

**WHAT DO WE LEARN
FROM TEACHING ONE-TO-ONE
THAT INFORMS OUR WORK
WITH LARGER NUMBERS?**

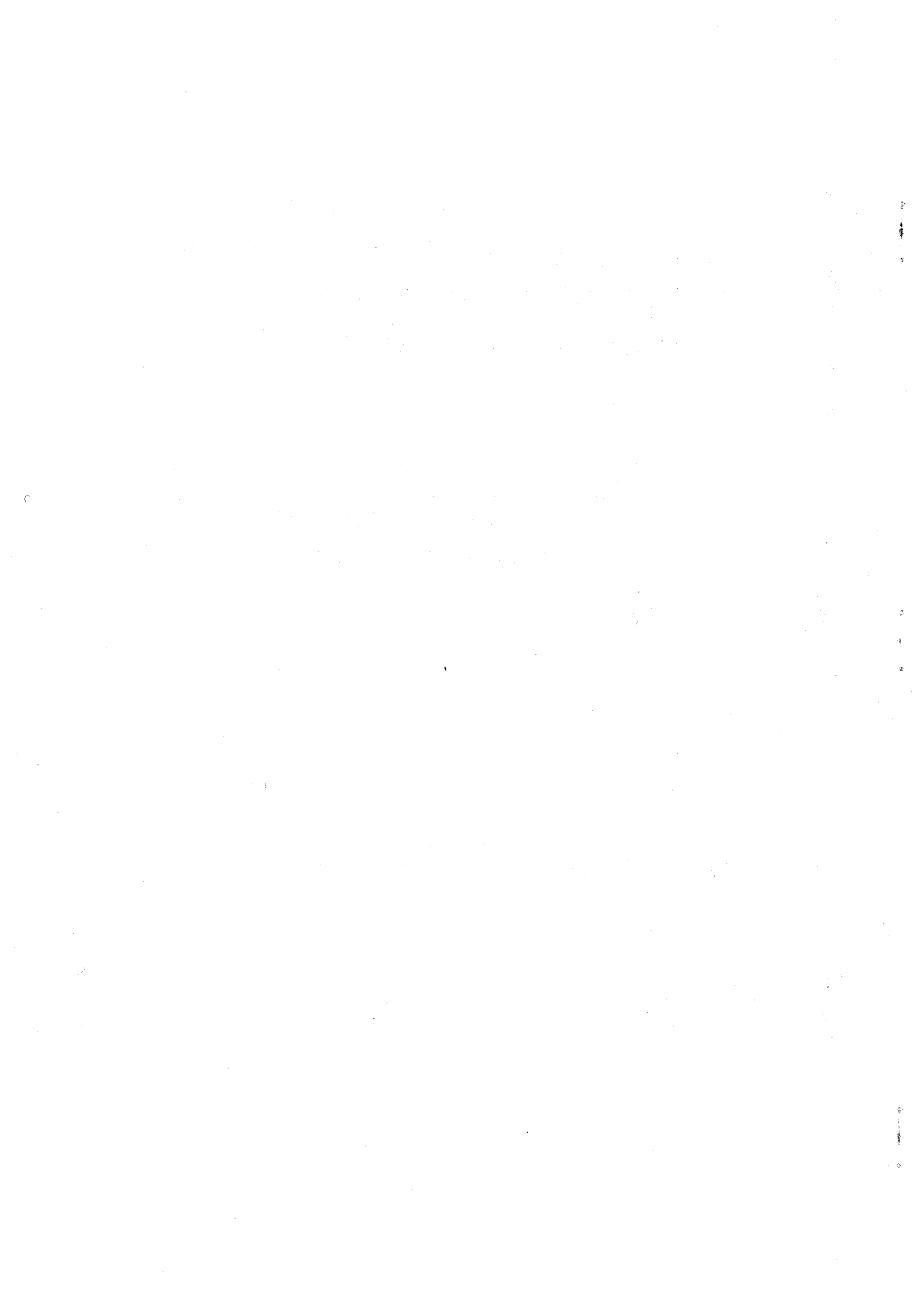
*PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE
HELD AT LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
NOVEMBER 18-19, 1996*

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PREFACE

On 18-19 November, 1996, the Language and Academic Skills Units of La Trobe University hosted a national conference on the theme, "What do we learn from teaching one-to-one that informs our work with larger numbers?" A hundred people from all over Australia and New Zealand heard twenty-eight contributions and shared their experiences with providing academic skills support to increasing numbers of students while in many cases suffering cuts in funding. While diverse in terms of their structures and histories, all units were facing similar problems, and participants were able to pool a wealth of ideas for dealing with these both in their papers and in an information-gathering plenary session (reported in this volume by Anne Pitkethly and Meg Rosse).

The conference theme was designed to bring together two concerns which run through many discussions in our field: the need to defend and sustain individual teaching on the one hand, and the challenge of teaching larger numbers on the other. These concerns appear to pull in opposite directions, but in fact most of us teach in both ways, and each mode informs the other. We hoped that the conference would help us to articulate what we think is valuable, perhaps even indispensable, in teaching one-to-one, and at the same time to explore the possibilities - and the limits - of recreating those benefits in other modes of teaching. A certain urgency had crept into the project by November, as universities across Australia faced restructuring and staff losses following an unsympathetic Budget.

Most speakers agreed that one-to-one teaching is the most effective mode we have, and, for some students, the only effective mode. In individual tutorials we can make a safe place for students who are uncertain in the university classroom, help them to understand what is unfamiliar, and build their confidence by recognising each one as a person and taking her/him seriously as a learner. We can provide an audience for the students' ideas, and because we are not experts in their field of study, they are put in the position of having to teach what they know to the adviser: that is, selecting what is important, explaining what it means, and articulating the ways in which ideas and information relate to each other and to particular questions. Finally, we can give advice on those problems - and *only* those problems - of expression that each student has. We can do much more for one student - and do it faster - than in a classroom setting. And some speakers felt that these benefits should justify the choice of individual teaching over other methods, for any student.

For others, however, the pressure of student demands for academic skills advice meant that not all students could be seen one-to-one; and some were also interested in making use of the group dynamic that develops in successful classrooms. The following questions were discussed in the context of a number of contributions:

Which students need one-to-one teaching, or what kinds of things are best taught that way?

How can we organise our offerings to provide individual teaching to those students who need it, while steering others into group work that can meet their needs?

Can some of the techniques, insights, and solutions that we develop in working with individuals be adapted to group situations?

To what extent can technology help us to "individualise" the teaching of larger numbers?

How can we evaluate our teaching, in terms which are useful to us and at the same time satisfy the decision-making purposes of our institutions?

This last question received a good deal of attention, because in so many respects our work resists quantification. Nonetheless, the plenary papers explored ways of using the information available to units like ours to work out the costs and benefits of our various modes of teaching, for the purpose of planning and advocating effective programs for students. Indeed, Patricia McLean and Aveline Perez discovered that one-to-one tutorials were not as expensive as they had supposed before costing them, compared with other university programs; their evaluation thus proved valuable both in enabling them to defend one-to-one teaching and in helping them to decide how worthwhile each kind of program they were developing was going to be. Similarly, Marcia Devlin argued that one-to-one support "is cost effective for universities".

While evaluations normally focus on what the students learn in any particular program, another kind of evaluation turns on what the teachers learn; and a powerful argument for one-to-one teaching is that it generates insights that we need

in order to be effective in other settings as well. Many papers shared what their authors had gained from individual teaching, in the way of principles, attitudes, insights into students' thinking, understanding of the tasks students are working on and the disciplines they are working in, and strategies for designing group work which makes effective use of all these things. Some of the approaches used new technology such as computer-assisted learning and discussion groups; some involved collaboration with subject tutors in the disciplines; in one, students were asked to annotate their work, as to what they thought was good or weak in it, so that their individual concerns could be dealt with even in a large class situation. It was clear, from the range of reflections and approaches that were offered for discussion, that one-to-one teaching is a crucial resource for a range of other activities, for despite a common commitment to individual teaching at least some of the time, nobody was engaged in it exclusively.

Nor were we engaging in it unreflectively. In one-to-one teaching, an adviser is in a position to mediate between the student and the institution, which fosters an awareness of what it means for a person to acculturate to academic study. One speaker felt that we were in fact mistaken in supporting our institutions by helping students to succeed within a system that neither recognised their talents nor served their purposes; she urged, instead, a Foucauldian critique of the relations of power created and sustained by university education. Most academic skills advisers in Australia, however, do not apparently see their function as colluding with an oppressive institution to subvert their students' purposes, but as raising students' awareness of the choices they can make. Universities both extend and limit what their members can achieve, as any other institution does; and the better their members understand them, the better placed they are to take up whatever is of value in their view.

As most of the concerns above were addressed, albeit differently, in paper after paper, it has proved difficult to separate them into distinct themes, and so they are presented here in alphabetical order (by author's surname). Also included in these Proceedings is a list of names and addresses of the conference participants, to facilitate communications in our field. Two years ago, the La Trobe Conference served to bring many of us into contact for the first time, and participants remarked upon the excitement of discovering that, while some of us work in marginal situations within our universities, every university in Australia has at least one of us, and there *is* a field to which we belong. Already, at that time, there were some state networks encouraging closer contact; but now, as well as these, we are linked by Unilearn, by a national newsletter, by email, by the HERDSA Special Interest Group on Language and Learning, and by a proliferation of affordable conferences and meetings. We look forward to many more.

Of course, it all makes work, and here I would like to thank the people who did the work of organising the Conference in '96: Valerie Burley, Sheila Davies, Philippa Barber, Diana Hiller, Meg Rosse, Beth Brough and Anne Pitkethly.

Kate Chanock, Convenor

ADVISING HONOURS YEAR STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Students in their final Honours year are already well socialised into their discipline and its discourse, research interests and methodology. It is generally assumed they are both competent and confident academic learners. Yet the Honours year presents particular challenges for these students: the more intensive demands for planning and self-management; the new dimensions of independent research and the production of a sub-thesis; and the very different skills involved in working under the guidance of a supervisor.

Study advisers at the ANU can make a significant contribution to clarifying and developing the professional, research and personal skills these students require, by drawing on the experience both of working with individual Honours students and of participating in discipline-based seminars for Honours students. Some examples of practice are offered for discussion.

There are three major steps in the initiation of students into full membership of the academic community: the first year of undergraduate studies when the student begins the process of scholarly socialisation; the Honours year when students now take responsibility for a significant piece of research and first encounter the complexities of working with a supervisor, and the PhD program from which the student emerges as an accredited academic colleague. At each of these stages students have to make a qualitative shift in their intellectual approach to their studies and a significant increase in their personal responsibility for and management of their academic work.

The fact that these students who follow this progression are, by definition, among the most gifted and most effectively motivated members of the student body does not imply that they are uniformly confident of their capacities and competence to meet the demands of an Honours or PhD program. Indeed it is the experience of advisers in the Study Skills Centre (SSC) at the Australian National University that potential Honours and Honours Year students frequently seek us out and make extensive and intelligent use of our services. We are also invited by many Honours Year coordinators to participate in some of the regular seminars arranged for these students on a departmental basis. This demand often surprises our less reflective academic colleagues who do not expect 'such successful students' to seek or even require further assistance with their academic work; yet it is quite reasonable if we accept that these students are high achievers, very self-aware scholars, and understandably nervous about the new demands of producing a sub-thesis. Moreover, they all want to get a First Class Honours degree, not merely a 2A or 2B.

So how can we most effectively work with Honours Year students, taking into account both their common and their individual needs?

Honours Year departmental seminars

Most departments in the ANU appoint a staff member as the Honours coordinator with responsibility for advising potential Honours students how to qualify for the Honours Year, and for coordinating seminars and support for students in their Honours Year. Quite a few departments produce a booklet for Honours students which covers their access to resources, such as photocopying and lab materials, and offers guidance on producing a thesis and meeting the other assessment requirements of the year. In the SSC we have also produced a generic leaflet on the Honours year, which gives students a general introduction to the demands of an Honours degree. In those departments which may not be so

well-organised in a particular year, the Honours students themselves will usually organise the seminars and invite speakers, read each other's work, and generally develop a support network. In either case, an adviser from the SSC will normally be invited to lead anywhere between one and three seminars on the process of writing a thesis and managing one's supervisor. This year, for example, I have personally worked with nine Honours programs in the Arts and Asian Studies Faculties and other staff have worked in the Law and Science Faculties. Some departments organise Honours weekends at an ANU property at the coast, during which students and supervisors join in all the discussions and social activities in a less formal setting. Most departments, however, run their weekly seminars in their departmental centre.

Setting the context

As advisers, we are normally asked to lead a seminar on some topic generally related to managing the Honours Year. This will take place early in the program and we are billed as 'the experts' setting the context. In the course of a 90 minute or two hour seminar we normally cover general issues which we know to be common to most Honours students, shaping them to the particular demands of the department in which they are located. (See Appendix 1 for materials used in an Arts and a Science Honours seminar.) We tend to focus on the skills these students will need to draw on in the process of producing their sub-thesis, starting with general self-management, group support, and coursework demands, and then moving more closely to the twin challenges of working with a supervisor and producing a thesis. In these seminars we always have the Honours coordinator present and, in some cases, there may be other supervisors and graduate students. We often include a successful Honours student from the previous year who can add personal experience and a proof that there is life after the thesis.

Our major contribution to such sessions is that we have experience of Honours Year students over a wide range of departments and over many years. We can, therefore, serve as both mediators and advocates. For example, we may draw on the experience in other departments to encourage the coordinator in a particular program to develop a 'Guide for Honours Year' or to extend the seminar topics beyond those strictly related to content. We can also ask some key 'structuring' questions on behalf of the students who are not yet aware such matters are important to their planning, such as the exact requirements for the final presentation of the thesis (must it be bound? how long does professional binding take? what will it cost? etc) or the role of supervisors in relation to the examination of the sub-thesis. Much of each seminar involves discussion among the students, leading to identification of problems or information gaps - in most cases the coordinator provides the formal departmental answers, with the study adviser intervening when a more flexible approach might be possible.

Producing the thesis

Depending on the stage in the academic year and when the sub-thesis is due, we usually run a separate session on the structure and production of an Honours thesis within the particular departmental context. For this we ask the coordinator to select, from the departmental collection of past Honours theses, a range of 'successful' theses which cover the generic types that the current Honours students are producing. We are much less interested in theses on similar topics than in theses which are structurally similar: we want examples of theses which move from application of one or more theories to a particular case study; theses which compare theories in relation to evidence; theses which start with a case study and move to a theoretical proposition; theses which lead to policy recommendations, etc. We then get the students to work in groups, based on common thesis structures, in order to analyse the title, abstract, table of contents, introductory chapter and the final chapter of the 'example' thesis. By having their critical attention drawn to these key communicative features of a thesis, they begin to recognise the structuring and editing they will need to do in their own work, and become more aware of the requirement that their thesis meet the expectations of their audience, ie their examiners. Here we often draw on the experience of departmental staff who have regularly examined Honours theses to reinforce this point, asking them to explain to the group how they actually read and assess a thesis, what they look for first, what attracts or upsets them, etc. We remain amazed at the uniformity of these responses over the years and across a wide range of departments. In this session, even though it is early in the Honours year, we encourage the students to discuss in pairs their proposed title and the (current) aim of their thesis. This also alerts them to the importance of at least a tentative focus, right from the start, to provide a basic structure and guide for their research and their evolving argument.

We also stress the importance of time management in relation to this production process. We may give out a semester timetable and get students to plan their writing over the three month period, emphasising the strategy of working backward from their deadlines (when must it be submitted? how long to allow for final editing and binding? when to

complete the whole first draft? when to complete each chapter? when to stop research? etc). It is our experience that it is not merely intellectual ability that creates a successful Honours year but also the much less glamorous skill of self-management is crucial.

Managing the supervisor

The other new factor in the academic development of an Honours student is learning to work productively with a supervisor. This requires a significant degree of management and negotiation, which are important professional skills for whatever careers they may later develop. In discussing this evolving relationship we draw on the experience of supervisors in the department, asking them about the range of ways they have supervised Honours students, what particularly dismays or pleases them, where they draw limits on the reading of drafts and the final editing of a thesis, etc.

More importantly, we get the students to consider what type and intensity of supervision they hope to receive: some want minimal contact throughout, others hope to be harried about deadlines; others would prefer informal discussion rather than formal feedback on each chapter. We stress that the working relationship between each student and each supervisor must be negotiated early in the process, so that both parties are clear about their mutual expectations, and re-negotiated where necessary as the year progresses and the context and circumstances change.

We also encourage students to work out fairly regular meeting times, and suggest they send a note or email to their supervisor a couple of days before each meeting outlining what they've achieved since the last meeting, what problems now seem to be arising, and where they think they'll go next. This memo can then frame the discussion at the meeting, and gives the supervisor time in advance to think about solutions, find useful references or contacts, and be reassured that the student is actually making progress.

We point out, too, that the role of a supervisor will change over the course of the year. Initially, while the student is working out the dimensions of the thesis, the supervisor will be a source of information, contacts and inspiration. Later the supervisor becomes a critical but encouraging sounding board for ideas and reader of the first draft. In the final stages the supervisor may become less friendly and more critical, now taking on the role of surrogate examiner. We emphasise here that although supervisors may not be expert in, or enthralled by, the topic of a thesis, they are expert in guiding Honours students through the process of producing a thesis, knowing when to be gentle and when to be tough. And it is this expertise that is as valuable to the student as expertise in the content and the discipline.

Seminar presentation

In some departments, particularly in the Sciences and the Visual Arts, students have to make a public presentation or defence of parts of their thesis or their work. Again advisers from the SSC are invited in to assist students in handling these requirements; and again we draw also on the experience of the departmental staff in making (and assessing) such performances.

Although most students will already have had some experience of making presentations in their past courses, the Honours presentation can be much more forbidding as the audience is expected to be critical. In some departments Honours students must present their thesis outline to an audience of other Honours and graduate students and all the academic staff in the department. This can be intimidating, though (like all good masochists) the students often acknowledge later that this was the point at which they finally came to grips with their topic. Even if the presentation is less formal and only to fellow Honours students, there can be a lot of competitive criticism. Most students need to be encouraged to practise their performance, to plan carefully the handouts, overheads and other aids they will use, and to learn to keep within a strict time limit. In some cases, though more commonly with graduate students, it is possible to arrange for a video-taping of a practice session, with the adviser or supervisor providing critical feedback. In some Science departments, where there is much emphasis on the professional skills of presentation, the supervisor will organise and evaluate a dry-run.

These group seminars have many advantages:

- they provide the opportunity for the students to ask practical 'housekeeping' questions and get an authoritative response from the Honours coordinator;

- they give the students a sense of community and the basis on which to form a peer support group;
- they generate strategies by which the students can solve some of their problems independently;
- they reveal the ways in which past Honours students have overcome problems that these students now face; and
- they remind academic staff and Honours coordinators of the types of problems, stresses and misconceptions that students face in their Honours year.

Individual interviews

Yet although many of the new concerns relating to Honours Year are generic to all Honours students, there are always problems which need to be discussed on an individual basis with a supervisor or study adviser. It is our common experience as advisers that whenever we make a presentation in a department or program, we invariably attract more students on an individual basis from the group we have worked with, and more referrals from the academic staff with whom we shared the session - so that working with a group rather than being an efficient way of dealing with numbers is nearly always a generator of more individual work. Yet if students have initially attended one of the seminars, we can then work together individually with them much more efficiently because the common background can be taken for granted and a professional relationship is already established. For example, one student, following my advice to send a memo in advance to the supervisor before an interview, used the same strategy on me, with a vengeance:

BRIGID,

You probably don't remember me, but I'm the Asian Studies Honours student doing a thesis on Pramodya Ananta Toer. I've done most of the preliminary reading for it, but I seem to have lost direction. What am I doing? I need to start finding some focus in order to keep going efficiently. Should I start writing if I can? I could (probably) write a chapter on Pramodya's background leading up to the "cultural offensive" '62-'62[sic]. I could also probably start work on a chapter on the historical background of the polemics. At the rate I'm reading Pram's articles, it's going to take me about 2 months to finish them - i.e. 7 more weeks. At the moment I'm reading them completely, taking notes, but only really reading for a general idea of contents and overall impressions. Is this the right way of going about the readings? I've completely lost sight of any of the thesis as a whole and what sort of time plan I should be looking at. How should I try and reconstruct one?

Anyway, I thought you might appreciate a rough rundown of what I was thinking about before I arrive to see you on WEDNESDAY AT 2PM.

Thanks.

Given those marching orders, we had a very full session that Wednesday afternoon...

With individual students we are most likely to be working on the texts of their chapters, either at an early stage before they have submitted the chapter to their supervisor or immediately after they have had it returned and criticised. Such interviews are similar to our daily work with student assignments, but with the difference that we always have to keep an eye on the broader overall structure and argument of the thesis as a whole. Very often we are deliberately forcing the students to be more objective about the structure and development of the whole thesis, pulling them out of the detail by which they have become enamoured, or bogged down. Indeed a common strategy with students who are halfway through their first draft is to encourage them to draft their conclusion (or at least a long abstract) so that they can recognise the end point to which their evidence and argument must tend.

With graduate theses we have a Centre policy of working in detail on one chapter, and possibly also reading over the Introduction and Conclusion, but resolutely not working intensively on a whole thesis. In the detailed work we will take account of language editing, but only to the degree that the students should then be able to go away and edit their other chapters independently. With Honours theses we do not usually draw such tight limits on what we will read and discuss, as we recognise that this is the stage at which these students do need help in making their initial transition to independent research. However we must also be careful not to take over the proper role of the supervisor; we make suggestions but do not insist on changes. By providing an initial sounding board for half-formed ideas, unclear arguments and uncertain evidence, we are also giving the student practice in the questions and approaches that can be used in a later more formal discussion with the supervisor.

Cross-fertilisation

In our work with Honours students it is clear that both forms of practice - group work and individual work - inform each other:

- in terms of the individual student, we often know our Honours students well before their Honours Year because in past years they have made use of the SSC to sharpen their arguments, their style and their work in general. So when we enter an Honours seminar we are already familiar with many of the students and they are more willing to contribute to the discussion. Equally, if we have run a successful seminar for Honours students, they are then much readier to seek individual help because they appreciate we can offer them valuable and critical experience, as well as a venue for practising their interactions with their supervisor or in a presentation.
- in terms of integrating our work with supervisors and lecturers in departments, the Honours seminars are invaluable venues for encouraging these staff to become more self-reflective on what they are expecting of their students, what assumptions they need to make explicit, and the possible range of strategies that they might use as supervisors. Equally, we learn from these staff more about the discipline, the departmental ethos, and their individual characteristics - all grist to our mill as advisers with 'local knowledge'. It also means these staff have more confidence in recommending students to us - and are also made aware that we will not serve as surrogate editors.
- in terms of our own professional practice as study advisers, we clearly gain from both forms of involvement. Seminars can be exciting, with the students generating a lot of intellectual energy; individual work can be very satisfying with a motivated and intelligent student ready to work intensively and perceptively on a substantial piece of work.

The very valuable AVCC Reports on Academic Standards in Higher Education (1990-94) review Honours programs in seven disciplines across a range of Australian universities. In summarising the qualities expected of the work of Honours student, and in particular of their theses, they note that these students are 'the jewels in the department's crown', 'the flagship of their teaching endeavours' and that 'without an honours program a department would function at a sub-professional level'. Honours teaching is 'the focal point or lynchpin of undergraduate teaching'. For study advisers also, working with Honours students is both a challenge and a professional bonus.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Managing your Honours year and your Honours thesis

1. THE NEW MODEL YOU: Don't kid yourself...

- You won't suddenly become highly efficient/fluent/motivated, etc. But you can make gradual and manageable changes to your study behaviour (if you choose to).
- Expect that you will have roller-coaster reactions to your studies/motivation/efficiency/belief in the value of what you are doing and producing.
- Develop a support group (not a competitive pressure gang) for hard times.
- Make sure you are competent in using a word processing package as you will be producing your thesis on a computer and it is not a good idea to learn on the job...
- Allow time for the rest of your life, including job hunting towards the final months.

2. SELF-ORGANIZATION: This is a crucial factor in success in Honours year. It may be useful to:

- set yourself clear long-term and short-term objectives
- assess your progress regularly (and honestly)
- work backwards from deadlines in your planning
- break all tasks/assignments into small component steps

3. COURSEWORK: More of the same, only more intensive. In practice, regular seminars and essays can be points of stability amid the chaotic insanity of thesis writing...

4. THESIS: This is the new step in your academic development. There are two new factors to cope with:

- independent and extended research and writing
- working with a supervisor

Stages in producing your thesis:

- a. search for **topic and supervisor**
- b. **thesis models:** look at successful past Hons theses in the Dept for structure/ length/format, etc.
- c. developing, and defending, your **thesis proposal**
- d. **research stage:** developing your theoretical framework; selecting case studies; how much time?
- e. **writing:**
 - how many drafts? forcing yourself to hand in drafts....
 - chapter by chapter, or whole thesis?
 - which chapter/ material to start with?
 - format, and final typing and binding?
 - what will supervisor comment on? how often? taking how long?
- f. **editing:** how long for typing? proofreading?
- g. **role of supervisor** in the whole process? regular meetings, or on demand? how to avoid irritating your supervisor unnecessarily?
- h. who will **examine** the thesis, and how?

Complete this sentence: *The aim of my thesis is ...*

Stick your answer over your desk - and edit it regularly

Appendix B

Justifying your own thesis: A checklist

The purpose of your thesis is to **persuade** your reader (examiner) that the conclusion you reach on the basis of the evidence you present is acceptable, satisfying, and elegant. So a thesis is a persuasive communication; and the overall **structure** and the structures of each chapter, each section and each paragraph are all shaped to your persuasive intention.

You will probably have the following sections in your thesis - each has a different purpose in your attempt to influence your reader. The **Introduction** and **Conclusion** are the most important chapters in structuring your argument. No matter when you actually write them, they will need to be carefully revised (and not just the night before you submit the completed masterpiece).

Table of Contents (your early warning system):

- What impression will my reader get of the thesis by glancing through the ToC?
- Do I need to list figures, tables and illustrations, etc separately?
- Will I have Appendices?

Introduction (sets up the criteria by which you want your reader/examiner to evaluate the rest of your thesis:

- What is my aim in writing this thesis? (not merely getting an H1)
- What does my reader need to know to understand why I am proposing this aim? [This may involve a literature survey; or that may come in the next chapter.]
- What will my thesis add to existing knowledge or theory in my discipline?
- What other contextual information will help my reader follow my argument?
- Do I need to outline what is to come, chapter by chapter?

Literature review (may be part of the Introduction, a separate chapter, or part of each chapter; but you always have to acknowledge your intellectual ancestors):

- What is the most effective organisation of items for the purposes of my argument: by theme? by chronology? by theory/concepts? by geographical location? or what?
- How much detail is necessary to provide the context for my analysis and argument?

Body of thesis, by chapters and by sections (your cumulating evidence and argument) :

- What is my precise purpose in this chapter/section (occasionally even in this 'paragraph')?
- How is this chapter/section/paragraph relevant to the aim of my thesis? and to this particular stage of my argument?
- How much detail is necessary here?
- Are the links between this chapter/section/paragraph and the next, clear?
- Have I indicated my viewpoint on this material/evidence/source to my reader? (you are not writing a detective story with the solution on the last page; you are persuading your reader to accept your interpretation accumulatively)
- Is this chapter/section/paragraph in proportion to the surrounding material and argument?

Conclusion (so what does all this add up to? maybe, what next?):

- So what is most significant about my research findings? Why?
- What problems have arisen? Any future possibilities in this field?

IMPROVING PARAGRAPH WRITING AND SUMMARISING SKILLS: WORKSHOP

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ABSTRACT

This workshop will be a hands-on session to illustrate an approach to the teaching of paragraph writing in the context of the summarising of an academic text. The workshop materials and activities are, in the author's opinion, a good example of useful and successful teaching materials and activities that have arisen out of work with an individual student in a second year Management unit, *C240: Organisation and Management Development*.

The author has been closely involved for a number of years with the C240 unit co-ordinator in providing an integrated program of extra language and learning workshops that are strategically staged to help students develop their skills to meet the assessment and learning tasks and needs of the unit. As one of the important aims of the unit is to develop students' communication skills as well as an in-depth understanding of organisation and management theory, there are a number of individual and group oral and written assessment tasks structured into the mainstream course. The first two mini written assignments are diagnostic summary and paragraph writing exercises which form the background and context of the materials and activities of this workshop. Many students have poorly developed note-taking and summary writing skills due to a fundamental lack of awareness of basic paragraph structure. This workshop, which has been developed from working with an individual student's mini-assignment, aims firstly to teach students important aspects of the structuring of ideas in connected written academic discourse including topic sentences, logical sequencing patterns, information structure (theme/rheme development), and range and role of cohesive devices in English. Secondly it aims to develop useful note-taking strategies that form the basis of summary writing that is both accurate and effective and avoids the problem of plagiarism.

(Colin Beasley considered that it was not appropriate to provide a paper, since the workshop was designed to be highly interactive. Interested readers can contact him for further information. Ed.)

THE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE AS A CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTER: THE BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Research into the first year university experience has highlighted many of the challenges students face (Pascarella and Terenzin, 1991; Tinto, 1995; McInnis and James, 1995). The transition to university is often particularly difficult for students from language backgrounds other than English, both local and international. Cultural differences in learning and academic discourse styles have been well documented (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991; Clyne, 1987). This paper explores the first year experience as a 'cross-cultural' encounter: both socio-culturally and academically. The value of one-to-one language and academic skills support during this transitional period will be explored and consideration given to the implications for the teaching of larger groups, as well as student learning and retention. Case studies and examples from students' written work will be used to highlight some of the difficulties faced by such students. This paper moves away from the deficit model of 'students at risk' towards helping students to navigate a new academic and cultural experience.

Introduction

Of Victoria University's student population more than 35% speak a language other than English at home and approximately 30% of students were born overseas. Borland and Pearce (1996) state that such a context of cultural difference and the cross-cultural interactions this context entails pose particular challenges for both lecturers and students.

In this paper, we examine whether or not the First Year University Experience (FYE) is a cross-cultural encounter for our students, both socioculturally and academically. We explore the appropriateness of a particular model in the recent FYE literature for typical students in our own university. This will involve referring to recent papers including Chaskes (1996) who suggests a new way of viewing the FYE and Borland and Pearce (1996) who examine student and staff perceptions of LOTE students at Victoria University. Secondly, we present three case studies of typical students from our university and explore whether or not Chaskes' model fits their experiences. Finally we explore the relevance of individual consultations in helping students navigate their experiences of university.

The first year university experience

There have been various attempts to describe the student university experience and in particular the first year. The systematic study of university students began in the US after World War 1 (Davis, 1977). After World War 2 the studies began to use the developing methodologies of the social sciences and examined more and more specifics of student life. A recent and we think significant addition to the First Year Experience literature is by an American, Jay Chaskes. In his paper entitled "The Student as Immigrant" Chaskes makes a case for the FYE as being like that of an immigrant arriving in a new country. Using the discourse of North American migration including vocabulary such as culture shock, assimilation, acculturation and resocialization, he demonstrates the necessity for helping students to 'resocialize' into a 'new cultural environment' (Chaskes, 1996:90).

At first reading, Chaskes seems to offer useful insights into the FYE, e.g. notions of culture shock and the need to acquire new knowledge bases. However, we argue that Chaskes' model is not able to adequately address the Australian context and in particular that of Victoria University. A major problem is the use of the generic term 'student' for what in fact is a very diverse group of people. In particular, issues of gender, ethno-linguistic background and socio-economics are either overlooked or rather pointedly marginalised under the heading 'minority'.

Furthermore, Chaskes' migration metaphor hinges on a particular definition of immigration, that of being 'taken out of traditional, accustomed environments, replanting in strange ground, among strangers, where strange manners prevail'. Seeing migration as a passive act i.e. 'being taken out of' as opposed to 'making a conscious decision to go' ignores the very definite and considered decision many migrants make to move to another country and for our purposes, to enter university. Indeed, Brower (1992) in critiquing Vincent Tinto's (1988) notions of what makes students persist in their studies, emphasises the importance of acknowledging that students are not the passive recipients of the university system but actively engage and shape their educational experiences. The idea of a 'strange land' is also less relevant for many students who live at home and sometimes in the same suburb as the university they are attending, as our case studies will show.

The idea of separating from family and friends when starting university is really only appropriate, and even then it is debateable, for students who live away from home when at university. It certainly applies rarely to mature aged students, a lot of whom access units like ours. Nevertheless it seems generally accepted that not only do students have to adapt to a new environment, they also have to, according to Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), 'unlearn' past behaviours, attitudes and beliefs and relearn new ones. This view suggests a cutting off from their old world in order to live successfully in the new and this is said to be even more necessary for those students who are working-class, as many of the students who attend our university are often labelled. Valerie Walkerdine (1990) when referring to working-class students who are successful at high school, writes of the 'disavowal' of one life for another, referring to it as a 'splitting' with all the connotations this word implies. She states:

"They have chosen to succeed, yet the very possibility of their success depends upon a splitting- the negotiation of an impossible array of identifications in which they, becoming what the school wants, can no longer be what their family wants, and vice versa. They feel desperate that they can exist in neither, that everything is lost in terrible and painful isolation, that nobody understands, neither at home or school." (Walkerdine, 1991: 47)

Similar to Walkerdine's splitting metaphor is Pascarella and Terenzini's (1991: 650) suggestion that students must 'cut loose' from what they have previously known, i.e family and friends, if they are to make a success of university. We will see in the case studies if cutting loose is something that happens for three typical students from our university.

Referring to Gergen's (1991) notion of the 'saturated self' Chaskes sees students' identities being saturated and therefore diminishing successful transition to university. Whether or not students are saturated in the way Chaskes suggests will be shown in the case studies but we argue that Chaskes' view of where the students are 'coming from' is unnecessarily negative and pessimistic. Students in fact bring with them huge untapped resources.

A major way in which Chaskes' paper is not suited for the Australian Higher Education context is the lack of reference to students who speak a language other than English or to students who actually are immigrants as opposed to feeling as *if* they are. When examining the experiences of LOTE students, a tendency is to see their LOTEness as a disadvantage and something that needs to be compensated for. But again this ignores the students' own perceptions of the world they live in. A VUT student in Borland and Pearce's (1996) study for example says:

"I have been here all my life...I call myself a wog. I don't care, it is self explanatory. I feel I am part of a bigger community, I'm not just restricted to the country I live in. Like I feel I have connections to other parts of the world, so it opens up more areas of understanding."

As our case studies will show, our students do not easily fit the neat descriptions and models of the FYE.

Three case studies of first year students

Noah is a first year Pacific Island student studying Community Development. He is forty years old, is married with two children. His family is living with him in Australia. Noah has no previous university education but has until recently worked as a nurse in a community health (immunisation) program in the Solomon Islands.

Matilda is eighteen years old studying Environmental Science. She has an Indian background and arrived in Australia aged fifteen. Her first language is Hindi. Matilda spoke some English upon arrival so was not identified as an ESL candidate at school.

Sophie is thirty-four and is studying nursing after leaving school at sixteen. She was born in Australia, is of Greek background and is married with three children.

What are the 'cross-cultural' issues for these students in their first year at university?

Noah, having taken the decision to study overseas is an immigrant albeit for three years. Whereas Chaskes speaks of first year students as if they were immigrants, Noah is one. As well as adjusting to a new country he is adjusting to a university. So much so that he has decided not to tell his family and friends back in the Solomon Islands that he is at university, preferring instead to tell them he is doing some sort of technical course. This is because he feels embarrassed that he and his family have had such little education that they would feel he was going 'above himself'. Further cross-cultural issues during his first year include learning to be a student for someone who used to be a bread winner and the possible gender issues this might entail. Noah speaks English but not standard Australian English, let alone standard academic Australian English so he must learn the appropriate 'language' (spoken and written) to converse in an academic context. Finally, he must work out the conventions and expectations of his new environment, in Chaskes' terms 'strange manners in a strange land'. Therefore, for Noah the FYE is a cross-cultural encounter both socioculturally and academically.

Noah came to the Student Learning Unit asking for help with understanding the following essay topic:

"Now with nearly a century's accumulated regulation, monopoly, and the habit of going cap in hand to government embedded in our history, our economy and our psyche and its reversal barely begun, the Sirens are again singing of a world in which Australians do not have to be competitive" (Hyde, 1993). Critically assess the impact of this quote on the process of policy formation in contemporary Australia.

The title has cross-cultural implications but the individual consultation is the site in which he can make sense of it. Dictionary definitions have been unhelpful in clarifying much of the terminology; the embeddedness of the sentence is equally unhelpful. In this example, critical analysis is not the problem but the fact that it is grounded in western culture, knowledge of Australian public policy and politics and western mythology e.g. sirens singing. Noah believed that his lack of understanding was *his* problem, not realising that it was inaccessible to most students (and indeed most lecturers).

For Matilda, the transition from school to university is minimal, in fact she still calls it 'school'. Going to university has not meant cutting loose from established networks in Chaskes' sense: there are five students from her VCE year studying Science with her and she lunches with still others from school who are studying in different courses. Matilda even catches the bus she took to school. In fact, she wishes it was more of a 'cross-cultural' experience in social terms. On the other hand, Matilda is referred to us in the Student Learning Unit precisely because there are cross-cultural issues which she needs to address as perceived by her lecturers. When she arrived at her high school aged 15 she was integrated straight into mainstream subjects without any ESL support. According to Matilda, she spoke English and there were students who needed ESL more than she did. She quickly channelled herself into science subjects where language was less of an issue and surprised herself in scraping a pass in VCE English. Now in first year her lecturers are concerned that Matilda's English expression is poor and that she had difficulty structuring assignments and pracs according to accepted academic and scientific conventions. Therefore, while socially the adjustment has been easy for Matilda, academically there is a transition to be made and it is here that individual consultations play an important part.

Finally, for Sophie, the university was known to her as she dropped off her two children at day care just outside the university gate. She lives nearby and often pops home during the day to put on a load of washing. Sophie's decision to go to university was not made suddenly or lightly but she considered the step for a long time. Despite family disapproval and undiminished family responsibilities and work (in her husband's pizza restaurant) Sophie has successfully completed her first year of Nursing. For Sophie the cross-cultural issues included coming to terms with critiquing what she read as until starting university she said "I accepted anything anyone told me and believed I knew very little about anything". Grappling with Bio Science was also a problem for her which included learning a whole new language. In Sophie's case, Walkerdine's comment about splitting was pertinent in that she was trying to negotiate 'an impossible array of identifications' during her first year.

What can individual consultations offer to these students in their first year at university?

The benefits of individual consultations have been well articulated in other papers in this volume: such sessions ease transition to university by taking account of individual needs, providing personalised attention which enables a close monitoring of problems. In the case of Noah's essay topic, an individual consultation made the impenetrable penetrable. The SLU lecturer acted firstly as cultural interpreter, helping him make connections to his own culture and secondly, as mentor, suggesting that he change topic! This specific example represents the type of situation which continued to confront him throughout his first year.

For Matilda, the individual consultation provided the environment in which implicit academic and scientific discourse conventions could be made explicit. This student was eager to learn, she just required a forum in which express her concerns and someone to whom she could address her questions. Therefore, Matilda learned quickly and soon became competent in the required skills.

Finally, in addition to her academic concerns, in individual consultations Sophie expressed the conflicts she experienced between university study and family responsibilities. She needed someone to help her navigate the first year, including encouraging her to persist with her studies at points where these conflicts seemed too great. From weekly appointments in first semester, Sophie shifted to less regular appointments as the year progressed because she learned to deal with these issues and to feel comfortable at university and at home.

Conclusions

As Garner (1995) states, "the academic skills adviser is the main person in today's university with the responsibility, the knowledge and the time to help students" and in the case studies we have shown how individual consultations can play a crucial role in supporting students in their first year and beyond. We have also shown that students live and study in and across different 'cultures', where the university constitutes one culture and home, whether in the Solomon Islands or near the university, another. Whilst in some respects this dichotomy may be 'cross-cultural', the greater challenge for students is to become 'bicultural'. Universities need to encourage students not to 'cut loose' or 'split' from one culture in order to 'assimilate' into the various cultures of universities, but to expand their cultural repertoires and become at least bicultural. Finally we propose that the widely used term 'first year experience' is inappropriate for the Australian Higher Education context. Instead, we suggest referring to 'First Year Experiences'. Paradigms of first year experiences need constant revision and we need to develop our own models which are appropriate to Australian higher education contexts.

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ATTENTION TO THE INDIVIDUAL

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ABSTRACT

To assist students in their learning, it is often necessary to have an understanding of their own particular perspective and difficulties. Some of these may be obvious, and may be common to large groups of students. Others may only reveal themselves in one-to-one or small group situations, or in the more private context of written work. Even then, careful attention of the right sort may be required before such features of the individual can reveal themselves or be noticed. This paper draws on literature on the 'ethics of attention', from thinkers such as Simone Weil, Martha Nussbaum, and Iris Murdoch, to examine what is required from such ethical attention, what can be gained from it, and what would be lost without it. The possibilities for, and limitations on, transferring such individual attention to the group setting will then be discussed.

This paper examines theories of the ethics of attention in order to help think through what is valuable about work with the individual within an academic setting. By 'the ethics of attention' I mean an approach to ethics stemming in large part from the work of Simone Weil (1951, 1952), and followed up in such philosophers as Iris Murdoch (1970) and Martha Nussbaum (1990). On the one hand, this paper is a theoretical and philosophical discussion, and on the other, a highly personal discussion of some experiences in teaching and working with students. The philosophical theory is used to indicate a way of thinking about the personal experience, a way which, I shall try to argue, is helpful and illuminating.

One starting point can be expressed thus: When I started teaching in universities in Britain in the early 1980s, I taught students. Indeed, I 'had' students in the sense that there was a personal relationship involved: they were 'my' students. An older colleague even spoke of 'his pupils', in a way that to me conjured up a notion of particular relationships and concern. But by the early to mid nineties, lecturing in Australia, I suddenly felt that I no longer taught students - (what, even though there were so many more of them!) Rather, I carried a load of 'Equivalent Full Time Student Units', or worse, just simply EFTSUS. Partly, this paper addresses the alienation and loss of value that accompanied this shift.

Why look at the place of the individual within tertiary education in terms of a theory of ethics? Some brief preliminary remarks may assist in explaining the rationale of this paper. From one end, it should be noted that I am understanding a theory of ethics in terms of any normative theory which examines values, which can encompass any decision about what to do or how to shape the world, in a very broad sense and not just in terms of a narrow notion of, say, limited codes of conduct that might govern only a portion of our lives. From the other end, I consider that there are very important value issues at play here, not least, issues about the quality of our relationships and dealings with both self and others.

Why look then at this particular theoretical stance, that of the ethics of attention? This choice can be explained by ranging it alongside rival theories of ethics. Although the writings on the ethics of attention are perhaps more sketchy, less fully formed than some alternatives, I have chosen to use it here because of what it draws our sight to. In some ways, alternative theories of ethics can be seen as genuine rivals with competing claims. In other ways, they can be seen as complementary in that they focus on different aspects of the ethical world. I shall attempt a necessarily brief account of these differences in focus, and from there, flesh out the theories more fully.

Normative ethical theories are traditionally divided into three groups on the basis of where their focus lies: on outcomes, on actions, or on agents. Firstly, consequentialist theories, of which the main examples are the many versions of utilitarianism, focus on the consequences or outcomes of actions as the area of exclusive, or major, concern. The question to ask is: what effects, good and bad, are produced for all concerned? Secondly,

deontological theories focus on the nature of the action itself: certain actions, falling under general rules, will be prohibited, allowed, or obligatory in themselves, and irrespective of their outcomes on a particular occasion. Lastly, virtue ethics examines the character of the moral agent and asks: what is a truly virtuous person like?

The ethics of attention is perhaps best characterised as a variety of virtue ethics insofar as it speaks of what one should do in relating to another person, and of what is required of the self in so doing. It focuses not on outcomes, nor on trying to decide what actions should be taken, but on the conditions under which we choose actions and deliberate on hoped for outcomes. Differences between different circumstances and different people are of the utmost importance and particularity is valued rather than generality. There is a major emphasis on a clear apprehension of the reality of a situation and especially the reality of another person. It is crucial to perceive the other as a separate, unique, real individual. Once this is clearly seen, and situations firmly grasped in all their complexity, proponents of such an approach may see judgements about what to do and appropriate actions as following automatically.

So to understand the ethics of attention key ideas to remember are its focus on individuals, on both self and other; its focus on relationships; its focus on particularity; its insistence on the accurate perception of reality, and the way that this leads straight into action. I also consider that although the individual is a starting point, because relationships must be included and because the individual is seen in context, we are quickly led also to an appreciation of community. A summary of this could characterise this stance on ethics as a way of seeing the world. I have tried to examine what it asks us to look at in relation to the place of the individual in my teaching work.

When I started this project, I fixed on the ethics of attention mainly because it talks so much of the individual. However, I came to see that what is of most interest is not so much *that* it talks of the individual, but *how* it does so. This is particularly important in distinguishing between different ethical theories, because in our culture, valuing and respecting the individual has come to have such importance that most or all ethical theories incorporate this in some way - at least, the most visible and used versions of them do so. Hence, this paper is partly about distinguishing different notions of the individual, and examining teaching practice in the light of this. Doing so will also place this discussion in a wider, more political arena.

The characterisation I give of the individual within different approaches to ethical theory is painted in very broad brush strokes. I identify crude outlines and primary colours. My excuse for such sketchiness is that here I am interested not so much in the exposition of theories for their own sake, but in finding ways of seeing the individual within the context of higher education.

Within consequentialism in general and utilitarianism in particular, the individual may be lost under the weight of what the best consequences are for the community as a whole, but nonetheless there is a particular individual to be found in this group of theories. In any calculation of consequences, each individual is to count equally. The individuals we are dealing with here are isolated bundles to be added up like separate marbles in a heap; the original atomistic individual belongs here. Although early formulations of utilitarianism saw the outcome that had to be maximised as happiness and the absence of unhappiness, versions that are more influential currently speak of outcomes in terms of the satisfaction of desires or of preferences. The main thrust here is in allowing the freedom to do as one's heart pleases; a perhaps more minor thrust is to create conditions under which people may freely choose to satisfy their preferences. It is in such terms that the individual has entered mainstream economics and it is in such terms as allowing free individual choice that the individual is valorised in much contemporary political rhetoric.

From within the deontological camp a perhaps richer notion of the individual has arisen, stemming originally from Immanuel Kant's extremely influential notion of respect for persons. In the Kantian formulation, such respect only involved abiding by what a 'rational' person - rational in a particularly Kantian and ostensibly objective sense - could consistently will. More modern versions have weakened this somewhat so that respect for persons comes attached to theories of what it is to be a person, and to theories of autonomy. Broadly, respect for persons is understood in terms of respecting a person's autonomy, for which read 'autonomous choice'. However, Kant's fingerprints are to be found all over even the modern versions: theories of both personhood and autonomy, for example, stress rationality, competence, and tend to forget about relatedness and emotion; a Kantian division between our 'rational' selves and our embodied animal selves runs deep within this literature. The literature on respect for persons and on autonomy perhaps provides a richer discussion of the individual than the utilitarian view that simply sees individuals as skeletal hat-stands on which to hang desires and preferences, but the focus on autonomy and choice forms an extremely strong bridge between these two approaches.

Work in the ethics of attention can be seen to be doing the job of fleshing out the idea of respect for persons (Teuber, 1982) although it can also be seen as a rival to, for example, theories of personhood that place great emphasis on the rational and take too little account of differences between situations and persons. Indeed, the very essence of the theory makes it impossible to extract a picture of what 'the' individual is like since the whole point is to watch and listen very carefully for differences, for nuance, for context, for social setting; any look and any encounter must be open ended, not prejudged. But more than just opening up possibilities of variety and complexity, this approach opens up two areas closed or masked by other approaches. Firstly, it provides the opportunity for a far richer account of relationships, in particular that between the first person and the one (or ones) attended to. Secondly, it opens up the necessity of examining one's own soul for what might be getting in the way of fair and proper attention. The process of ethical perception becomes a subject of study. Attending is not a matter of passively opening one's eyes and pointing them in one direction or another (indeed, Joseph Butler (1874) long ago reminded us that we have control over where we look). Attention is active, it is demanding, it requires a great deal of the self. We then have to examine that self to get it right.

All of these approaches to ethical theory can be understood in terms of how they see the first person individual, or moral agent, and the other with whom he or she interacts, or the so-called 'moral patient'. Important differences between the theories can be revealed here. The consequentialist or utilitarian approach can be characterised as very active in that the moral patients are seen in terms of exercising choice; the moral agent is seen in terms of not hindering choice (refraining from action) or of positively supplying choice. On versions that focus on happiness as an outcome rather than on the satisfaction of desires, the agent is again essentially active: what he or she produces is what matters and since every action or inaction will have some net effect on the world, there is no let up from this spur to choice over action.

The respect for persons approach can be seen as similar in many ways. The emphasis is very much on what I, the moral agent, do to respect another, and in this sense it is active. But, like the first group of theories, the relationship between self and other is somewhat thin. Merely respecting someone, it could be said, leaves an awful lot out of the human encounter.

The approach of the ethics of attention is active in an entirely different sense. Not so much concerned in the first instance with acting in the world, it can still be seen as internally active as it were, active in probing the self, active in perception, active in the energy put into relationships with tangible, complicated others. But a major emphasis is not so much on doing, rather on being. I do not look at the other and think: what can I do to or for them? but think: who is this person? where are they situated? what is their reality? Out of such apprehension, actions may come, but even these arise from the nature of the situation; we discover what to do, rather than deciding what to do in a way that imposes our will in a passive world.

I have been examining different accounts of the individual that may be extracted from broadly characterised accounts of different ethical theories. Now I wish to place these in a wider context within which we can consider the place of the individual within education. This is where the remarks are perhaps most political, and they are political at least in the sense of attempting to understand how the individual is placed in a larger social context. In essence, what I have chiefly been suggesting is that the ethics of attention leads us onto a fuller, and hence more accurate, picture of what the individual is. It reminds us that to focus too much on only certain attributes is actually to risk de-valuing the individual. The first two approaches (remember the proviso that I have of necessity to make broad generalisations here) characterise the individual in general terms; see the individual as one who expresses their individuality via the making of choices; focuses on actions, both of the moral agent and the moral patient. From here it is a short step to a rhetoric that announces that we have valued the individual if and only if we allow free individual choice. Allowing such free unfettered choices, or more strongly, providing them, in a free market of unbridled opportunity, is *ipso facto* to value the individual.

My tone probably already tells you my opinion of this. It is not that I am against choice; but that I am against the way so much of the individual is left out of account. I also take heed of Simone Weil's warning that such a picture, where separate, thinly drawn individuals fight over their respective rights, will lead to the 'shrill nagging of claim and counter-claim' (Weil in Teuber, 1982: 235). We need a fuller account where the individual and their choices are placed in context, the context of relationships and community. Especially within the framework that sees the individual in terms of choice and action, the individual is often pitched against the community as choices and preferences conflict. It would be foolish to deny this reality. But if we look not just at the individual as one who acts and chooses, but at the *being* of the individual, we cannot see the individual except within some relationship to some community or other. We must not forget that we are not just a rational animal but a social animal and our individuality is actually formed within a community, as well as possibly in opposition to a community or communities. And note that we cannot even understand this opposition except by noticing that the community is there.

A general point to be drawn from this is that if we think that the individual can be dealt with adequately within an education system by *simply* allowing choice - and the more the better, on such an account - we will be wrong. Not only will some aspects of the individual be overlooked, but many individuals will (and of course we all know this is true) actually lose out substantially on such a crude model. What then this is a plea for, in order to be true to any claim that the individual is of importance, is to allow space and time actually to pay attention to each individual. This point can be examined further if we think about why, within the context of education, we need to see people as individuals.

What needs to be done is to hold up what the ethics of attention says about how we see, and value, individuals, against a picture of how this might be of value in education. We can ask: what's needed for all this attention to the individual to be possible, and what's achieved by this? And we can also ask: what's needed for learning? What's lost if individuality is lost? Since I consider that the ethics of attention also alerts us to the importance of relationships, and of community, we can also ask questions such as: what's the importance of the teacher/ student relationship, and what makes for good or bad relationships? What if anything is the importance of the community in all this? It is here that the paper starts to switch from the theoretical to the personal, as I measure some of these ideas up against my own experience.

When I thought about this, most of the examples that came to mind related to experiences teaching ethics. There was no coincidence about this, since it is a subject which very much engages (or should engage) the student on a personal level. This is not to say that what I say only applies to this, or similar topics, but for me, examples were particularly vivid here. Later on I shall attempt to relate some of the discussion to the case of the Study Skills Centre where I work.

I am looking then at individual details that affect learning, either positively or negatively. One immediate response to such a project might be to say something like: so, this student can't sleep at night because of x, y, z, and so is performing badly. So what? That's a private affair, that's none of our business, that's tough luck, that's not our job. To this there are at least two replies. Firstly, that the response that it is no part of our job shows a remarkably narrow conception of what 'our job' as a teacher is, a conception that itself fits with a world vision somewhat bereft of community. Indeed, if the theorists of the ethics of attention are right - and I am convinced that here they are at least half-way to the truth - one couldn't *really* appreciate the reality of such a suffering individual *and do nothing*. This may be only to give them a relevant phone number or five minutes of time, or it may be a lot more. (But note: getting to this position in the first place, and then acting, does require at least some time - time that the education system currently often lacks. One may really be unable to do anything, other than worry and feel guilty.)

Secondly, there are details about individuals that may affect learning not just externally so to speak, as when a student has to work so long for money that he or she has too little time to study. There are details about individuals that affect their learning internally - they actually hamper understanding. It is here that my personal experience has convinced me of the value of teaching within the context of a personal relationship between a particular teacher and a particular student, a relationship between individuals that can make at least some room for such issues to surface and be dealt with. I shall look at this both from the point of view of the individual student, and then from the point of view of what is required of the teacher, although, since I wish to emphasise the teacher - student relationship, this division will therefore be to some extent artificial.

I would like to present a couple of cases in an attempt to illustrate my concerns. The first case is somewhat typical of a number of similar occasions. A student taking my applied ethics course handed in an essay on abortion. The essay was prefaced by a lengthy personal account from the student of an abortion that she had had, together with a number of other details omitted here to protect confidentiality. The language and tone was rather emotive. The essay that followed was rather poorly argued, and there were no really significant links - if any - made between the personal preface and the body of the essay. The personal preface, one could say, only served to distract from producing an answer to the essay, not so much because it was personal but because it was undigested, and in a sense, raw - showing raw feelings, and showing no thoughts on how to integrate the personal with the more theoretical content of the course, even though in theory, this should have been possible. A less sympathetic marker would have had justification for knocking marks off for the inclusion of material that had not been shown to be relevant, and hence, could be said to be entirely unacademic. The course required that students look at theory, look at both sides of a question, give a balanced, reasoned answer, not an emotive first personal biased plea. What could have been going on here?

Apart from obvious retorts such as, perhaps this was a weak student who had misunderstood the nature of the course and the nature of an academic essay, I would like to suggest a number of possibilities for understanding this example, possibilities I suggest partly on the basis of other related experiences. For this particular case, a lot is actually guesswork because I never had the time to check it out with the student herself. The student was actually touching on something relevant to the topic - personal experience that gave her a way into it. It could have been used, for instance, to help her see questions that should be asked, to use as one person's experience that could be used as one way of assessing general

theories. However, looking at the body of her essay, her experience perhaps hampered understanding rather than enhanced it. My hunch is that the student was just not able to integrate the way she told her personal story with the way she approached the content of the course. Perhaps she will never be able to do this - for one thing, it requires a certain degree of intellectual ability. But perhaps she could have done so, had conditions been different.

How does this relate to my topic of attention to the individual? Am I saying that had I had time to get to know this student, tutor her individually (I did not: I came across her on a large course, and came across her essay as one of an enormous pile to be got through against a deadline in the relentless mind numbing agony known only to markers of essays) she would have written a better essay? Am I saying that teaching, or in particular teaching ethics, has to be a kind of psychotherapy? I am saying none of these, at least partly because the context of formal education can only be one of the avenues, and a necessarily limited one, through which a student's understanding can grow. But what strikes me is that such a student needed a safe enough place in which to work through how her own emotions and history were affecting her academic understanding, and she could have benefited from the assistance of someone who paid enough attention to her as an individual to see the connection and the need for this help. One might well even see her personal preface, which she must have known was academically unorthodox, as an acknowledgment that something needed attention and a plea to have that attention. Providing individual attention to students does not guarantee that such things can be worked out successfully, but it *may* assist, and the lack of such attention certainly leaves out this possible avenue.

A safe enough place to take the personal risks of examining such issues may also include a place where there is some notion of community and where there is a good quality of relationships between participants. A notion of community may come into the one to one teacher - student relationship, if this includes some notion of 'pastoral care' or of seeing the student as a particular individual and not just as a producer of assignments or another 'burn on a seat'. It may also be important to try to foster within a tutorial group, where in a competitive, adversarial atmosphere students may be naturally defensive and disinclined to open up or take risks, even in what they think to themselves.

Indeed, for some students, and with some lecturers, individual tuition is not a safe enough place and the students may prefer the safety in numbers of a small or large group. This may be for a number of reasons. It may be because trust is lacking, because the teacher is too much of an authority figure, or because the student doesn't want to be encouraged to face certain issues (see below for a further discussion of trust).

Attention also appears in this example in another obvious place - in the student's problems with paying attention to what was required of her in answering the question. Again Weil discusses this kind of attention to what she calls 'school studies', and although she sees this as all subordinate to a religious attention to God, her discussion can still be useful here (Weil, 1952). What this attention requires is a quiet, calm inner space to allow a place for the subject matter. What this student, I guess, lacked, was sufficient inner quiet to allow this.

A second example I have in mind concerns a small sub-group of rather vocal students within a larger class (of about 70) and again it is a story of failure. It concerns a group, so later I will also use it to raise questions about attention to the individual within a group context. The incidents occurred well into a course on applied ethics, which had been going fairly well, with a responsive and generally interested lecture audience, until the time when the topic of environmental ethics came up. Suddenly, driven by a small group who entirely dominated the class, a generally cooperative and receptive class turned into what felt like a heckling, accusative, attacking mob. I was never able to finish a single lecture as I had planned it. I was assailed by cries from these students that suggested that anything I might say on the matter would be insufficiently radical, that I would be presenting a biased, establishment view, and even, who was I in the first place to presume to talk on these matters. Actually, a lot of what I had planned to say was more on the lines of spelling out different views in a relatively neutral way, and any personal line I might have argued was certainly not establishment. 'How dare you make judgements of value!' is an accusation which sticks in my mind because throughout the entire course, I and everyone else had been making such judgements without such comments on the process as such, and because I was never able to turn that back on these students to make them realise the self-absurdity of this remark against the extremely stringent and absolutist value judgments they themselves were making. In other words, I failed to teach them in failing to enable such self-reflection. The whole thing was a nightmare and the following year I cut that section out of the course. (To put this section of the course in context, I had the whole course assessed and the outcome was very favourable - I say this not to boast but to show that there was something going on with this topic, not with my teaching as a whole.)

This unruliness came as a great surprise to me for various reasons. Firstly, I was taken aback by the radical defence of the environment by these students because we had already discussed animal rights, and there was little or only lukewarm support for these. This contrasts with my experience in Britain where philosophy students generally show very high

levels of support for animal rights, and where there is a strong link between that support and support for environmentalism. So I just wasn't expecting this conjunction of views - apparent disregard for animals plus great concern for inanimate environmental features amongst other things. I think this shows two things. One, wider local knowledge of these individual student's views could have forewarned me, and may thus have helped. Two, it struck me at the time that the differential concern shown for 'animals' as a topic, *versus* 'environment' as a topic indicated a kind of irrationality - animals are part of the environment after all, and one of the major foci of concern for environmental activists. So what was going on was a kind of irrationality, and told me more about the emotional resonances of the issues than anything else. But again these were emotional responses that, it seemed to me, hampered learning.

Secondly, this was a surprise because by this point of the course, I thought I had the students well 'on my side' - i.e., in a cooperative relationship rather than an antagonistic one. I was also taken off guard because I had never been made to feel in the position of an environmental detractor - which is what it felt like as the whole thing had become so oppositional. I felt like an embattled spokesperson for a mining company. I reacted with a certain amount of personal indignation - what, me! I, someone who lives in Canberra *without a car*, who spends a small fortune on organic vegetables and a large fortune on organic paint, who as a small child used to beg my parents to start a compost heap! What this indicates to me now is how much such issues about the self - basically self-defensiveness - can get in the way of trying to see through a solution to the problem of communicating effectively with the students. Frustration at apparently being seen in a way I found offensive was certainly one thing which distracted from time and energy I could have spent attending to why this group of students was reacting so.

The way that the ethics of attention leads one to look at the state of mind of the one who is attending, and how this can interfere with what is seen, alerts us to the significance of examining such issues. Simone Weil in particular talks of this as an abnegation of self, as if to see the other, one has to make one's own self disappear as it were and make the *entirety* of one's world and one's focus that other person (Weil 1951). Weil herself had an especially austere outlook on life, and one may take her point that certain things about the self - such as pride, for instance, as in my case! - can blur one's attention, whilst querying the more extreme claim about self-abnegation. Not only does this seem unnecessary in many cases, but applied in the educational context it perhaps overlooks the way that satisfying and fruitful interaction with one's students can lead to a sense of self-fulfilment.

One thing that makes this issue of the role of the self within teaching, and one reason why I consider Simone Weil's call for self-abnegation to an extent misplaced, is that one of the things that one is giving one's students in teaching is a part of one's individuality. One's experience, views, enthusiasm, and so on, can enhance the transmission of ideas, and are part of what makes being taught by a human being different from, and often more rewarding than, reading from a book or off an Internet screen.

Interesting practical questions are raised by the issue of the role of the self. What sorts of things about the self do we have to look out for as possibly interfering with our attention to others? If we need to stand back from our selves to any degree, how much do we have to do so, and IF some kind of self-abnegation is an ideal, how close to such an ideal are we professionally bound to strive to get? How much of a burden on the self (or otherwise) might this be? And under what conditions can we best avoid personal issues interfering with the quality of our work with students?

Personal experience suggests to me some answers to the last question, and they are answers that again point to the importance of individual work with students or at least, very small group teaching. The 'worst case scenario' would be something like having to lecture a very large group of students, most or all of whom I did not know, and many of whom had little interest in the course but had to do it anyway. Add to this factors such as: not actually tutoring any of the students in the lecture course so having no kind of personal relationships with any of them; being on a fixed term contract or having some powerful person sitting at the back assessing my work; having students sitting in the lecture ostentatiously reading newspapers, talking and so on; having a few 'bright sparks' in the front row questioning everything I said, correcting my spelling, telling me that they were experienced in this area and actually I didn't know what I was talking about, etc; having a general feeling that my authority was in question because I was by far the youngest lecturer in the department, the only female in a male dominated subject, the only temporary lecturer, the only part-timer; knowing that my authority was a bit dubious because pressures on teaching meant being forced to teach a subject outside of my real area of expertise. All of these have happened to me (luckily not all at once!). There is of course the obvious factor of sheer numbers of students potentially needing one's attention. But apart from this, dominating factors which can cause problems are those of authority and control, when one's self image is most on the line. These issues can surface in individual work and in small group work, but are at their zenith when the teacher is also having to be 'in charge' of a whole group. I do not mean to say that wherever they surface, they are unmanageable; but that they may be in general, a rival to proper attention, and that there is a point at which they can reach the level of overload.

This point can be reinforced by consideration of Weil's claims about the place of equality in dealing with others. She talked about the need for equality in relationships as a prerequisite to attention and compassion: 'The supernatural virtue of justice consists of behaving exactly as though there were equality when one is the stronger in an unequal relationship.' (Weil, 1952: 86) (Note that for Weil justice and compassion must always go hand in hand.) Again although one may not go along with her in an absolute sense, there is something to be considered here in contrasting a one-to-one context, where a meeting can be more personal and more one between equals, with a large group context where issues of power and control are more dominant. It may not also be entirely clear what Weil means by 'equality' in such a context. In my experience there can be a difficult balancing act here since there may be a need to retain *some* authority in relation to the subject matter, whilst not coming across as the last word on topic X, and 'who are *you*, lowly worm student?' But again, my experience strongly suggests to me that this all depends on particulars. With some students, it can be necessary to assert one's power to a greater extent than with others in order to get them to listen and respond appropriately.

I also have a strong hunch that another important factor is the general context of community, or lack of such, within which one is teaching. This can also be seen as a matter of trust. I would not have felt so threatened had the environmental ethics students known me as a person even slightly; maybe too they would not have been so ready to portray me as a villain (or maybe they would have been even more ready to do so!). The theme of trust is discussed at length by Annette Baier (1994) who argues for its importance in our understanding of the moral life and also that what is needed is more accurately 'appropriate trust'. The judgement that the trust is appropriate will require keen attention to the individual(s) concerned. There needs to be trust on both sides that one is seen at least reasonably accurately; trust that assessment is done fairly; trust that ideas are engaged with honestly; trust that one is in an atmosphere within which one dares think, dares put self on line; and so on. It will be useful to ask, within the context of higher education, what conditions will help to foster such appropriate trust.

One factor which enters into the nature of these relationships and is linked with both trust and attention is that of assessment of student's work. Concern about assessment, which may reach the level of fear in many instances, can affect this relationship and in my opinion, can mean that the student is discouraged again from opening up or from taking risks. (We can think of this too in terms of attention: the student can attend to the question: how do I improve my work? rather than attending to the question: how do I get a high mark? or, how do I please this marker?) I have often felt this to be a real down side of continuous assessment, and it is one of the great advantages of working in a context such as study skills where there is no question of assessment or of even conferring with a student's assessors. I feel also that from the perspective of the teacher, not having to think in terms of 'how do I assess this person?' can free one up to pay a purer attention to those aspects of an individual student and of their work that need it.

Indeed I consider there is a compounding effect in operation here. The more competitive universities and employment markets become, the less time there is to see students as individuals, the greater the importance of grades to a student's sense of self. Hence, the need to make some space within the system to see students as individuals becomes all the greater.

All of what I have been saying about attention to individual students can also be seen as applicable to attending to particular pieces of work. It is often extremely helpful to see work as the product of a particular individual, not just as a piece with no discernible author. It can help in an understanding of why certain omissions were made, certain errors repeated, certain misunderstandings occurred. In practice, the kind of close attention to both students and their work that is possible in the study skills centre where I work is thus immensely valuable. What's crucial here is that the work is individual, allows time for personal attention, there is no involvement with assessment nor do the advisers have any axes to grind over content, and the work is confidential thus helping to foster conditions of trust. This contrasts with work I have done marking essays in a university department, where usually because of time pressures the only written work seen was work being marked and where, because the marking was for assessment purposes, it was done anonymously to protect fairness. But this is only a certain type of fairness; it may be fairness in terms of assessment but not necessarily fairness in terms of teaching.

The more I reflect on all this the more convinced I become that teaching must at least on some occasions involve teaching specific individuals seen as individuals. This may occur in a one-to-one context, or of course it may not, if due attention is not given to the individual and his or her work. It may also occur within small group teaching, provided that enough space is given to allow this and provided that the right conditions of trust and attention are operating. And although of

course, large group teaching is often necessary and efficient, unless some space is provided within the institution for students to be seen as individuals, opportunities for quality teaching will be lost. Above all we must resist the situation where people end up as 'student units'. Many people are beginning to realise the folly of factory farming. We must likewise realise the folly of factory education.

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TOWARDS A MORE EFFICIENT APPROACH TO INDIVIDUAL APPOINTMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The challenge of meeting specific needs of students within a context of large student numbers and relatively few study advisers is one that staff in our profession face constantly. The limited availability of individual appointments with study advisers at the Magill campus of the University of South Australia during Semester 1 1996, was a cause for disappointment to students who had to wait for weeks in some instances, and a source of pressure for reception staff and study advisers who knew the anxieties the students were experiencing. Hence this attempt to improve study adviser access by developing a plan of action with a shorter turn-around time for students seeking individual appointments. We are trialling a new system of initial brief appointments, where the issues students are seeking assistance with are identified and the most appropriate ways of addressing these issues are explored. This system was developed in conjunction with a series of generic and integrated course-based workshops such as essay writing, referencing, oral presentations and report writing. A long-term program of English language classes has also been established, as well as designated 'drop-in' times for students whose first language is other than English who might have specific questions that can be dealt with immediately. The overall objective of such an approach is to channel students towards enrolment in workshops or programs if their needs can be met via these; to identify those students whose concerns are so individual that one-to-one sessions are the most practical source of help; or to offer a combination of strategies should that seem the most beneficial approach. Evaluation of the system will take place at mid-semester break. This paper will report on this approach to individual appointments, why and how it was implemented and suggest recommendations for future approaches.

Historical background

Universities were once considered to be havens for the intellectually elite. Up until the middle of this century, the Newman notion of a university prevailed where knowledge was explored in gentlemanly leisure 'as an end which may reasonably be pursued for its own sake' (Newman, 1960/1853: 170). This model has undergone a radical transformation in the western world during the latter half of this century. Even as long as twenty-five years ago it was estimated that the number of college graduates in the USA would increase some 500% - 600% from the 1940's to the 1980's, while the labour force would increase by a mere 80% in that time (Folger, Astin & Bayer, 1970). The reality has indeed followed this trend there and in Australia also, where at the University of South Australia for example, the student population has become a very diverse one with less than half of the first admissions for 1995 being school leavers (University of South Australia Statistics, 1995).

Some vestiges of the old ways, however, still remain. One manifestation of this is the lingering belief that the rightful elite will inevitably flourish, and any who do not are somehow unworthy and unwelcome. This is typically expressed in such terms as 'if they can't cope then they shouldn't be here'; the idea that the university 'has to maintain certain standards' and that anyone who can't meet those standards deserves to fail.

Over time there has been some tempering of this attitude (and the reasons for this might be interesting to pursue, although we won't do it here). One concession that came to be made was that if the deficient students could somehow be 'fixed up' then they may, perhaps grudgingly, be accepted by academia. Counselling services were introduced into universities to transform the aberrant individuals and have them fit the university culture. By the early 1970's manuals were being written to describe and inform counselling processes within the specialised field of tertiary education (see for example, Newsome, Thorne & Wyld, 1973). The model adopted was the traditional counselling one of individual appointments, the purpose of these being to bring about change in the individual so they would fit with their relatively unchanging environment.

The provision of language and learning support in universities emerged from this counselling model. It became evident that student deficits were not only personal and social but were academic as well and counsellors, being in the job of fixing deficits, took on the responsibility of meeting students' language and learning needs as well as their personal ones. In 1985 Quintrell undertook a study of language and learning support in Australian universities. Of the nineteen universities he surveyed, thirteen of them provided this support within counselling centres.

There has, however, been a drift away from the counselling model of learning support towards one that has more of a focus on negotiating the demands of academia in relation to the increasingly diverse characteristics of the (perhaps not deficient) students. Provision of this support has taken on more of an educational flavour, is now largely carried out by staff with other than counselling backgrounds and is informed by mainstream theories of teaching and learning. A study of Victorian universities undertaken in 1995 (McLean & Surtie) indicated that 46% of the learning support units in those universities were located within academic faculties, with 39% attached to student services (expanded from and providing a greater range of services than the original counselling centres).

The situation is evolving but still somewhat uncertain. The continuing, and as yet unresolved, development of a model for provision of learning support has been influenced by at least two factors. One is the history of our work practice with its genesis in counselling. Another is the fact that learning support is currently being provided by staff with academic status in universities but without a strong academic tradition. Becher (1989) describes academia in anthropological terms as cultures made up of academic tribes each inhabiting their own territory. Learning support academics fit somewhat uneasily into this framework. Our tribe is not easily defined nor generally well known. We ourselves, it seems, do not have common agreement as to the characteristics of the tribe we are part of: who we are, what we do and how we do it (Webb & Bonanno, 1994; Spiller, 1994). Nor is our territory at all well established. Some of us occupy a small space on the outer edge of academia while others are claiming territory that is more central.

Within this milieu we face the practicalities of how best to do whatever it is we are seeking to do. At the University of South Australia our evolution has been from an initial strong emphasis on one to one provision in the counselling mode towards group based work integrated wherever possible into mainstream courses. As academics seeking to establish and define our territory we find our roles becoming increasingly diverse and complex. We are expected to work in new and unfamiliar ways: to articulate our theoretical and philosophical base, to carry out research, to respond and contribute to policy documents, to develop a range of teaching and learning resources in a variety of modes, to be active within our professional associations engaging in learned discourse. And so on. However there is also an expectation that the old ways will continue. There is too a corresponding commitment on our part to maintain some level of one to one support and an ongoing demand from students for this kind of service. The dilemma for us is how to fit it all in and one of the dilemmas for students is how to get to see us when we have so little time and so few appointments available.

Student learning support at the University of South Australia

Study advisers constitute the Student Learning Support (SLS) section of the Flexible Learning Centre (FLC) in the University of South Australia. They are located in Student Support Centres on all campuses, working with students and staff to provide a positive student-centred teaching/learning environment and to promote students' independence as effective lifelong learners in accordance with the FLC's strategic plan. (Flexible Learning Centre Plan, 1996)

With a student population of some 24,000, both on and off campus, and ranging from undergraduate diploma enrolment to PhD level, the need for study advisers to work as efficiently and effectively as possible is obvious. Despite the move away from working with students individually to integration in courses and collaboration with faculty staff in courses and subjects, we recognise that students still sometimes require one to one support. The study advisers at the University of South Australia have developed guidelines for this kind of support in our *Code of Good Practice* (Study Adviser Code of Good Practice, 1995). We are, however, attempting to refine the system of individual appointments to a point where it is manageable and where it is reserved for concerns which are so particular that this mode of delivery is the only sensible avenue for providing support.

The Magill campus is 'home-base' for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, providing courses such as Social Work, Social Science, Communication and Information Studies, Journalism; the Faculty of Education also has a significant presence, particularly in the areas of Early Childhood Education (the De Lissa Institute) and Primary/ Junior Primary Education. Much of the coursework in these faculties is heavily language-based, where it is crucial that students have an understanding of conventions of essays, reports, literature reviews etc from an early stage.

In semester 1, 1996, as in previous years, we found that demand for one to one support far outstripped time allocated for that activity, resulting in dissatisfaction for staff and students alike. The study advisers at Magill were finding that:

- the waiting time for individual appointments was unacceptably long and didn't meet the time frame for assignment deadlines
- students were failing to keep appointments, possibly either by forgetting an appointment made weeks earlier, or because the issue of concern was no longer immediate (or both)
- students were unaware of workshops which may have been useful, in spite of attempts to advertise these as widely as possible
- study advisers were repeating work with different students in the individual appointments that could have been dealt with effectively in groups.

Implementing an initial appointment system

At the end of Semester 1, 1996, as part of our regular review and evaluation, the Magill study advisers decided to break from previous practice and introduce an initial appointment system which would be trialled during the first term of semester 2 and evaluated during the mid-semester break. The initial appointment system applied to all students who wished to access our service by this means, regardless of whether they were making their first appointment, or had accessed SLS via any other means previously.

Features of this new system include:

- the provision of 4x10 minute initial appointments within a one-hour slot each day
- the appointment being either face to face or by telephone
- explanation to the student, both verbally at the time of making the appointment and in print on the appointment card (see Appendix A)
- provision of workshop/programs to which the students can be directed should that be the appropriate source of support
- availability of print and other resources for students to access
- access to subsequent long appointments.

One of the aims of the system was for students to gain access to a study adviser within 48 hours of approaching the Student Support Centre. The allocation of 20 such slots per week has been sufficient so far but we are aware that at times of higher demand, the number of initial appointment slots may need to be increased. Implementation of this system has required explanation to, and endorsement of the system by, our faculty colleagues. It has also required 'staff development' for our administrative officers, and extensive planning and publicity of workshops programs. The system only works if alternatives such as workshops and print resources are available; otherwise for almost every initial appointment there would need to be at least one long appointment, and no advantage would be gained. With this system longer individual appointments are reserved for occasions/students for whom other avenues of support are inappropriate. The flexibility that the system provides has been demonstrated since the initial trial and evaluation period. Now when

issues arise within a particular course or subject, identification of the students affected is swift and programs/workshops to address the issues can be set up.

Evaluation

The trial period for the initial appointment system began at the beginning of Semester 2, 1996. Fifty-four students had initial appointments with study advisers during this time. All of these students were sent a letter and an evaluation sheet (see Appendices B & C). Twenty-four responses were received (42%) and the results are summarised below and discussed.

Length of Waiting Time for an Initial Appointment

As shown in Table 1, the majority of students were able to make an appointment within one week of contacting the Student Support Centre and many students were able to see a study adviser within one to three days.

Table 1: Length of Waiting Time for an Initial Appointment

Length of Waiting Time for an Initial Appointment	Percentage of Students (n=24)
1-3 days	42
1 week	31
2 weeks	27

Even though it was anticipated that the majority of students would be able to make an appointment within one week of contacting our services and preferably within 48 hours, some students still had to wait for up to two weeks. However 87% said that the period of time they had to wait was acceptable.

Rating of New System

Ninety-two percent of the respondents said that the ten minutes allocated to the initial appointment was sufficient for them to make their needs known. Students were asked to rate this new system using a scale of 1-5: 1 = unsatisfactory, 5 = very satisfactory. The system was given a rating of 5 by 46% of students and 38% gave it a rating of 4. The majority of students who responded were satisfied with the system.

Students were asked whether they had any study needs which were not being met by the present system. The respondents seemed to have interpreted this question as referring to learning support generally rather than to the initial appointment system. Eighteen students said no and one said they didn't know if they had any unmet needs. Two students requested proof reading and one student time management (time management workshops have been offered throughout the year). Another student commented on the need of closer understanding between study adviser and faculty staff.

In the responses from the 'other comments' section most students commented about appreciating the help and that the intervention improved results (9 students). Comments were made from 3 students about the university needing to continue to support students through our services and that this should be kept in mind when considering funding cuts.

Further Support

All of the students who responded to the evaluation said that the initial appointment was a satisfactory introduction to further support. Students were asked to indicate what kind of further support they accessed and their responses are shown

in Table 2. It is important to note that some students had accessed more than one kind of support. The most common mode of support accessed was a longer appointment; however, if this system had not been in place we would have needed to allocate 54 hours for those students who accessed the initial appointment system.

Table 2: Further Support Accessed after Initial Appointment

Support	Student responses (n=24)
A longer appointment	15
Workshop	7
Other resources	4
Referral to another person(s)/services	5
None : Nothing further needed	2
Nothing suitable available	0

This new system has been well supported by the administrative officer with whom the students make their first point of contact either by telephone or in person. She has recommended that it be adopted by all campuses and by all the services (counselling, careers, international students) within the Student Support Centres at the University of South Australia. In comparison to Semester 1, this semester she has been able to meet students' requests more effectively and the responsibility of referring students to other modes of support is now being taken by study advisers.

As study advisers we have been satisfied with this system and it has certainly improved our practice of working with students compared to Semester 1. We feel we have more control over individual appointments and are able to make appropriate decisions about how the students' needs can best be addressed and provide them with effective support. It also has enabled us to work more efficiently and effectively. We are able to organise small group sessions and/or plan for longer individual appointments by contacting lecturers and/or consulting course materials.

Different times of the year result in different demands being placed on the need for individual appointments and this should be taken into consideration when implementing and using the system. For example at the end of the teaching period of the semester when there are not any workshops scheduled only individual appointments are needed. However, at the beginning of an academic year when there is a high level of student demand, more initial appointments may need to be scheduled and supported by a comprehensive program of in-course and generic workshops and print resources.

This system was trialled at a campus which offers studies in humanities, social sciences and education. Most students are studying full time with typically 10-12 contact hours per week. Adaptations may need to be made at campuses/universities where the student profiles are different and contact hours vary. For example where there are a large number of part-time students who have full time employment, flexible times may need to be offered and/or initial appointments conducted by telephone.

The responses from the students surveyed and the general response from all students who accessed this service, have indicated that the new system of initial appointments has been successful and the system will continue at this campus and be adopted university wide by the other five campuses at the University of South Australia.

Given the historical development of learning support from its counselling origins and the culture of the institutions in which we work, it is likely that individual appointments will continue to be a significant part of study advisers' work profile. However with our need to define our territory as academics and the economic climate in which we are living, it is important for us to find more efficient, yet still effective, ways of providing that support and of channelling students in other directions where appropriate. The system of brief initial appointments trialled by study advisers at Magill campus represents one attempt to achieve this.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Student Support Centre - Magill

**Initial Appointment with a
Study Adviser**

You have made an appointment for an initial
ten minute discussion

with _____

on _____

at _____

During this time you will have the opportunity
to discuss the issue that concerns you.
Together we will work out the most
appropriate course of action to meet your
needs. This might include: attending a
workshop, working as a small group on a
common issue, using resource material, or
making a longer individual appointment.

If you are unable to keep this appointment,
please contact Mary on 302 4423.

Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Flexible Learning Centre
Magill

St Bernards Road
Magill S.A. 5072
Ph. 8302 4423
Fax 8302 4390

30 September 1996

Dear Student,

As you are aware the Study Advisers in the Student Support Centre at Magill have been trialling a new system of brief initial appointments since the beginning of Semester 2. This aimed to overcome the difficulty and frustration that students experienced by having to wait a long time to get an individual appointment and of not being aware of workshops and other resources.

We are in the process of evaluating this system and we would like to know what you think of it. Would you spend a few minutes filling in the attached questionnaire and return it in the reply paid envelope which has also been provided.

We would appreciate you returning it by Friday 11 October 1996.

Thankyou for your cooperation

Margaret Hicks
Helene Bourne
Kerry O'Regan

Appendix C

INITIAL APPOINTMENT WITH STUDY ADVISER - EVALUATION

1. How long did you have to wait for an initial appointment? _____

2. Was this soon enough? YES/NO

3. Did the initial appointment give you sufficient opportunity to make your needs known?
YES/NO

4. Was the initial appointment a satisfactory introduction to further support?
YES/NO

5. What kind of further support did you access? (please tick where applicable)
 - A longer appointment
 - Workshop
 - Other resources
 - Referral to another person(s)/services
 - None - please specify below:
 - Nothing further needed
 - Nothing suitable available

6. Overall how would you rate this new system of brief initial appointments?
(please circle the appropriate number)

Very Satisfactory					Unsatisfactory
5	4	3	2	1	

7. Do you have any study needs which are not being met by the present system?

8. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

**FROM READING TO WRITING:
A WORKSHOP ON THE STAGES OF NOTE-MAKING**

Beth Brough
Language and Academic Skills
Faculty of Social Sciences
La Trobe University

ABSTRACT

For many students who seek the assistance of Language and Academic Skills advisers, the problem of obtaining information and ideas from texts is renewed with each assignment. Often these students are simply overcome by detail and cannot see the 'bones' of the matter. This workshop will demonstrate the stages of skim reading, interpretation, analysis and note augmentation and how they come to be resolved in paragraph writing. This 'staged' method of reading and writing builds on known note-making methods. It lends itself to computer use. The inclusion of personal observations and ideas before final summarization prevents unintentional plagiarisation. The method also enables students to take responsibility for their learning and adjust to the rigours of academic writing. This way of approaching text and writing has proved to be a most successful skill for those students who have had individual instruction. The method lends itself readily to classroom teaching as there is nothing private about such a strategy - a consistent 'first approach' to text, once practised, builds confidence. The improvement in the writing of students who have mastered the method is witness to how this approach to note-making can generate ideas and understanding that link academic reading and writing.

Making notes is a craft. It is a worthwhile craft which is a task of 'today'. It is very much an immediate task for it links the past with the future - yesterday with tomorrow. It is a transition task of great importance.

The use of the metaphor - yesterday, today and tomorrow - places the activity in time and helps to lift the process from a 'mere' study skill. This elevation helps the individual appreciate the value of the craft. Note-making gives meaning to the material being reviewed. Most students require meaningful purpose in their study; they require 'real' work; they wish to learn; they wish to comprehend what is presented to them in lectures, tutorial and texts. Many are not satisfied until they sense they are participating in 'deep' learning.

Working in the privacy of one-to-one teaching has shown me the power of this drive for meaning. It is when this is addressed that the prose improves. This improvement is not discipline specific; it is general. It is when this drive to know-what-you-know is satisfied that some of the underlying reasons for plagiarisation, intentional or accidental, are also addressed. Some students are merely lazy and plagiarise because they 'can't be bothered'. Others say: "But he (or she) expressed it so much better than I ever could" or, "I could not find words that were better than those!" The same notion is heard again and again. The very words that should release meaning have overwhelmed the student.

It is with this in mind that I have sought to develop two functions in note-making. The student needs to have a systematic approach to the selection of the 'best' material. Once the material is chosen, the student needs a mode of operation that will provide a systematic movement from the phraseology of the text to a re-iteration of those ideas in his or her own words. Once the mode is a combination of the student's language and the forms and conventions of academic writing, the outcome may well be a worthwhile 'product'.

The first step is to work with any compulsory text. This may not be the 'best' text for this particular student, but the compulsory text will set the parameters of thinking. If the set text is in a mode of writing that the student finds particularly difficult to comprehend, then further 'easier' texts can be sought. Let us be quite clear about 'easier'. Here I refer to the mode of writing. If the student relates more readily to round-about explanations of concepts which engage in constant metaphors, some of which help the student connect the images with prior knowledge and thus feel confident about exploring new areas of knowledge, then it is just such a text that should become the reading priority. If, on the other hand, the student requires a text which uses headings and numbered points, then such a text on the subject should

be located. The information, once mobilised, can then serve as a firm base-knowledge from which to approach the compulsory text. The student can be guided to find the appropriate text which he or she can cope with immediately, with the level of skill he or she has now. It is a case of 'know thyself', and learn to recognise a text. This manner of systematised skim reading helps to develop these awarenesses.

Compulsory reading, suggested additional reading - all these demands and requirements that the student should locate and choose - can often confuse the student. If the student concentrates on 'getting the gist' of one book, then it will be easier to discover whether the subsequent books concur, differ or contradict. 'One thing at a time' is a precept which is so hard to believe and requires discipline to carry out. But a staged approach to text analysis works and synthesis is made easier. With only one major book under review at one time, the sense of being overwhelmed by material is at least contained, if not totally averted.

The further refinement of focus concentrates on one chapter. Notes from this chapter are based on a very old mode of learning - transcription. With the advent of mass photocopying and the practice of high-lighting, the value of transcription has been forgotten. Transcription lends itself very well to the computer. The computer is the ideal instrument for insertions if and when more detail is required. In the meantime, transcription of the introductory paragraph, or paragraphs, the first line only of subsequent paragraphs, followed by the text of the concluding paragraph, provides the basis for an excellent summary.

The transcriber 'learns' at a number of levels. Patterns emerge in the language - first sentences often allude to information in the previous paragraph as well as introducing a new idea. The 'gap' in information leads to curiosity about the previous exposition and the student has a reason to go back and read the passage again. Indeed, once the student becomes practised in the method, he or she tends to 'back track' during transcription and locate the fine detail in a passage of particular interest. It is important to note, therefore, that transcription is not as passive as it may appear at first glance. At the simplest level, the student has used a semi-automatic process to provide a summary. But even at this seemingly banal level, ideas are remembered. The information and reference material are available to be studied more fully at a later date. Alternatively, the student can be 'grabbed' by the content immediately and, fired by curiosity, go on to investigate the detail at once.

The quiet and controlled repetitive nature of the task itself lowers the student's anxiety. Once anxiety is lowered, the openness to new ideas is increased. Not only do patterns of syntax reveal themselves but often the nuances of language engage the student's imagination. This awareness of the language often starts to show itself in the student's writing and, as this is one of the aims of academic writing assistance, we should be most gratified that the powerful patterns of the language can be so painlessly 'picked up'.

Transcribing in the manner stated allows the content of the chapter to be revealed slowly and without the possibility of 'drowning' in information. It becomes obvious when the first sentence of the paragraph is not the key idea. It is my experience that students who have practised this method, rather than being exasperated or frustrated by the seeming lack of cohesion, become researchers and find the missing links.

If the actual physical setting out of this form of note-taking is in columns, then additions are readily made. The student can add comments in one column and, when additional texts have been read, can also cross reference easily. If the student actually writes a paragraph about the content of the section and continues to 'come and go' between the text and the notes, then the passage has been synthesised into excellent base knowledge of the topic. This, I have found becomes a bulwark against deliberate and unintentional plagiarism.

Many texts do engage the reader. From texts which are engaging, the student will learn much particularly by being methodical. This is even more important when the student is confused or uninterested. Trusted techniques need to be in place to serve the student. Commitment to practise until a method becomes second nature is important, for when we are under stress of either quantity or time, we revert to old and learned study modes. The method which is 'practised in' needs to be effective.

No method will suit the needs of all students. However, practitioners need to guide students who are floundering by presenting a model. This can, and will, undergo modification as the student gains confidence and competence.

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THE POWER OF ONE (TO ONE)

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Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE

ABSTRACT

This paper is based on my work with mature age students at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE over the last six years. It takes a qualitative approach having a heavy reliance on comments made by the students themselves. I feel this approach is particularly effective as all too often we take too many of the strategies which we use in our one to one sessions for granted. By taking close note of their comments, I feel we receive an insight into "what we learn from teaching one to one which informs our work with larger groups". We also often underestimate the powerful impact that working in a one to one situation has, particularly on the mature age student. Such an approach has also created a greater awareness of the difference in the learning undertaken in a one to one situation compared to that of a larger group. The final result of this is a realisation that the learning process undertaken in the one to one situation cannot be duplicated when learning in a larger group. In the TAFE context, "larger groups" include mainstream classes of at least twenty and more recently "lectures" of around fifty)

This is a result of both the nature of the interaction per se and educational policies and practices which seem to be restricting the time available to teachers of larger groups to interact more personally with each student. So, in fact, what we see is a need for the two systems (i.e. the one-to-one and the larger group) to co-exist rather than believing that the strategies we use in our one to one sessions can be superimposed on the work we (or others) do with larger groups or even that these strategies can "inform our work with larger groups." I also feel that as we are often asked to use our specific skills and experience to "inform" or in-service other teachers within our institutions, we must exercise some caution, as once again, we need to realise that what we can achieve one to one can be quite difficult, if not impossible, in other settings.

For the mature age student, returning to an educational environment is a frightening experience. The greater the length away from educational settings, the greater seems to be the level of anxiety. Not only do they fear a repetition of past failures, but they are extremely unsure of what is expected of them. One of the reasons for this is that the mature age students who come to post secondary education come with a traditional view of their "teachers" and have not had the time to be acculturated through VCE and other systems to see the "teacher" as a "facilitator" or yet "another resource". As a result, they place great reliance on teachers and often expect teachers to direct them, spend lengthy periods of time discussing work issues with them etc. and often it is the fact that such expectations are not always met which intensifies the anxiety. Unfortunately though, as our taped interviews showed, teachers expected students to have such skills and spent little or no time developing them. Such students are at a great disadvantage. Often it is only through the individual study skills session, or the workshops developed by our service that such a situation can be improved. Services like ours provide such students with the person centred approach needed. We are able to spend the time to discuss many issues with them and because we focus only on their work, we are able to make assessments about where problems lie. Such time and ability to focus are not available to the teacher in "larger groups".

- In many situations today, the classroom may be a place where the opportunity for dialogue is seen as a luxury. Self-paced learning, flexible delivery, timetabling of lessons which are two to three hours in length, module completion rates and the newer challenges resulting from a deregulation of the vocational educational training sector are denying students the personal contact inherent within the one to one sessions. Teachers are also denied the time to indulge in the person centred techniques which the Study Assistance teacher employs.

Oddly enough this seems to have occurred at a time when our "clients", and especially our older ones, are identifying the need for more traditional or person centred teaching practices. A recent discussion paper (Developing a Client Focused Service/ OTFE/ Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE 1996) using focus groups to evaluate the services provided by the Institute, found that the "clients" discourse showed them focusing more on the affective domain of teaching. Language was filled with terms like "respect", "mutual respect", "interpersonal communication", "understanding". This has been reinforced by the video and taped interviews where we discussed the differences between learning in a "one to one" situation compared to "larger groups" with the students themselves. It was further re-enforced by talking to students who had chosen to access concurrent study support in a one to one situation They listed the following as aspects of our teaching which they valued:

- the ability to motivate and keep motivating
- the ability to discuss our learning problems at length
- the ability to make us feel relaxed about learning
- the ability to treat us like equals
- the respect shown towards us
- going one step further than you have to (1996)

A Return To Study course (1996) which is run at the institute re-iterated all of the above with the inclusion that they saw the role of teachers to be one of "nurturing" and "inspiration.". One student made the interesting comment that we were "real craftsmen" which begged the question of what they meant by "teacher". It was odd that very few if any of all those spoken to actually mentioned passing per se. All of the comments listed above, forced me to see the idealistic and reverent attitude that many older students still had towards "teachers" per se. The implication was that they expected "teachers" to be more than imparters of knowledge and facts. They seemed to mean teaching in what I saw as the more traditional sense of the word. The Socratic form where vigorous dialogue provided the basis of education and (at the risk of my sounding like a petrified hippie) where teachers were seen as mentors not "facilitators".

What I continued to learn from my one to one sessions was that in the present environment students and teachers are both under pressure from changes which are occurring within the system. Much has been written about this over the past twelve months. Hewett (1996:28) Anderson (1996:34) Peoples (1996:28) and Sutherland (1996) all give thorough outlines of such changes. The Office of Training and Further Education has acknowledged the impact of such changes by funding research into client focussed servicing and stating that:

- Many (teachers) have worked in what was formally the TAFE system and find the change to working in a deregulated Vocational Education and Training system a difficult transition. Long held traditional educational values have had to be reconciled with new commercial values. From an organisational perspective, old ways of thinking and doing now clash with new ways. Teachers have had to re-conceptualise their pedagogy, undertake new forms of teacher work and develop new relationships with students as clients.(Developing a Client Focused Service /Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE 1996)

So, as teachers, we now see success is measured in terms of "module completion rates". We no longer have "students" we have "clients" and "quality assurance" is the ideal for which we must all strive as we grapple with more and more financial constraints. But the problem is more than this..The problem is much greater than financial, it is philosophical and it goes right "to the heart" of education per se. It is true that those of us who have never had to function in such a "competitive" environment are finding it difficult to "re-conceptualise their pedagogy, undertake new forms of teaching and develop new relationships with students.as clients." There is no doubt that many teachers are now grappling with changes which often attack their very reason for being in this profession.

Whilst teachers like ourselves are also facing similar tensions it seems clear that we are not as hindered by completion rates, larger class sizes etc. and so it is now only through services like ours that students can actually continue to be

provided with a more Socratic, person centred type of education which caters to the emotional level they (especially the mature age) seem to be crying out for. In fact at present it has been stated (Are you being Served? Client Perspectives on student services and amenities in TAFE. Commissioned by the Education and Student Services Standing Committee of the former National TAFE Chief Executive's Committee) that unless we continue to provide high quality and accessible support services and amenities and become more service-orientated and client-responsive, then "TAFE's share of the market for international and domestic students may decline." An essential component of providing such high quality services in the area of concurrent support involves having a clear understanding of the nature of the interaction in this situation. Once the true nature is understood, one can expand, develop and refine.

Kate Chanock's paper, "Counselling and Academic Skills Teaching: What Person Centred Counselling Can Tell Us About Person Centred Skills Teaching" (1995) goes a long way in helping us understand this. In her paper we see how many of the practices used in Rogerian counselling are also used in the one to one study session. The "intellectual companionship", the "atmosphere of safety" and more importantly, "the recognition without rejecting of whatever the client brings in" are all aspects of our one to one sessions which go a long way in explaining the fervour with which many students speak about our service. If we listen to the taped interviews we undertook, we see all of this is firmly supported. However, whilst Ms. Chanock states that she feels the writing tutorial does not "involve the depth of feeling that must be dealt with in a session of therapy." I am not so sure, especially in relation to the mature age students. I would have to argue that in my experience many sessions have come so close that I myself have been astounded by the depth of emotion expressed and felt by such students. (This also seems to indicate just how deep are the levels of despair reached by many of our mature age students.) Unfortunately to employ similar strategies in larger groups can be quite impossible. Many of the students with whom I spoke indicated that when they are in "larger groups" the "safe place" of which Ms Chanock speaks, definitely does not exist. Given the vulnerability that many teachers are now feeling, this becomes easier to understand. Nevertheless for mature age students in particular, the fear they face is quite unique, and "paralysing". So I have no qualms whatsoever about accepting how our one to one sessions are (to use students' terms) a "life saver" for these students. However to expect teachers in larger groups to undertake the same person based strategies as those employed in our one to one study sessions is to fail to realise and understand the nature of the situation in present post secondary education.

To continue to advocate that teachers in larger groups employ such strategies is to add even more pressure and it is very difficult to see how any but the most self sacrificing would have the time to provide the depth of discussion and person centred approach which we are capable of offering. The taping of study sessions showed this quite emphatically.

Targeting one of the students, I witnessed the amount of time needed in merely interpreting a question as being about one hour. This was the length of time this student seemed to need to feel confident about merely understanding what the question was asking so that s/he could go home and complete the work requirement. The constant feedback, clarification, re-statement etc. were all essential if the student was to be able to work out exactly what the question was asking. This did not include follow up sessions where drafts are read, re-read, discussed, modified, polished up etc. To spend such time with every student in "a larger" group would be quite impossible. The realisation of this has meant that I have not only understood the nature of the interaction in a one to one situation per se, but it has also assisted me to realise more about how I need to be interacting with other staff members throughout the institute. I no longer see my role as being one where I need to attempt to sanctimoniously advocate that all teachers employ such person centred education as I no longer see the possibility of superimposing this person centred type of education on larger groups.

My role now is to streamline and strengthen our service so that it becomes a very viable support and alternative mode of learning for the mature age student and as Kate Chanock is stressing, a discipline in itself. As a relatively "new" discipline and given the current educational environment, I also see it as a service where we must incorporate assistance for teachers. The English and Study Skills Advisory Service at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE has spent a great deal of time developing their "identity" per se and from this, assessing what our role in our college should be. We are now seeing ourselves as a very strong person-centred service where both students and staff can come for assistance. We are encouraging the perception of ourselves as an independent entity and not just a "band-aid". We are achieving this by being much more assertive in the way we deliver our service. So we have become more proactive as the following strategies indicate. We have done this by:

- receiving enrolment information about mature aged and ESL students at the beginning of each course and targeting these by sending out letters informing them about our service and inviting them to access it.

- targeting courses with relatively high proportions of mature age students like our Social and Community Studies Departments and organising a number of workshops where we discuss the new educational environment they are entering: the difference between current educational models and traditional ones; the difference between the post-secondary and secondary teacher; academic writing and where to go for help
- offering staff as much information and support as possible. However, the focus is now always on how we may assist them, not on what more they should be doing for the students. Given the constraints under which many teachers now function, we cannot in all honesty go in and preach the need for "more individual attention" for students and expound how well this works. However we can stress how we may be able to "ease" some of the pressure. We attempt to do this by :
 - approaching management and stressing the need for orientation programs where students spend time before a course begins "brushing up on" or developing the skills which will be needed to complete a course. This would typically include understanding the perspective which each discipline takes; understanding issues related to discourse in different disciplines; how to manage time; research skills; critical thinking; and essay and report writing
- getting management to allow students to achieve credit for undertaking such programs
- providing staff with methods by which they can identify students who are in danger
- providing generic and course specific writing guides
- running study groups in courses where there are unusually large numbers of mature aged ESL students

In this way we hope to provide a more realistic outline of what these students can expect in this institution, thus reducing much of the anxiety as well as conveying the message that we are not there to "pick up bits and pieces." We have comprehensive, high quality programs to deliver for both staff and students . We are now assessing "needs" and responding to them within days. Thus we have seen ourselves evolve into a most "productive" service. As such, I think we are beginning to be seen as an important part of the educational process and a very important alternative mode of learning.

By continuing in such a way, I believe that services like ours will no longer be seen as being on the periphery, but they will become essential parts of the educational process for mature aged students. In the competitive educational environment in which we must all now operate, it seems we have found ourselves with services which will be what can give our institutes "the edge" over many other private providers . In fact, we have the answer to good business practise i.e. getting the edge. We have been able to do this because our whole raison d'être has been to meet a plethora of demands and often do so on "on the spot". Whilst we see many groups only now beginning to advocate the importance of becoming more service orientated and client-responsive, this is something which is second nature to us and for which we already have highly developed skills and strategies in place. In contrast to many others in education today, we have a clear sense of ourselves and our roles. Professor Sutherland, Dean of Edinburgh University, spoke of the importance of this identity at the Sir Robert Menzies Oration at Melbourne University (1996). He pointed out that the greatest problem in Universities (and I would add most post secondary educational institutions) today is that "we often seem to dance to tunes wholly composed by others - and as I have suggested these tunes enervate because their very power over us plays not simply on our evident lack of self confidence, but also on our current failure to redefine our identity in a new diverse world of higher education."

It is by maintaining this strong sense of our own identity and strengthening of the "competitive edge" that we will be able to attract not just clients, but also the interest and more importantly, the support of our organisations. In short, there are now many people with a "vested interest" in maintaining and developing services which provide concurrent study support. These include: the teacher who is being assessed according to "module completion rates"; the Heads of Departments, who are aiming to ensure students complete courses; and even management who is so aware of competition for the client! In these times of funding cuts and restructuring , there is no doubt in my mind that we will play a valuable role in assisting clients to succeed. It is in this, that I have found the real power of one (to one) teaching!

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THE USES OF IGNORANCE: REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING GRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Individual consultations with postgraduate students soon reveal that there is a discrepancy between the administrative classification 'student' and the person so classified. Many graduates in Health Sciences enter university with a fully-realised professional identity and a perfectly adequate command of the discourses and genres appropriate to it. Their entry into the university context is accompanied by an awareness of dissonance - of a disjunction between the forms of knowledge, genres and discourses previously accepted from them, and those valued by the members of the academic culture.

This amounts to a disarticulation between their existing professional identity, and a new, temporary, 'student' identity. Yet if they are to develop their identity as writing members of the new culture, it is crucial to maximise the continuity between the new, specialised academic knowledge and discourse, and those they already command. The disarticulation between professional and 'student' identity is much less perceptible in large classes than in one-to-one consultations. A comparison of the two teaching contexts suggests however that in both, an important factor in preventing this disarticulation is the avowed ignorance of the study skills adviser, since this separates the adviser's teaching role from that of assessor.

It is by now accepted that knowledge is socialised and situated, and so is characterised by normative structures (Bazerman, 1991; Miller, 1994). The differences between these structures are frequently presented as oppositions (Francis, 1995; van Manen, 1995): whether between theoretical and practical knowledge (Connolly and Clandinin, 1985), between paradigmatic and narrative knowledge (Bruner, 1985; Olson, 1995) or propositional and non-propositional knowledge (Eraut, 1994). Underlying all of these are two crucial notions: first, that the opposites are usually embodied in individual persons; and secondly, that the structure of knowledge functions as one of the criteria for 'gatekeeping'. That is, the translation of practical professional knowledge into a publicly accessible form requires obedience to institutional rules and conventions of argument, and failure to adhere to them will result in exclusion from the knowledge/discourse community (Knights, 1995; Myerson, 1995).

For students in general then, entering university may be experienced both as a disjunction between identities; as a separation of the knowledge expected of them in their present position (student) from the knowledge that constitutes the person they 'really are' (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Ivanic, 1995). Donaldo Macedo describes this as a

disarticulation between the reductionistic and narrow reading of one's field of specialisation and the reading of the universe in which the specialism is situated.(an) inability to link the reading of the word with the world (1994: xvii).

More importantly for academic advisers, the disjunction often takes the form of a conflict among genres, the genres involved being those valued in different settings (Shryer, 1994) and associated with specific tasks in each (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Trowler, 1996).

Not surprisingly, these issues arise frequently in the literature on continuing professional education, and particularly in association with the use of reflection in teaching. Reflection is where the learners' identities, as persons, are most involved and most exposed in their verbal expression. Nor is it surprising that the disjunction is most often noted in connection with writing, since the written genres are far removed from naturalistic communication (Bakhtin, 1986; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). The written genres required in university study are probably the most distant, since they are used exclusively for the purposes of assessment. The reader's reactions may or may not include a response

to the text *qua* text; but they certainly will include assessment of the extent to which the writer has met the criteria for inclusion in the knowledge/discourse community. In academic writing, the communication of knowledge in a publicly accessible form provokes primarily (perhaps only) a 'gatekeeping' response.

Describing her investigation of writer identity in nine mature students, Roz Ivanic (1995) reports their awareness of a disjunction between their identity outside the university, and another within it, which appeared less real to them. To one, assuming the 'voice' of an academic writer seemed to mean 'playing a game with words' (Ivanic, 1995: 20-21); making the necessary discursual choices in writing meant representing herself as somebody she was not. This has been echoed in the conversation of many of the graduate students I work with, who have entered or returned to university after years of successful practice in their professions. In individual tutorials, they express awareness of a hiatus between the knowledge structures and written genres required and valued in their workplaces (in which they are perfectly competent), and those required and valued in their university studies (with which they are less familiar). More importantly, though, they interpret the gap in terms of a hierarchy, of which the lower levels should be abandoned. My office thus becomes a site where competing professional discourses meet (1).

What is often not obvious to these students is that their workplaces and the university are in fact two areas within a single larger domain: their professions. I have found it useful in these encounters to represent their experience, to myself and to the students, as part of a biographical narrative. When analysed and described in narratological terms, the experience of entering and studying at university appears as a contractual syntagma, moving from initial 'alienation' to ultimate 'reintegration'. The syntagma begins with a disjunctive structure (temporary departure from the profession and arrival at university) and is punctuated by performative structures (assessment tasks, submission of drafts to supervisors, struggles with study management, etc.) Reintegration is attained when the professional resumes practice, as a university graduate (2).

From this perspective, the acquisition of written genres is one of a number of means to an end which lies outside the academic context, and which was to some extent determined before the students entered university. My general task as an academic adviser is therefore to mediate this 'outside' into the 'inside'. My specific task, as a teacher of writing, is to help the learners extend their existing repertoire of written genres, so that they may 'acquire multiple fluencies [which will serve as] a bridge to other kinds of genres and other professional conversations' (Ackerman, 1995: 146).

In actantial terms, this is the instrumental role of 'helper'. Since my role in each student's narrative is generated by that narrative, any attempt to assume a different role would cast me as an 'opponent' (Greimas, 1966). I think the key to fulfilling the role is to dissociate myself, as teacher of these learners' target discourse, from the 'gatekeepers' of their professional discourse community, and maximise the distance between us. The crucial factor is not my understanding of the operation and characteristics of that community's preferred genres, but my ignorance of its knowledge domain, which excludes me from it.

Trowler (1996) identifies four criteria by which 'serious' (propositional) knowledge may be distinguished from 'non-serious' knowledge: social interaction; personal commitment; the development of the mind; and openness and the involvement of the individual's values. In the rest of this paper, I describe how my ignorance of graduate students' professional domains makes it possible for three of these criteria to be met in teaching writing, in one-to-one tutorials and in larger classes.

One-to-one teaching

I have argued elsewhere that the reasons for the success of one-to-one teaching have less to do with the size of the participant group than with the participants' perception of the extent and relative value of each other's expertise. The learning support tutorial is a 'meeting of experts who ... teach each other different things' (Chan, 1995: 136), because each of the participants holds essential specialised knowledge which is unlikely to be known to the other. Graduate students in the health sciences bring to their studies a detailed knowledge of the conditions and protocols of practice in their professions, in particular of the institutional pressures which impinge on that practice. They are confronted daily with concrete problems, which must be solved despite the constraints of budget cuts, time and case load, institutional and professional hierarchies and uncooperative individuals. In consequence, they value the exchange of observations, personal experiences and 'case stories' in conversations with colleagues. This orientation to praxis is accompanied by a distrust of the 'science' and 'theory' presented to them in their courses, which seem to take no account of their real world and, worse, appear to devalue their experiences because these lack generalisability.

In fact, graduate students' expertise overlaps mine more often than the converse. Any assumption that their professional identity should be abandoned 'because they are students now' is thus quickly dispelled by the realisation that their 'helper' is ignorant of the most basic knowledge in their professional domain. The individual tutorial comes to resemble a conversation between two members of different professions, rather than a didactic or therapeutic encounter.

The importance of the learner's personal commitment to their knowledge and their learning becomes obvious when the tutorial context is analysed from a narratological point of view:

Contents	Activity: achieving the learner's objective	Object
Content	Topic: the learner's task for the tutorial	Object
Participants	Learner	Subject, sender receiver
	Adviser	Helper
Relations	Content expert	Subject, sender receiver
	Discourse expert	Helper

adapted from Fairclough (1989:158)

Though the learner's objective and task are usually associated with an assignment from a lecturer, those to be completed in a given tutorial hour are identified and defined by the learner. The tutorial itself is the outcome of an initiative on the learner's part.

Further, the tutorial task cannot be completed without the commitment of the learner to his/her existing knowledge and the open expression of his/her professional values. My ignorance means the learner must contribute actively, because s/he holds domain-specific knowledge essential for that completion. It does not matter whether the knowledge emerges in an appropriately socialised form or not: the essential thing is that it be provided, because my expertise cannot be presumed sufficient to supply information which is not made explicit, nor even to recognise the connection between the information that is provided and the learner's task. Consequently, the learner is positioned as 'teacher', assuming the role of 'giver of information', while I, the 'helper', am positioned as receiver of that information. We exchange roles when the learner needs help with interpreting the assignment task, or clarification of the discourse requirements arising from the university context.

When we work specifically on the written register, the learner's commitment to her/his existing knowledge and values is even more important, because s/he alone is competent to judge the factual accuracy of my discursal contributions. Again, the form of the knowledge underpinning these judgments does not matter: 'officially sanctioned' knowledge and knowledge acquired in day-to-day practice outside the university are equally useful, because the limits of my knowledge exclude me from any possible function as 'gatekeeper'. It is clear to us both, though, that factual accuracy is indispensable for the completion of the learner's task.

Ignorance thus creates a temporary separation between content knowledge and the linguistic form/genre in which it is ultimately to be expressed, by removing the possibility of assessment of the learner. The recognition of parity of expertise, and the exchange of 'gate-keeping' positions between learner and 'helper', require a continuity between the learner's professional identity and knowledge, and her/his newer, temporary identity as a student. Because of my ignorance, the communication in the one-to-one tutorial remains near the naturalistic pole of the genre continuum, so

that the learner's acquisition of the written genre is informed by first communicating his/her existing professional knowledge in a register in which s/he is already competent.

Chanock (1995) has observed the effect on student writers of seeing their texts evolve into academic discourse, in the presence of an adviser positioned as the receiver of information. Gemma Corradi Fiumara likens such interaction to midwifery:

The message from the other will not attain its expressive potential except in the context of a relationship through which the listening interlocutor actually becomes a participant in the nascent thought of the person who is talking. But a listener can only 'enter' in a way which is at once paradoxical and committing: 'by taking leave', by standing aside and making room (1990: 144)

Seen in this light, one-to-one teaching becomes less a matter of introducing one's domain of expertise and guiding the other person through it, than of leaving that domain for the other's territory, and accompanying her/him back into one's own (Chan, 1995). Both participants can see the learner's repertoire of 'fluencies' expand, as the learner makes and comes to own the discourse choices appropriate for the genre. Competence in that genre becomes embodied in a single individual.

Teaching larger groups

In important ways, the situation in graduate writing classes could not be more different. The implications of the change from one-to-one teaching include more than the change in the size of the group, and the move from an office to a classroom or lecture theatre. I am present in graduate classes at the instigation of a lecturer, not the learners, and for the purpose of teaching something specified by the lecturer, not by the learners. This is usually the genre and discourse required for an assignment task devised by the lecturer, and to be assessed by him/her.

Analysed from a narratological point of view, the large-group teaching context appears thus:

Contents	Activity: teaching writing	Object
Content	Topic: genre needed for the assignment task	Object
Participants	Lecturer Learners Adviser	Sender and receiver Subjects Helper
Relations	Content expert (lecturer) Assessor (lecturer) Content experts (learners) Discourse expert (adviser)	Sender Receiver Subjects Helper

adapted from Fairclough (1989: 158)

Such a context clearly favours (if it doesn't actually assume) a disjunction between the learners' permanent professional identity, and their temporary institutional identity as a student. By the fact of teaching at the invitation of a lecturer, I am aligned with the knowledge and discursal values of the learners' new institutional culture, and supposed to address them as clients of that institution, rather than as the professionals they still are. Regardless of the reality of my institutional status, the superiority of my position in the class is *visible*, and the value of my expertise affirmed independently of the learners' recognition of it. It is therefore imperative to ensure that their developing command of particular genres and discourses is informed continuously by their existing knowledge and experience.

While I cannot totally abrogate the 'teacher' position when teaching larger groups, I have found it possible to exploit my ignorance to subvert the institutional alignment imposed by the context. My classes often begin with an exercise which shows that, with regard to the learners' professional domain, I am the least knowledgeable person in the room, and therefore cannot judge the factual accuracy of anything they say about it. It also becomes evident that their best information sources lie in and around themselves - in libraries, of course, but also in their accumulated knowledge and that of their colleagues and classmates. This makes it possible for me to remain simply a 'helper', whose task is to present and explain the appropriate form in which to communicate that knowledge in writing to other scientists, and to warn that in the process they can expect the nature of their knowledge to change.

Undermining the 'teacher' position in this way has had several important consequences. The most obvious are the effects on my teaching. It is quite difficult to design courses, or even lessons for single classes, when I cannot predict the extent to which the expertise of the learners overlaps with my own. I therefore adopt an inquiry-based approach (Feletti, 1993), which makes it possible for needs assessment to be ongoing. This begins with the presentation of a scenario intended to act as the trigger for a learning experience; taking note of the key questions raised by the learners; and working out with them the learning objectives which must be achieved if the task is to be successfully completed. Specific aspects of the target genre (e.g. details of text structure and register) are thus dealt with when the learners call for them and for purposes they specify; that is, when the learners indicate that they *own* their ideas sufficiently to contemplate the form in which they are finally to be communicated.

As in one-to-one teaching, this artificial separation of content and form requires the learners to subject their professional, practical knowledge to reflective thought - the 'personal commitment' noted by Trowler (1996). It also leads me to adopt a discourse type (somewhat) at odds with the setting. My classes usually include at some point a brief monologue, presenting the purposes and characteristics of the genre required; but when time permits, they consist mainly of (spoken) interaction among learners or between learners and lecturer, starting from heuristics made up of questions neither I nor the lecturer can answer. There is therefore genuine dialogue, in which every member of the class is positioned as a receiver of information, with the learners being simultaneously exponents of a domain of their own. Until we begin work on writing, my contributions carry no more weight than those of any other interlocutor, and are punctuated by extended periods of listening. The lecturer and I must both 'stand aside and make room' (Fiunara, 1990: 144); s/he because of the sheer weight of numbers, and I because of my inability to judge anything but the rhetorical appropriateness of the learners' contributions.

The most important consequence of using ignorance to undermine the 'teaching' position has been, however, that the dimension of genre which is 'social action' becomes visible in the classroom. My presence as an ignorant outsider changes the class (including the lecturer) into a microcosm of the professional discourse community, within (and maybe despite) the university setting. The 'outside' and the 'inside' are fused. (This is not simply an artefact of the situational context: in continuing professional education, the same individuals are likely to be found in both.) My ignorance of the professional domain highlights the commonality of lecturer's and learners' experiences and expertise, and the questions shared by the learners, rather than positioning each learner as a 'client' of the institution, and the lecturer as 'gatekeeper'. In the interaction in class, just as in the one-to-one tutorial, practical knowledge from outside the institution is just as valuable as the codified propositional knowledge sanctioned by it; but in class, the first judges of the content and logic in any writer's text, and of their expression, are the professional colleagues of the writer. Communicating knowledge for assessment is temporarily replaced by a more naturalistic communication based on professional knowledge and values.

Conclusion

The emergence of the written (secondary) genres during and after these professional conversations parallels the embodiment of competence observed in the one-to-one tutorial. In both one-to-one teaching and large-group teaching, the presence of an outsider, a 'helper' ignorant of the profession and its knowledge domain, ensures that communication remains a dialogue among equals, so that any disjunction between the learners' temporary identity (student) and their permanent identity (professional) is minimised. Assessment by a 'gatekeeper' is then replaced by evaluation by professional colleagues, making it possible for learners to expand their repertoire of written genres by first exchanging their professional practical knowledge in the genres in which they already competent, and later translating it into the codified forms required by academic written genres.

ENDNOTES

1. All generalisations in this paper about graduate students in the health professions are based on my tutorial notes for the last two years. In that time I have worked with 117 graduates enrolled both in coursework and research degrees. This represents about 550 tutorial hours.
2. The idea that the semantic structure of narrative is homologous to that of the sentence was advanced by the structuralist A.J. Greimas thirty years ago (Greimas, 1966). The narratological terms used here are my translations from his second influential book (Greimas, 1970: 191).

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THE "INTERDISCOURSE" OF ESSAYS: LISTENING ONE-TO-ONE AND TELLING ONE-TO-ONE HUNDRED

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ABSTRACT

I can identify a range of errors in students' writing by reading their work, but I need one-to-one discussions to learn why the writers are doing what they do. The common explanations I am given suggest patterns of "interdiscourse", by analogy with "interlanguage", in writing in the Humanities; and from the understandings of misunderstandings that I gain by teaching one-to-one, I can design classes that resonate with the preconceptions, doubts, and questions that students bring to their writing. This paper will share some of what I have learned from students about problems of introducing, signposting, paragraphing and referencing essays, and show how one of these insights is treated in a lecture format. I argue that one-to-one teaching is needed for its benefit to individual students; as the source of teaching materials and informed, effective advice for teaching larger numbers; and as a basis for communication, and sometimes collaboration, with lecturers in the disciplines.

What I learn

Like many people in academic skills teaching, I teach in a variety of ways, including one-to-one sessions, workshops, lectures, and handouts for students to work with themselves. The traffic among these modes of teaching is complex, as each informs the others and is informed, as well, by reading in the various fields from which academic skills teaching can draw, and by discussions with colleagues in skills teaching and in the disciplines. But in my own practice, there is no question about where I learn the most - and the most important things - about what students need to know. While various classroom programs might tell me *what* problems students have, the one-to-one sessions are of crucial importance in bringing out *what kinds of* problems these are and *why* students are having them.

Just by reading the work of a class, I could discover that essays are often poorly introduced; that points and connections between points are often not made explicit; that paragraphing is often erratic; that sentence boundary errors are common; that referencing is often inadequate; and that students have frequently misunderstood the project intended by the essay topic. I could show them incorrect attempts, and correct models, and they could work at identifying and correcting mistakes, and at imitating the models. For some students, this would be of some use, but for most, it would not offer much they had not heard before. If they heard it before and did not learn it, this was probably because the teaching did not connect with the real reasons they were having the problems. In order to be able to speak to those reasons, we have to get them from the students themselves; and this is what one-to-one teaching does for me. In this paper, I would like to share some of the things I have learned, but also to go further and suggest that there is a common quality in the errors that students produce at this level of writing. They are doing the same wrong things, a lot of the time, for the same right reasons, so that I find it helpful to think of a wide variety of errors, at every level of a text, as something like "interdiscourse", by analogy with the language acquisition concept of "interlanguage": as approximations towards the target of academic discourse, formed by testing hypotheses about that discourse.(1) Let's look at some of the errors, first, which have suggested this idea.

Introductions

I have learned, for example, that essays may be poorly introduced for a variety of good reasons, each of them stemming from a different guess about the purpose of, and thus the audience for, the piece. There is the dramatic introduction modelled on good journalism, which does not address the question or foreshadow the argument. The student has situated the topic in the public arena, rather than in the context of knowledge-making within a discipline, and has imagined his audience as the general reader, whose interest must be captured at the outset. He can usually produce an introduction

with a more academic focus, but he needs some acknowledgement of his good reason for having done it differently, affirmation of his command of a style that would be needed in other circumstances, and some talk about what the assignment was meant to be for.

Then there is the introduction that situates the question at a great distance in time and space. "Since the dawn of history, people have been asking themselves...." This is an understandable response to the very reasonable question at the back of the student's mind -- why am I writing on this, anyway? -- though not usually a very honest one. It opens into a pretty disengaged essay, in which real grappling with the question has been replaced by a purely formal attempt to tell the reader why anybody would think it mattered. I think it is for this reason that some tutors at my university have actually told their students not to write an introduction. They are presumably hoping to be able to start reading at the point where the student gets down to the actual question. Sometimes a tutor will even draw a line through the opening paragraph, and write in the margin, "not needed". But the student's feeling that an essay ought to be situated in some way, and to have some purpose, is quite right and needs to be respected. To negotiate that one, we look at why the question exists, not cosmically, but in the particular subject the student is studying. She still may not be able to embrace the question once she's worked out why it's being asked, but at least she can give it a context that the tutor will appreciate, and narrow the scope of her answer.

Finally, there is the essay that begins without any introduction, because the student knows that the tutor knows what the question is, why it exists, and all the material that is relevant to answering it. This essay refers to writers and events without identifying them, lets the evidence speak for itself, and only coughs up a thesis in the final paragraph. The student has not ignored the needs of his audience, in writing this essay. He has made a very accurate assessment of the real needs of his real audience. Only the tutor is going to read the essay, and the tutor does indeed know what the student assumes she knows. Why then should he waste any words on putting her in the picture? To work on this problem, we need again to acknowledge the student's good reason for doing what he has done; and then we need to look, not at the reality of the tutor-student situation, but at the larger purpose it is supposed to serve: that of turning out somebody who knows how to frame and explain a question, gather relevant information and organise it into a readily comprehensible argument, and point to a demonstrated answer, for the benefit of people who know less about it than he does. The student needs to look beyond his tutor to this future audience to which, unbeknownst to him, his tutor is answering as she reads his work. For this audience, it makes sense to provide an informative introduction, some comment on the significance of the evidence and its relevance to the question, and signposting of moves in the argument.

In all of these cases, I am only able to offer a sensible analysis of the problem, and a persuasive account of what is needed and why, because I have learned from the writers of these essays why they are writing in the way they are. The one-to-one session gives me the time to delve into this, and gives the student the safety to tell me things which are too embarrassing, or too tentative, to bring up in a class. And because we are looking at a particular piece of writing done in a particular subject, we are not talking in hypothetical terms about "what would you do and why would you do it?" but concretely, asking "what did you do here and why did you do it?" So I get real accounts of the student's process rather than hypothetical answers. As Muriel Harris puts it (1986: 121), tutorials like this, which respond to individuals' errors, are "directed against existing confusions rather than toward what the teacher anticipate[s] might be typical problems, an approach often used in the classroom." Indeed, it might seem that because each session is so specific to a writer and an essay, there would be nothing I could take from it to class teaching; but in fact, so many students give me similar accounts of what they have done that I am able to design a class on introductions which explores these approaches and suggests ways of addressing the problems in a way that does resonate with the experiences of the students who attend, even though they haven't been to one-to-one sessions with me.

Referencing

Referencing is another area in which the gains from one-to-one teaching are particularly apparent, for without it, I doubt that I would have guessed correctly at the reasons why students fail to reference adequately, when they are not intending to cheat. Sometimes the reason is the same one I've just touched on in discussing failures to introduce or signpost an essay: that is, that the audience for the piece is the tutor, and she already knows where the material is coming from. A student will tell me, "I thought the bibliography would be enough to tell my tutor what I'd read". More surprising, however, are the many occasions when students have told me that they didn't want to give too many references for fear that it would look as if they hadn't had any ideas of their own! It is not that they are unaware of referencing requirements, nor that they cannot be bothered fulfilling them; rather, they are giving priority to another requirement, that their work should be original. Paradoxically, this problem is largely created by the warning against plagiarism that is given to the students at the beginning of every subject, for this is where they find the requirement that their work must be original.

To make matters worse, they are often told to avoid relying too heavily on sources, and not to quote too much. They are told, in many classes, to "give their own opinion". They do not know that "opinion", in this context, means a judgement about what other writers have said, and that "originality" is seen in the way they have explained other people's ideas, the connections they have drawn between them, and the way they have organised the material, rather than requiring them to produce a wholly new idea about it, or still more unlikely in first year, some previously unsuspected information. The other advice they receive -- that they should not "quote too much" -- can also be counterproductive. For many VCE students, quoting is closely identified with referencing: they think that it is quoting that gives a work authority, and when they have constructed an argument their next step is, as they say, to "put in some quotes". (One student described this to me as the "point, quote, comment; point, quote, comment..." system, and she was upset because she felt that, at university, she was "losing it".) Thus, every point is supported by quotation, and students often think that the reference is required because they have quoted, rather than because they have drawn on a source in any way at all. Thus, not to "quote too much" means not to reference enough. At university, it is the use of evidence that gives authority to a work, and the references authenticate the evidence; quotation is reserved for situations where the writer wants to comment on the wording of the original source. I now disentangle these threads in lectures, but I would not have known that they were tangled were it not for discussions with students one-to-one.

Errors as "interdiscourse"

It has often been suggested that undergraduate acculturation into academic discourse is like the process of second language acquisition (e.g., Bartholomae 1980: 254); as Eleanor Kutz has put it (1986:388), "For our students, ...the standard forms of academic discourse are a new style, a new dialect, in a sense, a new language". Kutz has suggested that the linguists' concept of interlanguage can be useful in understanding the errors characteristic of writing at this level. Interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) is the version of the target language used by a learner at any particular point. Interlanguage is not, as one might expect, just a mixture of the first language and the target language, whether realised as code-switching or as transfer. Rather, the learner uses a patterned but unstable idiolect to deal with the communication demands of her situation as she sees them, and according to the priority that she gives to particular demands on any particular occasion. She learns by forming hypotheses about the target language, employing transfer from her first language, overgeneralisation of target language rules, and transfer of training from earlier formal instruction in language learning. She then tests these hypotheses in communications with target language speakers, and gradually adjusts her language use according to the responses she receives (Selinker, 1972; Ellis, 1985: 47, 173-4). The errors in her interlanguage provide us with evidence of the hypotheses she is testing, and suggest a personal program of learning.

A learner's interlanguage, in this perspective, is not to be seen as deficient, in terms of ideal fluency in the target language, but as proficient in terms of progress from its beginning. What one-to-one teaching has often shown me is this element of proficiency where I would otherwise have seen deficiency, as in the attempts to address the problems of purpose and audience that I have been discussing. These go beyond surface errors and could perhaps be called "interdiscourse", by which I mean the learner's ways of responding to the demands of purpose and scholarly context which she perceives lurking around a piece of academic communication. Linda Flower has visualised these demands as talking heads, urging conflicting advice on the writer who tries to mediate between them (Flower, 1994: 99; see also 67ff.); Perhaps this cacophony of voices accounts for the solutions which, as with some features of interlanguage, are not found in the discourses from which the students come nor in the target academic discourse, but represent a third, unstable system at the current limits of the student's communicative competence (Richards & Sampson, 1974: 5). And, as with interlanguage, we can talk about these in terms of what the learner has tried to do, rather than in terms of what she has failed to do.

Thus, when I meet an unfocussed introduction, I can recognise the learner's attempt to give the piece a purpose, and help him to work out its purpose in terms of the subject he is doing. When information or explanation is lacking, I can talk about the audience on whose (imagined) behalf the tutor might be reading. When someone is parsimonious with references, I can talk about what originality could mean in this kind of writing. I am able to speak to the hypotheses that students are testing, in a way which is very difficult for their subject tutors to do via written comments on essays, for, as Bartholomae points out, the context for understanding an error is "not the text" (to which the tutor's comments are usually addressed) "but the activity of composing" (Bartholomae 1980: 257). This is the context we can learn about in one-to-one teaching, and obviously the one-to-one mode is ideally suited to this collaboration. The benefits can, however, flow on to classroom teaching too. For each of the problems I identify with students one-to-one, I can design a class to share what I have learned from individual students with a room full of others.

Teaching larger numbers

How *do* these kinds of insights help with classroom teaching? In order to share with a class what I have learned from individuals, I give a series of lectures each year which arises out of problems and questions that individuals regularly bring to tutorials with me. The materials for these lectures are samples of students' writing, tutors' comments, and subject guides in various humanities subjects. The series moves from discussing the purposes, assumptions, and values underlying courses in the humanities, and disciplinary variations of these, to looking at how they entail particular text structures, cohesive devices, uses of evidence, voice or tone, and scholarly conventions. It finishes with a look at the sentence-level problems that are most common at this level of academic writing.

WRITING BETTER ESSAYS

1. The purposes of university essays and how they may differ from school essays
2. What we mean by critical thinking, thesis, argument and evidence
3. How to identify thesis, argument, and evidence in a text
4. Your "voice" and the audience you are writing for
5. Ways of organising your essay
6. Paragraphing
7. Signposting
8. Grammar and punctuation

Some of these topics are matters of epistemology, while others are apparently merely mechanical, and indeed the series seems to move from advanced ideas to basic ones -- in the opposite direction, that is, from what one might expect. However, it is apparent from my tutorials that it is often an advanced requirement -- for example, to construct an argument -- that is causing what we think of, perhaps misleadingly, as basic problems with showing the relationship between ideas; problems which may be found at the level of organisation of the text, of demarcation of paragraphs, and/or of sentences or parts of sentences. To begin at the most local level, with the sentence problems, is to ignore the reason for their appearance. Since the "why" of a piece of writing drives the "how", I begin with that; and then we look at other people's writing in the light of what they were trying to do and what was hard about it.

An example: paragraphing

I'd like to show you just one example of this, which concerns the problem of finding the boundaries between ideas. One-to-one teaching has helped me to see several kinds of errors as stemming from this problem. Sentence boundaries, for example, are a problem for many students, who use run-on sentences apparently as a cohesive device. They know that a sentence contains one complete idea, and if their idea is not finished yet, they keep going until it is. What looks like a basic ignorance of sentence structure is actually an attempt to express the relatedness of ideas within a section of argument. Again, the idea of "interdiscourse" allows us to see a right "why" generating a wrong "how". And a similar error occurs in paragraphing, for a paragraph is supposed to contain one idea and to contain all of it. The problem is, where does an "idea" begin and end? (cf Bartholomae, 1980: 262) That this is not always a straightforward decision is suggested by the frequency of page layouts in which students have tried not to have to decide this, by blurring the demarcation of paragraphs (a good example of an interdiscourse form which students never see in print!). And perhaps it should not be a straightforward decision, if all ideas in an essay do, in fact, cohere together.

In my lecture on paragraphing, I show the students an example of somebody grappling with exactly this problem. The format here looks as if the writer does not know about indenting paragraphs, or leaving space between them, but this is not the case. Elsewhere in the essay, she has left space between her paragraphs, and in fact it is a fairly literate essay. The shiftiness of format, as I learned from her one-to-one, was the result of her inability to decide whether the pieces were ideas, or aspects of the one idea with which the section begins. When I show this example in the lecture, it provides an opportunity to open the lecture to the students. I ask them why they think the page is set out this way, and what grounds there might be for either joining up or separating the pieces. They offer ideas about what distinguishes each piece from the others, and I use these ideas to label the margins (a technique adapted from Ballard and Clanchy (1981: 6) which proves very useful to my students, and which I reinforce in subsequent examples).

intro The imagery of modern photographs greatly influenced Manet's perception, for it raised questions regarding the illusion of space: did the photograph capture the true nature of space and reality or did it falsify it due to some mechanical distortion?

contrast of shades Manet believed that the eye does not perceive the transitional half tones but only the harsher contrasts; in his work he therefore eliminated the transitional tones and made use of bright and dazzling light effects created by juxtaposing the near-white areas to the near-black. The elimination of surface detail and the simple modelling of figures thus rendered creates an effect of flatness that is paralleled in photography.

treatment of anatomy Instead of rounding off angles of a body and modifying the awkward proportions, as other artists had done in order to achieve a more natural and pleasing form, Manet incorporated these into his work. He depicted these traits of human anatomy just as photography did, and hence in OLYMPIA we see the sharp face and angularity of the arms that adds to a greater sense of realism.

cropped view Manet also made use of the cropped effect of photography, the seemingly arbitrary view which serves to rouse our imagination, carrying the narrative beyond the compositional framework and presenting an image which is immediate and distills the very essence of the urban experience.

Then we argue about whether this should be one paragraph or several, and not everyone agrees. It interests them that this is not a matter of a clear rule or formula, as their initial questions about paragraphing suggest that they expect ("How many paragraphs should an essay have?" "How long should each paragraph be?"). It becomes apparent that decisions about paragraphing -- as about most other things -- depend upon the purpose of the piece. If this is an essay about Manet's use of photographic elements, each piece should probably be a separate paragraph, and should be developed further. In fact, however, it was an essay about many different aspects of Manet's work, and for this reason all the discussion of photographic elements should probably be in a single paragraph. But the recognition that there is a decision to be made takes this problem out of the rather boring area of mechanical skills and engages the students with thinking about how they are going to make comparable decisions in setting out their own ideas.

Can we leave one-to-one teaching behind?

Thus, one-to-one teaching provides topics for lectures and workshops; it provides explanations of the problems students commonly have in terms which resonate with their experience; and it provides authentic materials for classroom use. Now, given that one-to-one teaching is very time-consuming, does there come a point when it is no longer necessary? Have I learned all I need to learn from individual tutorials?

I am sure I have not. Each year there are more discoveries to be made, even about familiar problems. Moreover, new problems are always creeping in. For us in Victoria (to cite just one example), the articulation between secondary and tertiary education has changed in many ways with the introduction and subsequent evolution of the Victorian Certificate of Education, and talking one-to-one with students enables us to keep abreast of these. Moreover, the nature of the discourse that students have to learn is constantly changing, as the disciplines they study continue to develop; and one-to-one teaching keeps us up to date with these developments as well. Apart from the deepening and changing nature of our work, moreover, there are always students who consult us with problems which are not common enough to warrant bringing up in class, but which should not, on that account, be allowed to slide. And there are always students who need the intensive work, and the recognition of their particular situation, that one-to-one work makes possible. Finally, there is the other side of the job, interpreting the students' difficulties to subject tutors. When tutors see our work as having to do with generic skills of "expression", they think of it as quite separate from their own course planning and teaching. But when I can talk to tutors about what I am learning from their current students, they take an interest in this because it comes in the form of discussion of the aims of their subjects, the structures of their lectures and of the readings they assign, and the ways in which students understand, or misunderstand, particular assignments they've been given. On the basis of these kinds of communication, I am sometimes able to become involved in a subject; and this is a particularly effective way to work with larger numbers.

One-to-one is economical

Thus, one-to-one teaching continues to be necessary both in its own right, and as the nutrient bath that produces effective classroom interventions. And, while this may seem an expensive way to work, it is arguable that economies of scale, in this situation, will be false economies. Our institutions are no doubt aware of our function in lowering failure and dropout rates at first-year, a matter of increasing concern to universities. It is important to recognise that, when students fail or

drop out for reasons connected with study, it is not just because they lack skills, but because they find themselves in an anonymous situation where their strengths seem barely to be recognised; their inexperience is translated, through a set of numbers on their essays, into failure; and they cannot find a supportive guide into the system. They badly miss the intellectual partnership and personal support that many of them had in Year 12, and this can be readily restored by one-to-one teaching. These students do not turn up to skills classes, but they do turn up to individual tutorials, and most of them do survive into second year. What our institutions may be less aware of, however, is our role in seeing students into Honours and postgraduate work. There are always students getting Cs who could be getting Bs or As, if their writing were better. These students would not come to skills classes because they do not see themselves as lacking skills; why should they, if they are passing solidly? But their tutors notice the discrepancy between their intellectual promise and their handling of assignments, and send them to work with us. These are needs it would be difficult to meet in a class, and in any case, many of these students only need one or two sessions to pinpoint what needs to be developed in their writing (cf Harris, 1986: 68); in this case a class would actually be a waste of money. And every year, people go through to Honours who would not have done so had they not worked with our unit.

Conclusion

For all these reasons, one-to-one teaching will continue to be necessary, and even economical when assessed against less effective ways of teaching larger numbers. But not all ways of teaching larger numbers are ineffective, and to the extent that classes do work, I think it is largely because they employ the insights gained from teaching one-to-one.

ENDNOTE

1. Since drafting this paper, I have seen the term "interdiscourse" used elsewhere in a different sense (Scollon & Scollon, 1995: 4, 11-15, 248-52). There, it refers to "communication between members of different discourse systems" (13) - e.g., between members of different cultures - rather than to approximations towards a target discourse, as I use the term here. I am indebted to Deborah Neil for drawing my attention to the Scollons' usage.

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A TALE OF TWO GROUPS: TO SATISFY WHOSE NEEDS?

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ABSTRACT

A three-hour group session devoted to the literature review was set up and first run in 1993 in response to the recognition, from examining drafts of a range of student work, that this area was often not well done. The literature review group is still offered as part of our semester programme.

In 1995, under the auspices of an Action Learning Project, we established and conducted an on-going group for new international postgraduate research students. Again, this group was set up in response to our experiences in one-to-one sessions. International students who were at the very end of their degree programme were bringing major problems to us for the first time. This suggested that we needed to know more about when such problems first emerged and thus whether we could foresee and forestall them. As such students were absorbing a significant proportion of our individual consultation times, we hoped also that we could find a way to use our resources more efficiently. The group last year met regularly and any concerns the students had at the time determined what the activities were at each session. We planned to conduct similar groups with the international postgraduates new to the University this year.

Therefore, these two groups, although prompted by different needs and run in different ways, were founded in one-to-one sessions and, in turn, informed them. An examination and comparison of the factors involved in the genesis and running of the two groups, considering what worked and what didn't, shows this (necessary?) Interrelationship and addresses issues central to this conference.

I hold one of three Learning Adviser positions in a large University which offers a great range of courses across all levels of study to a diverse student population. In the present climate (both economic and increasingly 'corporate') it is unlikely our resources will be increased in the near future, unknown whether they will be decreased, but certain that we have to demonstrate we have 'changed' which means working in different ways. However, even before this imperative became so dominant, we have run several types of groups: introducing peer assisted study sessions, accepting invitations to talk to groups in the colleges, in Departments (to the point earlier this year of actually being part of a course), a two-week (now four-week) academic preparation program for new international students, and our own seminar series. Our own series of group sessions or workshops is advertised each semester in a handout mailed to Departments and made available for collection by students from our centre on campus. The sessions take place on our 'patch' and attendance is of course voluntary. It is this series of group sessions we have most control over, are usually most pleased with, and from which we get the most enthusiastic feedback. Any increase in our group work or change in how we do things will initially begin with these groups. And, to examine the interaction and interrelation between one-to-one sessions and group work, it is two of these groups I focus on now: one on writing the Literature Review; the other a group for new international research postgraduates. These may be less straightforward than the 'How to reference' kind of group, but are probably in the main typical of the groups we all run.

I would like to be able to assert that the two groups I am talking about clearly show the bi-directional influence between the work we do in individual sessions and that in seminar groups. At the moment, however, this seems to me to be only trivially so, the broader picture remaining complex and almost unanalysable. It is of course incontestable that the two modes do relate to one another, at least superficially. In the first place, the idea for the group grows out of a picture emerging from individual sessions and, in the second place, individuals from the group frequently seek the follow-up of one-to-one sessions. Much less accessible is how the two modes relate in terms of

what I bring to and carry back from one to the other -- what I am then learning which informs all my work, and what students are learning that is useful.

Complementary needs are another thing. (Institutional needs are in the wings of this conference all the time, but I believe we need to put these aside and clarify our own thinking first.) We want to meet students' needs, though those are needs as defined by us; needs as defined by students often include things we are unwilling to give. We also have needs, but usually don't delve into what these may be or even define them. Nevertheless, we do have broader aims: for students to become independent, confident learners and be able to reach their learning goals now and in the future. And we want students to be challenged.

So, from the analysis of these two particular groups in relation to one-to-one work, I argue:

1. that the observable relationship is clear only at the trivial level,
2. that each mode of working raises our understanding but that the particular insights we gain from each do **not directly translate to the other.**
3. **BUT THAT**, paradoxically, therein may be the basis of our unique strength.

First I will describe and examine separately the genesis and evolution of each group and then consider them in terms of what may have been learned and, of this, what can be applied.

The Literature Review

The Literature Review group session first came about because I saw from my first semester of working individually with mostly international students drafts of their literature reviews which were not good. Doubtless the kind of thing is familiar to you: weighty summaries, contradictions not alluded to, no evaluation, *no reviewing*, no clear purpose, no point made, obvious plagiarism by the mile, etc. Such drafts are very hard to convert to something else. I thought that if I advertised a session on writing the literature review in the next semester's seminar program, I might get some takers.

Clearly my motive was to intervene **before** students embarked on the work - the basic preventive function of groups (Peelo, 1994). Clearly I thought I could save students some anguish. What is clear now, but was not clear to me then, was that I also thought I would save myself some future problems: I detest having to try to give concrete advice on **how** to wrest a coherent, focused review from a vast catalogue of summaries. What is also clear now to me is that this vast catalogue of summaries with all of the problems I mentioned sometimes seems to be accepted.

So, in our first semester 1993 seminar series, I advertised a three-hour session on writing the Literature Review. The first year, the diversity across all dimensions took me unawares. Many came - only one or two international students - but they were at all stages: from those nearing the end of a PhD to those who said "I'm considering doing honours next year and I thought this might be useful". I faced what is a recurrent problem for me in groups (and remember I was still new to this work). Armed with the theory about adult learning and my own belief from teaching at tertiary level about starting from where the learner is and of using his or her experience, I had made the mistake of first asking about what the students were doing and what they expected from the session. The expectations were as varied as the stages of study but the major single need was to discuss how to go about finding the literature and especially how to deal with it. Several students were relentless in bringing it back all the time to the question of how they could even begin to get their way through the vast amount of literature etc. One or two may have made follow up individual appointments, although I can't remember that they did.

My naivete here is glaring. I had gone armed with ways to review -- how to analyse material, how to map the whole field etc. In short, how to address the problems as they had hit me in the face. What I learned very quickly recalled my own raw state with thesis work which had a great deal to do, among other things, with coping with the alarming quantities and range of material. The individual sessions I'd had with students until then had actually masked that very real and highly common situation. What I saw mostly in one-to-one sessions were drafts of something. Furthermore, although it was working with these drafts which had alerted me to a need (which as I said I clearly thought of as theirs, not mine), I would have had to have read only a few source books on tackling academic writing to confirm that the Literature Review was a fairly unremarkable and, indeed, a typical thing to focus on. So I don't know that I can even strongly defend the connection, between the one-to-one sessions and the group, at its most trivial level.

However, I learned from my experience. The next year when I ran the session, I began by looking at the literature search -- indeed this time I was mostly thus prepared -- only to discover that the students who came that year were very sophisticated about how to do this (more so than I in using CD-ROM, the initial Internet offerings, looking into other library tools etc). What they wanted was to concentrate on writing, often indeed at a micro level. Several of them made follow up individual appointments, all with very different needs, ranging from one student I remember who had nearly finished her PhD and who had had a sudden crisis about verb tenses, to another who feared that what he in fact had was two separate theses which were unrelated and unrelatable.

The next time, 1995, I got it right. We had 2 two-hour sessions a week apart: The Literature Review A and The Literature Review B. A was the search and B was writing the review, and they were very closely related. Apart from one student who said she had expected more on writing paragraphs (!), the feedback was very good. One or two people followed up with individual appointments with me but the interesting thing is that they were more thrilled with one another. There was no drop off from the first week to the next (although the seminars could be taken separately) and there was a strong nucleus of students who planned to continue seeing one another in a support group regularly.

In first semester this year, I ran the two sessions again, and again very successfully despite unfavourable conditions. The first session had been scheduled for Friday 26th April; the day before had been Anzac Day and so the Friday was the only obstacle in what could have been a four-day long weekend. However, 16 students came, were enthusiastic, and were prepared to work. The second session a week later was just before the May long weekend and in Brisbane we were being deluged by most unseasonal rain -- flood waters were rising everywhere, roads were cut and to go out at all was to battle the weather. Nevertheless, 13 students came -- even two from other campuses of the University. Moreover, a few weeks later, several of these participants attended another seminar we run called simply Thesis Writing, and two others came to see me on an individual basis.

Indeed, it was in working with one of these students I had some more of my constant misgivings about groups confirmed. This student, an international student from one of the Pacific islands, was studying Architecture. He was in third year but had come to the session because, in fifth year, they have to write a thesis. And also, immediately, he had to do the largest written assignment he had so far faced. The Architecture school at our University is highly design oriented and very demanding in this way. So this was a student who had survived the demanding design requirements for nearly three years but had considerable anxieties about having to write at length and especially to have to examine what other people say. He reported he'd got a lot out of the group seminar on the literature review and indeed he was able to confirm the main principles I'd hoped I'd got across. However, over the next few sessions with him I saw how wide the gap was between understanding (following?) this and being able to do it. So, the wide diversity of backgrounds and levels of study in groups forces us to retreat to a level of generality. The specificity is lost **unless** one can get students working in a workshop mode; the lack of some students having anything to work on then undermines this. The other concern is that students have yet to take this and apply it. However, what I learned from this experience of observing in one-to-one sessions the painful process of trying to apply the principles which had been the focus of the group session was more about what groups lack though not how to answer this.

The group for new international postgraduate students

This was an on-going group begun last year by both my colleague, Katherine Samuelowicz, and me under the auspices of an Action Learning Project. The stimulus for setting up this group had come from the numbers of PhD students we would see for the first time at the very end of their candidature when they had struck major problems with their work-- often with their writing but also with supervisory problems, problems with access to information, equipment etc. These students took up huge amounts of our time under what were often almost emergency conditions.

The participants in the group were new international postgraduate research students who had responded to a letter we had sent them outlining our ideas and inviting them to join the group. We said we were keen to follow newly enrolled international students to learn from the very beginning about the kinds of issues they had to face and how they dealt with them. We also said we would offer them what help we could as or if the need arose - e.g. sessions devoted to writing the proposal, negotiating the system etc. - and they would also be able to share experiences with one another. Our need to learn was signalled clearly and we also hoped that we would discover a way to handle our work more effectively.

This group was a huge success. We originally met for 1 1/2 hours every two weeks. We had plenty of tea, coffee and biscuits, but only a very loose plan for starting discussions, and mostly responded to what the students introduced each time. After the first two sessions, at the students' request the meetings were changed to weekly **and continued for the**

whole year. What we learned was nothing new in the categories of problems but we were surprised at their intensity and surprised also that they had begun so early and that they arose from very basic origins. We also learned that such a group in no way replaced any of our work but that in fact it added an additional mode for the students, and one that seemed to be much needed.

Our final analysis was that nothing in particular we did was what met their needs, and indeed we had a striking instance in our most formal session, 'how to prepare for exams' in response to an urgent need of some of them, that the intervention then was singularly unsuccessful. Rather, we felt that the group itself was the intervention. Not surprisingly, we resolved to add to our program a mutual support group for new international postgraduate students.

So this year we again set up such a group but it has been very much less successful. We are still identifying the reasons for this. The way we contacted students and the arrangements made were rather more messy than we had planned in that times changed and space problems forced us to meet elsewhere and not at 'our place'. The individual students themselves may have had less need this year, either because they can already negotiate the system with success or, perhaps one could hope, because they were in departments which have established a positive ethos and environment for research --a vital way to benefit students we had noted in the report of our Action Learning Project.

However, for the concerns of this conference, we can make two points from the experience of this Postgraduate Research group, one from what we actually learned through the week by week contact with the students, and the other from analysing the comparative successes of the groups last year and this year.

The first point is that although, yes, we did learn a great deal of small things and did get a vibrant 'feel' for the many roughnesses along the way and the factors involved for new international research students, this does not in fact directly inform our work with individual students. Most of the students from the postgraduate group also sought one-to-one sessions with us at various times to delve more into matters raised in the group, but this was only because we already had a comfortable relationship with these particular students from the weekly sessions. The pattern of student consultation otherwise has not altered and, indeed, the issues these students were keen to discuss in the group sessions were mostly not of the kind that would prompt them ever to take the step to make an appointment to see someone about.

The second point has to do with the nature of a group and with expectations. Contrarily, while one of the reasons the group never flourished this year may have been because a core group never formed, perhaps we were hasty in our belief that the group itself was the major factor. Because of the practical problems, although one or two people would come each week (and indeed are still coming), there has been no sense of group identity and each person who does come comes to see us. Many would come again I suspect if they could be assured that the group would be there. So our conclusion that it was the group itself which was the intervention would seem to be true. However, perhaps we were mistaken in believing that it was the group itself which was the entire reason for the success and in believing that our other 'interventions' were unsuccessful or irrelevant. Perhaps more students would have come to the group this year if we had not downplayed this component. In other words, we had thought those aspects we undertook more systematically with them were not effective -- and as we measured effectiveness, they weren't. But the removal of those components may have had a significant effect in changing the 'flavour' of the group. And with the original group, not only may these elements have added flavour, it is difficult for us to know what works and what doesn't for a particular student at a particular time and they may have been useful, even if only to convince students that we did have an understanding of some strategies and may be of practical help to them at another time in individual sessions.

There are many small lessons from looking at these two groups, such as:

- that the frustrations of wide diversity and loss of specificity to some extent are inherent in groups;
- that the student group itself may have a continuing role to play;
- that we can never be sure what it is which connects with each of those students at that particular time;
- that many of them follow-up with individual sessions because: they finally know about us, they are comfortable about doing so, they have auditioned us and we pass, they can't actually apply the strategies to their own work;
- that the group can reconnect us with the sometimes funny, exasperating, smaller, earlier, more ordinary frustrations of students which surround their work and which bring them to the group, though not the one-to-one session, in the first place;
- that the frustrations of the limitations of individual sessions remain: I come into the picture after I would like to because there is nothing specific enough to bring students;
- and that the fine-grained working with a particular student in a safe environment at his or her own pace, in response to particular needs at that particular time can of course take place only in one-to-one sessions.

Conclusions drawn

Apart from the many small housekeeping points we pick up and put into practice and the small ideas we add to our arsenal or add to our own style, working in groups and working one-to-one each raises our understanding. From groups, we can be exposed to the many small hindrances on the way to performing well, we can gain a wider appreciation of the whole student body, and we can locate the student rather more "in context". From one-to-one sessions, we can observe the difficulties students have in interpreting requirements and in applying theories, principles and strategies and can come to appreciate the many steps often needed towards understanding and the many different possible paths.

The question is how we can use this raised understanding. It seems to me that the understanding gained from these groups can be directly useful only at the surface, procedural level and even then could conflict with other goals. For example, it would be good to see students before problems grew in number or size and it would be good to see drafts of students' literature reviews after they had considered why they were doing it, what they needed in order to establish their position, and how they could best shape it, etc. But urging students to come early "at the first sign of an academic lump" or to set up prior conditions on seeing them individually does not announce we have faith in their ability to cope independently and to select what they need when they need it.

Transposing to the groups we run the raised understanding gained from one-to-one sessions is also difficult. We can and should make our perspective clear (whether we talk to students or to staff), that we bring to the group an expertise gained from the experience of working closely with a range of students in their attempts to interpret demands, to understand what they are studying, and to apply theories and principles. And we also understand that it isn't necessarily easy to go from knowing how to do something to being able to do it, which of course applies as much to being able to do something with what we focus on in our groups. However, we can share this burden of bridging the gap between the theory and its application at least to the extent that we never give up trying to improve our group work, although such a duty demands we put in the time. Group work doesn't just happen. It needs careful thought on each occasion, planning, and the skill to respond flexibly.

Reflection on groups via the Literature Review and New International Postgraduate Research Students groups, suggests that they are well worth doing for their own value to students and also because they re-connect us to the University. We should do them for these reasons and not as more resource-efficient substitutes for one-to-one sessions. If there are any savings, we should regard them simply as a secondary spin-off.

That the most valuable insights gained from one-to-one are not readily transferable, even to our own groups, could be where our strength resides. We need to ensure institutions don't regard it as our weakness.

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**THE COMPLEX LEARNING EXPERIENCE:
USING THE INDIVIDUAL CONTEXT
TO TEACH GROUPS**

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ABSTRACT

As a psychologist in private practice, I bring to an individual session in my work as a Learning Skills Adviser an understanding of the complexity of human beings. A student's complex personal history, including their educational history and their personality, is expressed in the way they think and learn. Thus, a person's capacity to learn and how they learn are linked to all other aspects of the self.

This year at the University of Melbourne, along with my one-on-one work, I have been involved in teaching a credit bearing study skills program to an initial fourteen mature age students for three hours a week during the first semester 1996. This was part of an inaugural Mature Age Entry Bridging Scheme (MAEBS) in the Arts Faculty. I have also seen many of these students in individual sessions, which has enabled me to evaluate their learning of the skills taught in group sessions. In this paper I will present how my understanding of the complexity of how an individual learns has been informed by my practice. I will also show how I have incorporated this understanding into teaching the MAEBS students to enhance the development of their skills appropriate to learning in a tertiary environment.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

In order that you know where I am coming from it seems appropriate to say something about my background. I was a teacher who taught in secondary schools early in my career. After having two children and being home with them for eight years, I came back to teaching and taught a range of year 12 history subjects to mature age students for six years in a community house setting. I was also an external marker for HSC Australian History in this time. While I was still teaching I went back to Melbourne University and completed a second Arts degree, majoring in social theory and psychology, and then completed a two year counselling degree at La Trobe University.

I am currently in my fourth year working three days a week as a Learning Skills Adviser at Melbourne University. My daughter has also just completed her first year studying Arts at Melbourne University, so I feel I have been given first hand insight into the transition to university that has added to my knowledge from working at the LSU. I also work as a psychotherapist in private practice in the outer east. As a psychotherapist I tend to work long-term with clients and my orientation is a psychodynamic one. In this orientation it is believed that most of mental life is not accessible to the conscious mind, and that unconscious processes are important in influencing a person's responses and behaviour.

Thus, the following observations have been drawn from my teaching and counselling experience, my experience working with students at Melbourne University and my life experience. I am aware that campuses do vary in the type of students who are enrolled and also those who may present at Learning Support Units. Colleagues who have worked at other tertiary campuses do feel that at Melbourne University there are a higher proportion of students for whom complex personal factors interact with learning issues. (The possible reasons for this would be a paper in itself.) I would also see a higher proportion of these students because they are referred to me because of my counselling background.

AIMS OF THE SESSION

(1) To present a view of the interaction of the emotional aspects of the person and intellectual activity that can affect a person's capacity to learn, a view not all that common in our field. This may give insight into why it may be difficult for some students to learn as effectively as we might want them to, and affirms the importance of paying attention to the individual needs of students, often only possible in concurrent work.

(2) This understanding can also inform our work with groups. My second aim, then, is to describe my work in first semester 1996 teaching a group of mature age students in a bridging course offered by the Arts Faculty for the first time in 1996. Observing these students in class, and seeing many of these students individually in concurrent sessions, confirmed my feelings about the complexity of the learning process and highlighted the issue of differentiating between teaching and learning. For most group work offered in the tertiary setting it is difficult to assess whether students have developed skills through our teaching. This was possible in the subject I was involved in teaching as part of the Mature Age Entry Bridging Scheme (MAEBS), because of the ongoing nature of the teaching, formal assessment, and individual sessions with students where it was possible to ascertain whether skills taught were applied in their work for other subjects.

ASSUMPTIONS

Before I begin addressing the first aim, I wish to present the general assumptions I am making that underpin my observations —

- Human beings are complex
- The learning process is complex
- Learning occurs best in the context of a relationship
- Intellectual activity and the emotional aspects of a person are interlinked

I now want to make some observations that relate to the last point made above.

LEARNING

In discussing this I will be focussing on four areas which are all linked: internal factors; temperament and learning style; educational history; meaning study/learning has for the student (their feelings about it).

Internal Factors

Many teachers view a person's capacity to learn as being most heavily influenced by that person's intellectual/cognitive capacity, particularly in the area of the higher level skills often required at the tertiary level — the skills of abstracting information, linking ideas and synthesising information, organising ideas and the range of skills involved in being analytical. Implicit in this view is a cynicism about whether these skills can really be taught. However, the opposite view can also be held, and has had greater currency in particular historical periods, that students who can't 'think' have not had the appropriate environmental stimulus, good teaching etc., and can, with good learning strategies and interventions, learn the necessary skills. These two positions link to the nature/nurture debate and have also been identified with political/ideological positions evident in education, relating to elitist and egalitarian notions. Needless to say more complex views recognising the importance of elements of both these positions are currently most commonly accepted, although assumptions underpinning these two positions are still evident.

However, what is often not recognised or fully understood, and not expressed in either of these points of view, is the complex interaction between the emotional/psychological and cognitive aspects of a person, and how this influences learning. In fact even to articulate it in this way is to imply a separation of these aspects of a person. Western culture has been so heavily imbued with dualistic thinking, that the split between thinking/feeling, and mind/body is deeply held. It is very difficult to conceive of a person in any truly holistic way. Winnicott (1949), an important British psychoanalyst, states that, "There is no localisation of a mind self, and that there is no thing that can be called mind.", at least when the individual psyche-soma has satisfactorily come through the very early developmental stages and, therefore, there is healthy development. (Psyche, here, is defined as the imaginative elaboration of somatic parts, feelings and functions, that is, of

physical aliveness). He views mental development as somewhat dependent on variable factors such as the quality of early environmental care, the chance phenomena of birth and of management immediately after birth.

Drawing in a general way on some of these ideas, amongst others, I will attempt to briefly sketch how deeper aspects of a person's personality structure and their defences can influence the capacity to learn. In doing this I will not be presenting a theoretical account, as theorising in this area is complex and makes sense only with some understanding of psychoanalytic theory and concepts. Most of what I will be saying is based on my own experience working with students, informed of course by my theoretical understanding.

The last millennium in Western culture can be characterised as a period of increased rationality. Western culture, goal- and achievement- oriented, places a great deal of emphasis on the outside world. This is to the detriment of our other reality, the inner one (Kaufmann, 1989). In fact Klein, another British psychoanalyst, challenges the dichotomy between external and internal reality by arguing that to a major extent the external world is constructed and continually reconstructed by the individual and by the group, through individual and collective fantasy. (Fantasy is the mental expression of the instinctual impulses and also of defence mechanisms against instinctual impulses) (Hinshelwood, 1991). We 'see', then, the external world through the filter of our internal world.

As learning skills advisers our focus is often on external reality — the demands of academic study, the discourse of particular subjects, academic skills, the piece of work a student brings. Of course these things are important and need to be taught/dealt with, as a healthy individual needs to be able to satisfactorily negotiate the external world, to understand its demands and to see it as clearly as is possible. However, I also want to emphasise the importance of a person's internal reality, and that internal factors are critical to a person's capacity to learn what we teach about external reality.

The best way I can demonstrate this (in I might add a sketchy and not very theoretical way) is to describe some of my observations of students I have worked with to illustrate some of the points I wish to make.

One of the experiences with a student that helped me recognise the interaction of inner/psychic life with cognitive capacity was in working in an ongoing way with a student who had experienced sexual abuse as a child. Much of this experience was blocked through possibly the defence mechanism of dissociation. (A defence mechanism is a strategy unconsciously utilised, that serves to protect the ego from anxiety). She could 'hold' no memory of much of these early experiences and was 'blocked' in her understanding of herself. It was evident in working with her on reading and writing skills that she could understand in the moment what was being taught, but could not 'hold' the knowledge to put it into practice. Consequently, each time I saw her it was as if nothing had been learnt from the previous sessions. Different kinds of knowledge were, therefore, blocked — knowledge of her early experiences and the feelings attached to them, and intellectual knowledge. She also experienced high levels of anxiety, understandable considering how unsafe she felt as a child, which were also experienced in relation to her academic work. Therefore this student's way of being in the world, linked to her early experiences and defences she had employed to survive psychologically, was manifest, too, in her intellectual activity and affected her capacity to learn.

This may appear an extreme example, but makes visible the interaction of the psychic organisation of the person and cognition, illustrating how internal factors are critical to a person's capacity to learn. A person's disconnection from their inner experiences and feelings is common, with an often consequent inability to remember early experiences and to link current responses and behaviours to early experiences, when there have been much milder traumas, neglect or emotional deprivation. Here the defence mechanisms of repression (impulses and thoughts unacceptable to the ego are pushed into the unconscious) or denial (the avoidance of awareness of some painful external reality) could be at work. This, too, can affect thinking/learning, where the person may remain detached from intense engagement with what he/she is learning, affecting curiosity, motivation, and the capacity to respond deeply to the material under study. The failure to link experiences internally in the mind can affect the person's capacity to link ideas, critical in synthesising material and in developing a coherent argument. Of course I am not suggesting that this may be the only factor when considering a student's inability to perform these functions, but this dimension is often overlooked, or else is not understood, particularly when an obviously intelligent student is struggling with these skills. As I am wanting to emphasise, human beings are complex and the learning process is a complex one.

When there has been a lack of attunement and responsiveness to the infant's physical wellbeing and internal states, an individual's intellectual processes can to some extent make up the deficit. The failures of the environment become allowed for, understood, tolerated, and even predicted. Thus, the intellectual endowment of the individual can convert a not-good-enough environmental adaptation to the good-enough adaptation. However, sometimes with exceptional intellectual endowment the infant may allow for a severe failure of adaptation to need, but this can have extreme psychological

consequences for the person, as mental activity in this case can be exploited and can become the enemy of the psyche (Winnicott, 1950-5).

The latter is again an extreme case, but it seems that in a number of students seen at Melbourne University there is an overidentification with the intellectual self, either through using intellectual functioning to compensate for a not-good-enough early environment, or an overvaluing of this aspect of the child from people in the child's environment. It is common in these cases to see in the student a lot of anxiety attached to his/her academic work, often expressed through procrastination and sometimes physical symptoms. Perfectionism is also common, where the student cannot bear to hand in a piece of work that is not 'perfect'. The student can consciously or unconsciously feel that if they don't get a good mark on a piece of work they will be revealed as worthless or of no value (they are the piece of work). These responses, linked to the person's psychological make-up and emotional life, impede learning and make the learning experience a distressing one. So much anxiety can be experienced by the student that they can't approach their work in a relaxed and open manner, aren't prepared to take risks in their thinking, become obsessive in their research and can't judge what's important, or don't hand in work and fail. Often reasoning with the student, setting up external deadlines (for procrastinators) etc. has little effect on this pattern of behaviour and the student's anxiety, indicating the importance of internal, unconscious factors in their difficulties.

Intellectualisation is a defence mechanism in itself, and here thinking can be used as a defence against feeling. A person who is overintellectualised, and who may also employ intellectualisation as a defence, can do well as a student in subjects involving abstract intellectual theory, but sometimes their work, although of a high standard, can lack a rich depth of understanding.

In these few examples I have hoped to give you a little more insight into the complexity of the learning process and the influence of psychological processes on a person's capacity to learn.

Temperament and Cast of Mind

A person has a certain genetic endowment, and in a psychodynamic viewpoint a certain intensity of instinctual impulses (both libidinal and aggressive). The infant, then, with these inherited characteristics, is born into an environment which to a greater or lesser extent, adapts to the infant's needs. As can be seen from the above discussion, a person's way of being in the world — linked to their temperament, cast of mind, their responses and behaviours — is influenced by the complex interaction of the infant and the facilitating environment (and becomes the core of the person's personality structure). I want to make some comments, here, about the parallels between a person's temperament and their cast of mind (how they think).

As the infant's earliest experiences are bodily ones and deeply connected to the taking in of food/milk, it is interesting to note the use of food/digestion metaphors when discussing learning and the absorption of knowledge. We talk of someone not fully digesting ideas, of being hungry or thirsty for knowledge, of swallowing ideas whole or not swallowing ideas (spitting them out). To ruminate means both to chew cud and to meditate or ponder.

It is interesting when working clinically with clients, that often the way a person relates to you, the therapist, is thought of in these terms. Can the person feed, that is take in what you have to say, or do they spit out your interpretations or comments? These responses do in some ways relate to the infant's early feeding experiences, deeply connected to the relationship with the early caregiver, and influence the person's responses to others and to the world. This relates, also, to a person's intellectual responses. When I work with students I am alert to whether they take in what I have to offer, whether they spit it out or reject it as not being nourishing, as they may do in other interactions in the world.

Of course this is only one aspect of the many factors that contribute to the complexity of a person's temperament and cast of mind. And the way people think varies so greatly. There are those who think concretely, who may get obsessed with detail and can't grapple with broad concepts; students who can abstract general principles and seek overarching concepts; those who can organise and structure ideas, and those who move from one idea to another, not able to categorise information. All of this is evident in a student's written work and in their interactions with you as you work with them. Naturally, some of these differences relate to genetic and intellectual endowment, but what I am wanting to highlight is that a person's temperament and cast of mind are deeply connected and expressive of a way of being in the world. As teachers we need to be responsive to this and recognise that learning is a deeply unique and individual experience.

Educational History and Meaning of Study/Learning

Often when we think of educational history we think in terms of how many years a student went to school, which school they went to etc. While this may be important, I am also interested in how the student experienced school, what education means to the student's parents and their aspirations for their children, the parent's view of their child's intellectual capacity and where the child is placed in terms of other siblings.

It has been interesting that in my clinical work many of my clients are intelligent but had poor educational experiences, not able to draw anything nourishing from school. Often this was because as children they had experienced some physical trauma or emotional abuse or deprivation, and were not able to take in what the teacher or school could offer. They may also have been acting out their distress and were viewed as naughty and were punished. For many of those over 35 years old (and this applies to mature age students) their primary school experience was more often than not in large classes with a lot of rote learning, and where the teacher was usually not attuned to the child's experiences.

Educational experience is particularly important when working with mature age students. For a number of these there has often been disadvantage in this area. Many older women suffered from the effects of sexism in their families or schools, where girls were not encouraged to go far with their education or were directed into particular occupations. This can mean that the chance to get an education as an adult is imbued with a lot of feeling, sometimes connected to a wish to prove themselves. There can be internal struggles around authority figures and with some anxiety attached to succeeding.

Parental attitudes and expectations are also powerful in affecting a student's attitude to learning and their feelings about learning, influencing the capacity to learn. The more familiar situation is of parents wanting their children to have the chances they didn't have, and, therefore, there are high expectations for their children to do well. This can be particularly true for NESB students, where parents may have to work in jobs below their qualifications and experience, making this sacrifice in coming to a new country so that their children have more opportunities, achieved through education. However, there can often be more complex issues emerging from parental expectations and unresolved issues. One student I saw had a mother who had a successful sister who completed higher education and was envied and resented by the student's mother. This led the mother to restrict the educational possibilities for her daughter, so that she wouldn't become the envied sister who had what she didn't (this was not something the mother was **conscious** of). Although intelligent, the student left school early returning to study in her early thirties, where, although doing well, she experienced extreme distress and anxiety when producing essays. She handed work in late, sabotaging herself unconsciously for fear of attack if she succeeded, even though her mother was now dead. She had internalised the attacking mother, so that she unconsciously attacked herself.

More benignly, but no less distressing for the student, I had a young male student who was the only male and the eldest in his family. He was well loved and was successful at school with little effort. Pleasant and easy going, he was highly valued by his country boys school for being a "model" student. He had a strong feeling of being "special" and of the great possibility of his making his mark in the world. But as he approached year 12 he was confronted with having to put more work in to do well and began experiencing difficulty in completing work. He still got high marks but this problem increased at university. Also, in the university environment there were many more bright students, and so he was struggling to accept that maybe he wasn't as special as he thought, and was suffering the loss of the idealisation of himself. This was very painful and he began to experience severe physical symptoms when he sat down to study, struggled to hand in work (as he would put so much work in and then experience anxiety about whether he would do well), and faced failure in some of his subjects. (I could go on with any number of other students I see who have their own unique internal issues around studying/learning.)

Thus it can be seen in these examples that the meaning of study/learning to students, and how they view themselves as students, is profoundly linked to their educational experience and family dynamics and expectations, which becomes an unconscious internal struggle for them affecting the capacity to learn and their experience of learning.

GROUP WORK

Keeping all these factors in mind — what a human being brings to a teaching/learning situation — one can imagine that it may be difficult for a teacher to know what a student has made of what has been presented to him/her in a group teaching situation.

Much group teaching at the tertiary level consists of one-off classes in the form of specific skills based generic workshops. Some consist of classes given in conjunction with lecturers on more discipline-specific skills. There is a move to incorporate academic and professional skills within discipline teaching, so that it is possible for academic skills teachers to have more ongoing contact with a group of students. However, it appears that in depth ongoing contact with a group of students by academic skills teachers at the tertiary level is still relatively rare.

MAEBS at Melbourne University was one such example of the teaching of a group of students by academic skills teachers teaching a credit-bearing study skills subject for three hours a week for a whole semester.

Mature Age Entry Bridging Scheme

The Mature Age Entry Bridging Scheme was proposed by the Faculty of Arts, aware of equity issues and Melbourne University's lack of any mature age entry directly into degree courses. Applicants were to be selected on the basis of a written application, where a student demonstrated that they had not undertaken year 12, were over 25, and where educational disadvantage existed.

If a student was accepted into the scheme they were to undertake, if fulltime, two first year Arts subjects, a compulsory credit-bearing Communications Skills subject available to all Melbourne University students and run by the ESL and Communications Skills Unit, and a Study Skills subject run solely for the MAEBS students by the LSU. The content of the latter course was constrained by a wish not to overlap with the content of the Communication Skills subject, which covered oral presentations, computer skills and written skills. The Study Skills course was designed, then, to cover topics and teach skills not covered in the Communication Skills subject, and that would familiarise students with the university learning environment and equip them for university study. Topics covered were: Introduction to Tertiary Study; Understanding Course Structure; Time Management and Organisation; Analytic Reading Skills; Academic Argument, Structure and Planning; Academic Style and Referencing; and Memory. Two staff, of which I was one, were primarily involved in the development of the curriculum and in the teaching of the Study Skills subject.

The class was taught in a three hour block on a Friday afternoon, and was the only time the MAEBS students were all together. Individual classes were structured to include a lecture presentation, class discussion, and activities. The latter required students to draw upon what had been taught to demonstrate their understanding of this. Staff teaching the subject were also committed to allowing space for students to talk about their feelings and experiences regarding their return to study. Many had had unsatisfactory early educational experiences, lacked confidence and at times were overwhelmed by the demands of university study. Staff were also open to suggestions from students about what they needed and would like us to cover in the classes.

A new aspect of teaching this course for the LSU staff was the need for assessment, which had to conform to requirements for all first year Arts subjects. The staff members involved determined the assessment tasks, which consisted of weekly assignments and attendance and participation amounting to 50% of the overall mark, and a final assessment piece worth 50%. Of the original fourteen students, eight successfully completed the semester's work for all their subjects, the dropout rate relating to a combination of the demands of fulltime study and personal difficulties.

What emerged about the teaching/learning process

This teaching situation is, I think, a fairly unique one for Academic Skills Teachers - in having the extended time to work with students in a group setting, in formally assessing students, and in also seeing them individually. Having some understanding of the importance of internal factors on a person's capacity to learn and what these mature-age students may carry with them, particularly in relation to their educational history and the meaning study and learning has for them, we structured the Study Skills course in such a way as to allow time for students to share their thoughts, feelings and anxieties about this new learning experience, along with the skills teaching. The 3 hour block of time for the class facilitated this, providing flexibility to allow this to happen. Teachers got to know the students fairly well, and because of the small numbers could 'see' and respond to individual concerns. Giving time for this sharing the teachers' responsiveness to student concerns, proved very supportive to students as they grappled with their anonymity, and often feelings of alienation, in the university environment at large. Many said later that if it wasn't for the Study Skills class they would have dropped out of the scheme altogether. In a reflective essay the students wrote as an evaluation exercise at the end of the course, one student said, "Meeting once a week with the other MAEBS students, sharing their experiences proved 'therapeutic'. Study Skills not only provided a comfortable environment but proved to be so helpful for some-one returning to study." Two more students stated, "This subject was the only one to offer me personal encouragement." and "Study Skills was very much a supportive aspect."

But allowing space for and, therefore, acknowledging how students felt about their university experience, not only provided emotional support but I feel enhanced their learning, through reducing anxiety and freeing the students to 'take in' what content was being taught. Students also affirmed the value of the Study Skills class for their learning: "Study Skills has been the main influence on my learning"; "... the Study Skills classes helped me achieve much better grades than I otherwise would have."; "Study Skills has taught me a great deal, not just on an academic level but also on a more personal level."

Students were also encouraged to see us individually if they needed to be helped with specific work in their other subjects, and these sessions furthered a deeper understanding of them as people and learners. This also enabled us to ascertain whether they were able to apply what we had taught them, in other words to demonstrate their learning of the skills through integration and application. This often indicated that the skills learning was difficult for students, as did the assessment tasks, drawing attention to the importance of differentiating teaching from learning. Reflecting on why it was difficult for many students to put into practice the skills taught, particularly the higher order skills, confirmed my thoughts on the complexity of issues relating to each individual student, discussed above, but also raised issues relating to group teaching.

In one-off group teaching situations, and also often in one-off individual sessions, it appears very difficult to teach complex skills to all students. They can often understand what you are saying to them, but being able to integrate and apply these, so that intellectual growth and development occur, is a different matter. With the ongoing nature of the Study Skills course, recognising this meant we could spend longer on some things, pick up particular sources of difficulty in subsequent sessions, and also explain to students that the learning of these skills is difficult, and of necessity ongoing, and takes time (sometimes the length of a degree). Students need to understand that learning these skills is part of the university learning experience (unlike many academics who believe students should already have them) along with content learning. It is unrealistic for them to think they should know it all right at the beginning or to feel bad about themselves if they struggle with applying these skills.

However, with much group teaching that is not ongoing, where there is no assessment, or where students are not seen individually, it may not be apparent just what skills the student has, what are the individual difficulties and whether they have all learnt what we have taught. This comes back to the issue of the value of much group work, in a climate where economies of scale and measures of productivity in terms of numbers of students taught are called for. This climate would appear to reflect a preoccupation in our culture at this time with how things appear on the outside - with external things. On the outside, large numbers of students catered for in groups looks good (and, therefore, justifies our funding), but looking more closely at what this **means**, at whether real learning occurs, may not confirm the value of this method of teaching. Assessing this is very difficult. Giving evaluation sheets to students at the end of a class provides little real information on whether learning has occurred, just as establishing, in an 'objective' way, the gains made by students in ongoing individual work is difficult.

However, while recognising the limitations of much group work, working with groups does have some advantages. Apart from being cost effective, it was apparent through working with the MAEBS students that students benefited intellectually from group discussion, where students were resources for each other and could offer insight and knowledge apart from the teachers. Working co-operatively in small groups within the class, sharing resources etc., established a co-operative learning model that students can utilise in their future study. And of course, sharing mutual concerns and anxieties, and the emotional support students gave to each other, were critical factors in students' perception of the value of the Study Skills subject. Students also made friendships and contacts from the course that enhanced their university experience, often an important issue for mature age students who usually know no-one on their entry to university.

As Academic Skills teachers, then, understanding the complexity of the learning process and the internal factors that affect a persons' capacity to learn, may enable us both to work more effectively with individuals, or at least to understand why they might be 'stuck', and to think about our group work in different ways, to facilitate student learning. It may be difficult to establish ongoing groups that involve a commitment of time without the incentive of gaining credit for the class, but there are certainly many students, especially those at risk, who could benefit from academic skills being taught in this way. It is up to us, armed with an understanding of the learning process, to attempt to work with receptive decision-makers within our tertiary institutions to convince them of the value of this kind of group work, and, of course, of concurrent work. Utilising both settings for students can enhance the learning experience, as was evident with the Study Skills subject taught as part of the Mature Age Entry Bridging Scheme at Melbourne University.

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HOW DOES DIALOGIC LEARNING WORK?

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ABSTRACT

Subject lecturers can point to students passing their subjects as an obvious measure that they have learned. While Language and Learning staff can frequently point to the good results of their students, perhaps they need to look into more subtle evidence of their effect on student learning. In the case of individual sessions, student evaluations suggest that the students experience this as a particularly intense and satisfying form of learning, but little work has been done on what kind of learning it is and how it happens. How/where can we say that learning is taking place? This paper examines the discourse of (audio) taped individual sessions between students and Language and Learning staff in an attempt to begin seeking answers to these questions. From a perspective influenced by Bahktin and Vygotsky, and using insights from systemic functional linguistics, the paper explores how dialogic learning can be said to work, and what is distinctive about it.

One-to-one teaching is getting a bad press. Increasingly it is regarded as a waste of time to engage with students on an individual basis. And indeed in these days of what is delicately called fiscal constraint and with the approaching explosion of teaching via electronic means, it cannot be denied that those of us involved in language and academic support need to have very sound reasons why we include this mode of teaching in our repertoire, or be prepared to give it up. Even John Swales, while acknowledging that this type of service is 'well established' and 'of proven value', remarks 'The only major problem with such consultancies is that they are hopelessly cost-ineffective' Swales (1987: 45).

At the level of economics, one might reply that it is cost-effective if it enables students to complete degrees, who (for a variety of reasons) would otherwise not complete them. And if one takes into account 'human cost' or even, God forbid, the pursuit of excellence, the effectiveness of this mode of teaching would appear to require further consideration. Furthermore, for a needs-based teaching program, teachers can be of little use unless they know what those needs are, as suggested by the title to Kate Chanock's paper (this volume) 'Listening to one, talking to one hundred'.

One way of approaching the challenge of validating the one-to-one session is to use precisely the expertise for which we are employed, and attempt to describe and analyse the interaction with a view to exploring how the learning might be taking place, and if its value appears sufficient to pursue it. The field appears to be wide open for investigation of the nature, let alone the value, of the one-to-one teaching session. This paper is best viewed as a tentative step in that direction.

WHAT KIND OF INTERACTION?

The one-to-one session has not been given the same degree of close analysis as, say, classroom teaching (for fairly obvious reasons) or workplace interactions or even casual conversation. The individual teaching session has points in common with each of these interactions but is still, I want to argue, significantly different. Useful research has been conducted on the classroom interaction of the school which gives us information about how discourse is structured to achieve the learning goals of the classroom, usually as defined and determined by the teacher (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Teachers traditionally determine and initiate topics, elicit responses and have the greatest control over the amount and nature of the follow-up which goes on. In workplace settings, particularly cross-cultural ones, although relevant research has been conducted into task-based interactions (Willing, 1992) and casual interactions where collaborative communication has been central (Neil, 1996), the context, the status relations and the participants' goals are different again.

It is important to realise at the outset that the macro-goals of the participants in the one-to-one advising session may be very similar: for the teacher, clarification and enhancement of the student's understanding; for the student, receiving attention to individual needs, development of language, and a deeper comprehension of the demands of the task at hand (commonly a writing task for a given subject). Micro-goals, conceivably, may be seen to differ when we examine the discourse. In any case, goals may be strategised differently by teacher and student. Given the under-theorised nature of the interaction, it will be necessary to employ several different frameworks to frame and describe the data, chief of which are Bakhtin's notion of *dialogic understanding*, Vygotsky's concept of the *zone of proximal development*, Lave and Wenger's (1991) *situated learning*, and for the analysis of the discourse, the insights of Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics.

FRAMEWORKS FOR ANALYSIS

First of all, let us review some theoretical and methodological considerations. There is as yet no comparable descriptive account of spoken discourse which approaches the level of delicacy achieved by Halliday, Martin et. al. in their description of the grammatical system. Recurring regularities in talk cannot provide the sort of internal evidence of conversational functions for which analysts hope (Schiffrin, 1988: 271). How does one arrive at a complete understanding of context and its interaction with language, for instance, or judge whether a pattern occurs with enough regularity? The ethnomethodologists remind us that face to face communication both constitutes social process and is constituted by language, in contrast to written communication. Speech act theorists remind us that what speakers intend and what they say can be two different things. Lacking a grammar of speech, how should we proceed?

Bakhtin shares with Halliday the conviction that all language, all sign systems are ideological, that is, they *mean* (Emerson 1986). For Bakhtin (1981: 288) though, language should not be regarded as a system: for him, extralinguistic forces constitute the language and its history. Thus, every utterance *means* and is part of a greater whole. This leads us to his central theory of *dialogism*. He speaks of the 'internal dialogism of the word': 'every word is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates' (p. 280). Bakhtin draws the focus away from the sentence as the basic constituent of meaning in speech; what he calls the 'expressive intonation', as opposed to the 'grammatical intonation' of the sentence, is only available in the *utterance* (Bakhtin 1986:90). For him, dialogic relations can be separated in time and space, containing echoes of other authors, other subjects, and can be between two different people or between an earlier and a later self:

The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word (1981: 280).

The meaning of an utterance is understood by the listener against a background of contradictory opinions and points of view, so that reception is never passive: it establishes a series of complex interrelationships with the spoken word. The speaker enters into 'dialogical relationships' with certain aspects of the 'alien conceptual system of the understanding receiver' (p.282). Discourse becomes 'dialogic' when it becomes relativised, aware of competing definitions and interpretations. Bakhtin is often speaking of dialogic relations at the broadest cultural level, but his notion of dialogic understanding also offers us a way in to understand co-terminous interaction.

Vygotsky had something of the same understanding of the competing influences of the words of others (of authorities) and one's own internal voice (Emerson, 1986). In a sense, the child's growth to intellectual and moral maturity, in Vygotsky's terms, taking over the communicative and regulative responsibilities of the adult, is another way of looking at his/her growth into dialogical understanding with the culture, in Bakhtin's terms. For Vygotsky, the child learns in the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978), assisted by a wiser peer or teacher, and thus, in a very Bakhtinian way, accomplishes individual learning by means of dialogue. There are several key features to Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development. He defines it as:

the distance between the actual developmental 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 (1978: 86).

The adult or older peer serves the learner as a vicarious form of consciousness until such time as the child achieves that conscious control over a new function or conceptual system and can solve similar problems without assistance; hence,

Vygotsky's basic belief that 'social transaction is the vehicle of education' (Bruner 1985). For useful 'scaffolding' activity to take place, the adult must know at what stage the learner is, must use appropriate language, must understand what the learner is aiming at from the learner's point of view, and must possess an overall conception of the objectives to be attained. This situation perhaps obtains ideally for the young child cared for by an adult; it is only intermittently the model for learning once a child is at school. Where it does take place is in 'conferencing' sessions about student writing, which may take place at any stage of an individual's education and which will be considered briefly below.

Before beginning to explore the specific features of the one-to-one session, it is useful to outline the important work of Lave and Wenger (1991) who have essentially extended the thought of Bakhtin and, in particular, Vygotsky, in their theory of what they call 'legitimate peripheral participation'. This they describe as 'an interactive process in which the learner engages by simultaneously performing in several roles', each implying 'a different sort of responsibility, a different set of role relations, and different interactive involvement' (p. 23). While their case studies are chiefly those of more obvious 'apprentice' relationships, their theory is clearly relevant to other learning situations (such as the supervisor-postgraduate student relationship, see Clerehan & Moodie, 1996). Lave and Wenger are concerned to emphasise the *context* of a changing shared social practice as significant in the unfolding of learning. The focus is on, not the *teaching* curriculum with its 'prescriptive view of the target practice' (p. 97), but the *learning* curriculum, which provides 'situated opportunities for the improvisational development of new practice'. It is, they observe, important to be able to 'talk within' a practice, the purpose being not to learn *from* talk, but to learn *to* talk. And instructional assistance should, finally, not be understood as a purely interpersonal matter, but with respect to 'a practice as a whole with its multiplicity of relations' (p. 114).

Of the 'conferencing' session as part of the English curriculum, Gumperz (1982: 5) writes 'unlike most learning situations, it is a conversation with dialogic properties ... meanings are being continuously negotiated by speaker and hearer and judgements either confirmed or changed by the reactions they evoke'. This is usually embedded in the assessment process with the teacher in the teaching and assessing role, which differs from the one-to-one session of the language and learning program. It is to the distinctive general features of the language and learning sessions that we now turn.

It is usually the student's choice to attend such sessions. This contrasts with, for example, Goldstein and Conrad's (1990) study where they examine the involvement of students in writing conferences in relation to revisions they later make to their work. These conferences are, as we have said, 'compulsory', part of the work in the ESL sequence that leads to Freshman Composition. Our hypothesis is that because a student has sought to attend the language and learning session, potentially at least, the discourse of teaching and learning may differ with reference, in particular, to the three variables of register: object and activity organisation (field), participant relations organisation (tenor), and medium or channel organisation (mode).

A further implication of this element of choice is that status roles are equivocal: the lecturer is 'the teacher', but her role is also to address the needs of the learner as defined by the learner. The student, while admitting imperfection by attending the session, is also, to a degree, a member of the relevant discourse community and thus a subject expert in a way the lecturer is not. The lecturer may conceivably, by coincidence, have in-depth knowledge of the particular discipline, but her 'outsider' status (Chanock, 1994) puts her in a position where she must defer to the expert 'insider' knowledge of the student. This has interesting implications for our view of dialogic learning and the zone of proximal development.

What it suggests is that the interaction will not be very like a classroom where the teacher is likely to be the knowledge bearer and the director of the learning; neither will it be like the casual conversation where turns are short, and aims other than pragmatic ones, including the maintenance of the social relationship, are not always transparent. In the intersection of the personal relationship and the motivation for learning, there can be expected a potentially intense experience, particularly for second language acquisition: rich in subject matter, social interaction and focus on language. Even in longer (teacher) turns, where dialogue can sometimes appear to become monologue, dialogism may still be realised in the utterance in the speaker's awareness of the other's presence and role as demonstrated below, and in the multiple references to other texts and other wordings. In the amount of exophoric reference, the utterance is highly dependent on its context: at times it could be said that the text (the student's assignment) not only accompanies, but even constructs the dialogue which is taking place. This way of thinking is closely related to Craswell's (1994) description of the dialogic development of skills by 'formulating for students questions of text construction which need to be tested against discipline constraints, individual research needs and other relevant variables'. Craswell's account is linked, in turn, to Taylor's (1993) hermeneutic emphasis on understanding as essentially dialogic in nature, taking the form of 'a dialogue

between a student and all those "others" who constitute the world of learning' (p. 59). The present paper attempts to examine sections of three individual sessions, conscious of the limits of generalisability, with a view to seeing how understanding emerges, not as a simple clarification of material, or even of the student's thoughts, but as a practice realised from moment to moment in the act of talk.

PROCEDURE

Subjects

The focus of this paper is three one to one sessions, two which took place at Monash University and one at LaTrobe. It takes a functional approach, seeking to explore how the discourse works to realise the goals of the two speakers. The only criteria for selection of student subject was that the student had been seeing the language and learning lecturer for some time and that she/he was happy to consent in writing to being audiotaped. There was thus the advantage, for the interview, that teacher and learner were familiar with each other and with the teaching and learning situation, with each other's 'interactive frames' (Schiffrin 1989). An alternative approach would be to consider the discourse produced by complete newcomers in this situation.

The first student, whom we will call Albert, was an international student from Indonesia in his mid-twenties, in the third year of his PhD in Engineering. He had been attending the language and learning program at the university from time to time for some months and had been submitting sections of the thesis to the language and learning lecturer. This was, effectively, his first conference paper, and the session was the third and final session devoted to this. The paper outlined his development of a tool for integrated network planning (Electrical and Computer Systems).

The second student we will call Paula. Paula was in her early twenties, a native Chinese speaker who had been in Australia only two years, having migrated from Hong Kong with a business degree. She was enrolled in the Masters of Business Administration and had been attending sessions with the author to discuss her assignments on and off for almost two years. The assignment was a critical review of an article on layoffs and their effect on corporate financial performance for the subject, Human Resources Management. The teacher in this case is the author. It was recognised that a disadvantage might have been that the author-as-participant could be conscious of the interests of the research and thus bias the data; however, in practice, the task at hand was found to be involving enough for minimal consciousness of the research interests during the taping.

The third student, Christine, was a mature-age woman of approximately thirty, enrolled in first-year Business. She had attended the language and learning program previously to discuss an Organisational Behaviour assignment. The current assignment was for Macroeconomics, on the following topic: 'Banks, left to manage their deposits and lending, will overlend, and cause economic instability'. For all three, the lecturers had read the work prior to the session.

Data Analysis

The interview was conducted in the usual setting, the lecturer's office, audiotaped and transcribed. The first two sessions were longer than usual, even for postgraduate students, lasting over an hour; the third was half an hour. The transcription of the session with Paula was difficult as her pronunciation was frequently non-native-like, final consonants, particularly, were regularly omitted. Transcription resulted in some 30 pages of text for the postgraduates and 8 for the undergraduate student.

DISCUSSION

With the general framework of the relevant concepts of Bakhtin and Vygotsky, we will now analyse sections of the dialogue. In the Birmingham school account of classroom discourse, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Coulthard, Montgomery and Brazil (1981) developed functional categories at a number of levels of delicacy, such as lesson, transaction, exchange, move, act and so on, which seemed at first useful, but have largely been discarded as not suited to map on to this type of interaction. While the consultation is clearly a teaching-learning event with a planned and pedagogic character, it also has the surface of a spontaneous interaction. Thus any analysis which purports to imbue such spoken discourse with a patterned structure, even that provided by some of the systemic functional literature, such as 'phases', 'transitions' and the like (Gregory, 1985), seems doomed. Consequently, it is thought preferable to allow the data to drive the analysis with a minimum of categorisation, other than using the systemic functional variables of register: field, tenor and mode. The term *interaction* is used to denote the consultation session.

How does the student learn in such a way that is not possible under any other conditions?

In terms of mode (channel of communication), the interaction consists of mutually contributory dialogue where each speaker is concerned to play their part in the task at hand. The language is highly contextualised with extensive reference to the written piece and to the context of the writing: is it a joint piece? How was it drafted? Had the lecturer read this particular research article? The heavily collaborative nature can be seen in the number of times a turn is begun in each of the sessions by 'yes', 'OK', 'that's right', 'right', 'so', which is not simple back-channelling, but functions to continue, expand, elaborate the other speaker's turn in a form of joint text production (Neil, 1996). Not unexpectedly, given the broadly shared goals, there are few moments of conflict resolution; there is, however, plenty of opportunity for disagreement, for instance in the following extract from Interaction 2:

- T. So, well, shouldn't it go under Critique then? Shouldn't it go under the gen- the general heading of Critique do you think?
- P. So, maybe this is OK, yeah, to make it, yeah I think your suggestion is all- I think is also better
- T. So if if you went with your original thinking on it- so how would it work then? You'd have?

Here, the use of *so* seems to enable the two speakers to interact with each other's positions, effectively modulating the interpersonal distance. The dynamism of the exchange is such that the student is not simply at liberty to adopt the teacher's position. As soon as she attempts to do this, the teacher shifts position and the student is forced to confront the practical implications of her earlier choice. The power relations are subsumed in the development of dialogic understanding.

This is not to say there are no distinctions at the discourse and at the clause level between 'teacher' moves and 'student' moves. In the following examples from Interaction 1, the teacher uses thematic equatives to identify and make clear the discourse topic:

*what I'm interested in
this is what I felt
what you were ... actually doing*

The student uses thematic equatives to explain or justify to the teacher, and in a sense, to himself, the reasons for his beliefs or actions:

*that's why I try to structure
why I need to do this work
why this is the problem*

At the discourse level, it can be seen in the following sequence how the dialogic understanding is constructed up to the point where the teacher herself asks the central question the student wants answered. The first few moments of the interaction had been devoted to 'contextualising' discussion, where the student and teacher jointly established the relevant community of practice and then moved fairly seamlessly into discussion of textual matters. Both the coherence of the article and of the student's paper is then the focus:

Interaction 2

- P: maybe that is not very, very ah, fluent or the flow will be a big problem maybe, so- (0)
- T: (0)What might be a problem? (0)
- P: (0) The flow, I mean ..How this, how this is ah ...
Is it complete complete for, addressing to the, to this ah to this coherence of the article? (0)
- T: (0) So does it flow within this section
- P: [Yeah Yeah Yeah]

- T: ... and does it relate to the *??* of this section?
- P: I like to discuss with you whether
- T: Ye-es
- P: this is ... okay.
- T: Yes, see I suppose the thing is you're making a fairly important point about the fact that the article doesn't hang together
- P: Mm, mm
- T: very neatly, and so my feeling would be that maybe you should say something both in the introduction and in the conclusion about this, this-sort of-flaw ..
- P: Mm, mm
- T: .. in the design of the article.
- P: Yeah, in the conclusion, we haven't had the conclusion is, one reason is ah, because beforehand this is ah very not co- .. not ah, OK.
- T: Mm
- P: Only after on Wednesday (0)
- T: (0) Mm
- P: when we meet, we have lesson on Wednesday
- T: Yeah
- P: and then after that I, I, I get his part and my part,
- T: Mm,
- P: ... join together
- T: [Mm]
- P: then after that I go home and try to think how I can make it more not to repeat and not to, not to ah, make it more ...
- T: make it more coherent, in fact, yes (BOTH LAUGH)
- P: ... more coherent but I don't know whether is, now is all OK (0)
- T: (0) Yes
- P: ... so the main thing is I have to talk to you and I would like to discuss this. For critically analyse
- T: Yes
- P: ah, what should be the meaning for ah, to an other article, WHAT should we HAVE, basically?
- T: What should you have in a critical analysis? (0)
- P: (0) Yes, yes.

The (micro) objective of the teacher in the sequence before this one had been to establish a pragmatic understanding of the situation: who had written what, what were the dynamics of the co-authoring which had taken place. The student is keen to steer the discussion on to textual issues and moves to get the teacher's response to her decision to move part of the original conclusion into the introduction. Her question ('whether this is OK') refers to this part only; interestingly it is *she* then who reverts to the pragmatic issue, perceiving that in fact it is closely related to the question of the coherence of the review. She is now in a position where she can broach the question she has wanted to ask, have she and her partner got the genre right? ('what should we have, basically?') So we see how the two different frames (pragmatic issues/ textual issues) bounce off each other across a number of turns and finally intersect, how the understandings of teacher and learner interact dialogically to get the two of them to the point where the state of the student's knowledge can be exposed and the learning she wants can begin.

We note also the recurrence of tracking by both speakers, serving to ensure for both speakers 'that the experiential meaning of both speakers is shared' (Martin, 1992: 67). This takes the form of back-channelling realised paralinguistically ('Mm, mm') and by positive polarity ('Yeah', 'Yes'), occasionally overlapping, but usually following with no pause or only a small pause. They are not follow-up moves and do not involve a change of turn. When the teacher completes a clause of the student's, whether for reasons of assisting her with a lexical item or to make lexical links with key ideas (such as 'coherence'), the student usually continues almost as if it were her own idea: that is; there is a dialogism operating whereby the other voice is anticipated and absorbed almost as if it were not separate. An alternative explanation of the slow build to the important question of the appropriate 'genre' could be that there is some cross-cultural interference (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982:12), the student not liking to be too direct in asking for what she wants. Certainly both the Indonesian and the Australian student tend to be more direct: it is difficult to judge.

There is heavy contextual dependency, and thus much exophoric reference in this section (as there is throughout most of the rest of it), with the student and the teacher referring extensively to the review and the original article. The intertextuality is another Bakhtinian feature throughout each interaction; the dialogue refers constantly to these written texts, as well as to the student's lecturer, the other student author, to their use of language, their activities and their expectations. These should be seen as key presences in the community of practice of which all three students and their teachers are aware.

Because the focus is the student's text, teaching and metalearning points arise not in a prescriptive teacher-driven way, but from the interaction itself. The teacher points out that the current assignment is clearer than her previous one:

Interaction 3

- C. You know I sort of can't
- T. [manage]
- C. look beyond the obvious .. you know like .. people behave how they do and I don't really CARE why they do, they just DO.
- T. Yeah, you're not interested in analysing (0)
- C. (0) Yeah, I think that must be it, I mustn't be very um, I think I just sort of take it for what it is
- T. Mmm .. I think you'll probably develop the skill (0)
- C. (0) of REASON sort of
- T. Yeah, analytical
- C. Mm mm
- T. [skills] yeah yeah. This has to, this is analytical too in a way but perhaps you're dealing with things that are more ... real.
- C. I think that it's just that I'm more ...

Here the student is using the interaction to make a teaching point for herself, an insight which is subsequently put into practical effect by the teacher as she draws from the student's text a way of making the analysis more explicit, namely by including a graph.

In the session with Albert, there is much made by the teacher, and gradually by the student, of the fact that most of the structuring of the logic of his information in the first two sections of his paper is in his mind and not on the page, available to the reader. About half way through the session, he observes very slowly and deliberately (and wryly):

- A. We have to be quite diligent to keep telling them.

Some discussion of grammatical points and dictionaries intervenes and shortly after, we have this exchange:

- T. All right, so now you see what I'm going to ask here. What am I going to say to you about the beginning of section 3?

A. 'What are you going to tell me here and why do you tell me' (BOTH LAUGH).

T. That's right, that's exactly right, two nice little questions that you answer even in your own head, all right?

We see how he has now internalised the teacher's questions, which are for him in conflict with his previous experience of writing in Indonesia where he would work his way through the background before arriving at the main statement.

One of the features of the dialogic understanding that arise in these exchanges is that there is often a lengthy build-up, usually of one speaker expanding, elaborating, re-phrasing or instantiating the other speaker's turn. It thus represents quite a length of discourse. The following is manageable in length, and is a striking example of what sometimes happens: a sequence of turns where each speaker is finishing the other's thought.

Interaction 1

T: See, what I'm interested in is that when you read another person's paper ..

A. Mm mm

T. are you aware .. of the structure? You know, do you were you examining um HOW they wrote it?

A: Sometime (LAUGHS) but .I don't notice it I mean (0)

T: (0) No, you were looking for the ideas,

A. [Yah, yah, look at, yah]

T. so you were really looking at how he planned, how HIS system worked.

A: I didn't really attempt to see the structure of their paper (0)

T. (0) [no]

A. I just zipped (slipped?) on to the, to the ..

T: ..the details,

A. [the details]

T. [the information] that it contained (0)

A. (0) That's right

T. So you could look at the abstract and say yes this is going to be useful and

A. [o-oh this is // so let's see how they're doing it (LAUGH)]

T. right right. (laugh, laugh).

A: And I just jumped to how they're doing it, because...

T: That's righ-, that's what is interesting to you . and what I'd say now is that you see what you NEED to do, in order to write a good paper yourself (0)..

A: (0) You have to read a lot. (LAUGH LAUGH)

T well you have to understand the the LOGIC behind it, you know, and the stages ...

From the transcript the reader could be forgiven for thinking that the teacher is dominating the discourse, taking over the student's turns. On the tape, however, the two speak more and more quickly, the student's enthusiasm and engagement becoming more and more marked as the mutual understanding deepens. The teacher's turns are longer (as are all the teachers'), but the amount of back-channelling, the continuative 'so', the use of 'right', 'well' etc, the completing of each others' utterances or saying the same thing at the same time points to far greater involvement on the part of the student than might appear on the surface. Again, there are only a handful of positive comments from the teacher, but the subject knowledge of the student is always respected by hedging ('I want to really know, I feel'; 'but you don't have quite that') etc and the limitations of knowledge of the teacher are expressed as well, so the message is consistently that these are small problems which can be solved with mutual input. One way this is done is for the teacher to stress the minimal nature of the learning that needs to be done, for example:

- T. And really also it would be very helpful to take a couple of well-written papers, just to see how they do it, and you can take a few examples of how they link it together and how they make that logical step, so my suggestion of that last paragraph, say, then you learn the tricks, you learn how to make it easy for yourself ...

The notion that all that has to be learned are 'tricks' makes the task achievable.

As we noted earlier, the field of the discourse is that of academic work, revolving around the *content* of the writing (eg firms, motivation, measures, costs, downsizing, layoffs); and *texts*, : the student's (whether collaborative or not), including previous drafts and texts of the student's, assignment questions, other examples of the particular genre, articles of researchers in the discipline, and adjunct texts such as dictionaries and grammar books. The most salient lexical 'text' strings relate to such things as text organisation (critique, design, sections, information); and text logic (coherence, flow, ideas, details, questions, analysis, skill, discussion, thinking). Also present are the *community of practice participants*: the two speakers, the lecturer, the supervisor, 'the reader', the partner, authors by name, students, conference delegates. A representative utterance is the following:

Interaction 3

- T. Maybe you need to check with your tutor or lecturer whether they're expecting you to talk about [...] Talk to some of your classmates and see what their interpretation of it is as well

What is interesting is the way these three elements of the field (content, texts and community of practice participants) are selected by both teacher and student to enmesh the exchange in the community of social practice, the dynamism of which is realized in the discourse relationships.

In relation to the concept of dialogic learning, the most interesting element of register is tenor, which refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants and their role relationships. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of examining the transcripts was that the students ask very few questions and the teachers do most of the question-asking. One effect of the teacher asking the questions is that the distribution of primary and secondary knower in each exchange becomes more evenly spread, another reason for the subtle shifts in power we noticed earlier. The absence of communication breakdown is notable; unlike in a class, it is possible for the teacher to detect any failures and none was detected (save for two instances where word meaning needed to be clarified).

We need to examine how it is the students get their needs met. All three interactions operate as a process whereby the teacher appears not to wish to issue explicit instructions, but, most commonly, to present options to the student who has to decide if he/she wishes to take them up or not. Paula, unlike the other two, sometimes talks as if the teacher saying something means she has to 'put it' into her text, and obviously her life would be much easier if the teacher simply said 'do this', but there are rarely any commands in the teacher talk - most are modalised suggestions, quite heavily hedged with 'actually', 'just', 'really', 'maybe', 'possibly', 'probably'. The student is fundamentally aware that the situation requires a negotiated settlement, the teacher having the 'scaffolding' role, but the student having ultimate power of veto. One of the powerful elements of each of the interactions is the subtle shifts which take place from point to point:

Interaction 3

- T. Are you going to look at the other side of it too? That if they did overlend what might happen? (0)
- C. (0) Not really, no, because I don't know that I've, I don't know that I'll have room to do that ... Do I need to do that, do you think?
- T. Not necessarily (0)
- C. (0) to prove the other side's not right?
- T. You probably need to show that you have an understanding of what might happen if the opposite did occur.

The teacher's seemingly neutral question prompts sudden hesitation in the student as her pragmatic reasoning is given a jolt. The teacher then pulls back ('Not necessarily'), but tellingly, the student then completes her utterance, glossing the teacher's original inquiry, which in turn pushes the teacher to make her suggestion, albeit tentatively couched.

The interaction between teacher and Albert is marked by the least number of tentative suggestions, probably for the reason that the teacher is dealing with a genre (the scientific article) about which more is known (Swales, 1990). So in this exchange, we have more utterances of the type

'that's not really what you want to do yet'
'The poor reader might be lost, so you want to help them by ...'
'Yeah, you have to ... don't just leave it implicit again'

Following this last comment, the implicit/explicit issue is continued by the student himself as a kind of self-talk ('Explicit, explicit', he mutters), and the teacher responds; 'Yes, that's right. And if I know at the beginning that's what you are going to do, that makes me a better reader'. Here, the teacher's judgement is significant for the student, in that it effectively underlines his role in the community of practice, giving a pragmatic reason for the textual change, to which he responds 'All right, that's right'. A further interesting feature of this interaction is the way the teacher takes up different identities: observer ('you can't make the reader struggle through a terrible thick mud ...'); the 'ideal reader' ('you're telling me what that situation is, all right?'); and the student himself ('I'm showing that it requires this'), in this way enacting the dynamism of the social practice in which the student is participating.

A final telling example of the way dialogic learning can work is evident in the following joint composing process:

Interaction 1

- T. link across to section three
A. [mm]
T. "in order to do this"
A. [hm mm]
T. COMMA
A. [comma]
T. what, what do you propo - a ... ? (0)
A. (0) "I propose this model
T. [yes]
A. a constraint-based model, which up on there the deductive process is taken place"
T. Right, so, like in this first couple of sentences (0)
A. (0)[right]
T. that's what you have to have, isn't it (0)
A. (0) [I see]
T. so in order to devise an integrated network problem solver, um
A. [I propose]
T. [the prop] or you could have the yes, in order to do that, yes, why not say 'we propose', is that what you do?
A. [Yeah]
T. Or 'I propose', is it? (0)
-A. (0) Yeah, 'the constraint-based model is proposed...
T. Right
A. with, with um ...'

Here, the student appears to accept the teacher's suggestion (Yes), but actually alters the wording to the more 'written' passive voice. This formulation is later taken up by the teacher in a further turn, followed by 'Is that OK?' and the student says 'Yes'. The teacher has learnt from the dialogue.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has attempted to explore how an understanding which encompasses personal, textual and contextual matters grows through, and is realised in, the dialogue. This is illuminated by the general framework provided by the Bakhtinian notion of dialogic relationships; the Vygotskian concept of the learner taking on the teacher's problem-solving capabilities; and the Lave and Wenger notion of the learner's initiation into the community of social practice. The present paper has dealt with a small section of only three interactions. Further research on this type of 'teaching and learning' language could be made both more intensive, perhaps with the aid of a concordancer, and in taking prosodic factors into account; and more extensive, dealing with a number of interactions with different teachers and learners. In the intensely collaborative talk of the one-to-one session, the horizons of teaching and learning are freed up to become more like each other, almost to fuse, in an exchange which enables a growth of understanding within the awareness of a community of practice.

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APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions

[] = speech overlap

(0) = when speech from B follows speech from A without perceptible pause (latching)

.. = brief pause

... = pause of at least half a second

CAPS = very emphatic stress

/ / = inaudible words

- = arrow at left highlights key line in example

WHY THE PROVISION OF ONE-TO-ONE LANGUAGE AND LEARNING SUPPORT IS COST-EFFECTIVE FOR UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

As economic rationalist analysis of activities becomes increasingly necessary for tertiary institutions, the *seemingly* cost-ineffective provision of language and/or learning support on a one-to-one basis is likely to be under threat. This paper explored whether the provision of one-to-one support is cost-effective and examined the benefits of such support. The applications of a particular model of teaching, an interview schedule and a learning strategies inventory with individual students studying at RMIT were examined. It was found that there were direct benefits from teaching one-to-one to working with larger numbers. These included a greater awareness of the relevance of the factors affecting student learning and an improved focus and quality in the support provided. It was also found that information gained from teaching one-to-one led to a greater understanding of the academic conventions of disciplines and improved liaison and communication with academic staff, both of which contributed to an increased integration of the teaching of academic discourse into the disciplines. This, then, has resulted in an increase in the number of students who are able to benefit from language and learning support, without any increase in resources. Some of the implications of the findings are discussed.

The recently announced federal government changes to funding in the higher education sector are likely to encourage decisions within universities over the next few years that have far-reaching effects on teaching and learning. Exactly what these decisions will include is yet to be seen but it is likely that cost-cutting will be high on the agenda. Given that salaries are a large part of any university's spending, staffing arrangements are likely to be examined in this light. If so, staff-student ratios will probably be of particular interest as these are a *prima facie* measure of value for money in terms of salary spending.

In the majority of universities in Australia, language and learning support is provided on a one-to-one basis, to some extent. It would be safe to assume that in the majority of university administrations, the provision of a service such as this, that is, with low staff-student ratios, is generally not viewed as cost-effective. In the current political climate, then, such a service is likely to be under threat. It is true that one-to-one teaching *seems* costly. The problem for language and learning support services is that the administrations often do not view the provision of one-to-one support in context. This study sought to investigate the provision of such support in the context of some of the other activities that most language and learning services undertake.

The study investigated how three tools used in one-to-one teaching contributed towards establishing and providing support for larger numbers of students in groups. Specifically, the use of a teaching model, an interview schedule and a learning strategies inventory were examined. The author's reflections on the use of the model and schedule, coupled with numerical data collected through use of the inventory, were used to determine whether the view that the provision of one-to-one support is not cost-effective is, in fact, correct.

Because of its relative infancy, the area of language and learning support does not have a large body of published knowledge. Literature in the specific area of one-to-one teaching in language and learning is particularly sparse. This study, then, is an attempt to make a contribution to that body of knowledge.

For the purposes of the study, it was assumed that high staff-student ratios were an indication of cost-effectiveness. The aim of the study was to provide evidence that, despite the low staff-student ratio involved, the provision of one-to-one language and learning support is cost-effective for universities. Specifically, the expectation was that examination of one-to-one teaching would reveal processes which led to the initiation and maintenance of work with larger numbers. This expectation came from an as yet empirically unsupported consensus among many language and learning advisers, including the author, that the provision of one-to-one support is somehow an essential part of the provision of support

to larger groups. Although many advisers agree that this is so, the argument is difficult to sustain without evidence. This study sought to provide the necessary corroboration for the general impressions about this issue.

METHODOLOGY

The three tools used to gather data for this study are a model of teaching, an interview schedule and a learning strategies inventory. Each is described in turn below.

Model of Teaching. The Cognitive Apprenticeship Model (CAM) of teaching (Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989) is an attempt to initiate the novice (student) into the world of the expert (practitioner/academic) by first articulating and modelling the expert's behaviour and then supporting students' attempts to approximate this behaviour (see Devlin (1995) for a more detailed description and discussion of the CAM). The model has been used for individual support by the author in RMIT's language and learning service for several years. The author's reflections on the use of the model were recorded over 12 months, from mid-1995 until mid-1996. For the purposes of this study, these written reflections were then reviewed and used to identify how teaching one-to-one using the CAM informed work with larger numbers.

Interview Schedule. In 1995, an interview schedule for use with individual students seeking language and learning assistance was developed by the author. This schedule is an adaptation of Murphy, Hudson, King and Remenyi's (1985) schedule for the behavioural assessment of children's problems. The current schedule consists of nine sections: (1) Establishment and General Introduction; (2) Background Information; (3) Problem-Specific Information; (4) Diagnosis; (5) Clarification of Expectations; (6) Teaching/Learning; (7) Homework; (8) Scheduling next appointment and (9) Observations and/or Comments (See Appendix A). Two of the aims in developing a schedule for use with tertiary students were to improve the information-gathering process and to monitor and improve the relational and communicative aspects of working with others (Bogels, 1994). In the context of extensive cuts in resources for language and learning support at RMIT, the schedule was also a tool for ensuring that the scope and limitations of the individual support available to students were made clear at their first contact with the service. For the purposes of this study, the application of the schedule over first semester, 1996, was examined for its contribution to teaching both one-to-one and larger numbers.

The schedule was used with 16 students, studying in a range of disciplines at RMIT, on their first visit for 1996 to the Language and Learning Unit. The schedule was structured and standardised, that is, administered in the same form and in the same manner to each student. It could be argued, then, that the information gained can therefore be presumed to be somewhat more reliable than information gained simply through personal reflection. Immediately after use with each of the 16 students, the author recorded comments and reflections related to the usefulness of the schedule, in itself for the individual session, and for informing work with larger numbers. These comments and reflections were then examined and a number of themes identified.

Learning Strategies Inventory. Weinstein, Palmer and Schulte's (1987) Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) is a self report measure that assumes that students need certain strategies in order to learn and study effectively. The inventory contains ten scales: five that deal with the affective and five with the cognitive aspects of learning. The affective scales relate to how students organise their time and space to promote systematic study behaviour and include Attitude, Motivation, Time Management, Anxiety and Concentration. The cognitive scales are related to aspects of cognitive strategic processing relevant to academic performance and include Information Processing, Selecting Main Ideas, Study Aids, Self Testing and Test Strategies (Christensen, Massey & Isaacs, 1991).

The LASSI is composed of seventy-seven statements, for each of which a student responds by endorsing, on a five-point scale, a description of how typical each statement is of their behaviour. Each of the ten scales is made up of eight items, except the Selecting Main Ideas (SMI) scale which has five items. Scores can range from 8 to 40 for the eight-item scales and 5 to 25 for the SMI scale. The reliabilities of the scales range from .68 to .85 (Weinstein, 1987).

The LASSI has been used as a diagnostic tool within RMIT's language and learning service over the past two years. For the purposes of this paper, the LASSI profiles of 28 students who had been individual clients of the service in 1996, and who were studying in a range of disciplines, were summarised to give an indication of what sorts of factors might be relevant for a group of students.

RESULTS

Model of Teaching. The author's reflections on the use of this model revealed that a common sequence of events often took place: (1) Over a period of time, through much one-to-one work, the adviser observed and became familiar with aspects of the academic discourse of a discipline, for example, the preferred research methods and writing style; (2) The adviser contacted the course or subject coordinator or a discipline lecturer directly to ask for feedback on the accuracy of her understanding of the discipline conventions (NB: On the basis of this feedback, the adviser refined her understanding and amended her modelling to more closely approximate the discipline expert; (3) This communication with discipline staff often led to a detailed discussion of the importance and potential benefits in articulating the discipline conventions to students and (4) In some cases, this discussion led to programs or sessions being arranged and offered as either voluntary 'extras' or as part of the normal curriculum, sometimes provided solely by the language and learning expert and at other times team-taught by the adviser and the discipline expert.

Interview Schedule. The seven major themes identified from the author's reflections on the use of the interview schedule were learning context, summarising, anxiety, positive reinforcement, rapport, independent learning and concentration. Details of these themes are presented below.

Learning context. The strongest theme to emerge from the examination of the author's reflections was that of the importance of 'the big picture', that is, of the students' learning contexts. The author's reflections indicated that in order to teach a student in the most appropriate way, it was often necessary to take account of factors other than the specific difficulty the student was experiencing with a particular task or skill. These other factors ranged from how the student was feeling emotionally, through how external factors were influencing the students' ability to learn, to the perceived and actual expectations of the student's faculty, department, discipline and/or particular lecturer. General information related to individual student's educational background and previous difficulties, strategies and successes was also invaluable in deciding how to approach teaching each student. It was noted that when working with larger numbers, such a level of awareness would not be possible, nor, perhaps, desirable, but that an awareness and consideration of these factors at some level would probably be beneficial for teaching and learning.

Summarising. Another strong theme to emerge from the examination was that of summarising. Early in the session, while emphasising that the problem/issue would be returned to in more detail shortly, each student was asked to give a brief summary of their problem/issue, in "a sentence or two". This was useful for the adviser as a timely decision about whether the student had attended the appropriate service could be made. The request also proved to be extremely useful for students as it encouraged them to identify why, exactly, they had sought help and to articulate what, exactly, they were concerned about. Several students commented that having to state their reason for attending in one or two sentences "really made me think". Several also commented that summarising helped them to focus on the most salient problem/issue.

The adviser also consciously used summarising later in the interview, particularly in Sections 3, Problem-Specific Information and 6, Teaching/Learning to assist each student in defining their problem/issue and to check for understanding of any new material covered. The author's reflections indicate surprise that this technique was so useful with tertiary students as it had been assumed that it was not generally necessary to review material so thoroughly at this level. It was noted that this technique would probably be at least as useful in a group situation in order to both determine the initial needs of the group and ensure these needs are being addressed as the session or program progresses.

Anxiety. Through the use of the interview schedule, students' anxiety around attending language and learning support and/or admitting they were having difficulties and/or attempting to overcome their difficulties was clearly evident in a number of ways. When asked why they had attended the service, some students' responses included a statement that they were anxious about their (perceived) inability to overcome problems/issues. The anxiety of other students was apparent in more subtle ways. For example, a number of students had great difficulty in presenting a brief synopsis of their problem/issue as requested and tended to talk at length about a number of potential problems and/or issues and other matters. All students were asked what existing strategies and resources they had to overcome their problem/issue. A number were quite certain they had absolutely no way of overcoming their problem/issue and that without immediate language and learning support they would "fail", "drop out" or "have a nervous breakdown". The reflections noted that perceptions such as these are frequently apparent in the one-to-one situation. It was also noted that if effective teaching and learning is to take place, perceptions such as these should, at the very least, be acknowledged. The author reflected that if anxiety is present, it may interfere with or impede the learning process of students, whether they are seen individually or in larger numbers.

Positive reinforcement. In Section 3 of the interview, each student was asked for evidence of past successes and/or achievement with their problem/issue or a similar one. Some students were adamant that they had never had any such success. The interview did not progress until appropriate evidence of past success was offered and discussed and it was often necessary for the adviser to assist the student to identify such success or achievement. This provided an opportunity to offer each student some praise and positive reinforcement in a subtle and genuine way. Without exception, there were very positive responses to this feedback including students physically demonstrating, through their body language, what could be interpreted as increased confidence (for example, by sitting up straighter) as well as smiling at and leaning and moving closer to the adviser. The author reflected that she had unconsciously assumed that positive reinforcement and/or feedback was not particularly important for tertiary students and that this assumption was (evidently) incorrect. It was noted that students' responses to positive reinforcement might not be as visible when working with larger numbers. The author also noted that rapport with most students, but particularly those with whom it had been difficult to establish, often improved after this section of the interview.

Rapport. Use of the interview schedule highlighted the need to focus not only on content but also on the relational and communicative aspects of teaching. Where the adviser was able to communicate an interest in and understanding of their problem/issue to the student, rapport appeared to be enhanced. The reflections noted that most language and learning advisers would probably agree that good rapport with a student assists the teaching and learning process in a one-to-one situation and that there seems no obvious reason why good rapport would not be similarly beneficial in work with larger numbers.

Independent learning. Section 5 of the interview schedule, Clarification of Expectations, emphasises the necessity of the student's involvement in the learning process and the importance of their moving toward independent learning. When asked to confirm that they would take the necessary steps, many students indicated they did not know what independent learning really meant, how to undertake such learning or why it was desirable for them to do so. For example, when asked to explain what they understood independent learning to mean, students' responses included *"studying in the library"*, *"Does it mean doing an adult ed. course?"* and *"I've heard of it..."*. This was quite a surprise to the author who had unconsciously assumed students generally understood what the term meant and that they were generally striving toward becoming independent learners. It was noted that in a one-to-one context and between one meeting and the next, an adviser can pay detailed attention to the development of students' independent learning skills. The author reflected that it is difficult to pay such close attention when working with larger numbers, but that it is no less important to do so.

Concentration. It was clear from close observation of students' behaviour during the interviews, that in every case, their concentration wavered at times. At times, students were clearly focussed on the task at hand, at other times, they were not attending well. The intensity of the individual session, and resulting fatigue for the learner, may account for some of the non-attending in that situation, but it is reasonable to assume that not every student in a group situation will be fully focussed at all times. The author reflected that although it might not be as obvious as it is in a one-to-one situation, students in a group setting are likely to miss parts of a session. The reflections included a proposal that in order to both maximise student concentration and provide opportunities for students to catch up on parts that might have been missed through a lapse in concentration, it may be useful to use a range of engaging teaching and learning strategies as well as summaries and reviews periodically throughout the session.

Learning Strategies Inventory. The means and standard deviations of the scale scores for the 'group' of students who completed the LASSI are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations on the LASSI Scales for the Group of Individual Students

LASSI Scale	n=28	
	M	SD
ATT	31.64	3.98
MOT	27.68	5.57
TMT	22.64	7.24
ANX	20.61	6.44
CON	24.14	6.59
INP	25.39	5.90
SMI	16.25	4.00
STA	24.04	4.46
SFT	22.46	6.13
TST	25.21	4.49

Note: M = Mean scale score, SD = Standard Deviation, ATT = Attitude, MOT = Motivation, TMT = Time Management, ANX = Anxiety, CON = Concentration, INP = Information Processing, SMI = Selecting Main Ideas, STA = Study Aids, SFT = Self Testing, TST = Test Strategies

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that the provision of one-to-one teaching is part of a cost-effective system of language and learning support in a university.

Model of Teaching. The use of the CAM, in the 'micro-classroom' created by the one-to-one teaching situation, led directly to an increased integration of support into the disciplines through the sequence of events described in the previous section. What was learned from teaching one-to-one not only informed work with larger numbers but also facilitated those larger numbers accessing language and learning support.

The cornerstone of the CAM is the modelling of expert knowledge. This knowledge includes not only the facts and concepts of a discipline but also the ways in which these facts and concepts are learned, managed and articulated (see Devlin (1995) for a more detailed discussion). Gathering and modelling the expert knowledge from a range of disciplines is arguably the most challenging aspect of a language and learning adviser's work. As most advisers who have attempted it know, 'cold calling' lecturers to offer 'study skills classes' (especially if normal class time is requested to deliver them) does not often result in a satisfactory outcome. Similarly, generic inter-disciplinary 'lunch-time' classes are generally not well attended by students and, given the disparate needs of such a group, are difficult to teach.

The results of this examination indicate that through the use of the CAM on a one-to-one basis, a satisfactory outcome often resulted. Large numbers of students, who probably otherwise would not have had the opportunity, were provided with proactive, developmental, discipline-specific language and learning support. This is a cost-effective system of dealing with large student populations who could benefit from language and learning input, especially when the resources available to provide such a service are limited. A situation where there is a reactive, remedial focus and the only service provided is to individual students who are sent by discipline staff to have their problems 'fixed' is cost- and, incidentally, often educationally- ineffective. If this sort of service exists in any university, it may well deserve to be under threat.

Interview Schedule. Through use of the interview schedule, a substantial amount was learned from teaching one-to-one that informed work with larger numbers. The importance of attending to students' learning contexts and concentration spans as well as of focusing on establishing rapport were reinforced. The basic teaching concepts of positive reinforcement and summarising as a reviewing technique, which had, perhaps, lost the prominence they deserve in tertiary teaching were revisited. These included the use of positive reinforcement and of summarising as a reviewing

technique. Finally, the realisations that student anxiety is or may be a factor to consider when facilitating students' learning and that independent learning may not be well understood by students were also made. Arguably, the author's learning could have occurred through paying appropriate attention while working with larger numbers. Perhaps, however, it would not have occurred as readily, nor have been so convincingly supported, had the opportunity to examine teaching in the one-to-one situation not been available.

As hoped, the relational and communicative aspects of teaching were highlighted and improved. The author felt that through paying detailed attention to these aspects in a one-to-one situation and by doing so, refining them, the quality of work with individuals was increased. As well as this, through the use of a standardised interview schedule, the potential to increase the quality of these aspects of group teaching was enhanced.

Learning Strategies Inventory. In the absence of norms for an Australian sample, and because of the small sample size, biased sample selection process and the fact that the 'group' was not made up of students from the same discipline or with the same problems/issues, it was not possible (nor, indeed, desirable) to statistically analyse the findings from this part of the study. However, some tentative and general observations may be made, based on the data collected on some of the affective scales.

The scores on the Attitude and Motivation scales appear to be uniformly quite high. That is, the scale score averages for these two scales were two of the highest and, as indicated by the apparently small standard deviations, the scores did not vary a great deal from the mean. The Attitude scale scores measure students' general attitude toward succeeding at study and performing tasks related to success in study. The Motivation scale scores measure the degree to which students accept responsibility for performing these tasks (Weinstein, 1987). The findings make sense as it would be reasonable to assume that students who voluntarily attend individual support outside their normal timetabled classes would have a generally responsible attitude toward study success. This would also presumably be true of those who attend voluntary sessions for larger numbers.

Scores on the Concentration scale measure students' abilities to direct and focus their attention to academic tasks and study matters generally (Weinstein, 1987). Although not as high as the Attitude and Motivation scale means, the average score on the Concentration scale seems reasonably high. However, it is interesting to note that the standard deviation here is quite large, indicating a variability in students' ability to focus and concentrate. It would seem that some students are having difficulty maintaining concentration, a theme identified through the use of the interview schedule.

The responses to the Anxiety scale provided the opportunity for some interesting speculation. This scale is reversed: the lower the score, the higher the student's anxiety when approaching academic tasks (Weinstein, 1987). The average scale score for Anxiety is one of the lowest and the standard deviation is relatively large. This would suggest that, generally speaking, student anxiety should be taken into consideration when working with both individuals and groups. This finding supports that of the interview schedule on student anxiety. Weinstein (1987) explains, "Many very capable students are often incapable of demonstrating their true level of knowledge and skill because they are paralysed or distracted by debilitating anxiety" (p.6). However, the large deviation on this scale would seem to indicate that students' ability to focus on a task rather than on their anxiety varies. When tackling a study issue, advisers should also remain alert to the possibility that such anxiety is not an issue for all students.

In fact, all the scales with large standard deviations provide an indication and reminder that in any group there is likely to be substantial variance or variability in students' skills and abilities.

When working with larger numbers, information on the affective aspects of learning cannot generally be obtained as easily as information on the cognitive, and more skill-based, aspects. With appropriate and sensitive questioning, a quick 'show of hands' survey at the beginning of a group session can provide a substantial amount of information to the adviser about cognitive issues such as whether students are able to read for main ideas, test themselves, approach an exam in a logical manner and so on. Information about what might be considered more personal matters, such as students' attitude toward and motivation for study or how anxious they feel, would probably be more difficult to elicit in a group situation. Yet it could be argued that such information is, or should be, an important factor in an adviser's decisions about how to provide language and learning support, whether for individuals or groups.

As with the CAM and the interview schedule, use of the LASSI in a one-to-one situation provided valuable and useful understanding and learning for teaching larger numbers. The findings from use of the interview schedule related to student concentration and anxiety appeared to be supported by the LASSI group results. The assumption that students

who attend voluntary language and learning support are generally well motivated was also supported by the LASSI scale scores.

CONCLUSION

In the current climate of federal government cuts to the higher education budget, it would probably be difficult to find a senior university administrator that would disagree with the proposition that higher staff-student ratios in universities are necessary. To some extent, university staff will be forced to accept this. However, it should be noted that without a one-to-one ratio as part of the teaching in language and learning support, high staff-student ratios in this area would be extremely difficult to achieve. This study has demonstrated that the use of the Cognitive Apprenticeship Model of teaching increases an adviser's knowledge and understanding of individual students and their learning which leads directly to the provision of cost-effective sessions for larger numbers.

This study has also demonstrated that the one-to-one teaching situation is essential not only to generate the numbers necessary for a higher staff-student ratio but also to ensure the quality of teaching necessary to maintain these numbers. The use of the CAM, interview schedule and LASSI in one-to-one teaching provided detailed knowledge and understanding of students and their learning which would be difficult to achieve otherwise and which enabled better teaching, of both individuals or groups. In itself, high quality teaching is important. It is especially important in the current climate and where student attendance is voluntary and 'extra' to their course. It could be argued that in the case of voluntary language and learning support, the better the quality of teaching, the more likely it is that group attendance will be consistently high. If advisers can gain and communicate an understanding of students' needs and of their specific discipline requirements, it is likely that support will be valued and proactively sought by faculties and their students.

Two of the three methods of data collection used in this study relied on the author's reflections. Reflections, by their very nature, are subjective. The results, therefore, do not have the scientific reliability often deemed necessary to make a strong case. But what was of interest in this study is what was learnt in one set of circumstances and then transferred to another set of circumstances. Most educators will agree that measuring human learning in any given conditions is fraught with difficulties. In the conditions of interest in this study, those difficulties are substantial. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the results of this study based on the subjective collection techniques must be interpreted carefully. It is interesting to note, however, that the LASSI scale scores provided objective support for some of the subjective findings.

It can, and probably will, be argued that after two decades of the provision of language and learning support in Australian universities (Webb & Bonanno, 1994) one-to-one teaching has served its purpose in language and learning support - that a base of knowledge and experience has been established and larger numbers must now be the focus. Counterarguments include those that the acquisition of knowledge and experience is not a discrete phenomenon that can reach an end point; advisers must be continuously updated on the conventions of emerging and changing disciplines and combinations of disciplines; advisers need similar updating on the variations that accompany changes in personnel (and perhaps recent federal government initiatives in higher education funding and industrial relations will mean such changes are more frequent); even the most conscientious teachers can benefit from the reminders and reinforcements more evident in one-to-one teaching than in teaching groups and with the increased focus on flexible delivery and technology in the provision of university education, there is much that is yet to be learnt.

This study has made a contribution to the literature on one-to-one teaching in language and learning. It has also shown that a range of methods may be used to appreciate how what is gained from teaching one-to-one reinforces and enlightens work with larger numbers. The results of this study also demonstrate that teaching one-to-one can lead both directly and indirectly to work with larger numbers and therefore to the higher staff-student ratios that a university focused on cost-effectiveness is seeking.

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APPENDIX

Interview Schedule

Date: _____ Student Name _____

1. Establishment & General

Introduction

- (a) Small talk
- (b) Introduction of adviser & service
- (c) Purpose of session
- (d) Permission on notetaking
- (e) Explanation of status of & access to records
- (f) Brief client perception of problem

2. Background Information

- (a) Check details on card
- (b) School/educational background
 - (i) High school attended
 - (ii) Highest level completed
 - (iii) Other courses undertaken
 - (iv) Previous study/learning difficulties
- (c) Tertiary education history
 - (i) Feedback from lecturers
 - (ii) General

3. Problem-specific information

- (a) Precise detailed statement of what perceived problem is
- (b) Existing strategies to complete task
- (c) Previous attempts to overcome problem
- (d) Previous successes

4. Diagnosis

5. Clarification of expectations

- (a) Agreement of goals
- (b) Statement of suitability of agency
- (c) Explanation of likely length of intervention
- (d) Agreement that independent learning necessary

6. Teaching/Learning

7. Homework

8. Scheduling next appointment

9. Observations and/or comments

ELECTRONIC MAIL TUTORIALS: ALTERNATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR UNDERGRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

The demand on Australian academics for substantial research and publication output, concomitant with increasing student numbers and shrinking budgets, means that many lecturers are having to find new ways to teach their students, while maintaining quality of teaching and learning. This paper reports a study of an experiment with the use of electronic mail (e-mail) tutorials as a means of reducing face-to-face teaching, used in a traditional tutorial structure, while still achieving the objectives of the unit. At the University of Tasmania - Launceston, a first year cohort of 185 students were introduced to the use of e-mail tutorials. Students were expected to form small groups, to log-on to the network on six occasions in a 14 week semester, address a series of set questions relating to required reading and lectures, and respond to ideas and issues raised by members of their e-mail group. "Journal" entries were sent, by e-mail, to the lecturers. Lecturers reported that they felt that students were more ready to contribute opinions and to engage with the texts. Lecturers also reported that, through the material that students produced as e-mail commentaries, they came to understand the students' thinking processes to a greater extent than they had experienced in the traditional face-to-face tutorials.

An evaluation was conducted in which students were surveyed then interviewed, in order to obtain their reactions to e-mail compared with face-to-face learning strategies, as well as their comfort with technology. Results indicated that the students had a positive reaction to the e-mail process. E-mail tutorials were seen to be more effective for ensuring that students read text material for class preparation. E-mail tutorials were favoured for the opportunity to raise issues in class as well as for access to peer opinion. An important finding emerged from data rotation, in that the less that students perceived the technical aspects of using computers as a problem, the more likely students valued e-mail tutorials. This finding has significance for lecturers increasing the use of technology in undergraduate teaching.

Introduction

The pressure introduced by university performance reviews, increasing internal scrutiny regarding course delivery, and the demand on academics for substantial research and publication output, means that many lecturers are having to find new ways to maintain the quality of teaching. This state of affairs is occurring at a time of increasing student numbers and shrinking budgets. Changing approaches to university teaching strategies, supported by rapidly advancing computer technology, have generated a climate of innovation and experimentation. But will the increasing use of computers take away from what has long been held as important in education: good teacher/student relationships?

In one-to-one and small group teaching situations, relationships can be built which allow students to take risks in learning. The question is whether, through the medium of computers, we can compensate for the reduction of teacher-student contact and still create environments where students can be risk-takers in order to extend their skills and knowledge.

The use of computer technology as a means of reforming schools has occurred for three reasons (Cuban, 1993), each of which is equally pertinent to the reform of teaching in universities. Cuban argues that the 'impulses' for using the latest technologies in schools relate:

- to developing and maintaining a technological lead in education, in order that student skills are in line with expectations of the workforce;
- to efficiency in teaching and learning because it has always been highly valued, and,
- to developing self-directed learners.

It could be argued that Cuban's second 'impulse', that is efficiency in teaching, has not traditionally been a priority in universities. However the introduction of electronic technologies in schools relates to 'the impulse for productivity' (Cuban, 1993:190), though he also points out that this urge to improve effectiveness and proficiency in teaching and learning can be 'traced back to the early nineteenth century and has been a consistent goal for schooling ever since'.

The third 'impulse', developing self-directed learners, has long been a priority in education. Those advocating the use of electronic technology see computers as a valuable resource for achieving that end. These reformers see students as

active learners creating knowledge that makes sense to them. [Reformers] want schools in which such knowledge is shared by all members of the community ... Interactive computers and telecommunications are mind-tools that could make these self-directed learning communities possible (Cuban, 1993:190).

Despite the best intentions of lecturers to provide technological experiences which enable student self-directed learning, they may be met with complaints and resistance (Akerlind & Trevitt, 1995). While these complaints may come from only a minority of students, it is possible that they stem from conflicting student and lecturer conceptions of the nature of learning.

The reality is that most students' educational experiences in school rooms and lecture theatres have supported the more passive conceptions. This sets up the unfortunate situation in which students whose main educational experiences have been as passive recipient of information may suddenly be introduced to computer based courses providing for them unexpected opportunities for active, self-directed learning for which they are largely unprepared (Akerlind & Trevitt, 1995:2).

Student resistance to the use of computers may come not only from an unwillingness to take responsibility for their own learning. The literature on cognitive/learning style differences in learners provides sufficient evidence to assume that these differences would affect acceptance or non-acceptance of computer technology. For example, Witkin's (1977) notion of field dependent/independent learners is one model which could explain such differences, particularly in adult learners. Joughin (1992:13) argues that

those adults who tend towards field-independence will have a relatively well-developed capacity for some aspects of self-directed learning — their analytical ability will enable them to conceptualize the various components of a learning task, to put order into disorganized elements of a learning field, and to be aware of their own needs and strengths as they progress towards meeting goals. On the other hand, those adults who tend towards field-dependence will be relatively lacking in these skills. While they may compensate to some extent by the benefits of a more 'with people' orientation and consequently may perform better in learning tasks that are dependent on relating well to others, they may suffer in all learning situations that require a high level of analytic thought, that are relatively unstructured, or that call for self-reflection.

Reluctance to accept computers as a means of learning may also relate to the well documented lack of confidence some students feel in using them — a situation which can be particularly problematic for mature aged students returning to study. In a survey of students involved in Networked Learning, a model which increases the use of computer networks in relation to print and face-to-face processes, Chua, Debreceeny & Ellis (1995) found that 13% of students were not confident in using computers; 34% said they were reasonably confident, and 20% claimed to be very confident in computer use.

McInerney & McInerney (1994) maintain that it is simplistic to assume that increased use of computers by undergraduate teacher trainees will allay anxiety. These authors cite two studies (Rosen, Sears & Weil, 1987; Mahmood & Medewitz,

1989) which support their assertion. Rosen, Sears & Weil (1987) found that 'for the computer anxious student, increased experience (40 hours of computing over 10 weeks for 150 students) appeared to exacerbate rather than "cure" the problem' (McInerney, McInerney, 1994:300). Students acknowledged their increased understanding of computers, but still reported anxiety when using them. Mahmood & Medewitz (1989) found that after an extensive computer literacy course for undergraduates, early negative attitudes, while partially allayed, still persisted.

Whether students' reluctance to use computers stems from a view of learning as passive receiving of knowledge; from a sense of inadequacy; or from learning style preference, it would make sense, in Vygotsky's (1978) terms, to provide 'scaffolded instruction' for those who do not easily embrace the technology. In other words, instructions and/or tasks should be given which are within the range of achievable challenges, and which can move a student from their current to potential ability; in this case from avoidance, to a sense of comfort with computers.

The Study

In the study (in progress) at the University of Tasmania, during semester 1, 1996, student perceptions of the use of e-mail tutorials, as compared with face-to-face tutorials (one component of the unit) were sought. The students involved in the study were concurrently undertaking other units which contained a regular mix of lectures and face-to-face tutorials, and at least one other unit which involved the use of e-mail.

In a fourteen week Language Development unit, 185 first year students were required to complete an assignment (one of three) through e-mail. For 40% of their overall award for the semester, the students had to develop a Learning Journal, comprising a record of transactions with a selected group of their peers, based on set readings, additional material listed throughout the semester, and ideas and issues raised in face-to-face class session. Three e-mail tutorials were scheduled during the semester and the students were expected to log on to e-mail network at least six times in that period. Students were instructed that in order to fulfil the minimum requirements of the unit, they must:

- i) complete the scheduled program of reading
- ii) make summative and critical written responses (via e-mail) to the matters/issues raised in the various readings AND other class sessions; and
- iii) respond to comments made by other members of the e-mail network group about these matters/issues (Unit outline, 1996)

Informal feedback from students indicated that their impression of the e-mail tutorial mode was that of a valued teaching strategy. Students commented that they felt more confident to raise issues and to explore opinions believed and presented by their peers. The technological factors affecting e-mail tutorials were raised as some of the difficulties experienced by students.

In order to more accurately gauge students' reactions to e-mail as compared to face-to-face tutorials, it was decided to conduct an evaluation of their perceptions to better inform the lecturer for future unit development.

Methodology

Data gathering methods to date consisted of surveys and semi-structured interviews. Document analysis of the student Learning Journals will be undertaken as a second phase. The data source consisted of 185 first year Bachelor of Education students who had experienced the e-mail tutorial strategy as part of one unit in Semester 1. A survey of 131 first year students was conducted in class time, in early Semester 2, with 100% response.

Designing the data gathering instruments

a) Survey

Consultations were undertaken with the lecturer involved in teaching the course and the evaluator and evaluation team. Six areas were identified as being relevant for comparing e-mail tutorials with face-to-face tutorials, with one area designated as technical. A survey was constructed using a Likert scale format of SA, A, Not Sure, D, SD. The non-technical aspects related to learning effectiveness, reading preparation, students raising issues, peer group opinion, access to tutors and links to practice.

b) Semi-structured interviews

Results of the questionnaire indicated a need to follow up on issues emerging from the responses. It was decided to conduct semi-structured interviews with students, in order to amplify and/or clarify findings from the survey. It was intended that one-fifth of the students be randomly sampled for interviews, and that these students be taken from three equal groups — the high, middle and low achievers, based on results in the Language Development 1 unit. All potential interviewees were e-mailed with a request for expressions of interest.

Random sampling was abandoned because only 17 responded, with 13 acceptances. It is interesting to note that 7 of the respondents came from the top group of students, 4 from the middle range and 2 from the lower achievers. Of the two from the latter group, one both failed to keep an appointment for the interview, and failed to respond to a request for a second appointment.

The 11 students interviewed were all asked two questions, the first relating to comfort with the technology, and the second to the finding that "e-mail tutorials provided access to *opinion*, but face-to-face tutorials are perceived as providing *understanding*". Discussion relating to the second question covered issues such as the students' conceptions of *opinion* and *understanding*, their preference for face-to-face or e-mail as a means of learning; reading for face-to-face and e-mail tutorials, and expressing opinions in each format.

Results - Survey

Learning effectiveness

About half of the student group disagreed that e-mail tutorials were a "more effective learning method" with one fifth of the subjects responding "Not Sure". A little less than half agreed that learning was less effective from e-mail "discussions". A little over half of the student group agreed that they "learn more effectively in face-to-face tutorials" with 29% unsure. Nearly two-thirds agreed that the "structure of a face-to-face tutorial is more helpful to my way of learning". This result is thus inconclusive as to the acceptance of e-mail tutorials as a learning method. It appears that students marginally prefer face-to-face tutorials with a stronger preference in terms of the "structure" of these tutorials.

Reading preparation

Less than one half of students disagreed that they "do not necessarily have to read the texts" for face-to-face tutorials (40% agreed) and two thirds disagreed that face-to-face tutorials would "force me to undertake more reading" than for e-mail tutorials. Nearly three quarters of students considered the e-mail tutorials "ensured that I read the class texts" (with 19% responding to the question as "Strongly Agree" and only one student responding as "Strongly Disagree"). Nearly two-thirds of students disagreed that "they didn't have to read all the texts" for e-mail tutorials (with 17% responding "Strongly Disagree"). In summary, it appears that e-mail tutorials are more effective for ensuring that students read text material for class preparation.

Raising issues

Fifty percent of students disagreed that they felt more "confident to raise issues" in face-to-face tutorials with nearly one fifth "Not Sure". Two-thirds agreed that they were able to raise issues in e-mail tutorials "without feeling foolish". Responses to these questions appear to favour the use of e-mail tutorials in the area of raising issues in class.

Peer group opinion

Nearly two-thirds of students agreed that in e-mail tutorials they were able to find out more about "class members viewpoints" yet nearly two-thirds considered that face-to-face tutorials promoted "greater understanding of members' viewpoints". In summary, results indicate that e-mail tutorials provide access to opinion but face-to-face tutorials are perceived as providing understanding, which is a subtle yet important difference. This should be considered in the light of 17% responding as "Strongly Agree" with no responses as "Strongly Disagree", to the question regarding understanding.

Access to tutors

Over three-quarters of students agree that face-to-face tutorials give the feeling of more accessibility to tutors than e-mail tutorials (with 27% responding as "Strongly Agree" and no responses as "Strongly Disagree") and nearly two-thirds disagreed that e-mail tutorials "provide more access to tutors". In summary, results indicate that face-to-face tutorials are perceived by students as providing better access to tutors.

Links to practice

Two questions sought opinion regarding opportunity to make links to practice.

Over half the students agreed that face-to-face tutorials helped them to "better understand school practice" and over half disagreed that e-mail tutorials "helped to make better links to school practice". It appears that students favoured face-to-face tutorials in relating to school practice but a large number of "Not Sure" responses (one quarter for each question) tend to leave this result inconclusive.

Technical aspects of e-mail tutorials

Five questions were designed to seek opinion regarding the technical aspects of e-mail tutorials. One question enquired about time, two questions related to technical skills needed for e-mail tutorials. One question addressed access and one question asked about maintenance.

Students need technical skills to conduct e-mail tutorials so two questions enquired about these skills.

A little over half the students disagreed that e-mail tutorials were "time consuming" in terms of learning skills and a little under half the students considered that the technology involved "was a barrier for open student discussion", with a high (28%) "Not Sure" response. This result is interesting in that students do not seem to perceive the conduct of e-mail tutorials as a problem, but e-mail tutorials may serve to limit student discussion. It should be noted that these results appear to be inconclusive.

Access to computers and maintenance of a computer were considered to be important aspects of e-mail tutorials. Two questions addressed this issue.

The difficulty of access to computers was considered by students to "limit usefulness" of e-mail tutorials, with two-thirds agreeing to this, yet the maintenance of computers was not perceived as a problem by about half the students, but with a large "Not Sure" (18%) response. The high number of responses in the Strongly Agree (25%) category regarding difficulty of access to the computer should be noted, in conjunction with a small "Not Sure" response of 2% to this question. In summary, it appears that difficulty of access rather than maintenance was considered a problem with e-mail tutorials, although the inconclusive result regarding maintenance should be acknowledged.

One question addressed the general issue of tutorial time. A slight majority of students consider that e-mail tutorials are time saving, but opinion appears fairly evenly divided on either side of the question (47%) (46%) leaving the result as inconclusive.

Open ended comment

Students were invited to add "any point not covered in the survey". From 131 surveys completed, 21 written comments were made, which amounted to 16% of the total. Therefore, this data needs to be treated with caution. However, it is interesting to note that of the 21 comments, 9 referred to technical difficulties, the majority of which described problems experienced in sending and/or receiving messages, or not knowing if messages had been received.

Of these nine comments, three complained that late responses to messages disadvantaged students in making replies in time. One comment suggested that e-mail should not be "used for 1st year students" as they needed "confidence" in using the computer.

Four comments suggested that "discussions" were more like "chats" "conversations" "limited in the range of opinion" "only opinions of a few". Two comments noted "lack of feedback" from lecturers regarding progress. One student expressed a preference for "talking about" rather than "writing about ideas" and one comment noted the teacher's opinion as "valuable" and went on to point out, that the "teacher knew the issue being raised and this may have caused students to be reluctant to raise issues".

Of the four positive comments, three proposed a preference for a mix of both modes, and one commented that "it made me do the reading" and then "in my own time I could complete the work, I thoroughly enjoyed e-mail tutorials".

Data analysis - rotation of data

Results of the evaluation were analysed further. It was considered useful to examine relationships that may exist between the technical difficulties experienced by students and their perceptions of e-mail tutorials.

Questions relating to two key issues were analysed further: effectiveness of learning and the technology itself. Interpretation of the rotation of data indicated the following:

The less difficulty in access to computers, that a respondent felt s/he had experienced, the greater the likelihood that they felt that e-mail was a more effective learning method, that their learning was more effective from e-mail discussions and less effective from face-to-face tutorials, and that the structure of face-to-face tutorials was a less helpful way of learning.

The less time consuming a respondent found e-mail tutorials to be, in terms of learning how to manage the computer, the greater the likelihood that they felt e-mail was a more effective learning method, and their learning was more effective from e-mail discussions and less effective from face-to-face tutorials, and that the structure of face-to-face tutorials was a less helpful way of learning.

When maintenance of computers was not perceived by respondents as a problem, the greater the likelihood that they felt e-mail tutorials were more effective as a learning method; that their learning was more effective from e-mail discussions and less effective from face-to-face tutorials; and that the structure of face-to-face tutorials was a less helpful way of learning.

The less that the technology involved in e-mail tutorials was perceived by respondents as a barrier for open student discussion, the greater the likelihood that they felt:

- that e-mail tutorials were a more effective learning method;
- that their learning was more effective from e-mail discussions and less effective from face-to-face tutorials; and
- that the structure of face-to-face tutorials was a less preferred way of learning.

Results - Semi-structured Interview

The very low numbers of students who accepted the request for interviews makes the data, in itself, unreliable. However since questions asked were aimed at expanding on the data taken from the survey, the following summary includes data from both survey and semi-structured interview.

Discussion

In terms of students' perceptions of the technology, a majority wanted more training and better access to computers. Most of the interviewees expressed concern that deadline expectations were such that they created periodic congestion in computer labs. It is interesting to note that while students had undertaken a computer course alongside Language

Development 1, and another unit which incorporated e-mail, they expressed a need for additional e-mail training. This supports the research of Rosen, Sears & Weil (1987) and Mahmood & Medewitz (1989) who found that extensive computer literacy courses for undergraduates only partially allayed early negative attitudes. It could also bring into question competencies expected from computer courses. Further, student comments challenge school/education/policy statements that computing is taught in schools, remembering that university students are the top one third of graduates from the secondary education system. Computing educationalists may need to take note.

E-mail was indicated to be successful in accessing peer *opinion* but face-to-face was indicated as preferable for *understanding*. Interview comments claimed that the interaction in a face-to-face tutorial enabled clarification of issues or corrections of misunderstanding, and that there is a need to think carefully about written communication, and to "respond to colleagues in a diplomatic manner" so that they don't "take it the wrong way".

In face-to-face tutorials it is possible to "ask questions and go off in different directions", but with e-mail it is likely that only directed questions can be asked and received. An important aspect of understanding was feedback from lecturer and a prevalent comment referred to the need to have the lecturer's opinion in order to understand a) the material, b) the requirements. Feedback came from assessment, though those that asked were given verbal feedback during the process.

This study revealed the importance students placed on having access to lecturers, and desiring feedback from them to increase understanding of the material and understanding of the tasks required. Feedback could be seen to be related to the strong result from the survey indicating that face-to-face tutorials were seen to be more effective for "access to tutor". It would appear that this valued characteristic of one-to-one and small group teaching situations was not entirely compensated for in the e-mail tutorial learning situation. A possible solution may be the use of synchronous communication in the form of international relay chatting (IRC), through which "real-time" communication can occur, such as is found in face-to-face tutorials. The addition of desk-top video cameras would provide more personal contact.

The study has highlighted the need for lecturers to identify the role of face-to-face learning and the role of e-mail learning in enhancing both verbal and written forms of communication. Both issues should be seen in terms of learning outcomes for particular units taught. It does not seem to be an either/or situation, but more of a combination of strategies that are interrelated and interlocked, toward achieving particular learning outcomes. In this sense, a combination could serve to improve current methods of conducting face-to-face tutorials, ensuring a higher quality of preparation and contribution on the part of students.

It could be speculated that the inconclusive results regarding "application to practice" have been influenced by the degree of access to the lecturer, and the need for feedback. Results of the study illuminate the need for designing tutorial tasks, particularly e-mail, that a) suit the technology and mode of thinking, b) relate logically to the learning outcomes of the unit. Longstaffe (1996) points out that unless the learning technology is well-designed and 'properly integrated as part of the course environment which incorporated a range of approaches and strategies', then, the "garbage in, garbage out" principle still applies. The tasks involved in the Language Development unit which was the focus of this study were deliberately structured to take account of the fact that the technology was new to the majority of students. In Vygotsky's terms "scaffolding", or supportive structures, took the form of set questions to guide the nature of the interactions, and the availability of the lecturer when requested.

Raising issues in class was shown to be easier for students in the e-mail tutorials, with two-thirds agreeing that they were able to raise issues in e-mail tutorials "without feeling foolish". This supports Marjanovic, Cecez-Kecmanovic & Bonner's (1995) assertion that "some students are very reluctant to ask questions even when they don't understand something, being ashamed to express their own opinion especially if it contradicts the teacher's" (p.306). Additionally, these authors claim that "when total class discussion is organised, it is often dominated by a few students while the majority remains passive" - a reality supported by all students interviewed in this study.

Both survey and interview data indicated that in terms of reading for both forms of tutorial, e-mail was more effective for ensuring that reading preparation was undertaken, whereas for face-to-face, students did not necessarily have to read - "you can bluff your way through" or get away with "just sitting there". Also e-mail was effective for seeing "everyone's point of view regarding the readings". It is interesting to note that all students interviewed agreed that "opinion" in a

face-to-face tutorial is more likely to come from personal experience, whereas in e-mail tutorials it was more likely to be based on a combination of the literature and personal experience. This supports Longstaffe's (1996) assertion that research in the area of computing conferencing, and e-mail, as components of learning strategies, shows that "contributions to this type of discussion are more considered and better referenced than those observed in a traditional face-to-face tutorial" (p.5).

Interviews provided data about students' perceptions of their learning style. Some students preferred an interactive spontaneous mode of thinking, accessible through face-to-face tutorials, that is, thinking out loud by talking or listening and reacting to other's talk. It could be speculated that this group of students were field-dependent learners. Research into the relationship between field-dependency/independency and approaches to the two forms of tutorials could provide valuable data for the teaching of undergraduates.

The e-mail tutorials raised an issue of a technological nature - whether the students typed into a word processing document and edited their work before cutting and pasting into e-mail or whether they typed directly into e-mail. This highlighted student confidence and/or competence in written language and an unwillingness for some of them to expose their perceived deficiencies to the lecturer.

This study highlighted several key issues in the use of e-mail and teaching, relating to the difference between face-to-face and e-mail tutorials, particularly the way in which students engaged with the literature prior to each form of tutorial; the reasons why students tend to prefer face-to-face tutorials, despite the relative inefficiency of the process; and the possible reasons for the varying attitudes towards both processes. Further research is needed to examine the effects of computer skill preparation on groups; and how to match the level of reading preparation students undertake in e-mail to face-to-face tutorials. The structure and format of e-mail tutorials needs to be developed to encompass and promote depth of student discussion.

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A SLIPPER FOR CINDERELLA: REDISCOVERING PERSONALIZED TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Very little educational attention has been given to one-to-one teaching. A review of the research literature suggests that there is virtually no interest in this form of pedagogy. It appears to be regarded as either marginal and insignificant, or basically the same as class teaching. The institutional administrators often hold the same view, as witness the fact of academic skills advising, in which individual consultations is the norm, is very low in the priorities of most universities. The Adviser is a Cinderella, required to lurk among the ashes, and tolerated only as long as she brings results. The real business of mass-market education (the prevailing attitude has it) is about classroom and large group teaching. This paper argues that the reality is the reverse: that one-to-one teaching gives us insights into the nature of pedagogy that are usually missed in the class. The paper draws on aspects of a model of learning as communication, illustrated by comments from extensive interviews with practising academic skills advisers, to suggest some new insights into teaching and learning at university.

Introduction

I approached the question that forms the title of this conference with interest. It was going to be an easy and informative task. I would simply examine the research into one-to-one teaching, select issues that are appropriate to my particular interests, connect them with the relevant research into classroom teaching, and reflect on my experience of both. With my plan of attack clear, I began to survey the research literature on face-to-face teaching. After many hours of fruitlessly trying every avenue the information librarian and I could think of, the suspicion gradually began to grow that, in fact, perhaps there is no such research literature. By the time I decided to give up the search, I had failed to find a single publication. Even allowing for the possibility that I had overlooked something, it was clear that this topic is hardly central to educational research.

Why should this be? The answer is fairly obvious. Educational research has grown up to serve the needs of a mass education system, such as teacher training, curriculum development, and the like. (It is not accidental that the recent upsurge of activity in research specifically into higher education - of which this conference is an example - coincides with the shift towards mass higher education.) In this sort of system, the individual consultation or tutorial is a rare and marginal form of teaching. Universities simply cannot afford to teach their students, as they once did, through fireside chats in the tutor's study. Education researchers, too, cannot afford to spend their time on marginalia: they have much more pressing issues to consider. Individual tuition has become the Cinderella of higher education.

There is an irony, however. If the shift to mass higher education has made individual tuition uneconomical in one way, it has made it indispensable in another. As the universities began to cast their nets more widely in search for students, the larger the classes became in which these students are taught. Soon it became evident that the need for one-to-one assistance had grown correspondingly. Since the point was reached at which intakes were so low that it was uneconomical to allow too many students to fail, universities have gone back to providing one-to-one teaching through academic support units as a corrective. Clearly something is lost when the personal contact between teacher and student becomes too distant - something that is educationally very important. I return to this point below.

I must add in passing, also, a colleague and I have decided to do our own little bit towards filling the gap in educational thought by embarking upon a research project which examines academic advisers' descriptions of what they do in their professional practice. The work is only beginning, so there is little to report here, but I draw occasionally on some of their comments to illustrate the points I make.

Filling the gap in educational thought

What can we academic advisers do to redress this situation? Is there a way in which we can show that Cinderella should not be the lackey of the ugly sisters, but is in fact the unacknowledged princess? There seem to be at least two fundamental research questions. First, what actually happens in one-to-one consultations? What sort of activity is this, pedagogically speaking? When I started to think about it, I realized that I have always assumed that what I do in individual consultations is more or less the same as what every other language and learning adviser does. But there is hardly even any anecdotal evidence that that is the case. Do others conceive of the function and process of this form of teaching in the same way I do? Do they hope to achieve the same goals? Are their ways of evaluating success similar to mine? What techniques do they use, and with what result? This is one area on which the early research efforts could usefully concentrate. We have begun to investigate some of these questions, and I hope the first results will be available in the fairly near future.

The second fundamental research question I want to raise, and to consider in the rest of this paper is, what specifically has been lost, in the trend towards more crowded classrooms and curricula, that has made it necessary for universities to return to providing one-to-one teaching once more? The university authorities who established academic assistance units don't know. They seem to feel it is a good idea to do something, or at least to appear to be doing something, to correct the educational failures of the modern universities. But they want success on the cheap. Cinderella is a good thing, as far as the ugly sisters are concerned: she sweeps the floor and washes the pots. But she mustn't dream of a new dress, least of all expect to be invited to the ball.

Our second question is, pragmatically speaking, the more important. The answer to it may be the slipper that will ensure that one-to-one teaching will be taken from the bottom of the educational and institutional pile and put to the top. I believe it is much harder to discover the processes of teaching and learning from large group contexts than it is from the individual setting. There are so many complicating factors in a lecture: the greatly varying backgrounds and abilities of the students; the crowd effects; the issues of presentation and performance by the teacher; and so on. These are absent in the individual consultation, which allows us to focus closely on the essential elements of teaching and learning. We in the field can begin, I believe, to make a serious contribution to knowledge and practice. Rather than being marginal, what we do, when properly understood, will be seen as basic to the whole field of higher education.

To start on this process, we need first of all a way of describing the teaching and learning process which is relevant to our focus.

Descriptions of teaching

What happens when a teacher successfully teaches - that is, when a student learns as a result? Although this question goes to the core of our understanding of education, it remains elusively difficult to answer. There seem to be a number of different views held by teachers and students, and theorists who have attempted to describe the process of teaching and learning typically do so in terms of a range of models.

Scheffler (1964), for example, in his "quest for a satisfactory conception of teaching" identifies three "philosophical models", which he calls the *impression*, *insight*, and *rule* models. The impression model sees the learner's mind sorting external impressions and storing those to which it is receptive. The teacher's rôle is to ensure that the experiences given to the student are conducive to learning, and to help the student to develop discrimination. In the insight model, by contrast, the learner's vision, or perception of meaning, determines the process. The teacher can help the student in his or her search to achieve knowledge, but can never determine the outcome. The third, *rule*, model places reason - rational dialogue and critical reflection - at the centre of learning. The teacher's job is to develop character, or principled thought and action, so that the student can exercise autonomous judgment. According to Scheffler, each of the models captures something important about pedagogy, and each has shortcomings. The most rewarding approach to understanding the process would seem to be an eclectic and synthetic one, in which at different times one or another of the orientations is more prominent.

Whereas Scheffler's is an *a priori* philosophical analysis, Farnham-Diggory (1994) is interested in classifying what educationists have written about pedagogy. She extensively reviews the educational literature looking for "instructional paradigms", and finds three and only three. There are two criteria for classification: how a novice is distinguished from an expert, and what "mechanisms" transform the former into the latter. The three paradigms, which are mutually exclusive, are: the *behaviour* model; the *development* model; and the *apprenticeship* model. The behaviour model places novice and expert on the same scale; the latter simply knows more. Learning is achieved by adding knowledge,

skills, etc., and thus moving up the scale. The development model differentiates between the novice and the expert according to the quality of their personal theories and explanations. Learning is achieved through conceptual change as the student finds his or her personal theories challenged and is compelled to revise them. The third model, that of apprenticeship, places novice and expert in different worlds, and change is effected through acculturation into the world of the expert.

Other conceptions of teaching have recently arisen from phenomenographic research. These studies are based on the premiss that people hold a limited and definable number of conceptions of any phenomenon. Kember & Gow (1994), for example, in a study of 170 staff in a Hong Kong university, identified two orientations to teaching: *knowledge transmission* and *facilitation of learning*. The latter category contained five subscales. Kember and Gow found that when teachers viewed what they were doing as facilitating learning, the students were more likely to develop meaningful approaches towards their learning.

These various descriptions were devised to account for class teaching, and although they can all be partly applied to one-to-one, they do not fit entirely easily. The experienced language and learning adviser will be uneasy with the fact that, in each of the descriptions, the categories are mutually exclusive. (Scheffler is the one writer who does allow the possibility of some small overlap between his models). And yet, when I reflect on my own practice, I can describe what I do when teaching an individual student only in terms of several models simultaneously. There are also things I do regularly (such as inducting the student into the communicative style of the university) or occasionally (such as acting as advocate for a teacher whose innovative approach is contrary to the student's expectations) which are an important part of what I do, but are not accounted for in any of the models of teaching I have encountered. During the research interview, our subjects were asked to describe their teaching one-to-one. Some of their responses are as follows. Notice how many overlapping and yet distinct models there are here, yet clearly they constitute a single whole:

My role is to get the students to identify where they think they need assistance ... I see myself facilitating their learning ... you're aware of not coming on strong, of leaving them room ... They have to admit first of all that they've failed, so I try to make the environment as comfortable as possible for them ... I often ring up lecturers to talk about students I'm worried about ... just to see how they're going in class, and to get an idea of their perceptions in relation to the students'.

I see myself as a guide, a guide and a helper.

I interpret the teachers' words ... We looked together at her [essay], and I acted as an audience for her ... and I modelled for her the process of planning.

My role is asking questions, pointing out and asking questions.

I think my major role is connecting what they're learning now with elements in their own background, and I often do that through stories.

We describe our teaching as collaboration: we sit beside the student ... we roll up our sleeves ... we want to see the whole thing unfolding and it unfolds between the two of us.

I'm trying to mount a salvage operation.

I suppose I see myself as part of the human face of the institution.

I'm a sort of academic intermediary.

I'm a cultural intermediary.

I act like a secretary, I ask them, for example, what are the key terms in the question ... I ask them questions constantly that drag out the information they have ... and I write it down.

Sometimes I enact a sort of knowledge base for them in the discipline ... You're always hoping to find a student who catches fire about the knowledge.

The language and learning adviser is daily confronted by students with a wide range of needs and motives for seeking help. The adviser is called upon to play a range of roles: consultant, mentor, instructor, counsellor, expert, encourager, sounding-board, and so on. At different times one or another of these roles is to the fore, but all are potentially or actually being played during every consultation. In order to capture this sense of simultaneous, parallel processes, I find it helpful to focus on the single process which comprehends them all: communication. When we teach one-to-one, we are engaged in the ancient and fundamental practice by which two human beings come together to share in a conversation.

Pedagogy and communication

The old descriptions of communication, such as sending and receiving messages, or the flow of information, are no longer taken seriously by communication theorists, although in the public mind they still appear to be as entrenched as ever. In a recent paper (Garner, 1995), I discussed how they give rise to widespread misconceptions about teaching and learning. Unfortunately, no coherent model has yet replaced these simplistic views - which is one reason why they persist.

There are some features of communication, nonetheless, which are best exemplified in one-to-one teaching, and which serve as a reminder of the fundamentals of all teaching. I shall briefly discuss three in the following sections: the interpersonal nature of teaching and learning; the centrality of the listener-learner; and the continuous, instantaneous construction of meaning. They are illustrated by comments from a number of advisers whom we interviewed as part of our current research project. In the final section, I shall suggest ways in which these insights can be usefully applied to improve university teaching, in whatever context.

The interpersonal basis

At the basis of all our communication is a one-to-one interpersonal exchange. We do, of course, experience many other forms of communication, such as the mass media, books written by unknown authors, long dead, or the pseudo-letters generated by computers. Nonetheless, the way in which we engage in and think about these other modes, and the ways in which we construct meaning from them, are derived from the basic form in which two human beings talk to one another. In our academic advising, each consultation with a student reminds us of this interpersonal basis of communication and, therefore, of teaching. The student is an actual human being, and not a blurred face in a crowded lecture theatre or a number on an examination paper. He or she has a personality, a view of life, a way of speaking, that interact with our own to create mutually defined meanings and interpretations. We cannot, face-to-face, overlook the uniqueness of each individual student, and the uniqueness of each interaction. This was frequently commented upon by the subjects in our study:

There isn't really a typical consultation I'd have with students. each one demands something quite different ... there's a great range.

I don't think I could say that any consultations really fit a pattern, and that's partly what makes this job so difficult, because you don't have a pattern to follow.

I know myself when it's been a good session or an average session or an indifferent one ... or there are personality differences, or that frustration one feels when you're dealing with a student who's not very able and not very responsive, or the opposite case.

The teacher of a large class finds it very hard to recognize the essentially interpersonal nature of the teaching-learning process. It is easy to think in terms of "I taught them", as if "they" were an undifferentiated mass. In fact, as our one-to-one experience never lets us forget, whether there be six or six hundred in a class, each student is learning (or not learning) in a unique way. Each understands differently, remembers differently, regards different things as important or interesting. Each has had a unique interaction, however anonymously and remotely across the rows of lecture theatre seats, with the teacher. Bonnett (1996: 35) describes the relationship between teacher and student as "a form of the poetic" in the sense that:

it celebrates receptivity and participation: engagement that is open to the call of what is there to be thought in its summons to individuals, rather than a preoccupation with imposing a pre-formed structure ... or with seeking detailed pre-specified learning outcomes

The centrality of the listener-learner

When we talk about communication, we almost always think only of its expression side: we tend to focus on the speaker, who "sends the messages" or "tries to get across (or through) to the listener"; we allow a sort of moral primacy to the one who initiates the communication by being the first to talk. The term "communication skills", which is so bandied around these days, is virtually synonymous with "speaking and writing skills". A "good communicator" is someone who speaks or writes convincingly; the term is hardly ever used to refer to a good listener or reader.

Academic advisers, by contrast, are constantly dealing with the interpretative side of communication. The picture they have of their university as an educational institution is probably formed almost solely from the students' perceptions. Like me, you have probably had the experience of feeling that you are familiar with a class you never attended, or a lecturer you have never met, simply through talking to a number of students from the class. And, whilst a lot of our work is concerned with improving students' writing, we are acutely aware of the fact that good writing arises from good learning and good thinking, and that the student needs to master these skills before he or she can learn to write well.

This is an invaluable corrective to the common perception of the majority of students and staff, that education is defined by what is taught and how, rather than what is learned and how. For the simple fact is that communication is determined in the final analysis by the listener. What he or she makes of the message, carries away from the interaction (as it were), is what has been communicated. No matter how much the speaker may have intended the listener to understand the message to be X, if the listener takes it to be Y, then Y is what the message has become. We are constantly being reminded by the students who seek our help, because they aren't learning what the lecturers want them to learn, that the success or failure of the educational process is determined by the learner. Those academic advisers who work from time to time with academic staff will know how surprised the latter can be when we tell them what the students are actually learning, as opposed to what they are supposed to be learning. This brings us to the third of the communicative characteristics of teaching and learning.

The continuous and instantaneous construction of meaning

A common misrepresentation of the communication process is that messages are somehow "sent" and "received". The implication is that the message is a set of meanings which exists in its entirety. A little reflection on even the most commonplace communication shows that this is not the case. From the first instant of interpersonal contact, even before a word has been uttered, both parties to the communication are constructing interpretations: of what sort of person the other is; what mood he or she is in; what the function of the communication is. We predict what is to follow; we closely monitor the minutest clues to the other's meaning. The so-called "content of the message" is being constantly created and modified - a message is not a given entity but a dynamic process. Communication is a constant ebb and flow of meanings.

Again, one-to-one teaching reminds us that the educational process is exactly the same. As one of our research subjects expressed it:

I see it as the teaching emerging from the dialogue you have with them, in the way the conversation runs. I see learning emerging from that as a kind of dynamic thing, so it's not me telling [the student] things, but it's the way the session runs, the give and take of meaning that the two of us make together.

There is nothing more frustrating than students whose ideas, attitudes, or values simply will not change, despite our best endeavours. It is (I hope it is unnecessary to say) not that they refuse to adopt *our* ideas, but that they will adopt none. The person who has a fixed idea and refuses to consider alternative possibilities is simply not learning - even if we happen to agree with that fixed idea. Conversely, the greatest reward in the job is when we see a student beginning to develop the capacity to question, probe, weigh alternatives, criticize, and evaluate. When that happens, that student is learning to apply to the larger issues of life and the world the processes he or she naturally applies in the making of meanings a thousand times a day.

Conclusion

The prevailing folklore about education, as about everything that really matters, is that of the market place: knowledge is a commodity, students are consumers; teachers are purveyors. It is rare in any generation to find those who go against

the overwhelming current of the taken-for-granted, and not surprisingly those of us who see education as primarily about human beings and not primarily about money are regarded as irrelevant. Universities have, by and large, leapt mindlessly aboard the market-bound bandwagon, and in such places one-to-one teaching is a pointless and inefficient extravagance. Nonetheless, there is still a remnant of sense, and possibly of sensibility, in our institutions, as evidenced by the fact that the number of academic advisers has increased in recent years. We have, to return to the reference in my title, been allowed into the kitchen - provided that we sit in the corner and clean up the fallout from the educational process.

In this paper, I have suggested that, whilst we may be among the ashes, we are possessed of a great secret. One-to-one teaching is not at the margins, but at the centre, of all of teaching and learning. There is so much for us to tell the world about pedagogy: we are most intimately acquainted with its true nature. Our kitchen is the heart of the castle. We may never, in our lifetimes, be recognized as the true princess, but there is hope. If civilization is to endure, the metaphors of the market-place must be eventually replaced by more appropriate ones - perhaps the masked ball.

Until then, the handsome prince, slipper in hand, is doomed to a desperate and fruitless quest.

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REVISITING PROCESS AND PRODUCT DEBATES IN ONE-TO-ONE TEACHING OF WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Teachers of academic discourse will be very familiar with debates on the merits of process and product-focused approaches to teaching writing. While the debate has often been most heated in school education, it is also heard in universities. Process approaches are particularly strong in North American writings on writing instruction. Some of the characteristics of these approaches include encouraging students to retain responsibility for and control over their writing, and encouraging writing teachers to adopt facilitative roles and to respond in non-judgemental and non-authoritarian ways. Textually-focused approaches have been criticised as authoritarian, and as imposing on students narrow and idealised views of expository writing. Awareness of these approaches and criticisms can be useful, particularly if they help teachers pay attention to writing as a dynamic rather than static construction of meaning. Nevertheless, there are reasons for wanting to give textual analysis a more central role in responses to student writing. Among these are some significant differences in the institutional context of writing instruction in North America and Australia (or Western Sydney!), which make text analysis particularly appropriate here. Another reason is the potential for a socially-oriented analysis of language to help make students critically aware of how their texts are shaped by context, including the institutional context of the disciplines in which they study. This paper discusses whether and how text analysis, combined with an awareness of the potential in student and tutor roles in the one-to-one consultation for encouraging or discouraging growth in writing, might be able to take account of both the process of writing and the social meanings and relationships of texts and language choices.

1 Introduction

This paper developed out of observations of individual consultations at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur. In 1994 and 1995 I received a Teaching Development grant from the university to observe, record and transcribe consultations. The project aimed to help tutors understand what happened in consultations, and to assist us in finding ways of making the teaching and learning in these situations more effective.

During the project, I read a number of North American papers on teaching one to one which appeared to describe and evaluate writing consultations in quite different ways from those I was familiar with. My own teaching, and that of some other colleagues in the Learning Development Centre at UWS Macarthur, was based on the assumption that as well as dealing with an individual, a consultation needed to address textual issues or problems identified by the student or the tutor and to engage with a student's text, and that advice about how to 'improve' the text was ethically responsible and useful. However, some of the North American publications I read challenged these assumptions. In particular, they questioned whether a textually-focused approach which offered explicit suggestions on textual changes was responsible, arguing that such direct intervention in the composing process led to domination of consultations by the tutor, disempowered the student and made his or her text less authentic. The apparent differences between what I was observing and practising, and what I saw described in these publications, can usefully, although not without danger, be characterised as debates between product and process approaches to the teaching of writing.

There is a danger in creating such an opposition of over generalising and stereotyping arguments. I will begin my paper, therefore, with an acknowledgement of the dangers, and an attempt to recognise some of the enormous and productive diversity of approaches to teaching writing in individual consultations, a diversity which makes it very difficult to neatly box approaches into rigid categories. I will then analyse parts of one transcribed consultation, and briefer parts of others, in an attempt to make judgements about whether and how explicit teaching about texts and language can be compatible with students' retaining ownership of their writing, and with their continuing development as writers at university.

2 Process and product debates

A process-focused approach to teaching writing in individual conferences could be characterised as being primarily concerned with the student as an individual creator of knowledge whose authentic voice needs to be respected by the tutor, and whose writing is an inner-directed, cognitive, problem-solving process (Ede 1989, Flower and Hayes 1981). This focus on the individual is claimed to be sensitive to the different personalities of students and their learning and writing styles (Stewart 1988).

In the context of one to one teaching in North America, where tutors often receive training before they begin tutoring, there are often process-oriented guidelines on the ethics and practice of teaching one to one. Tutors are often trained to guide unobtrusively rather than offer explicit advice, to avoid authoritative answers and even to deny their own expertise (ten Have 1989, p. 128, Thonus 1996). In part, because the tutors are often graduate students working in composition programs, their advice is commonly about the elements of "good writing", rather than about the particular literacies of different disciplines. This is a possible difference between the North American and local contexts which I will develop later in the paper. One claim made about the supposed non-authoritarian position of the tutor is that it leads to a more equal status between tutor and student. However, it has been noted (Ulichny and Watson-Gregeo, 1987) that even writing conferences conducted by tutors who profess a process philosophy are very frequently marked by tutor dominance in the control of topics.

Debates on the merits of process approaches have been current for many years. This debate in Australia has centred on the value of teaching genres, as that word has been described by writers and teachers applying Hallidayan linguistics. In North America, social constructionist theory, which emphasises the influence of social and cultural contexts on reading and writing, and the role of language in mediating or constructing reality (e.g. Brufee 1984, Bartholomae 1985), has also had a considerable impact on the theory and practice of teaching writing. Scholars such as Bazerman (1988) and Myers (1988), for example, have argued that the activity of drafting and rewriting academic papers, which has often been described in cognitive and process terms, is essentially a social act of response to feedback and criticism from peers.

One criticism of process approaches is that they neglect vital aspects of academic and critical literacy. Reid (1984) suggests that process approaches do not usually address the schemata of academic discourse. Horowitz (1986) argues that process approaches neglect important academic genres (a criticism voiced in Australia by Martin (1985), Christie (1990) and others), that they do not give sufficient regard to the importance of formal structure in much academic discourse (the psychology report is a good example), and that they do not adequately prepare students for the tasks of academic disciplines. Phelps (1988: 114) critiques the 'myth of natural literacy' which permeates process approaches, arguing that it does not account for the creation of written artifacts and the development of critical reflexivity, both of which are crucial to sophisticated, cultural literacy. It is also argued (e.g. Johns 1990) that explicit teaching of how the codes and values of discourse communities are realised in textual practices is essential simply because they are often not transparent to novices.

Socially and textually oriented approaches to writing have sparked counter-arguments in turn. They have been criticised, for example, as focusing on form rather than meaning, as ignoring the importance of emotion in the writing process, as making arbitrary distinctions between the personal and the social and as diminishing the importance of an individual's ability to idiosyncratically generate personal knowledge (Gregg 1981, cited in Murphy 1994). In a carefully reasoned discussion of the evidence about the effects of instruction in genres, Freedman (1995) suggests that links between genre instruction and the development of critical literacy may not be firmer than in cases of untutored immersion in literate practices and the unconscious performance of writing.

I wish to address just the issue of whether explicit teaching about language and text - genre, semantics and lexicogrammar - can be compatible with collaborative conferences which are not dominated by the tutor. I predicted that transcripts would show students and tutors sharing the tasks of identifying problems and negotiating suggestions and solutions. I predicted also that students and tutors would each have opportunities to assert and explain their areas of expert knowledge, and that students would show evidence of a developing ability to express their understanding of their own written texts. These predictions are tested only against the evidence of transcripts of the consultations, not against redrafted essays.

Analysis of one to one consultations

My study examines two features of consultations where issues of control, knowledge and explanation are foregrounded: generic staging, and interpersonal meanings realised in lexicogrammatical patterns. In the area of interpersonal meanings, I want to look in particular at mitigation. Texts are taken from transcripts of consultations with one male and one female tutor, both of English speaking background.

3 Generic staging

The expectation that students will receive help or advice in developing their assignments leads to unsurprising similarities in the staging of one to one consultations. Consultations typically begin with greeting, learning about the student (if it is a first consultation) and small talk, and clarification of the purpose of the consultation. In consultations where a substantial draft of a text is being discussed, the discussion goes through a series of stages in which problems are identified and suggestions for solving the problem are offered. Consultations often conclude with a summary of the main problems and suggestions made, and sometimes with discussions about follow-up tasks or meetings.

3.1 Introductory stage - identifying problems

Text 1 is an extract from the introductory phase of a consultation, when issues and purposes are first raised. In this transcript, the student and tutor are reading comments by a lecturer on a draft of her critical review of a research report. The student identifies two needs. One is oriented to writing and thinking processes - *how* to get her ideas onto paper, and the other is oriented to discourse rules and disciplinary conventions - whether her critical reflections on the report she had read belonged in a critical review.

Text 1 (Critical theory): "I know what I want to say"

Tutor 1: Male, English Speaking Background (ESB)

Student: Female, ESB, mature age, 1st year

- 1 T The last comment on the page [*i.e. by the lecturer*], 'I need a context to understand this comment.' ...
So how have you developed that?
- 2 S I got to the end of this, and that's when I rang you. (*Both laugh*) I wrote a sentence and thought, I know what I want to say but I can't get it on a piece of paper.
- 3 T So that's going to be an important thing for us to look at then
- 4 S Yes
- 5 T How to develop a context for your comments about critical theory.
- 6 S And my other, the other area I wasn't sure of in a literature review, can I put those sorts of things, is that what should be there, or, I got to the end and I thought, maybe not.

3.2 Evaluation - suggestion stage

As this paper deals mainly with the later problem-suggestion stages of the consultation, these stages are analysed in greater detail than the introductory stage. The analysis is based on the sequence described by Thonus (1996). I identify the following features (my codes are in parentheses):

- (1) student identification of difficulties (SI),
- (2) tutor evaluation of problems (TE),
- (3) student acceptance (SA) or rejection (SR) of the evaluation,
- (4) tutor suggestion (TS),
- (5) student acceptance (SAS) or rejection (SRS) of the suggestion.

Some additions are made to these options in later texts.

The following extract shows an example of a localised evaluation - suggestion sequence.

Text 2: Evaluation - suggestion sequence: "I know it needs more"

Tutor 2: Female, ESB

Student: Female, ESB, 1st year

- (1) SE *That's the intro, I know it needs more, I don't know what else to add.*
- (2) TE *Well you give a definition ... so what is the whole point? You've said you're going to review what scholars have said about crime, you haven't said that you're going to look at the ways they've used Marxist theory.*
- (3) SA *Right, I see.*
- (4) TS *So you need to, perhaps, rewrite that sentence. Yeah rewrite it to say "this essay will discuss the ways Marxist theory has been applied".*
- (5) SAS *I might stick it in there somewhere.*

In Text 1, the student evaluates the problem as being a matter of personal knowledge and additional content. The tutor accepts her evaluation, supplying the lack of knowledge by identifying something unsaid: *you haven't said that you're going to look at the ways they've used Marxist theory*. The evaluation is accepted, and the tutor makes a suggestion. Interpersonally, the suggestion is made as a command, a demand that a person provide some good or service (Halliday 1985:69): *you need to, perhaps, rewrite that sentence*, and again *rewrite it*. The sense of obligation is mitigated in the first command through the mood adjunct *perhaps*. The suggestion/command is 'obeyed', but the modal verb *might* opens the possibility, which was taken up, for the teacher to suggest an alternative place to "stick" the sentence.

It would be difficult to argue that Text 2 does not show tutor control of the consultation. The only time the student initiates is in the identification of the problem. The tutor uses statements and commands; one question is asked, but the tutor does not wait for an answer. Opportunities for elaborating on knowledge about text and genre are missed. As an example, the tutor might have responded to the student's opening evaluation by asking why she thought it needed more.

Text 3 shows a sequence elaborated in ways which seem to promise greater student understanding of genre, and more equal participation in the dialogue.

Text 3: Evaluation - suggestion sequence: "I'm scared"

Tutor 1: Male, ESB

Student: Female, NESB, mature age, 1st year

- (1) SE (Not in this extract)
- (2) TE *Looking at this section on class and health, when you begin that, you immediately go into a reference. Is there a particular reason why you go straight to the reference?*
- (3) SA *I'll be honest with you, since starting to write these essays, I'm somehow, I became confused how to write ... But as I say I was frightened once I got all those directions (on how to write an essay) and then pick up all those referencing ..., and sort of now when you ask me why I go straight to it, because I'm scared, I don't know how to go about it.*
- (4) TS *...One way you could bring out your own ideas on a topic is to put them there right at the beginning, then use the reference from .. as a way of supporting that.*
- (5) SQ *So do I start with my idea and then put a reference, and then again finish with my idea?*
- (6) TS *Yeah, make a claim, which can often be in your own words, say something about what you think that relationship between health and class is, and then say what the evidence is for that, and the evidence you've got is, comes from the quotation itself. And after that you might want to say something more about it, some explanation, again in your own words. Do you think that might make you feel more comfortable with this?*
- (7) SAS *Yes. I was afraid how to put that down what's mine, what's not mine...*

In Text 3, the student appears to participate more independently in the sequence, interrupting and extending it to seek clarification about the tutor's suggestion. Interpersonally, the relationship between tutor and student is also mediated more equally through the reduced use of commands, and a greater use of statements and questions. The extensive use of mitigation devices, including modals such as *might* and *could*, may also have some effect on reducing interpersonal distance and tutor domination.

In Text 4, the student identifies a general problem and localises it, asking whether a sentence is critical. The tutor's evaluation is that this sentence is not critical in the sense expected by the lecturer, and she explains what counts as critical analysis. The student makes a suggestion about using tutorial notes as a source of critical viewpoint, and her suggestion is accepted and expanded by the tutor.

Text 4: Evaluation - suggestion sequence (Tutor 3)

Tutor 3: Female, ESB

Student: Female, ESB, mature age, final year

(1) **SI** *I'm still a bit concerned about what is critical analysis. I still don't know if I know what that means.*

(Later in consultation)

(2) **T** (Reads) *"Relationships between the director and staff have become strained... (This action) has caused frustration and confusion, and breakdown."*

(3) **SI** *So is that critical analysis? Is that what she means? Do you think?*

(4) **TE** *Well it's a critical comment on something you observed at the centre. It's not critical analysis because it doesn't use any of this, the literature to argue it from.*

(5) **SA** *Right.*

(6) **TE** *I can't see anything in here, that would be useful.*

(7) **SS** *The stuff that I have read in the first tutorial.*

(8) **TAS** *What about something that even does that. Someone else that refers to Jorde-Bloom. Just so that you've got another viewpoint, because the question is asking you to have read widely.*

(9) **S** *Yeah.*

(10) **TS** *And to be critical, you need to be able to use other theorists, to make comments about situation as well as Jorde-Bloom...*

If dominance is measured in length of turns and the speech functions used, the tutor in Text 4 controls the consultation. Yet the student has identified a need, and has asked for and received an explanation of a critical term. The explanation allows the student to take up new options for developing her essay, rather than closing them down.

4 Interpersonal meanings

There are many ways suggestions can be made in our grammar. One way is by the speech function of command, realised in the grammar by an imperative. Yet tutors usually employ a much wider range of speech functions and grammatical forms. As well as the imperative grammar for commands, such as *rewrite that sentence* and *make a claim*, tutors use declaratives such as *you might need to change that sentence* and interrogatives such as *Can you sort of say something about Marxist theory?* In addition, tutors make other lexical choices which reinforce the tentativeness of suggestions, or reduce the apparent authority of the tutor. They make extensive use of non-specific words in nominal groups such as *some* and *something*, as in *you might want to say something more about it*. They use extensively hedging words in verbal groups, such as the mood adjunct *perhaps you need to*, *perhaps*, *rewrite that sentence*. Conjunctions such as *like* are also used to make the suggestion appear less specific or prescriptive, as in *you could say, like "therefore it is clear that..."*. The mitigation of suggestions varies from speaker to speaker, but appears to be common to all consultations. It is a feature of the institutional discourse of giving advice, and shows an awareness of the potential for conflict or passive acceptance of control when evaluations, advice and suggestions are made. It is therefore an important grammatical resource for reducing the overt exercise of control, and plays an important, if not completely conscious, role in facilitating a dialogue which is not tutor dominated.

Text 5 shows how this mitigation works to maintain some kind of equality in the consultation.

Text 5(Critical theory): "how to approach this"

Topic: Making suggestions on how to develop an approach to resolving textual problems

14 **T** (continued from 'Yes it does') *Um, maybe, I'm trying to think of how to approach this. It might be we need to break that up into a couple of different steps.*

15 **S** *Right.*

16 **T** (2 lines deleted) *Do you think the critique of the approach is something more manageable? Without suggesting at the moment how the research might be different, but just trying to say, here are my assumptions, this is the theory, this is the thinking that they're based on.*

17 **S** *Yes, that would probably work better, because what's happened with this, is I'm looking at that review, and reading it, and it seems everything that has been done is flawed.*

18 **T** *Yes.*

19 **S** *It doesn't go far enough, or perhaps it can't go far enough, it's controlled it was done from within the institution. Does that make sense?*

- 20 T Yes... (*2 turns deleted*) how about we just look at that issue, and think first of all how your own critical assumptions here can be integrated with reference to critical theory which you did in the first draft and concentrate on that before looking at what else could be done. Does that make sense?
- 21 S Yes. Do I, I would prefer not to go into what else could be done differently because I don't feel I have the expertise to say that, I'd like to localise it a bit more.

The tutor's control is heavily mitigated. In line 14, the tutor says "It might be we need to break that up into a couple of different steps". The person who must take this action is, of course, the student, so the use of a statement/proposition rather than a command ("Break this up") is one device used to moderate the exercise of power. Two other grammatical devices reinforce the tutor's unwillingness to appear to be coercive. "We" is used to show that the effort of rewriting is collaborative, and the mood adjunct "It might be" reinforces the tentativeness of the suggestion. Later in this dialogue, the tutor says "how about we just look at that issue". Again, the possible command "look at" is interpersonally moderated in the grammar by 'how about', 'we' and 'just', and is reinforced at the end of the turn by an invitation to the student to accept or reject the suggestion: "Does that make sense?" - an invitation borrowed from the student (line 19). These grammatical strategies are important resources for levelling out uneven distributions of power, and appear to be quite successful in this instance. The student cooperates - "Right" (line 15), "Yes, that would probably work better" (line 17), "Yes (that makes sense)" (line 21). The careful negotiation of potentially conflictual roles also seems to be ideationally productive. The student accepts the tutor's sketch (line 16) of how the critique might be organised, and elaborates on her critique of the report in lines 17 and 19. Furthermore, in line 21, she rejects the tutor's suggestion of a two-step approach to the critique.

Tutors' consciousness of the negative effects of unequal power in consultations, manifested in their use of interpersonal resources in grammar, makes it possible for them to be experts about texts without taking away from students the responsibility and the creative function of developing ideas. However, it is important to add one qualification to my argument. It is possible that overuse of mitigation when there is no real exchange of power might lead to students disregarding it. The list above seems to show a preference for statements and commands over questions. While mitigation strategies in combination with questions and statements may open possibilities for students to extend their thinking, it is possible that they are disregarded if the overall tenor of the consultation is dominated by the tutor, and if the student is not given or does not take opportunities to challenge or reject the tutor's evaluations and suggestions.

To conclude my analysis, I want to look at how one of the issues identified early in the 'Critical theory' consultation were developed. Transcript 3 (d) is from late in the consultation.

Text 3(d): "do that first"

Topic: giving and responding to advice

- 1 T Looking at what you've got, there are a number of assumptions, which are done separately. One way you might be able to do this is to start off with something which is going to help integrate them... (*3 lines deleted*) Now that might be what you can start off with, by giving that broad assumption about the need to place any program... or this particular report into a broader social context.
- 2 S Right.
- 3 T Now if you do that first, that might help to integrate these particular points.
- 4 S Yes... With this, can I tell you what I thought about it, because I might have the wrong context... Critical theory shares, or my understanding of it is it acknowledges social and cultural influences. Had this (*points to report*) acknowledged social influences to a greater extent, it may have been able to answer these questions.
- 5 T Okay. So what you're telling me is that your assumptions are based on critical theory. Is that, would it be true to say that?
- 6 S Yes.
- 7 T Then that might be the way you begin this. Identify the paradigm that your own assumptions are based on, as far as you're aware of it.

The assignment has asked the student to identify the assumptions (e.g. about adult learning) on which a research report is based. In her draft, a number of assumptions are listed, but they are not organised into a paragraph. One approach (the idealised process approach) might be to ask the student to suggest ways of organising them. A slightly more directive approach might be to describe two or three ways information could be organised. The tutor's approach here is to offer one suggestion about how the assumptions could be integrated. Where does this ability to resist suggestions - something tutors would welcome - come from? The student's maturity is one factor. Another factor is likely to be that the student, who had come to this tutor previously, felt comfortable about resistance. It is even possible that the

reduction in personal distance which is reflected in the tutor's use of mitigation strategies contributed a little to this independence.

5 Critical awareness

What evidence is there that the kind of teaching described here is able to help students develop more critical awareness of their own place as writers in the academy? The evidence from the dialogues is fairly meagre of course. However, there are two areas in which I think a modest claim can be made about the student taking from the consultation an enhanced critical awareness of academic discourse. The first area is her active participation in talking about texts and expectations an academic community has about texts. She began the consultation by identifying a need to know whether a critical review could make use of critical theory, a paradigm which she had found helpful in thinking about the unstated assumptions in the research report she was reviewing. That question seems to have been answered to her satisfaction by the end of the consultation. Secondly, what I think the dialogue in Transcript 1 shows is that a close focus on the student's text, coupled with sympathetically moderated advice, suggestions and directives, is not inconsistent with the goal of helping a student to understand and critically reflect on her own ideas. The student in Transcript 1 sometimes accepts, sometimes modifies, sometimes rejects, the tutor's advice. She enters a real dialogue with the tutor, and is not overwhelmed by him. This dialogic interaction, if it can be transferred to her readings of and conversations with other texts, is an important element of critical literacy.

6 Conclusion

Tutors do have to be modest in their ambition to assist students to develop independence, critical consciousness and critical literacy. We usually spend a very short time with students in comparison with the time they spend in lectures, tutorials, discussions with teachers and peers, and engagement at home or in the library with reading and writing. Student's own goals for consultations are often pragmatic and limited - they want a particular assignment checked, or they identify a particular area of difficulty (whereas the tutor often sees different problems). Younger students often seem less willing, or able, to challenge suggestions or offer different solutions, and tutors constantly look for ways of encouraging involvement in the task of analysing texts and writing processes, and equalising status. Nor can we do much more than prompt students to consider where and how their reasoning needs to be developed, and we are almost never able to sit with them and compare ideas from their texts and other readings, an element of academic literacy which we spend much time on in other classes. The valuable insights that have come from process theory on drafting and revising assignments are part of our *raison d'être*, for we would not exist as one to one tutors unless students wanted to reexamine their own drafts, but it is not in our control to require students to bring work back to us one more time. There are other things we could possibly do more. While some students want to know how to create the thesis driven, monologic texts which are rewarded with high marks, a few want to know how to creatively rethink genres, and I suspect we have few models which they could learn from. Nevertheless, this work we do has value, and the individual consultation may be, despite its limited extent and narrow focus, a rare opportunity for students to observe and respond immediately to how another person reads their own text, evaluates it sympathetically, critically and positively, and provides wanted guidance on how to develop the kinds of writing skills which faculties expect but less often teach or explain.

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TALKING WITH STUDENTS: SOME TEACHING METHODS IN A CREDIT TOPIC

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ABSTRACT

The Language and Learning Unit at Flinders University was asked to co-ordinate a topic, Directed Study in Skills in Higher Education, within the newly formed University Preparation Diploma, a pre-university course selected on equity criteria. The topic was expected to provide students with 'basic knowledge and skills for university survival' and complemented a Communication Studies topic which focussed on academic speaking and writing. A firm principle in writing the curriculum was that learning is a reflective process and that students need to be encouraged to look at their experiences critically. To encourage this process a dialogue between students and staff was evolved primarily through the use of a learning journal and mid-semester student-teacher interviews. The course focussed strongly on the position of learner in the tertiary sector, academic argument and general study skills. Four parts of the programme can be seen to particularly facilitate a dialogue between lecturers and students:

- (a) The learning journal encouraged a process which was intended to take the writer beyond description and commentary to reflection and critical evaluation of experience.
- (b) An interview with the tutor investigated students' progress in both Directed Study and other topics. Issues raised in the interview by students were addressed and strategies to make the most of tertiary learning were developed.
- (c) Minute papers were used in workshop sessions to evaluate the sessions, and feedback from students modified the following week's programme.
- (d) Finally general 'letters' from the staff to the class set a friendly and informative atmosphere.

Issues that arose from these steps to enhance dialogue between students and staff centred around resistance to journal writing, students' difficulty with reflective writing, appropriate assessment of journals, defining lecturers' roles in interviews and acknowledging collegiality with staff of other topics.

The diploma, the topic and the students

This paper describes the experience of teaching a group of 45 first year university students a topic called Directed Study Skills in Higher Education within a newly formed Diploma of University Preparation.

The students, both school leavers and mature entry students, were selected for the Diploma programme on an equity basis, focussing on those students who had not met usual university entry requirements. They were asked to furnish a 500 word statement outlining previous educational experience, obstacles that may have affected their educational experience and their hopes for achievement within the programme. Students were also interviewed before being accepted. Students accepted represented a cross section of the community, including bicultural Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people from a low socio-economic background who demonstrated disadvantage. In the introductory interviews evidence of recent educational experience, secondary or post secondary, was sought. The group selected had a wide range of knowledge and expectation about their study.

In first semester the diverse Diploma student population was asked to undertake a limited curriculum of one elective topic and three compulsory topics: Directed Study in Skills in Higher Education; Communication Skills; and streamed topics of English as a Second Language for bicultural students, Issues for Aboriginal Students in Higher Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, or Australian Identity for the rest. All faculties were represented in students' choice of electives selected from first year topics.

The University Calendar specified that the 'topic aims to provide students with the basic knowledge and skills for university survival. It covers skills embedded in cognate studies focussing on analysis and synthesis using the university structure' (Flinders University, 1996) and gave the coordinator an open ticket. A broad context for study was set with lectures on the nature of the tertiary sector. The first lecture noted the disparity highlighted by McInnis, James and

McNaught (1995) between the expectations of lecturers and those of beginning students, and set a theme for the course of developing approaches to breach the gap and develop good learning. A bracket of lectures on argument, personal voice and critical thinking were included. The skills emphasised in Directed Study were academic writing conventions, effective reading, note taking and time management, leaving academic writing, oral presentation and library skills to the Communications Studies topic.

Staff backgrounds

Two staff taught in the programme. both have had extensive experience in student advising and both have taught credit topics in a variety of disciplines. Currently both are language and learning advisers as well as teachers in communications topics. One to one consultations within the Language and Learning Unit are predominantly with first year students. Issues are identified and strategies developed through discussion. One staff member had had extensive experience with journaling for both education and health sciences students. The approach of Beasley (1986) in constructing a way of introducing prospective students to university studies informed the development of this and other topics taught by unit staff. Much of what the Directed Studies teachers practice comes from contact with excellent teachers in the Unit and among faculty staff. Thus staff brought a deep experience of student learning issues and strategies to the topic.

Starting principles

McInnis et al (1995) identify the need for academic staff to be aware of the diverse backgrounds and needs of students in a mass education system. The report suggests that the social nature of teaching and learning is particularly important in the first year at university and also that the quality and frequency of feedback about academic performance is paramount to first year students in Australian universities. Directed Study wanted to find ways to talk personally to students about their different experiences.

Ratcliff (1996:18) stresses that an ideal first year curriculum should be flexible. 'Instead of looking for the one best curriculum for all students, we need to examine which course work patterns and sequences advance which types of learning for which types of students.' Identification of the needs of individual students or groups of students is unlikely unless mechanisms exist for establishing a dialogue between teachers and students. Directed Study imparted some study skills and some understanding of the context of tertiary study, but also sought to understand the issues confronting starting students by creating an expectation of detailed communication between staff and students through the use of reflective writing tasks and discussion of learning.

By focussing on student awareness of their learning the first steps towards lasting learning outcomes are possible. Cross (1992), who constantly seeks interaction with her students on their own learning, stresses this point:

Classroom research such as 'minute papers' and self diagnostic learning logs provide feedback and require students to engage in the higher level learning activities of synthesis, application and evaluation.

Directed Study incorporated both the journal and minute papers as ways to encourage students to talk with staff about the effectiveness of learning within the topic.

With the recommendations of McInnis et al (1995) and Cross (1992) in mind, the topic Directed Study placed emphasis on 'timely, diagnostic feedback' with a statement to this effect in the student guide. Lecturers made formal provision for the student's need for support, encouragement and access to staff for out of class consultation. While these provisions may be part of the practice of good teachers already, within Directed Studies four elements of dialogue were purposefully built into the programme: learning journal writing, personal interviews, minute papers and letters from staff.

A deliberate effort was made to talk with students. In other words, staff in Directed Study wanted to hear from and respond to students as well as talking to them in the more formal aspects of the topic. The dialogue which can develop between lecturer and student can be a particularly rewarding and unique experience, and one which validates the student's need to have individual access to staff in an academic environment which normally makes this difficult.

Learning journals

A learning journal was the first way of talking with students in Directed Study. Journals containing weekly (at least)

entries were collected and responded to by tutors three times during the semester. As trust developed between student and lecturer, a genuine and professional dialogue became possible and, as McAlpine (1992) suggests, challenge as well as support could be offered and accepted. As the semester progressed a sense of openness and sincerity developed with many students and this was reflected in their journal entries. One student wrote:

By now you are probably either frustrated or simply acknowledging that I have some serious flaws in my educational life, namely being disorganised and lax in attitude. I have grappled with this and have tried to assume control of this situation, with some success.

McAlpine (1992:24) points out that the written dialogue also allows the student to have 'considerable control over the agenda for the conversation'. This is one way of establishing the partnership in education mentioned by McInnis et al (1995:124). In responding to journals staff developed a dialogue by commenting on issues, suggesting further development of an idea, or asking questions (see appendix A).

Journal writing issues - resistance, reflection and evaluation

The first issue we encountered was resistance to writing: 'I also have to say that I hate writing journals. I thought that Yr 12 saw the end of such silly tasks'. In class several introductory exercises were tried. Students wrote a short piece in class describing a life experience from which they had learnt something. Students were told this item could become a journal entry. A headlining exercise was also done in class where a series of possible headlines for the first week in uni were suggested, for example 'Crisis in the carpark', 'The fog clears', 'Words of wisdom?', 'Late again', 'A fortunate meeting', and students asked to make up their own headlines and points (Simons 1978). Further suggestions for writing included stream of consciousness word association; putting entries in the form of a letter to a friend; or setting up a conversation between the writer and their journal. Despite our best efforts some students resisted to the end, giving only perfunctory entries. Others, though, like the writer quoted above recognised the benefit: 'I know that without these journal entries, I probably would never have seen my transition. I can't believe that this is my last journal entry.'

The second issue of note was the difficulty students had in reflecting on their experience. Students were encouraged from our first meeting to make journal notes on their university experience. Journals can vary from private, personal diaries to reading logs; in Directed Study the purpose was to reflect on learning experience during the semester. Students were asked to see the process in three steps: description, commentary and analysis. Each level required a cognitive jump. The first jump is from description: 'I had great difficulty with research for the first assignment, finding only one useful book.' to commentary: 'I feel I wasted my time as I was in a panic and could not think straight'. The next jump is to analysis: 'Earlier preparation may avoid both panic and make more books available. Now that I think about it I wonder if I had had the time whether I would have looked along the shelves and found something else'.

The third issue was evaluation of personal writing. Journals constituted 40% of the grade in the topic. The issue of assessment was managed to a degree by specific formal criteria printed in the course handout, reiterated in class and identified on a mark sheet (see appendix A). Such things as regularity of entries, expression, presentation, reference to other university topics and evidence of reflection on issues were ticked off to give half the grade. In considering the content of the journals evidence was sought of engagement with ideas in Directed Studies and/or other topics; reflections on learning in general; comment on study issues related to first year at university; discussion about strategies and resolutions for study issues. Feedback, especially on the first journal, was extensive (see appendix B) and pointed students towards investigating their experiences, reflecting on the learning points involved and drawing out comment. For some students second and third journal submissions began with direct discussion of the teacher's comments on previous submissions: 'I have read through your comments. My last entry answered one or maybe a couple of your questions' and 'In response to your comments on my writing... I must explain the vast amount of R.O.S. [run on sentences] that pop up everywhere. This is because I have been writing diaries for many years, and this is the style I've fallen into.' Grading was generous in this section in the first submission, but, as direction towards a certain approach was encouraged, students who either resisted writing about learning issues or who refused to investigate their experience fared less well. No one presenting weekly issues which were loosely related to the experience of studying at a tertiary level failed this section. The content of the first entries was material for the next step of dialogue between staff and students, the interviews.

Personal interviews

Workshops were suspended during weeks 5-7, making comment, discussion and feedback about individual first learning experiences possible in a 20 minute personal interview with a Directed Studies teacher. Four weeks of workshops had

shown students that staff in this topic were approachable. Issues raised in the first learning journal submission as well as comments from students on the topic, other topics and university in general were discussed.

In this the background in language and learning advising of both lecturers was invaluable. Skills of identifying issues, problem areas and directing discussion towards resolution of issues are part of the stock in trade of advisers. The interview was an opportunity for the teacher as helper to discuss the types of support and assistance available for acquiring adult learning skills in the first semester of university by the student entering via a non-traditional route. The value of these interviews was reported in this student's journal entry:

There aren't many subjects at Uni which give you the chance to express your thoughts and discuss problems through an interview... I also found it really useful to talk to someone about the course and know that everything was confidential.

Issues arising from interviews - conflict of roles and collegiality

The ethical dilemma that arose for staff from interviews was the degree of conflict between their roles as topic lecturers, student advisers and university academics. Each role has a different focus of responsibility: they are the teaching/learning content, the resolution of student needs, and support of colleagues and the institution respectively. All academics fulfil these roles at different times. In the interview setting the role of student adviser became primary. This was potentially awkward as one of the tenets of advising is that the adviser is an independent advocate for the student. Here the duality of both teaching a course and advising generally on study strategies could conflict and may have inhibited honest criticism of the topic.

Another dilemma was compromising the collegiality between ourselves and colleagues from other disciplines. We heard considerable criticism about the topic content and teaching in other topics. Had we been discussing issues as language and learning advisers we would have been discussing ways to overcome problems encountered, perhaps using our independent status to talk with academic staff. In the final analysis concerns for our students' learning outweighed those for our colleagues' sensitivity and we talked about ways to overcome difficult situations. The face to face interview was a great way to find out about individual progress, but may not be the best setting for receiving critical feedback about our topic, so other means were set up for communicating both student and staff views.

Minute papers

Minute papers are an effective means to gain immediate feedback about teaching. Literally in one minute, at the end of a class, students are asked what was the most important thing learnt and what question remains unanswered (Angelo & Cross 1993). Through this immediate feedback teachers in Directed Study were able to see whether important issues had been effectively communicated and what was important to reinforce in later sessions. One of the teachers in Directed Study deliberately began the following workshop by reviewing the issues raised by the previous week's minute papers. Cross (1992) says that the process of reviewing the session is valuable for students in that they reflect on the immediate experience in order to make comment. For themselves and for the teacher the students have evaluated the class.

Letters from staff

Three times during the course staff used the device of a letter to communicate important information in a friendly manner. An introductory letter prefaced the course guide, while half semester and course end letters encouraged students and informed them about course matters. While not a dialogue, the letter produced the environment of good information exchange which encouraged communication later.

Conclusion

Experience with the student centred ethos of a language and learning unit has led us to believe that catering for the needs of students for a learning environment that is social, interactive and responsive to their needs must be paramount. Reflection on practice is a key to learning and we encourage students to evaluate their experience of the first semester of their tertiary studies critically and constructively. In order to do this we set four elements into the Directed Study programme that have effectively given voice to that first year experience. Furthermore, through quick feedback, we

establish dialogue and thus we guide students to develop useful skills and strategies. One student's view of the journaling process confirms our belief in its value.

I found the journals to be really helpful because I got to put all my experiences and what I have learnt at uni into them. I think the journals have been a great help in referring to and I think they will become useful in future.

We can ask for no more than that students record significant learning, reflect on it as they proceed and see value in returning to it again in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Directed Studies Journals

Mark Sheet

Name:

Method (3 marks)

Are there weekly entries?

0-no, 1-yes

YOUR MARK

Is there reference to reading/research/other topics?

0-none, 0.5-some, 1-lots

YOUR MARK

Is there reflection as well as description?

0-none, 0.5-some, 1-lots

YOUR MARK

Style (2 marks)

Does the material communicate well?

0-no, 0.5-some problems, 1-yes

YOUR MARK

Is it neatly presented and formatted in recommended style?

0-no, 1-yes

YOUR MARK

Content (5 marks)

This section is marked under the guidelines set out in the manual. Tutors will be looking for evidence of your engagement with ideas in the Directed Studies and/or other topics; reflections on learning in general; comment on study issues related to first year at university; discussion about strategies and resolutions for study issues.

YOUR MARK

OVERALL GRADE

Comment:

Specific comments (see numbers in text margin)

Appendix B

Comment:

This journal is among the best I have read. You are accepting the challenge to think about the experience of university when so many others avoid it and write short, safe accounts of what happened in class. I believe it is possible to investigate things further, still I am encouraged by what I have read and look forward to sharing your progress through the remainder of the semester.

Incidentally, there is great improvement in the expression in this piece. I have corrected some instances of non-sentences and you will still need to be careful about this technical aspect of the work.

Specific comments (see numbers in text margin)

1. This is a fine and appropriate starting point. I wish many others would stop for a moment to consider options and motivations. Still I wonder why you chose study - you don't really say. Although, remembering your autobiographical piece and taking the title "Making the Grade" into account, I assume you really want to prove to yourself (the world) that you are capable of overcoming the odds and achieving success. One highly regarded measure is a university degree.
2. While this comment is cryptic - I don't understand what you mean - it makes me think about the level of election debate. I am dismayed at the simplistic nature of election debate and election advertising. If there is one thing I would hope university education can do it would be to give people the skills to discern what is valid argument and what is electioneering, advertising or empty rhetoric. Could you investigate what issues formed our opinions and why you accepted the things the politicians said?
3. This is excellent. You have indicated a problem and thought about it. I like your strategy of saying, 'It doesn't matter very much' in order to get started. I am glad the outcome was productive.
4. Smart move.
5. I have to agree that the difference between this work and the first piece of writing you did is vast and is evidence of this happening.
6. This is a very important consideration. You must strive for balance. Obviously, you can't study effectively if you are undernourished from poverty and you won't be much good if you become a zombie from overstudy and no recreation. This really is a period of sorting out.
7. It is good to see you making links between university work and other information. You presume your reader knows about concepts of sustainability and Aboriginal culture. You could go another step and say what you think the importance of these viewpoints is. Why is there resistance to allowing the expression of these cultural ideals in other cultures? More close to our topic, learning, how important have the things you learnt in Australian studies been to you in helping you to form an attitude and digest the material? Are there ways in which you are able to evaluate comment that you may not have had before?
8. Interesting, but is this material suitable for a journal meant to be based around learning experiences? Or is there a learning point to be drawn from this? they say "ignorance is bliss". Until you heard the report you were prepared to eat what you thought was fresh food. Now you aren't. Can you verify the report? Does it apply here? What are the alternatives to eating at the refec? On the balance of issues is compromise possible? I guess what I am getting at is that there is room for speculation on how knowledge affects you and how you can be sure what you hear is true?
9. This kind of learning should not be underestimated.
10. Maybe you wrote this for me so that I would know you had followed my recommendation. If time was wound back, but I had this piece of writing, I would not have made the suggestion I did. Still you may get some reassurance from the counsellor. As far as I am concerned you are well on the right track with this journal.

**THE ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY:
SOME IMPLICATIONS OF NEURAL NETWORK THEORY**

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the nature of human knowledge development (including language development), its representation in the brain and the use of artificial intelligence to model brain behaviour. Using artificial intelligence systems called 'connectionist' or 'neural network' systems, which mimic the most obvious features of brain behaviour, it is possible to observe learning that is not based on the input of explicated rules, or governed by an innate set of rules. Neural network theories gain additional support from current work in neurophysiology. Connectionism reframes some of the issues concerning teaching literacy skills within different discourses, whether it be on a one-to-one basis or in larger group settings. The theories pose a number of challenges for those who believe that language and literacy development are a matter of rule-guided reasoning, either internally governed (innate), or learned through the explication of, and regulation by, rules of 'genre', 'discourse' etc. People learn language within a social world of action and interaction. The social practices within communities and cultures create natural settings for the acquisition of discourse and literacy practices. Thus their roles are integral to human learning. Connectionist learning theory suggests a possibility that the development of human language and literacy within a sociocultural setting might be a matter of pattern recognition, categorisation, inference and generalisation, not rule guided reasoning.

Educational epistemology (the study of the nature, range and employment of knowledge) and teaching theories are only as good as their implied theories of learning. These must include a theory of brain functioning and cognition of the individual, as well as an account of the sociocultural dimension of human learning. I intend to provide a naturalistic explanation of cognitive learning, one relying on empirical science, particularly the work being done in artificial intelligence and neurophysiology. The approach is variously termed 'neural network', 'connectionist', or 'parallel distributed processing', because of its physical characteristics. Each of these terms emphasises an important feature of the cognitive theory, which I expect will become apparent during the paper.

By observing artificial intelligence systems which mimic the most obvious features of brain behaviour it is possible to observe learning which is not based in the input of explicated rules, or governed by an innate set of rules. Evidence that information processing might encompass pattern recognition, categorisation, inference and generalisation, rather than rule-guided reasoning, could inform our teaching practices, whether we are teaching individuals or larger groups. This paper forms only a small part of a much larger story.

The situated mind

Humans learn to explain and predict behaviour. The principal function of brain structures is the perception and organisation of experience; that is, of perceptual information. Perceptual experience occurs in a sociocultural environment and includes both linguistic and non-linguistic features. Learning may thus be said to be contextual. Jean Lave (1996) criticises cognitive psychology, as having a definition of learning which is too narrow as it ignores the importance of this subject-world relation. Diana Laurillard has also criticised the information-processing models of cognition, particularly those claiming to represent knowledge or conceptual structures in computer programs. She argues that the idea of a 'conceptual structure as a stable and well-defined entity abstracted from the contexts in which the concept was experienced' does not address what teachers regularly experience, the problems of transfer of knowledge across contexts or from theory to practice (Laurillard, 1993: 15). From their descriptions of cognitive psychology Lave and Laurillard seem to be describing classical cognitive accounts of learning, which *are* problematic. Connectionism possesses the explanatory power to surmount these problems: the value of the subject-world relation is maintained, the importance of

active and situated learning is recognised, the problems of transfer of knowledge can be explained, and some directions for teaching techniques can be abstracted from the learning theory.

Discovering the relationship between the individual, the sociocultural context of learning, and the role of the teacher has become an important area of research into teaching and learning. The issue is complex and the radical / social constructivist debate will not be explored in this paper. Connectionist theory allows some reframing of the debate in any case. What I am suggesting in response to my current understanding of the issues is that teachers committed to a social constructivist learning methodology must recognise that, whatever the sociocultural context, there is still an individual learning within the environment. Social theory needs explanation at an individual information processing level, and individual learning and knowledge development certainly cannot be explained without investigating the sociocultural environment.

Classical cognitivism and 'rules'

An empirical theory of brain function is still important, and a rationalist account will not suffice. As Walker and Evers say, 'what we can know will depend on what sort of creature we are and, in particular, on what sort of perceptual and cognitive capacities we have' (Walker & Evers, 1988: 33). Classical models of cognition are committed to the idea of a computational model of human learning, and that 'the kind of computing that is relevant to cognition involves operations on symbols' (Fodor & Pylyshyn, 1988: 4). According to classical cognitivism, the brain is therefore an organ that formally manipulates symbols according to logical rules, which results in the production of intelligent behaviour. The manipulation of these structured symbolic expressions (propositions) in the brain results in knowledge and reason. In a critique of cognitive theory, Allman sums up classical cognitivist accounts of human knowledge as asserting that:

The mind is a system of symbols manipulated by logical rules. These rules and symbols form a 'language' of thought, the structure of which mirrors the structure of the language we all use to speak to each other. All humans use the same basic mental structures to think, structures that can be defined in terms of rules and symbols. (Allman, 1989: 41)

Chomsky is committed to the claim that linguistic competence in humans can only be explained by assuming a tacit knowledge of a universal grammar, from which all human languages develop, and according to which they all fundamentally operate. An *innate* knowledge of syntactic rules derives from a language faculty. His goal is to determine the rules which, he claims, humans use to produce new sentences, and to reveal the *principles* that govern them (Chomsky, 1972). Acceptance of the rationalistic principle of knowledge acquisition through rule-guided reasoning—in which students test hypotheses against rules represented symbolically in propositional form—invites certain methodologies in teaching practices. The key point is that tacit knowledge of the rules is seen to play a *causal* role in the production of the behaviour they are *describing*.

Based on studies of brain behaviour, and certain connectionist systems of artificial intelligence, neural network theorists argue that knowledge cannot be subdivided into separate and distinct propositional forms because it is distributed across many neural networks in the brain. There are no categories which result from innate faculties or which are made by accessing a set of necessary and essential features according to a guiding set of rules. Knowledge is not symbolically or propositionally represented, and is not acquired through any innate knowledge or application of rules. If we discover that neural network theory offers a coherent account of learning then we might need to reframe some of our notions of what is occurring in what we perceive to be successful teaching strategies, and why other practices do not work. In the following section I will examine some key features of neural network theory and explain why I think it provides such strong explanatory power.

Knowledge representation in the brain

Paul Churchland, a leading exponent of connectionism has said, 'The brain represents various aspects of reality by a *position* in a suitable *state space*, and the brain performs computations on such representations by means of general *coordinate transformations* from one state space to another' (Churchland, 1989: 78).

The basic elements of the nervous system are cells called neurons. By virtue of a specialised anatomy these cells receive, integrate and transmit signals. Neurons have branching structures called dendrites which receive signals, and a single axon which sends signals to other neurons. Neurons do not act as individuals 'but as part of a mass of cells cooperating to produce a coherent pattern that can reliably be related to a particular stimulus' (Freeman and Skarda, 1991: 117).

Information is contained in the distributed patterns of action allocated over many neurons. The principle function of the neuron cell is the processing of signal inputs from other cells which are combined on the way to, or upon reaching, the cell. The process of this transfer is synaptic transmission, where synapses are the actual linking sites. The synapse may be either inhibitory or excitatory, depending on the nature of both the bulb's neurotransmitter and the chemical receptors which receive it at the synaptic junction. An excitory synaptic event will increase the possibility of the affected neuron to fire, and an inhibitory event will have the opposite effect. Thus 'each neuron is the site of a competition between "fire" and "don't fire" inputs, whose relative distribution and temporal frequency effect an action potential' (Churchland, 1988: 132). The actions of each neuron are felt by hundreds or thousands of other neurons, which, in turn, provide the environment in which it responds (Freeman and Skarda, 1991: 118).

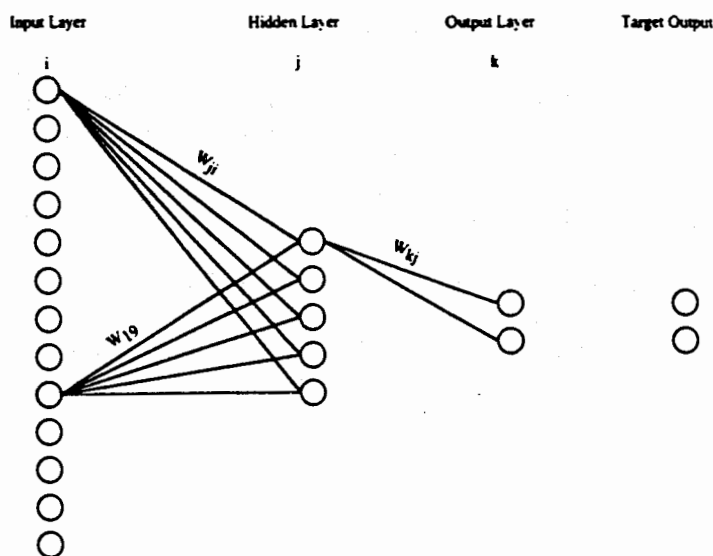
Neuron machinery governs all human activity including motor and language behaviour. There appears to be some degree of modularity in the way the brain processes information but no 'central processor' and no separate 'banks' of memories to be accessed one at a time. Knowledge is distributed across the networks of neurons in the brain. The brain acts on data by bringing huge numbers of neurons to bear on the problem.

Connectionist representations of knowledge

The architecture of the brain operates as a massively parallel computing system. Connectionists attempt to construct neural networks that mimic some of the most obvious organisational properties of brain functioning, and thus to simulate cognitive phenomena. One problem is to create a model which demonstrates the same biological constraints as the brain. The system I will describe is termed a paralleled distributed processing (PDP) system (1). PDP systems consist of neuron-like semi-conductor units, or 'nodes', which are connected to form a network.

The nodes in a connectionist system are divided into a number of layers, the input layer, one or more middle or 'hidden' layers, and an output layer, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1. A simple feed forward network



A three layer feedforward net with 13 input nodes, 5 hidden nodes and 2 output nodes. The target nodes are not part of the net's design. Not all connections are shown.

Source: Evers, C. (1996) "Philosophy of education: a naturalist perspective" in D. N. Aspin, *Logical Empiricism and Post-Empiricism in Educational Discourse*, Durban: Heinemann, p165.

The input and output nodes in this feed forward system are connected to each node in a layer of hidden nodes which act upon the information according to predetermined connection patterns of activation and by the alteration of weights between those synaptic connections. The level of stimulation of each input unit will determine the strength (weight) of the output it emits to its various connections in the hidden layer(s). Connections are weighted so that the activity of one unit influences the activity of others. The weights are changed by mathematical learning rules which result in changes in the behaviour of the whole network. As Place describes it:

The weight of a synaptic connection is a dispositional property of the connection whereby the firing of the node on the anterior or input side of the connection contributes to either the excitation or to the inhibition of firing in the node on the posterior or output side of the connection ...

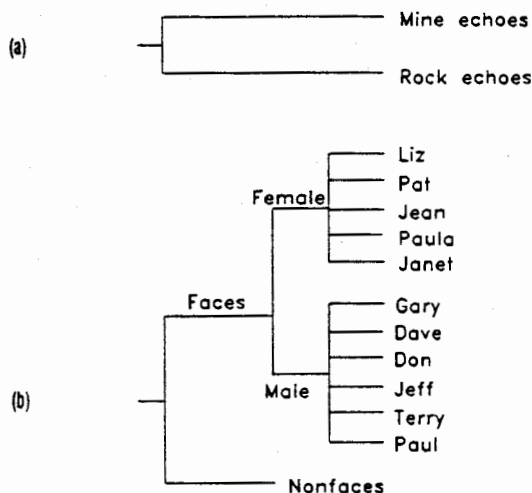
By assigning a set of weights to the various synaptic connections within the network, one can give it the innate dispositions to respond in a particular way to inputs of a particular kind (Place, 1992: 24)

Neural networks are able to learn without the benefit of rules. Given a particular task, learning in a neural network proceeds with information fed into the input layer, said to imitate the perceptive qualities of human experience. Real examples of the features to be learned are presented many times at the input level; for example, recorded sonar echoes from a training set of an equal number of mines and rocks. Initial weights between the units are set randomly. The information is repeatedly fed forward through the network and by gradually making small weight adjustments to the synaptic connections, 'the network slowly but spontaneously generates a set of internal representations, one for each of the several features it is required to recognise' (Churchland, 1989: 123). The patterns of activity are called 'vectors'. Error correction is made as the system gradually adjusts the excitatory and inhibitory connections to the current set of connection weights in response to an error signal (back propagation) from the external environment (2). As a result the network reduces errors and 'learns'. Learning occurs when the network output layer converges on a target output: it can distinguish between rocks and mines. During the learning process no part of the network knows the final solution, and no knowledge of rules has been programmed into the system to guide the learning. When tested on echoes outside the training set it *generalises* to these novel examples and recognises more than ninety per cent of them (Churchland, 1988, 1989, 1995).

Through the presentation of many examples in the training set the network learns to discriminate between features. Its skill can best be described as a pattern recognition. If we examine the activation vectors across the middle layer certain characteristics can be seen which give us clues as to how the network organises its knowledge. The network has managed to distinguish an internal pattern or abstract organisation that distinguishes one feature from another (e.g. mines from rocks). Through multi-dimensional analysis its higher activation space is subdivided into activity vectors for different 'classes' of features. In a network trained to recognise and distinguish more complex environmental features, the network produces hierarchical structures of categories and sub-categories. It produces a framework of *concepts*. It achieves this conceptual framework by filtering out irrelevant variations between features, and tuning itself to some central features: what might be described as *prototypical* examples of a category. Each neuron comes to represent some microfeature of the input stimulus: it has been called sub-symbolic. No single node represents a prototypical example or symbol.

The activation vectors in artificial neural networks can be analysed using a dendrogram, in order to illustrate the structures of categories and subcategories. Figure 2 shows two dendrograms. The first (a) shows the categorical partitions in the mine / rock sonar network described by Churchland (1988, 1989, 1995). The second (b) depicts a categorisation into partitions and sub partitions of a face-recognition network trained by Garrison Cottrell and his associates, also described by Churchland (1995: 38-50)

Figure 2. Two dendrograms



Source: Churchland, P. M. (1995) *The Engine of Reason, the Seat of the Soul* Cambridge, Massachusetts: A Bradford Book, p 84.

The face recognition network is trained up using a set of sixty-four photographs of eleven different faces, in addition to thirteen photographs of non-face scenes. After the training process involving the continued presentation of the photographs, the network demonstrated one hundred per cent accuracy on the training set of images, with respect to 'faceness', gender, and the 'identity of a single face presented'; it recognised all subjects again when presented with different photographs (it missed the name and gender of one female subject); it *generalised* to discriminate the faceness and gender of completely novel scenes and people; and finally *inferred* the identity of familiar faces when one fifth of the face was obscured in the input image (Churchland, 1995: 45).

Artificial neural networks share, at a vastly simplified level, some important features of the brain and nervous system. They contain large numbers of highly interconnected units. As many of the connectionist units are processing this information simultaneously, the processing system is said to be 'parallel', a feature consistent with what we understand about neural processing in real brains. Knowledge is said to be distributed because it is held in patterns of activity across the network, rather than in individual units. No unit holds a given fact, no unit is a symbol for a feature in the environment, thus representation is said to be non-symbolic. There is no unit to represent the concept 'cat' or 'jug of milk'. Units have been called 'sub-symbolic', or said to contain microfeatures.

Some implications for teaching and learning

In my current research into the sociocultural influences on human learning it has become apparent that there is considerable debate amongst constructivist theorists as to the nature and place of cognition in developing sociocultural practices; for example, in the 'radical' [cognitive] versus 'social' constructivism debate. I do not intend to enter into this debate in this paper, except to say that neural network theory reframes the debate on some issues.

There is widespread recognition by theorists who argue that knowledge is socially constructed that the brain is a 'tool' we use when we engage in social practices (Vygotsky, 1978; Resnick, 1991; Gee, 1992; Pinxten, 1992). As Pinxten says, 'People in all cultures use the same tools for learning ... differences occur in terms of preferences of use of the operators and in terms of contents ... Physical systems distinguish the nuances of culturally embedded properties' (Pinxten, 1992: 92). It is important to provide some explanatory account of these physical systems.

I am endeavouring to demonstrate a coherent theory of human cognitive learning, using a simulated neural network, which recognises the importance of both the individual and the sociocultural environment. The implications of neural network learning for education involve the acquisition of literacy, discourse and discipline-based concepts and procedures; the development of critical literacy, and the teaching of grammar and spelling. I intend to focus on a few issues which might be pertinent to one-to-one or larger group teaching.

Developing literacy skills

University teachers aim to enable their students to successfully enter their discipline discourse communities, and to use language effectively for specific purposes. If we can show that networks learn by being constantly stimulated by the external environment, and that they are pattern recognisers, then investigating the *nature* of culturally embedded properties (patterns) remains a vital part of the teaching process. These patterns include the concepts and procedural skills, including language skills, which encompass literacy, and which are essential for success in these discourse communities. Neural network systems demonstrate that there are no physical differences between the way that 'knowing how' (procedural knowledge), and 'knowing that' (propositional knowledge) are represented.

In connectionist networks, the conceptual and procedural skills which are essential for effective literacy are represented in the same fashion, by the partitioning of activation spaces, and through the property of *superpositional storage*. Superpositional storage is a key feature of knowledge representation in neural networks. The same set of units can store several representations depending on their weighted connections. This means that different concepts / procedures might be represented by different patterns of activity over the same groups of units, and thus each of the patterns can be granted a semantically significant structure. What we see are degrees of superposition arranged in a systematic space of similarities and differences, a sort of course coding. Empirical accounts of human conceptual analysis support the suggestion that categorisation intuitions might reflect 'a taxonomic system in which most categories have a graded membership rather than in terms of necessary and sufficient attributes' (Ramsay, 1992: 63). Connectionist demonstrations of brain behaviour establish a claim that knowledge representation is distributed across neural networks (3).

In feedforward networks, such as those I have been describing, memory consists of the skill or knowledge manifest in the overall synaptic-weight configuration as it is brought to bear on input data. Many of the most recent neural networks exhibit an additional feature, a feature also present in human brains—'backward' or 'recurrent' pathways. These make the network's 'immediate cognitive past continually available to it for processing together with incoming sensory information about the present'. Recurrent network architecture permits the development of a rudimentary short term memory and representation of 'sequences of specific states of affairs in time' (Churchland, 1995: 100-101). The brain contributes to its own learning inputs. Recurrent networks provide connectionist theorists with the best opportunity so far to explain human understanding and processing of formal characteristics of all natural languages such as recursiveness / systematicity and compositionality. Classical cognitivists such as Steven Pinker (1995) continue to maintain that this is problematic for connectionism.

As we learn, our synaptic connections are continually altered to allow us to behave as members of our social or professional communities, to a configuration that produces what is locally regarded as an appropriate conception of the world. They are said to be *plastic*; that is they can 'change their transformational properties by simply changing some or all of their weights' (Churchland, 1988: 154). Concepts and motor skills are not the 'stable and well identified' identities *abstracted* from the contexts in which they are produced which Lave (1966) finds so problematic. They are contextually dependent, and continually adapting through use in new contexts.

The style of apprenticeship proposed by Lave (1996) is supported by connectionist theory. The sources of our conceptual development are both the external environment, and the network itself. The network is sensitive to features of the sociocultural or discipline framework in which it is embedded, and from which it will develop its categories of concepts and prototypes. Its categories will closely resemble the categories of those environments, without recourse to knowledge of rules or symbolic representation. In this way the importance of the subject / world relation is maintained. Separating 'expert models' from the environments in which they are contextually embedded, and explicating them for students is not a highly effective apprenticeship teaching methodology. The sociocultural environment in which the expert models are encountered by students will form part of the experience from which patterns are recognised, and concepts formed. This is a point Lave emphasises, and it has important implications for teachers. There must be an awareness in teaching models advocating future empowerment for students through the mastery of language / discourse skills (e.g. critical literacy skills) that the teaching technique does not create a theory / practice dichotomy. If we want to teach critical literacy skills in order to empower, neural network theory suggests that the whole context in which they are to be taught must support the patterns we have detected and which we want students to discover. Distributed representation exhibited in connectionist networks suggests that a holistic approach to teaching and learning is desirable. Current research into the benefits of active and situated learning is supported by a cognitive theory which does not separate conceptual and procedural skill development.

Conceptual modification will usually involve a degree of conceptual reorganising rather than a fundamental conceptual change. The activation partitions within the network which have been created during learning, will be used to process additional information. These patterns of activation can be framed in human terms as predispositions to behave or 'current beliefs'. These configurations influence how the brain (human) will react to the world. Hutchins calls this a 'confirmation bias'; that is 'a propensity to affirm prior interpretations and to discount, ignore, or reinterpret evidence counter to an already formed interpretation' (Hutchins, 1991: 286). It offers some explanation of why it is sometimes difficult to challenge conceptions currently held by students, and to achieve the necessary conceptual changes for successful participation in a discourse community, particularly when that community is substantially different.

Conceptual change is achieved or compelled in a number of circumstances. It is useful to see it as a problem-solving process in which learning can be influenced by contrived, expected and unexpected occurrences. Change occurs when the current activation patterns cannot produce a satisfactory performance, they no longer maintain explanatory adequacy. This might result from a need for theoretical unity: the new evidence cannot be incorporated by current activation spaces and new ones will develop through the learning process I have described. The reaction will depend on which of the many prototypes the problem activates.

Conclusion

If connectionist theory provides a reasonable account of human learning then success will depend on presentation of many examples of the features to be learned, and on the detection of patterns in these features, rather than on explicating the 'rules' that are said to guide understanding. This applies to conceptual, procedural and linguistic development as the representational *process* appears to be identical.

It is tempting to see the patterns that 'fit' as rules that 'guide'. It is also tempting to think that humans *master* language neurologically as a serial cognitive process operating symbolically, such as that displayed in discursive speech, and involving a tacit knowledge of rules which guides behaviour (Churchland, 1988). (This is classical cognitivism, which is difficult to map on to observable brain behaviour. The problems will not be discussed in this paper.) If we accept that rules *guide* language and behaviour, then explicitly teaching of the rules of language and behaviour said to be involved in sociocultural contexts, and rational analysis of the correct models, using symbol structures will teach students to use them correctly (whether they be 'genres', or 'discourses'). This will shape understanding. Rationalist accounts of knowledge such as this are the foundation for many teaching / learning practices in education today.

It is important to distinguish between rule-fitting behaviour and rule-guided behaviour. Quine makes this distinction clear when he says, 'behavior *fits* a rule whenever it conforms to it; whenever the rule truly *describes* the behavior. But the behavior is not *guided* by the rule unless the behavior knows the rule and can state it' (Quine, 1974: 104). There may be a place for the explication of rules in the *refinement* of literacy skills, but overall success in discourse communities does not rely on internalising a set of discursive *principles* or *rules* which guide behaviour. I suggest that it is more productive to recognise that humans are extremely sensitive to the natural and social features of their environments, and that, as Churchland (1995) argues, learning is a matter of developing the ability to recognise a wide variety of situations and respond to them appropriately.

In this paper I have aimed to show: why human learning in a sociocultural context might be a matter of pattern recognition, rather than guidance by an innate set of principles; how categorisation is a clustering of classes of features around a prototypical 'hot spot' rather than a list of necessary and sufficient features; that when incomplete or faulty information is perceived the identity of features can be inferred; and that features once learned in the physical or social environment can be generalised and applied successfully in new situations. This invites a reframing of our teaching practices whether they involve individual students, or various combinations of larger groups which we might see as communities of networks.

ENDNOTES

1. Another type of connectionist system is the self organised dynamic system (SDS) which emphasises a mathematical model of the analysis of human cognition. SDS systems do not require an external 'teacher' (such as back propagation). (Grossberg, 1988, Amari, 1989).
2. For a more detailed explanation of the learning algorithm and its place in the learning process see Churchland (1988, 1989, 1995), Clark (1993), or Plunkett (1992)
3. In fact there is some specialisation of neural function but with massive interconnections among these areas of specialisation (see Bloom & Lazerson, 1988; Churchland, 1995; Hinton et al., 1993; and the work of Damasio and Damasio.)

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ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL: RATIONALISING THE INDIVIDUAL SESSION

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ABSTRACT

Given the current economic rationalist climate, a driving question for learning skills providers as we move into the next century is how can we justify individual sessions and the benefits that they offer? This paper takes the weapons used against us and looks at how we can use those same economic rationalist strategies to defend and expand the role that the individual session plays in our provision of learning skills to students. It seems that learning skills staff are always quick to defend the value of individual tuition and the value it offers students. Yet rarely are the benefits of the individual session (as opposed to group teaching) established empirically. In this paper we first demonstrate a need to identify the features of individual tuition that provide its unique appeal to both students and staff. We then show that we can take control of rationalisation through the use of program budgeting, activity based costing, and performance indicators which draw on this evaluation and research and can empower us against those who would control our services by mere numbers alone. While the need for greater evaluation and research seems to be a clear prerequisite for promoting the individual session, we also consider the alternatives we can use to provide quality individual assistance, particularly through computer technology and peer tutoring. Once again, by developing these new programs and maintaining the right to diagnose and recommend a program to students (according to needs), we still retain control over the provision of individual tuition.

Is the individual session the last bastion of the idealist teacher?

In an age when economic rationalism is lauded and university class sizes grow ever larger, many academics look back nostalgically to a time when tutorials meant a group of no more than a dozen and when there always seemed time for individual tuition. With policies of amalgamation and mass education, university populations have grown enormously in a relatively short space of time (McMullen, 1990), and one of the casualties has been the individual session. If individual sessions have all but disappeared except in the postgraduate area and in learning support, how can we argue for their retention, especially over the next few years, when all universities can expect to undergo severe cost cutting measures?

Our aim in this paper is to argue strongly for the retention of the individual session, but in ways that acknowledge the economic, social and technological changes which are inevitable. To do this successfully, it is important that we not only understand what is valuable in the individual session, but also understand the nature of the changes which our university system is facing, so that we can use those changes in a way which will benefit our work. Rather than be fearful or dismissive of technological change and economic rationalist policies, we need to harness them in ways that can enhance our developing profession. In this paper we reflect on our practice in the individual session within the context of enormous economical change.

What is the unique appeal of the individual session?

The individual session has a unique appeal to teachers because it is easier to take account of and value individual learning needs; it facilitates an easier anticipation of learning problems; it enables a closer monitoring of progress; and it allows follow up of individual learning needs. Students like individual sessions because of the personalised attention it gives; it acknowledges and values their individuality; it is a 'humanised' service; it stimulates motivation in a way that the most stimulating group teacher can rarely achieve; it is more pragmatic and tangible; and it provides individual students with a role model and mentor. It is indeed ironic (but not co-incidental) that 1:1 teaching is under threat at the very time that mentoring is undergoing a revival in popularity.

The 1:1 session as it occurs in learning support is not well understood by many faculty staff. Many lecturers think that a 1:1 session creates a dependency in students who perhaps have no place in an elite higher education system. They often express concerns too, that advisers edit students' work for them in a way which potentially threatens the academic credibility of courses. If we are to argue successfully for the retention of the individual session, it is our responsibility to ensure that faculties understand that we are acutely aware of these issues. We need to take every opportunity to ensure that staff know that in an individual session we: diagnose, assist students to solve their own problems, transfer information, offer advice, teach skills and acculturate to academic genres. The key issue here, is that we take active measures to address potential misunderstanding of what we do in as many forums as possible: through newsletters to Faculty managers for distribution to academic staff; through research into the value of 1:1 teaching; and in the publicity material we disseminate and in the meetings we address. We need to acknowledge that what we do in concurrent support is not well understood and to actively educate the clients who use our services.

Individual sessions are not always the answer

This paper assumes that while individual sessions are valuable, it is not possible for individual support to be available for every student, nor is it the most appropriate teaching medium for all purposes. When budgets are being cut, it becomes useful to market a view of individual teaching which matches university goals. Current policies on internationalisation and mass education provide opportunities for learning skills lecturers/advisers to support the increasing diversity of university populations. The recent focus on the importance of the transition process (McInnis and James, 1995) also provides opportunities for learning skills units to provide evidence of how they can enhance university programs in these areas. It is our responsibility to market ourselves to university administrations in a way which will enhance our role in these areas. We can do this in a number of ways:

1. By validating our work through research

Validating learning support by providing evidence of its impact on retention rates and student success is clearly difficult; there are many variables, over most of which we have little or no control. While acknowledging the difficulties, it is no longer sufficient for us to expect funding to continue on the assumption that learning support impacts positively; we need to be providing the foundations of this research ourselves. Useful beginnings can be made by remembering that every student is a potential subject, every essay we read is potential data - case study data can be particularly useful. Another fruitful avenue is studies of student perceptions of the value of learning support through regular surveys which can track trend data.

2. By developing Performance Indicators which match OUR goals

Increasingly, universities are developing a culture of evaluation in which university bodies will be held accountable for their performance against a range of measures. As a profession, we need to agree on objectives and the measures by which we would like to be evaluated. If we don't establish our own performance indicators, they will be developed for us. Most measures used by university administrations focus on easily quantified data like number of students seen in a year or number of sessions held for international students. It is in our interests to develop quantifiable quality indicators which take account of the complexity of human service delivery. Moving on from the work begun at the Bendigo conference (Hicks, 1996) we need to develop a set of measurable key competencies which can be used to establish performance indicators for learning support which are acceptable Australia wide.

3. National Benchmarking

Using universally accepted measures of performance, it is possible to benchmark university programs nationally and internationally. The culture of accountability can be used to enhance funding as well as reduce it. We recently successfully argued for increased staffing by using a measure of staffing levels (ratio of learning support staff to student population) which benchmarked our staffing ratio against a number of other universities in Australia.

If individual sessions are not for everyone, whom should we target?

If we accept that 1:1 cannot be available for all students, it appears to us that there are three possibilities:

1. Sufficiently Motivated Students

The problem with seeing every student sufficiently motivated to find us out is that if we are doing a sufficiently effective job of marketing our service, we will inevitably be unable to meet demand and service quality will fall. Another problem with this option is that we will be highly likely to miss the students most in need of our service, or those who simply find it difficult to seek help due to cultural differences (McLean, 1995). We must ask ourselves some hard questions about whether we want to focus our attention on moving students from a B to an A while students at risk of failing receive no support.

2. At-risk Students

Alternatively, we could see students who are referred as being at risk of failing by their faculty, or students who refer themselves because they are worried about failing. The problem with this, is that such an approach firmly places us in a deficit model. It also means that we may be seeing very poorly motivated students - "my lecturer sent me" (with an unspoken but strongly felt - "and I don't see why I should be here..") is not the best start to a useful learning relationship.

3. Proactively Targeted Students

Our preferred model is to proactively target particular groups which have special needs which can benefit from 1:1 teaching. It is in our interest to ensure these groups also match groups which university administrations have targeted as being in need of additional support such as international students and students in the DEET categories. 'Non-deficit' groups have special needs too - first year students, postgraduate students and study abroad students for example.

Performance indicators can then be attached to measures of success in targeting these particular groups. Information relating to these groups of students is available in the annual reports of almost all units; our approach is to develop performance indicators which address the needs of target groups and to apply for funding directly related to specific funding for particular groups. Program budgeting is the latest in-term at our university, with funding being tied directly to specific programs. There are advantages for learning skills units in this approach; we have had success writing submissions for individual programs for:

- postgraduate international students
- students with learning disabilities
- students with psychiatric disabilities
- native speaking study abroad students

and a number of group programs (which have in turn freed up staff for individual work).

Funding opportunities need not be restricted to central funding either - Australian National Training Authority and DEET are possible alternative funding sources.

Economic rationalist tools

Economic rationalists like numbers, and activity based costing (or ABC) is often used by companies to assess competitiveness and efficiency. By using ABC on our own activities, we are able to develop a measure of comparison couched in terms which administrators readily understand - dollars. In addition, it doesn't necessarily hurt us to have a good understanding of exactly how much an individual session costs and how it compares to other activities we do.

Table 1. Activity Based Costing of the Individual Session

No of Indiv Contacts	1,732	Staff Cost per Indiv Contact	\$31.20
No of Indiv Clients	788	DV Cost per Indiv Contact	\$0.29
Contacts per Client	2.2	Total Cost per Indiv Contact	\$31.50
		Staff Cost per Indiv Client	\$68.50
		DV Cost per Indiv Client	\$0.64
		Total Cost per Indiv Client	\$69.20

Importantly, however, we are able to ensure that our dollar figure includes all our activities, not just the ones which may seem immediately visible. For example at our university we include time taken on telephone consultations and drop ins - activities which take a considerable amount of time and which benefit a number of students but which are discounted by administrators when they count the number of workshops we run or the number of individual appointments we've

had. The time spent on producing materials can also be factored in, enhancing their value as a mode of delivery especially when related to the number of students receiving these materials. By factoring in research time and time taken in collaborating with faculties, then attaching a dollar value to them - these activities become more valued in a climate which values dollars rather than intangibles.

Potentially, the process used to develop ABC can have a staff development component in that it raises inevitable questions about the value of particular activities. There should be room for individual staff to make decisions about the amount of time they want to spend on particular activities. In our unit for example, while research is seen as being an essential component, not all staff wish to allocate time to it; the individual skills and interests of group members can be valued. It can be enlightening sometimes to discover how much time a particular activity takes - and for this to prompt discussions about priorities. The interpretation of our work in accounting terms does not sit comfortably with people used to meeting the complexities of human service provision, but it can provide a useful tool.

In addition to budget cuts, technological change is also seen as an alternative type of 1:1 learning support. Just as we see opportunities in economic rationalism, we also see opportunities in some of the alternatives which are often suggested to replace the individual session.

Alternatives

The mistake often made when confronted with radical alternatives is to reject them outright. Interestingly, those who succeed with alternatives have not so much adopted them, but adapted them to their needs. We believe we need to consider these alternatives not as options which will take over from traditional 1:1 support, but as additives which can enhance what we have to offer students, particularly if we are involved from the outset and thus maintain control over their development and use. In this instance, they are a further chance to offer students more diverse ways of learning while at the same time appeasing those interested in dollar figures.

The two alternatives being considered in this paper are Multimedia and Peer Mentoring: two extremes that look at using fewer people and using more people respectively. In particular we want to consider their plausibility against the fact that they are often lauded as being more 'cost effective'.

A Brave New World

There are certainly some functions of the individual session which may be dealt with elsewhere - such as through group teaching or resources. Multimedia projects can not only function in a similar way, but can also outperform their 'low-tech' competitors in terms of providing a richer combined set of resources, more control and feedback, self-paced instruction and extended access. It is also worth remembering that the "client" (ie students of today) are coming to expect such resources of their educators.

Within learning skills, Multimedia (in particular the World Wide Web) can provide a useful forum for transferring information, teaching skills and helping students acculturate to academic genres. Through the use of 'smart software' which is designed for general disciplines (ie medical sciences, arts, social sciences, commerce, etc.), it is possible to efficiently provide individual tuition which can supplement the 1:1 session. In addition to these programs being categorised by disciplines (where necessary), the ease with which they can store massive amounts of information means that it would be possible to provide ample examples and models for students to peruse in order to learn by example. However to offer more than a 'high-tech' book, we need to ensure that our computer software embodies all the aspects of quality teaching that we ourselves aspire to in 1:1 teaching.

Firstly, there needs to be a "personal touch" - otherwise students are as likely to use the software as they would consult a book over seeing a learning skills lecturer/adviser. Allowing end-users to feel that they are personally catered to is not beyond good programming - user friendly programs cater to the students' needs - they can search and save information either to disk or printer or come back to the same place in the program later. A flexible and friendly end-user environment very much drives programming today, and can be seen particularly in the rise and development of multi-platform web browsers such as Netscape, which allow bookmarking, saving of text and graphics, and local printing. Also, our software needs to provide personal interaction through monitoring the students' progress (via on-line tests) and providing immediate feedback (such as already exists in computer-based training programs like WinLMS by CBTS).

Secondly, the software must be interactive. By this, we don't just mean the users point and click, but that they are intellectually stimulated and have some control over their learning. Such software would provide students with choice and with a chance to practise their skills. We already see this with MUDs, MUSEs and MOOs (1) where users contribute to the construction of an artificial reality (either a city or a fantasy world); likewise a fantasy such as a murder mystery could be adapted to teach students how to structure an academic argument (Pérez and Romey, in press).

Finally, we should demand of our software some diagnostic and problem solving capabilities. This notion of computer as tutor is likely to be some time coming. While diagnosis based on diverging answers to simple questions is possible (such as the branching tree models used by Medical Expert systems) they are largely reliant on stereotypical problems (Haugeland, 1985:195ff). Furthermore, such a system embodies a microworld - that is all the knowledge within it needs to be inter-related, and hence it supports depth of knowledge rather than breadth. So, for example a "study skills" expert may be too cumbersome to construct - but a "reading skills" or "writing skills" expert (probably with cross referencing between systems) may be possible. Certainly, if nothing else, the bottom line of any such system would be "if you are unable to solve your problem, please consult a learning skills lecturer/adviser". There is no danger that the computer expert, as it stands today, will replace us, but its potential as a reflection and research tool to help us determine what and how we work and where we can delegate is indeed exciting.

Nevertheless, the use of computers in 1:1 provision does raise the following three issues:

1. Cost

While the initial outlay is great, such as setting up labs and buying software, these are often global costs covered by universities in general, rather than learning skills centres in particular. Furthermore, funding for projects with the "Multimedia" label is easier to acquire than anything would be for 1:1 support and cheaper to maintain - a long term fact that can often appease the economic rationalists. In fact, some options such as basic web sites can be established at minimal cost which is partially met by central university funding and/or training.

2. Quality

We should not view computers as a poor second when it comes to providing individual instruction. If we have control over the input then the software used will match our knowledge, objectives, and quality of teaching. We can't stress enough how important it is that learning skills lecturers/advisers be involved in the development of such software. This concern is also current in such societies as ASCILITE (Australian Society of Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education).

3. Training

We can always look to outside sources which would charge - but just as many learning skills staff (and academics) now do their own typing, rather than paying typists, so too will we provide our own IT support. This is already happening in Departments where technical support is far more efficient when provided locally and is backed up by central resources and training. Indeed, the current trend within management seems to be moving towards "matrix groups" which consist of members from diverse backgrounds, but with a common focus.

If, in economic rationalist times, we are to salvage some of the quality tuition that is provided by 1:1, then it may be by teaching relief acquired through funding for multimedia projects that address the more common issues raised in such tuition.

Mentoring Process

The second option - mentoring - was chosen to show that the future need not be technology driven - in fact, with current interest in transition to university, mentoring has become quite a "buzzword". Yet, as we've pointed out, 1:1 support already provides a form of mentoring, in that it combines academic content with a mentoring model. We all agree that individual support is valuable for students, and peer tutoring or mentoring has further advantages. In particular for a first year student, a third or fourth year student is a more realistic role model than a member of staff. For some students, they can be less intimidating and can also further student social networks (Rhoden, 1996:420) - another vital aspect of transition to university life.

In adopting one of the many models of mentoring, such as training a group of later year students to act as mentors to an even larger group of first year students, we are really only extending our "clientele", not necessarily the content of what we teach. Furthermore, we indirectly reach ten times the number of first year students, while also reaching later year

students we may otherwise not see. While most models use discipline specific tutors (ie 4th year history mentors for 1st year history mentees), there is no reason why generic skills can't be directly incorporated into the mentoring content, rather than left to be indirectly alluded to.

In terms of being cost-efficient, we are providing instruction to more students, often with the funding of faculties who are paying to train their mentors. Such programs also train the mentors in inter-personal skills which enhance their graduate career prospects and can indirectly provide teaching support in that the mentors are required to reflect on their learning process. All together, this is a large outcome for one project within one department, clearly benefiting the whole University. As such, funding for mentoring need not be limited to departments or learning skills units, but can be carried by the wider university community (or targeted areas within it, such as post-graduate students, international students, etc.).

Another benefit of such a model is that as it teaches all students in the departments, there is a definite move away from the deficit model. Not only does it expand the role of later year students, but our skills base is also broadened and strengthened through providing such training - and diversity is definitely protection during such rationalist times. As such programs work best within the departmental context (Rhoden, 1996: 421), this means that we increase our collaborative opportunities. It would also be possible to work more closely with academic development staff to ensure that mentoring training is compatible with tutor training. A mentoring model, or peer tutoring, is used widely in the USA, where it feeds directly into tutor training and provides a network across the many levels of the university hierarchy which supports students and new teachers alike.

Some conclusions

This paper values a holistic approach to learning support. Given that our developing profession already draws on the expertise of a number of disciplines (linguistics, counselling, special education), espousing new technologies and classifying what we do in new ways should not prove too difficult. Universities are changing and as a developing profession we need to adapt to the rapid economic, social and technological changes. Rather than anticipating a negative future, we need to grasp the enormous opportunities that are available to us. When considering our future choices we also need to keep in mind the increasingly diverse populations of today's universities, and what students and management of the twenty-first century will expect of learning skills lecturers/advisers. While we may not be enthused about interpreting what we do in economic rationalist terms, the ability to do so allows us a voice in such debates. To encourage this voice, we need research and reflection on what we do in 1:1 teaching, as well as being party to the creation and use of alternatives that address some of our students' educational needs in new media.

ENDNOTE

1. Multi-User Dimensions (MUD), Multi-User Simulated Environments (MUSEs) and MUD Oriented Objects (MOOs), together with Inter relay Chat (IRC) Channels are some examples of Synchronous Learning Networks.

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IDENTIFYING TRENDS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS: THE STUDY ADVISER DATA BASE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

Statistics and other quantitative data increasingly impact upon university teaching and decision making processes. Study Advisers at the University of South Australia have over the last three years maintained extensive records of their work in teaching students both one to one and in groups. In an institution of six campuses and nine faculties, a central data base now provides useful information in the form of profiles of students who have used the Student Learning Support Unit (SLS). Over the last three years the data collected has become a basis for identifying trends in student demand and the subsequent level of Study Adviser and institutional support. The data base is also useful for reviewing Study Adviser work and for reporting to, and informing and educating other units within the University as well as improving planning processes of the adviser unit. Possible future directions for the data base and its effect on Study Adviser work practices are also discussed.

This paper discusses some of the ways that Study Advisers at the University of South Australia (U-SA) have used records, of one to one sessions and other work with students, from a centralised computer data base to help articulate the role of Study Advisers within the institution and to evaluate and develop Study Advisers' practice.

Before outlining in detail what we as Study Advisers are doing in this area it is worthwhile to situate this paper a little, to outline what values and ideas inform this project. The authors have noticed how, not surprisingly considering the broader political climate, management at all levels are influenced by explanations of the work of Student Learning Support (and other University units) which can be expressed in numerical/statistical terms. It seems that despite all the other good work that academic support does which can be conceptualised and explained in a critical, qualitative way, when it comes down to it - it is the numbers that really count! This then has been one of the ideas that has driven this project along, ie a view that it is helpful that our work be described and analysed, on one level at least, in a quantitative/numerical/statistical way.

At the same time we would not be presenting this paper if we were not interested in how this approach can provide some meaning or understanding about what we are doing. Both of us are interested in 'looking at the numbers' not because quantitative accounts of work practices are inherently better than other ways but because there is a belief that these accounts in one sense provide a valuable picture of the overall practice of Study Advisers.

Study Advisers have been employed by the University to enhance the success rate of students, especially those from the various equity groups and international students. This emphasis is articulated in various documents such as the University's mission statement and goals. There is a recognition by the University that not all students come from the same backgrounds and that success at tertiary level may be enhanced by access to academic support. So another of the ideas informing our approach is the belief that it is vital to ensure that support services actually give value to the users of the service and therefore there is some positive effect on student learning.

The SLS generally has developed a broad philosophy of seeking to work with students in ways which develop learning independence and notions of life-long learning (Candy 1994). Study advisers were first employed to work with students on a one to one basis, which tended to construct a particular relationship between the Study Adviser and the student often within a helping or deficit framework. However with increasing and more varied work demands over the last 12-18 months and a better thought-out theoretical perspective there has been a more pro-active approach to student learning support. This has meant seeking to work more effectively and efficiently with students most particularly in small group presentations and resource development. Recent resources collaboratively developed with teaching staff include study skills booklets, and study leaflets and University electronic network pages.

This change in professional emphasis has been partially reflected in changes within the University which have been driven by a move towards flexible learning, flexible delivery of courses and the subsequent creation of a Flexible Learning Centre (FLC) and the situation of Study Advisers, organisationally at least, within that Centre. The FLC among other things "provides specialist services in academic staff development in relation to teaching and learning integrated with language and learning support for students" (Moran 1996:6).

The University is spread over five metropolitan campuses and on a regional campus in Whyalla. Establishing the SLS within a new university has partly been the process of working through of issues to do with the conceptualising of practice and the effective provision of service. The way the SLS unit has developed and maintained records of its practice has been part of this process. An internal SLS committee, the evaluation committee has been responsible for setting up the SLS database. Initially the data base was something that the Unit knew it had to do in order to maintain a profile within the institution with records being kept manually and then collated at the end of each semester. Since then the data base has been expanded and is now routinely maintained by Study Advisers working on each campus.

The Learning Support Database

Now operating for 3 years, the data base has been useful in gathering information and allowing for intervention based on the data. One example has been the work with the Nursing School at the City East campus. Throughout 1994 there was heavy usage of SLS by first year nursing students, particularly in regard to assignment writing tasks. This data, related primarily to numbers of students who were seen one to one, was able to be used in discussions with the School staff and the consequent development of resources and learning programs.

The most recent version of the SLS Database consists of four linked Filemaker Pro files that are accessed by study Advisers and the Administrative Officers at Student Support Centres. It was developed after a similar database from the English Language Study Skills Assistance (ELSSA) Centre, University of Technology, Sydney, was demonstrated to a group of Study Advisers. Its purpose is to record and collate statistical information about students who use the services provided by Study Advisers. It records a range of confidential information similar to that kept on student records, and hence only aggregated data is available to those interested in the work of Study Advisers with students.

This version of the data base is an improvement on previous versions as it collects more detailed and more useful information. Information is collected via a student registration card which students fill out prior to seeing a Study Adviser for an individual appointment, or during a workshop given by a Study Adviser. The information on the card is entered manually into the central database by Administrative Officers at each Campus.

The data base now collects the following information:

- the number of times students have seen a Study Adviser for an individual appointment
- the number of programs (ie. a single workshop or a series of workshops) students have attended, and the time spent in each program
- how students found out about the service provided by Study Advisers
- students' assessment of their own spoken English ability
- students' assessment of their own written English ability
- students' assessment of how well their studies are progressing
- areas in which students feel they need assistance

Students discuss with Study Advisers a number of issues and problems in one to one sessions or in workshops and these are identified by the students themselves as:

- writing issues including: understanding and interpreting assignment questions; organising main points; using evidence/quoting/referencing; paragraphs; linking ideas; grammar sentence structure; punctuation; spelling
- speaking and listening including: seminar presentation; general communication; pronunciation; listening skills
- maths including basic numeracy applicable to: calculations, statistics, mapping
- other including: reading; time management; critical thinking; note taking; exams and tests; background science; negotiating with staff
- learning in a multimedia environment¹

This information can be aggregated by:

Course

School

Faculty

Campus

Year level (Including postgraduate)

Gender

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI)

Non English Speaking Background (NESB)

Disability

Postcode (for the purpose of estimating Socioeconomic Status, following Martin, (1994))

International Student

Mature Age

Mode (internal/external/mixed mode, full time/part time)

Issues of concern to students

For example it is possible to ascertain how many NESB students from a particular faculty needed assistance with referencing.

Trends for semester 1 1996

The data base has been in operation for a number of years but recent improvement meant that data from semester 1 1996 was able to provide a picture of student support across the University. Study Advisers saw 3072 students with a wide range of aggregated information available about those students accessible from the data base. To illustrate this what has been tracked here are the issues that these students identified as being of concern to them, collated across the University and by faculty.

University wide

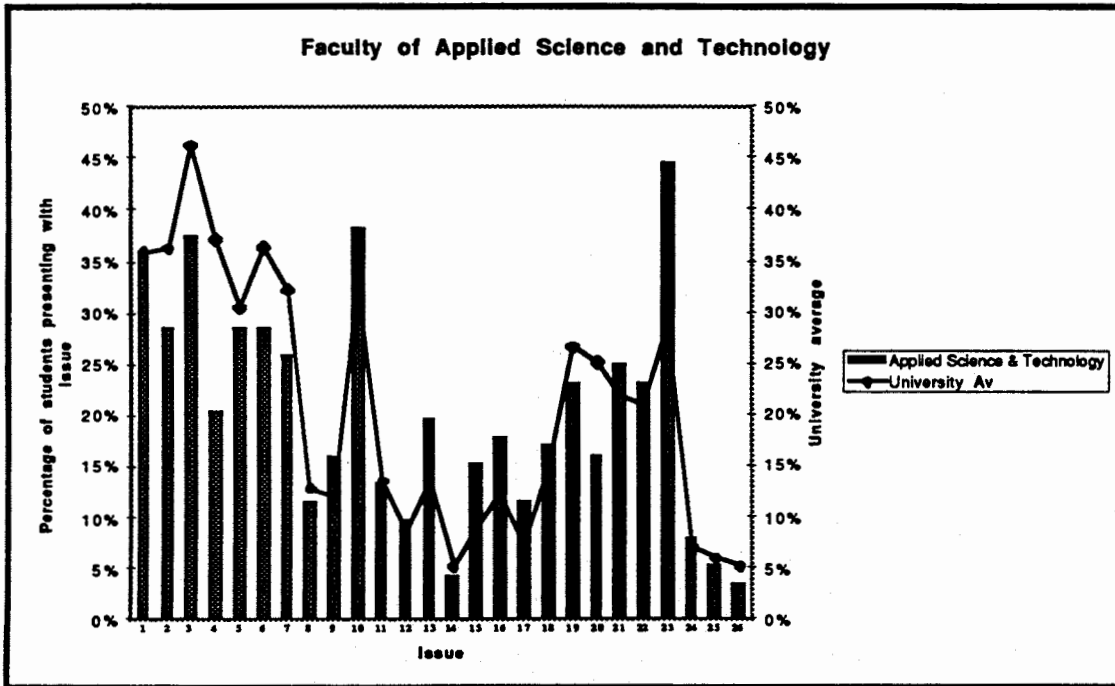
The issue of academic writing is the largest area of concern. In particular, students reported that organising the main points and structuring their writing (at 46% of all students) was by far the largest concern. In the area of speaking and listening, giving seminars or preparing for interviews was the largest need, at 33% of all students. Time management (27%) and preparing for exams and tests (29%) were other significant concerns for students

Faculty of Applied Science and Technology

Students from the faculty of Applied Science and Technology differed from the University average in the following ways:

- they understated their need for assistance with writing
- they sought more assistance with speaking (especially for seminars/ interviews) and listening
- they sought less assistance with creative/critical thinking
- they sought much more assistance than their peers from other faculties with preparation for exams and tests

Figure 1: Issues presented by students from the faculty of Applied Science and Technology

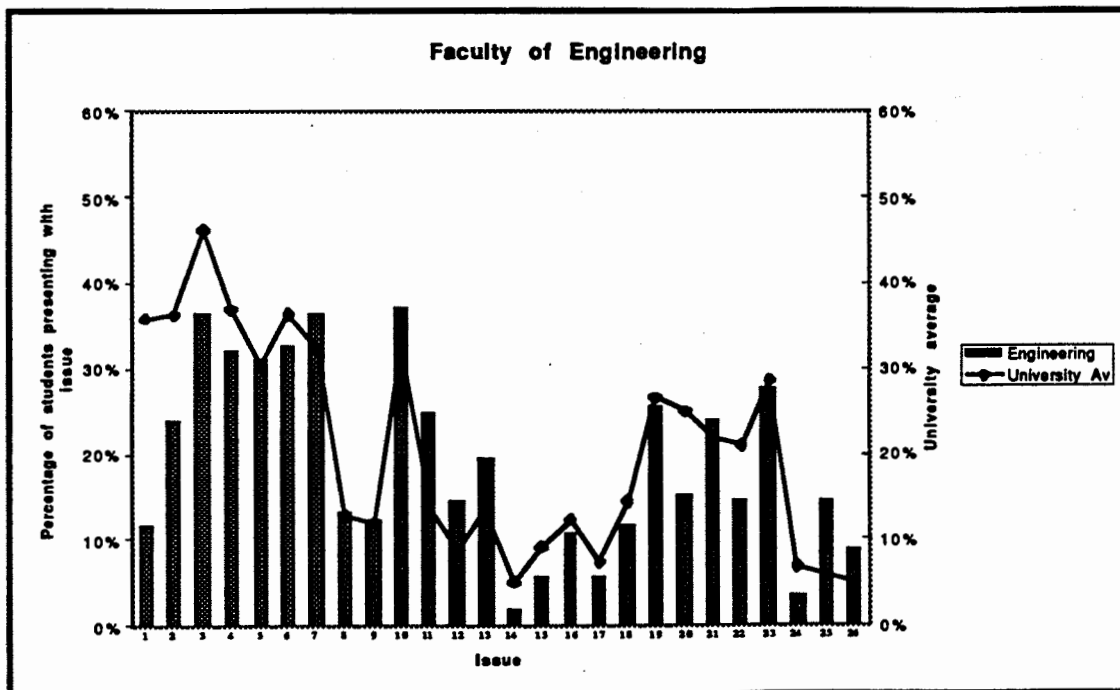


Faculty of Engineering

Students from the faculty of Engineering differed from the University average in the following ways:

- they sought less help with writing than other students, especially in the areas of understanding the question (12% compared to 36%) and formulating a viewpoint (24% compared to 36%)
- they sought more assistance with general communication and conversation
- they sought less help with thinking skills and study techniques
- they sought more help with negotiating with staff

Figure 2: Issues presented by students from the faculty of Engineering

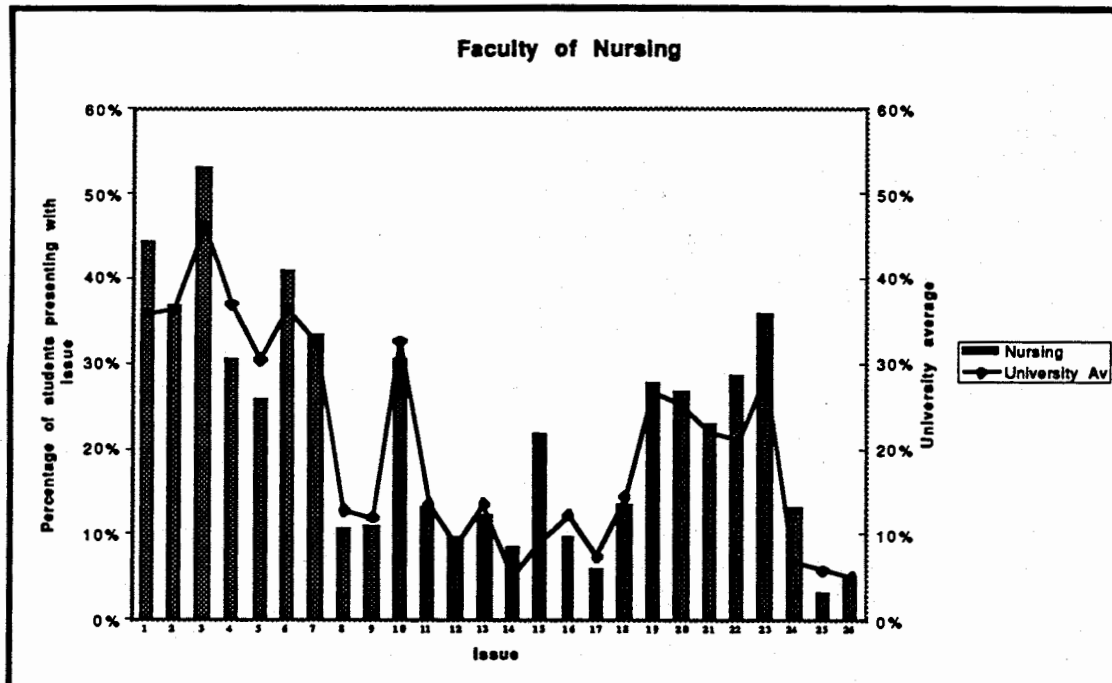


Faculty of Nursing

While trends for the Nursing faculty generally followed the University average, students from this faculty differed from the University average in the following ways:

- they sought more assistance with understanding assignment questions and organising main points and structuring their writing
- they sought more assistance with mathematical calculations (22% compared to 9%) and background science (13% compared to 7%)

Figure 3: Issues presented by students from the faculty of Nursing

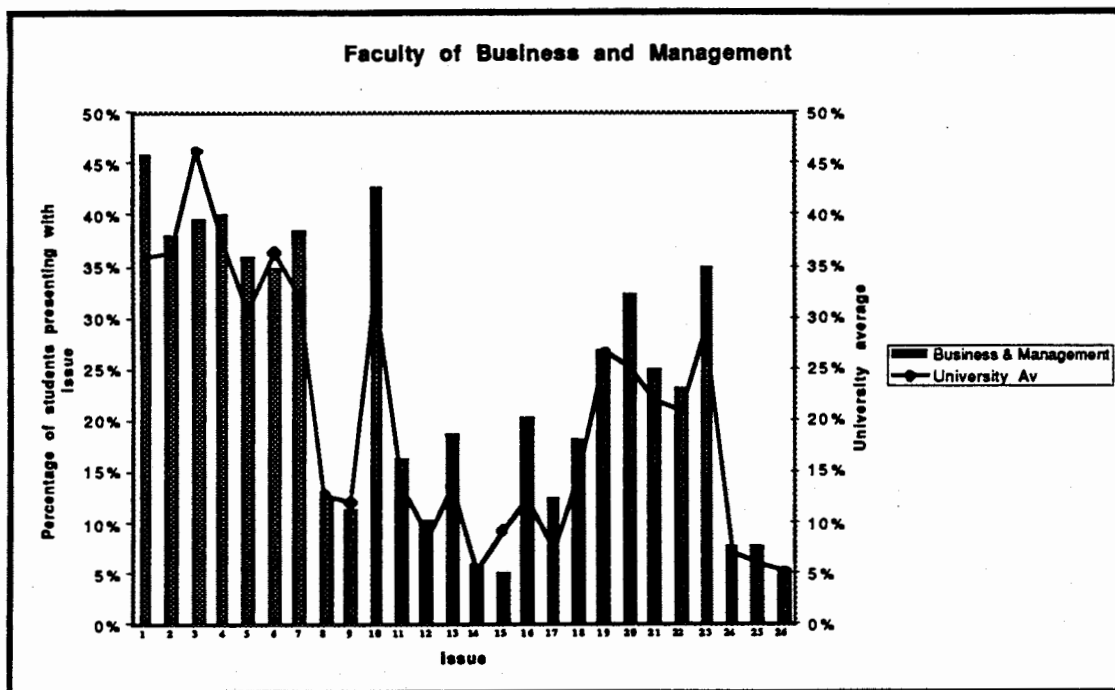


Faculty of Business and Management

Students from the faculty of Business and Management differed from the University average in the following ways:

- whilst they sought assistance for writing at a similarly high level compared to other faculty students, they sought more assistance with understanding assignment questions, and less with organising main points and the structure of their writing
- they sought more assistance with speaking in formal settings (43% compared to 33% for the whole University)
- statistics was a significant concern
- they sought more than the average level of assistance for creative and critical thinking, as well as exams and test preparation

Figure 4: Issues presented by students from the faculty of Business and Management



Using the data base

Documenting and collating student concerns and other data via this sort of mechanism is a time consuming and resource dependent process. In order to make this effort worthwhile, significant gains need to be made from the use of the information obtained. The principal advantage of doing this is that it gives Study Advisers a clear picture of what concerns students are expressing across the University, thus allowing them both to get a picture of student needs and to appreciate the commonalities and differences of their work and that of their colleagues on other Campuses. This, linked with knowledge of programs that have been offered to students, helps determine future priorities and directions.

Indeed the data base with its profile of student issues and its description of SLS programs allows Study Advisers at various Campuses to achieve a consolidated vision of the problems they are addressing, and hence to investigate University-wide and Faculty and campus based solutions. Interestingly, although on the one hand the data base often confirms notions that study advisers may have about the broad nature of student learning in, say, a particular faculty or campus, on the other it can also throw up issues that need addressing.

A recent example of this has been the use of data base information in discussions with staff of the Faculty of Business and Management. The data on student issues (see fig.4) and the low numbers of students (only 193 out of an enrolment of around 8,000) who had accessed Study Advisers' support at one level or another meant that a more consolidated, better targeted program of academic support is now being developed for orientation and semester one in 1997.

Broadly then, programs that Study Advisers devise can be shown to address stated student needs as gleaned from the data base with the advantage of being able to develop programs which are transferable across campus. With faculties currently moving campus and with there still being a high level of organisational change, the need for developing programs for targeted groups is more clear.

The data analysis allows effective communication of the need for Study Advisers' work to the University community as a whole, and particular stake-holders. It brings the needs that students express to the forefront of considerations relating to the work practices of Study Advisers.

The tracking of student concerns allows one of the feedback loops of teaching and learning at the University to be more effectively closed. Reports produced by Study Advisers to faculty Deans report not only what they have done with students in their faculty, but also what ongoing areas of need exist, allowing faculties to take this information into

account when developing subjects and courses. This fits nicely with other structural and organisational processes which review and plan Faculty processes and directions annually. Without this kind of information from Study Advisers, faculties would not be operating with a fully reliable and valid base of information on student needs. When faculty academics recommend that a student sees a Study Adviser for assistance, they deserve appropriate feedback. While confidentiality concerns prevent this on an individual basis at all times, this type of aggregated data can be a useful guide to lecturers wishing to better meet the needs of students and to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. This is equally true for other University support units, in addition to faculties.

The data collated is also a rich store of baseline information for research by Study Advisers and other academics into student learning, particularly that for targeted groups of students within the University.

Future directions

The following future directions are now being contemplated:

- At a practical level, the data base is growing in size and use to such an extent that the Flexible Learning Centre is seeking to transfer it to the University's central student records system. This will have the benefit of making the work of Study Advisers a part of the mainstream of student records management. There will of course also be concerns about confidentiality of both student and staff information that will need to be safeguarded
- As part of the University's process for subject development, the analysis of data from the data base will inform curriculum development undertaken by staff from the FLC and faculties. This allows Study Advisers to engage with faculty academics from a position of knowledge, and of articulated experience, thus improving the relationships that are developed.
- The planning of one-to-one support and programs is possible in an informed way, now that this sort of data is available. Indeed areas of high student demand can now be predicted on a University-wide basis.
- Further research on the work of Study Advisers, and on students' needs, is now to be undertaken with the data base as a fundamental ground on which to build studies.

It should be clear then that the student data base is a response to the needs of a particular tertiary institution and a particular construction of student learning support. The data base has a number of advantages which will prove useful especially in the future as the work of the SLS continues to develop. The current data base will be useful in helping to determine more effective modes of academic support.

ENDNOTE

¹These areas have been adapted with permission from the ELSSA Centre, UTS

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APPENDIX

Appendix A - List of student identified issues

writing

1. understanding assignment questions
2. formulating your viewpoint
3. organising main points/structure
4. using evidence/quoting/reference
5. writing clear paragraphs
6. linking of ideas
7. grammar/sentence structure
8. punctuation
9. spelling

speaking and listening

10. seminar presentation, interviews, etc
11. general communication/conversation
12. pronunciation
13. listening skills
14. basic numeracy

application to:

15. calculations
16. statistics
17. mapping

other

18. reading
19. time management
20. thinking - critical/creative
21. notetaking
22. studying
23. exams and tests
24. background science
25. negotiating with staff
26. any other areas

A WRITING COURSE FOR ADVANCED ESL ACCOUNTANCY STUDENTS: COMBINING THE ADVANTAGES OF INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP TUITION

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ABSTRACT

Tertiary level ESL (English as a Second Language) students are often not succeeding in spite of very advanced levels of English. However, traditional ESL courses for these students are no longer appropriate. At this stage of their academic careers, they require assistance specifically tailored to their particular needs and requirements. The small group model, combining the advantages of individual tuition as well as those advantages offered by group tuition, is one way in which their needs can be accommodated.

The ability to critically develop ideas and to critically evaluate one's writing are fundamental to successful academic writing. An intensive academic writing course was devised and delivered to a small group of accounting and commerce students. The advantages of both individual and group tuition were achieved by only having a small number of students from one discipline, by only using texts relevant to that discipline, by giving students immediate feedback on written work, and by responding quickly to students' specific English language problems. The management of such a course is offered as an example of the small group model.

1. Background and Rationale

The specific requirements of tertiary level ESL (English as a Second Language) students present a particular challenge to the study skills adviser. Although such students generally have advanced levels of English, they are often not doing as well as they would like. This is particularly so for later-year students. Low marks (a pass mark or credit minus) for essays and assignments are often assumed to be due to poor writing skills.

The following comments from students give an indication of the problem:

- *although my English level is high enough to study here (IELTS 6.5), I still need to have my English perfect in order to be a qualified ANU first degree graduate.*
- *I do not have a good idea of what an essay should be like.*
- *I often have many ideas with a topic but when I make them in a sentence and paragraph, I get stuck as I do not know how to carry them on.*
- *The most common thing that I face after finishing an assignment is a question to myself of whether or not I finished answering the question asked.*
- *I write an essay the way I think an English speaker does not since they often do not understand clearly what I want to say.*

In the Study Skills Centre at ANU, most students are dealt with on an individual basis. An individual session has many advantages, the most obvious one being that the tutor is able to specifically focus on the student's particular needs and requirements. Group sessions are also available and the Study Skills Centre runs a number of courses, including essay writing courses, throughout the year. The advantage of group sessions is that information can be disseminated to a larger group of students in a relatively short time. But there is a third option available, the small group model, in which the

advantages of both the individual and the group session are combined. In this talk, I would like to focus on the small group model as a way of accommodating the specific needs of ESL students.

2. Individual tuition or the larger group

The positive aspects of individual tuition are well-recognised. Individual tuition maximises the opportunity for individual attention, with mutual interaction and immediate feedback. The expectations and needs of the students are directly focussed on, with the adviser continuously monitoring the effectiveness of the tuition and modifying it as necessary. The student, in turn, is motivated to gain as much as possible from the session. This is because, firstly, the individual nature of the tuition ensures that the student is an active participant in the learning process, and secondly, because the material is directly relevant and useful to the student. The student continuously receives information about their current level of achievement and is able to modify their learning behaviour accordingly. As a result, the probability of the students achieving the required outcome is high.

However, there are some disadvantages to the individual session. Some students prefer the anonymity of the group situation rather than the more threatening one-to-one session. They see the authority figure as being too imposing and would rather have the support of the peer group to overcome their inhibition of expressing themselves to an adviser. Other students try to use the individual session as a quick editing service rather than using it as an opportunity to work through specific issues with an adviser. In addition, individual sessions cost more in terms of resources. (See Appendix 1 for a summary of advantages and disadvantages of individual tuition.)

Group tuition, on the other hand, has the obvious advantage that it uses fewer resources, because it is able to provide information to a group of students simultaneously. Experience indicates what the students need, and a course is designed to meet those needs. When the course is repeated over a number of years, as is the case of the essay writing courses offered to undergraduates by the Study Skills Centre, the course gains a reputation within the university. Students enjoy being enrolled in a course. Some students actually prefer group tuition, because being part of a group gives them a greater confidence. For these students, being in an individual session where they are the focus of attention is too threatening. For other students, being part of a course seems to add credibility to the content of the course. Then there are the students who find the anonymity of university life quite difficult at times. For these students, the social function provided by the group is vitally important.

However, the difficulty with a group session is that it has to meet the demands of differing needs, interests, abilities and attitudes. Because the course has not been designed with the specific needs of any one student in mind, the content of the course may not be exactly what each student requires. In addition, because of the size of the group, the student is less likely to receive individual attention. As a result, the student is more likely to be a passive learner, waiting to be filled up with information. Because of this general attitude towards courses, students tend not to be as highly motivated to achieve a specific outcome as in the individual session. As a result, the attrition rate can be high. If the course does not meet their needs, they just stop coming. (See Appendix 2 for a summary of advantages and disadvantages of group tuition.)

3. Combining the best of both worlds: The Small Group Model

In 1996, the Study Skills Centre ran a pilot writing course for ESL students at ANU. The aim of the Winter Break Writing Course was to provide an opportunity for NESB and International students to work intensively on developing their writing skills. The workload of the course was high, with students being expected to write as much as possible over a 2-week period. Authentic model texts looking at the different techniques used to critically develop ideas were analysed in detail, and there was discussion of the writing process itself. Emphasis was placed on students learning how to critically evaluate their own writing. The course followed a top-down approach (Nunan, 1990) concentrating on the macro-structure of the text, rather than looking at the detail of individual sentence structure.

In the Winter Break Writing Course we attempted to design a very specific course to meet the very specific needs of a particular group of students. Although ESL students are well-catered for on an individual basis at ANU, and are eligible to attend the group essay writing courses offered by the Study Skills Centre, we were aware of the need for some sort

of writing course focussing on the specific needs of ESL students. What we offered to students was a third option, the small group course, combining the positive aspects of both individual and group tuition as a way of meeting the specific needs of a specific group of students.

4. The Winter Break Writing Course

When designing the Winter Break Writing Course, we had a clear picture of what we were aiming to achieve. The aim was to create a small intimate group of highly motivated students who would work together over a 2-week period on improving their writing skills. When thinking about the course, we took a number of issues into account. Firstly, students benefit enormously from individual sessions with a study skills adviser. The way in which we tapped into this resource will be discussed below.

Secondly, students wanted a 'grammar' or writing course. Successfully writing an academic essay is a daunting task for the ESL student, especially considering that it forms the basis of much of the assessment at tertiary level. ESL students have to deal with a number of issues simultaneously. Not only do they have to grapple with second language linguistic forms, but they also have to process and articulate complex ideas, while at the same time taking the audience into account (Edwards, 1995). Part of the students' difficulty is in correctly diagnosing where the problem actually lies. The sorts of comments from lecturers and tutors at the bottom of essays are not always very helpful:

- *fix up your grammar*
- *do not use such a chatty style*
- *get someone to proof-read your work*
- *conclusion too short*

The tendency for students (and some lecturers) is to think that the problem will be solved by 'fixing' the grammar. It is clearly not as simple as that. In thinking about designing a writing course, it was important to tackle the problem with a top-down approach. This places the focus on the macro-structure of the text, rather than concentrating on the detail of individual sentences. This does not mean that grammaticality issues were avoided, but rather they were dealt with as they arose. Grammar needs to be understood as making grammatical choices in terms of meaning and pragmatic considerations, rather than simply applying particular rules (Larsen-Freeman, 1991).

The third consideration to be taken into account was that there are certain groups of students within ANU who are not catered for in terms of academic English. ANU offers two first-year English in Academic Contexts units which are designed for NESB and International students in order that they develop such skills as note-taking, analysing, criticising and evaluating arguments, producing reasoned arguments from relevant sources, and participating effectively in tutorials and seminars. However, economics and commerce students are not eligible to take English in Academic Contexts.

As a result, we set up a pilot course for commerce and economics students in order to see if such an intensive writing course was a feasible addition to the range of courses already offered by the Study Skills Centre. In designing the course, we endeavoured to incorporate what we knew to be the positive aspects of assisting ESL students in individual sessions into the small group situation. This was achieved in a number of ways.

A small cohesive group

The most important way in which the Winter Break Writing Course was able to mimic one-to-one tuition was to create a small cohesive group. Three criteria were taken into consideration in creating the group. Firstly, we decided to limit the size of the group to a maximum of 10 - 12 students. Allowing for drop-outs, this meant that the final group would probably have fewer than 10. The rationale behind this was to provide as much individual attention as possible. Secondly, the target students were all chosen from one faculty: undergraduates or postgraduates doing commerce and economics units. This particular group was chosen because of their exclusion from English in Academic Contexts. However, the added benefit was that it allowed us to focus on the genre of one discipline, and enabled the students to form a social network of like-minded students. Thirdly, students were required to undergo a rigorous selection procedure not only to enable us to ascertain whether they were suitable or not, but also to ensure that they were 'paying' for the course in terms

of their own dedication. Students had to submit a completed enrolment form, a copy of a written assignment, and a 200-250 word explanation as to why they wanted to attend the course.

The selection procedure was important in that it enabled us to be confident that the selected students would benefit from the course. We were able to 'prevent' students from signing up when we knew they would probably not complete the course. Having been encouraged to think through why they needed a writing course, students were able to focus on their strengths and weaknesses and to articulate what their expectations of the course might be. This meant that we were able to carefully match the objectives of the course with those of the students. It also meant that students were highly motivated, providing a solid base for being active learners. As in the one-to-one situation, students therefore came with clear expectations of what they wanted to achieve and were prepared to be active learners in order to achieve it.

Providing individual attention and immediate feedback

One of the main advantages of one-to-one tuition is that the student has the undivided attention of the adviser. Students respond well to receiving an immediate response to their work, in that it increases their motivation and ensures that they are actively involved in the learning process.

The Winter Break Writing Course was designed to provide as much individual attention as possible within a group situation. A 3 tier scaffolding approach (Chamot and O'Malley, 1992) was used, in which skills and strategies are introduced and modelled by the tutor, then rehearsed in a controlled environment in small groups, then practised individually without supervision. This meant that the first part of the morning was devoted to analysis and discussion of model texts in the group as a whole. Then students worked together on different texts. This involved reading, note-taking, analysis and discussion of what the text was actually about. In other words, they went through the pre-writing phase of the writing process together. In the third part of the morning, students wrote individually on the text they had been analysing in the groups. The last hour was available for individual consultations during which students discussed their completed work. This meant that students had ample opportunity to discuss their writing throughout the 4-hour session, either as they were actually writing or during the feedback session.

An important feature of the writing course was that students wrote every day. We ran the course in one of the student computer laboratories, enabling students to write directly onto the computer as they were thinking through their ideas. This was important in that it mimicked what the students have to do in practice and avoided the students having to type up essays at home. In addition, it somehow fostered a conducive writing environment, so that writers' block was not an issue. The advantage for us was that we could stipulate that only typed work would be looked at, thus making the job of providing feedback much easier.

Immediate feedback was an important aspect of the course, with all work being returned the following day at the latest. This meant that students could constantly see and 'correct' their previous texts, so that writing became a process, rather than students wanting to concentrate on the finished product. An added advantage was that it enabled an open dialogue between the tutor and students to be maintained. In this way the tutor was able to directly respond to the needs of the students as well as to maintain the rapport of the group.

Some of the comments from the evaluations indicated that this was appreciated:

- *it's useful to be able to apply the ideas immediately*
- *daily writing and feedback was very useful*
- *immediate feedback identifies the problems and allows me to correct my mistakes*
- *writing a lot is essential - it's the actual writing that enables me to think about my problems with writing*

Using materials from within the discipline

In individual consultations with a study adviser, students generally bring current essays or assignments to be looked at in detail. They may want assistance with analysing a topic, generating an outline, ordering the material, writing the introduction or conclusion, or in creating coherent and unified paragraphs. Often ESL students do not even know where the problem lies, they only have the tutor's unfavourable comments to go on. But whatever the problem, the adviser is working directly within the discipline of the student and with the actual work brought to the session by the student. Because the session is therefore directly relevant to the needs and requirements of the student, motivation is high and it is highly likely that the student will benefit from the session.

It is also possible to achieve this within the group situation, although it requires greater input on the part of the tutor. In the Winter Break Writing Course, all model texts were from accountancy, commerce and economics. We chose texts from the undergraduate text books and 1996 'bricks' used by students studying those subjects. These model texts formed the basis of the textual analysis and underpinned the students' own writing throughout the course. As a result, students were reading texts within their discipline, analysing texts within their discipline and also writing about topics within their discipline.

Students found this very useful:

- *it's good to focus on specific topics, rather than more general topics*
- *materials have a lot of relevance to my course*
- *having students from the same faculty is good, because they have the same technical jargon and can relate to the same examples*

Using authentic texts from within the discipline is very important for ESL students. Such students are required to have both general language competence as well as competence in the specific genre of the discipline. They therefore need to be exposed to all different styles of writing within the discipline, including the style of writing required for essays and assignments. This is particularly relevant for disciplines such as accountancy and commerce, where the types of texts students are exposed to vary enormously. They range from legalistic accounting standards, to tightly-written journal articles, to rather prescriptive text books, to very readable, but poorly-structured, magazine-type articles. Having such a variety of source materials creates a problem for ESL students, because they have no clear model to follow in writing their essays. By analysing the different text-styles, students were better able to appreciate the differences and to take greater control of their own writing style. ESL students find this control of the writing process very empowering. They learn to control the language, instead of letting the language control them.

One of the difficulties for the tutor in using material from within the discipline is the issue of whether s/he is fully able to understand the often-unstated background material to the text. However, there are benefits to having the tutor outside the discipline. Firstly, as Ballard (1994) notes, it means that the tutor is able to maintain a distance from the discipline and so concentrate on the structure of the text rather than the detail of the content. Secondly, as Chanock (1995) notes, it enables students to 'instruct' the tutor in the content of the discipline.

Flexibility

One of the clear benefits of individual tuition is that there is an inbuilt flexibility. The tutor is able to modify the direction of the assistance depending upon the needs and requirements of the individual. This is particularly relevant for ESL students who have come from varied educational backgrounds. The danger of setting up and running a course is that there is limited scope for flexibility.

In the Winter Break Writing Course, we anticipated the problem in a number of ways. We made sure that the objectives of the students matched those of the tutors. This was achieved by the careful selection process and by having on-going discussions with students throughout the course. Time was spent at the beginning of the course creating a relaxed non-threatening environment so that students felt comfortable indicating their needs and requirements to the tutor. We allowed for a mid-course feedback session for the tutor so that dissatisfaction could be dealt with immediately. In addition, a catch-up day was factored into the program in which we were able to concentrate on issues which had come up during the course, including students' specific English language problems.

5. What is gained by the small group model?

In the Winter Break Writing Course, we were able to combine the advantages of both individual and group tuition. The small group model ensures that students are treated as individuals. Students receive a lot of individual attention; students are highly motivated and willing to put in the required effort in order to achieve their desired goals; students receive frequent feedback; and the content is relevant to the students' needs and requirements. This ensures, just as in the individual situation, that the students are active learners and that it is highly likely that learning outcomes will be achieved.

However, the small group model also has the advantage of students being a member of a group. The most important aspect of the small group model is that the group seems to generate its own 'momentum'. This momentum carries the students through when the going is tough, tiding them over until they can see for themselves that they are benefiting from the course. Whether this occurs or not depends upon the design of the course, the tutor and the group itself. The course needs to be well thought-out and prepared, with an underlying rationale as to how the course content is chosen, how it is relevant to the students' needs and requirements and how it assists students in achieving their objectives. Students respond well to a well-designed course. If they can appreciate the effort that has gone into designing the course, they will reciprocate by putting in the required effort. The tutor also plays an important role in generating the momentum. The success of the group depends upon how well the tutor responds to the needs of the group and to the needs of the individual members of the group. Finally, it is the group itself which also determines whether the momentum is allowed to be built up. If it is a small cohesive group of like-minded students who are highly motivated to achieve their outcomes, then it is highly likely that students will identify with the group and be sustained by the group. This is something which the individual session is not able to offer.

One aspect which has to be taken into consideration when running a small group course is the time involved. Although the initial outlay in organising the Winter Break Writing Course was high in terms of hours involved, it is important not to allow cost considerations to dissuade centres from offering the small group course. A conservative estimate indicates that the Winter Break Writing Course 'cost' 150 hours, which translates into 15 individual sessions for 10 students! (This will be much less in subsequent years.) However, the 10 students spent 40 hours in a small group situation, with a lot of individual attention from the tutor, as well as benefiting from the group as a whole. (See Appendix 3 for a summary of advantages and disadvantages of the small group model.)

6. The particular needs of ESL students

Our experience with running small group tuition is not limited to this pilot course. The Study Skills Centre also runs the University English Language Program (UELP). These daily lunchtime language classes for ESL students concentrate on developing students' oral and aural skills. Five very specific courses dealing with varying aspects of speaking and listening have been designed to meet the specific needs and requirements of ESL students. Students are carefully selected, in order to ensure that the students suit the particular course and that the course suits the students. As a result, class sizes are small, enabling students to receive individual attention as required.

The small group model is a particularly important option for ESL students. There are a number of reasons for this. Some ESL students prefer attending a course rather than the more 'threatening' individual sessions. They find it too confronting having to articulate their ideas and thoughts in the presence of an authority figure. With the small group model, students are able to receive the benefits of individual tuition while at the same time being nurtured by the group. They can only benefit from such an option.

The second benefit for ESL students is the social aspect of being part of a group. Identifying with the group gives ESL students a sense of importance. Being part of a course reminds students that they are not alone in finding particular aspects of the English language daunting, whether it be writing, reading, speaking or listening. The group sustains itself as the course progresses, allowing a momentum to be built up, and by so doing, sustains the students. This is very empowering for ESL students who frequently find university life to be a rather isolating existence. The contacts made during a course continue long after the course has finished.

Studying in a second language is not easy. It takes dedication and perseverance. We are able to support ESL students by enabling them to share the burden with others. We can do this by providing them with the opportunity to concentrate on a particularly difficult aspect, as part of a small group and for an extended period of time. The Winter Break Writing Course gave students the opportunity to work intensively on their writing for 2 weeks. Being able to write simultaneously with others, instead of facing the struggle alone, was a very positive experience. Students also find the UELP classes to be positive, in that they enable students to develop their speaking and listening skills, with the support of the group, throughout the academic year.

7. Conclusion

The one-to-one situation and the group situation are not the only options available to assist university students. There is a third option, the small group model, which combines the advantages of both the individual and the group tuition. The small group model is particularly suited to meet the needs of advanced ESL students at tertiary level. They respond to the energy and momentum generated by the group, while at the same time responding to very individualised attention and the tailoring of the course to suit their particular needs and requirements.

In this talk, I have offered up two examples of how the small group model can work in practice. In the Winter Break Writing Course, the advantages of both individual and group tuition were achieved by only having a small number of students from one discipline, by only using texts relevant to that discipline, by giving students immediate feedback on written work, and by responding quickly to students' specific English language problems. In the UELP classes, the advantages of both individual and group tuition were achieved by carefully choosing class participants, by carefully tailoring the course to meet the specific needs and requirements of the ESL students, by providing individual attention as required, and by encouraging the students to benefit from the build-up of the momentum of the group.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Summary of advantages and disadvantages of individual tuition

ADVANTAGES	active learners highly motivated students open dialogue enabling immediate feedback students receive individual attention directly relevant material
DISADVANTAGES	threatening situation for some students pressure to give 'quick' bandaid solutions high in resources

Appendix 2: Summary of advantages and disadvantages of the larger group

ADVANTAGES	students enjoy being part of a course social function provided by the group course builds up a reputation low in resources
DISADVANTAGES	students have differing needs and requirements tendency for students to be passive learners students at different levels difficult to give individualised attention material may not be relevant to student

Appendix 3: Summary of advantages and disadvantages of the small group model

ADVANTAGES	active learners highly motivated students open dialogue enabling immediate feedback students receive individual attention directly relevant material momentum of the course sustains the students social function provided by the group
DISADVANTAGES	initially high in resources

PROOFREADING: THE SKELETON IN THE ACADEMIC SKILLS CLOSET?

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ABSTRACT

The issue of proofreading is a vexing one: most learning centre advisers would assert that the responsibility for this process lies principally with students, and yet, for some students, especially some international and NESB students, the opposite view is held. How can this apparently conflicting perception of responsibility best be resolved? On the assumption that a clear consensus over the 'correct' way to resolve this issue is unlikely, this paper seeks to aggregate some views expressed publicly by learning advisers via the 'unilearn' discussion list.

Within this broad consensus approach, attempts are made to identify the outlooks that staff have on the learning development process, options available to staff in relation to the proofreading role, and how to improve understanding between advisers and students in dealing with the task of proofreading. The paper will also examine connections between the one-to-one experience of this perceived conflict, and group-based teaching and learning practices. Through this examination, a view of proofreading is developed that constitutes a re-evaluation of its role in learning centre operations.

When a student first approaches a learning adviser for such an appointment, his/her expectations of what will happen in that initial meeting may be unclear. However, some students might have a very clear idea of what they want from such a consultation, and how it should be provided. However, this may be significantly at variance with what the learning adviser believes is appropriate for the discharge of his/her responsibilities. This difference can provide illumination on both sides of the advising table, but is perhaps more likely to push the boundaries implicitly set by the adviser. It might then be necessary to articulate these boundaries via some kind of statement of established practice or policy on the part of the adviser. The question is then posed: where should such boundaries be, and how strongly should they be adhered to?

This question of boundaries, flexibility and appropriacy frequently centres around students' expectations about how much and what kind of work 'ought to be done to' their writing; most specifically, how much 'correction' the learning adviser should make of a student's text, maybe even without requiring the student do anything more than supply the text. The demand for this kind of non-negotiated service can be quite high at certain predictable periods of the academic year, and so too can attempts by learning advisers to find ways to re-negotiate this potentially frustrating arrangement.

One important attempt to redistribute the demand for text correction is to encourage a more independent approach to dealing with the responsibility of this demand. A significant tool in this effort is the use of group-based teaching to communicate the nature and extent of the problem of faulty texts, and most importantly, to engender an active self-responsibility for the task of text correction and development. This paper explores ways that learning advisers have responded to the demand for text correction and in particular, how they have sought to develop effective strategies for promoting independent learning at individual and group levels.

Approaches to proofreading

Proofreading is often confused with other processes of reworking texts. McCuen & Winkler (1990) define four such processes: drafting; revising; editing; and proofreading. These four represent a shifting balance between content and form. Drafting is the development and clarification of ideas through rewriting part or all of a text (p.8). Revising is rethinking the content and refining the form. Editing is an extension of revising where the balance shifts from content to form. Proofreading, then, represents the ultimate focus on form and disinterest in content (p.9).

From a more integrated perspective, Pam Peters' recent *Australian English Style Guide* (1995) makes this comment about proofreading:

This is an essential part of checking your own writing, or preparing anyone else's for printing. It involves reading at more than one level - firstly at the level of ideas and how those ideas are expressed, and secondly at the level of spelling, punctuation and typesetting. This means at least two readings of the manuscript, since the people who can reliably read on both levels at once are as rare as hen's teeth. (pp. 614-615)

Despite the differences in background and style, both sources acknowledge the crucial balance of content and form in writing, and the difficulty in developing these two dimensions simultaneously.

Differences in semantics and demarcations between these dimensions mean that different writers, and certainly different learning advisers, develop different norms of rewriting practices and their responsibilities. If Peters' view (1995) of proofreading is considered, then the content and form boundaries become blurred, and therefore, so do the responsibilities accepted in one-to-one sessions. However, like McCuen and Winkler (1990), there is an implicit distinction between ideational and textual 'correctness'. One important aspect of this distinction is the degree of agreement on correctness. While there is an abundance of literature that advises students on textual correctness, there is an inherent problem of subjectivity with what constitutes ideational correctness. For many learning advisers, this problem of determining the 'correctness' of ideas is believed to be outside their contractual boundaries.

The notion of textual correctness generally assumes a model of 'correct language', which is practically determined by, either or both, an external linguistic authority, or an internally consistent set of principles. How well individual students can make the shift to an autonomous sense of correctness via such resources is quite uncertain (see discussions for example in Bushman & Ervin; Shuman; and Glover & Stay, all in Hunter & Wallace, 1995). While the acquisition of an 'internally consistent set of principles' is very complex and only happens over the long term, the immediacy of a learning adviser service is seen by some students as direct access to a superior external resource - the easy way out.

Unfortunately, the question of a 'right' way for learning advisers to deal with grammatical errors in student writing is subject to personal, professional and institutional influences. Consequently, it is almost certain to be beyond general agreement. One readily identifiable factor in this disagreement is the choice of grammatical approach used by students and learning advisers, and how this might affect proofreading outcomes. This paper makes little recognition of this factor, and hence reflects the definitive view expressed by Taylor (1995) that "no theory of language and learning, however rich and rigorous the philosophical tradition behind it, is of value unless it is indeed a 'theory of practice'"(p.48). Therefore, it is within an individual adviser's domain to realise this 'theory of practice' in whatever way is most productive in effecting an improvement in students' writing.

A second and much more directly relevant aspect of the role of grammatical theory in textual correctness is the effectiveness of one-to-one appointments in improving students' grammar through their writing. Despite probably the majority of learning advisers' intuition that improvement does take place, it is anything but proven. Indeed, as Muriel Harris (1986) claims, "no mystical transformation takes place: ineffective teachers can remain ineffective; recalcitrant, indifferent, or slow learners can remain recalcitrant, indifferent or slow." (p.105).

Hartwell (1985, cited in Harris, 1986) identifies five sorts of grammar, of which types one, two and four are particularly useful for examining proofreading practices:

- (1) the grammar in our heads - typically the grammar acquired in L1 and prone to unconscious usage, ie users are unconscious of the underlying structures,
 - (2) grammar as complete linguistic theories, regardless of which theoretical model is used, and
 - (4) grammar as "rules" which are cited out of the context of their theoretical origins
- (p.119).

Hartwell's research makes conclusions about the following relationships:

- (i) grammar 2 has little effect on grammar 1 and is of little practical use, and,
- (ii) formal instruction in either grammar 2 or grammar 4 has little power to improve surface correctness.

This leaves us with grammar 1, 'intuitive' L1 type grammar, which seems like a return to the original conundrum for L2 students - the grammar that they can least control or gain access to. Most learning advisers would probably say that grammar 1 would generally be the most desirable in terms of its reliability; but also the most difficult, if not impossible, to teach. Grammars 2 and 4 would seem to be powerful resources but suffer from difficulties in coping with the irregularities of authentic texts. A compromise position of working with authentic student texts and identifying grammatical points as they appear in those texts has yielded considerable support from the present research, and is seen by some as undoubtedly the most effective approach.

Harris (1986) identifies two efforts that learning advisers can make that produce opposite and fruitless results in product terms: (i) the detailed correction of sentence level text, which is later discarded in the editing process, and (ii) the retention of corrected text that no longer 'fits' in content with the final draft. These wasted efforts represent a potential cost in learning adviser effectiveness. This recognition consequently leads to strategies aimed at minimising this cost, or making efforts to reformat the session interactions so that this outcome is altogether avoided.

The seeking of strategies invariably includes the consideration of contexts outside the individual appointment. In most cases, this means small groups and larger groups, each with their many options of pedagogical structure and process. In order to gauge learning advisers' views and practices regarding proofreading, and especially to examine opportunities for developing effective alternative practices and contexts, this paper reports on an informal survey of learning advisers which addressed the following broad questions:

- What is proofreading?
- How is it used in one-to-one appointment contexts?
- Is it an appropriate and valuable practice for learning advisers to become involved in?
- What implications does this usage have for larger groups?
- What opportunities might it offer for larger groups, that are otherwise less available?

Method

In July 1996, a survey document was distributed via 'unilearn', an e-mail discussion list of learning advisers and others in Australian and New Zealand universities. It invited interested subscribers to comment on the above questions and return their responses by e-mail reply. Eleven formal responses and two informal responses (one of which was generally able to be included) were received by this system, with the understanding that these responses were readable by all 'unilearn' subscribers. This fact was unacceptable to a small number of respondents who chose to either reply with their objection only, or send a paper copy by mail. A second objection was raised in regard to the adequacy of security over the use of the responses. In order to address these objections, a further invitation to 'unilearn' subscribers was issued to encourage alternative modes of response and to guarantee anonymity in reporting data. However, no further responses were received, leaving twelve separate and useable responses received and collated.

Results

The twelve responses were collated into a single document which allowed an approximation of their collective views to be recorded. An attempt at descriptive 'measures of centre' and 'measures of distribution' is given in the summary of responses to each question. While the survey document asked questions about the topics given above, the results were identified by topic only. For a verbatim record of the survey questions, please refer to the appendix. Numbers in parentheses refer to response numbers allocated by the researcher.

Section A - Demographic variables and service provision

1. approx. 12 responses from Australia and New Zealand

A	B	C	D	E	F
Response Number	Student Population (on campus)	Number of Staff (literacy only)	Ratio of learning advisers to students¹	one-to-one student numbers	Prop. of stud. popn. seeking one-to-one (%)
1	~22,000	6.0	0.27	1000	4.5
2	6,873	2.5	0.36	1170	17.0
3	10,000	8.0	0.80	430	4.1
4	10,000	4.5	0.45	750	7.5
5	17,000	2.75	0.16	200	1.18
6	10,444	>0.7	N/A	430	4.1
7	8,000	1.0	0.125	~450	5.6
8	12,000	2.0	0.17	N/A	N/A
9	10,377	4.2	0.40	1200	11.56
10	(1,000)	1.0	1.00	~600	60.0
11	N/A2	4.0	N/A	N/A	N/A
12	N/A	2.0	N/A	N/A	N/A

2. On-campus student populations

These ranged from under 7,000, to 22,000; however, some staff only deal with sub-populations such as international students which reduces the minimum to less than 2,000 (10).

3. Staff/student ratios

These also vary considerably from 0.17 staff per 1,000 (8) to 1.0 per 1,000 (10), or to put it another way, the highest ratio was over five times the lowest.

4. Number of students seen on a one-to-one basis per year.

Varies from 1.18% of the on-campus population (5) to 11.56% (9); a factor of nearly ten.

5. Policy on proofreading

Three respondents had a clear and public policy, and several others had what might be called a 'working policy'. Three others had no policy on proofreading. Apart from this latter group, the theme of the 'policies' was clear - proofreading is an unacceptable request and practice. Differences focussed on how this message was communicated and how students' attention could be redirected to what was permissible by accompanying positive 'messages'. Some other issues were also expressed, such as the amount of notice required to adequately examine a text, the required presence of the student during 'proofing', past work with the student, the avoidance of dealing with "immediately due" work, or even acceptance of differential practices of learning centre staff.

Clearly, these issues go further than policy alone: they cover agreed practice and recommendations. If there was any uniform departure from outright prohibition, it was some sense of obstacle to redirect attention onto other more supported service activities.

6. Eligibility criteria for one-to-one service

The response from the sample was uniform (except for one) that no criteria were applied. This is both difficult and easy to interpret because, though many of the policy statements do imply restriction, they are generally based on service usage rather than individual criteria. The clear difference is that no student is prevented from using the service on any permanent basis - if all usage requirements are met, no service request is denied.

Section B - Identifying proofreading

1. Identifying proofreading

Seven of the eight respondents claimed that they conducted proofreading in some form. Again, qualifications or obstacles were often provided to prevent simple on-demand use (or overuse) of this facility. The exceptional respondent offered proofreading to NESB students only. Though not made explicit, this seemed to be a job designation requirement.

The prompt options offered within the survey generated a substantial response as defining elements.

a) "correct every ... error"

This service is provided by 50% of respondents to this prompt, though only one respondent from this group does so without qualification. Restrictions focussed on number of errors, length of text and number of visits.

b) "identify errors but not provide correction"

Some 85% of respondents to this prompt provided this variety of proofreading, but every one of these responses was qualified by restriction such as frequency of use or characteristics of the student, such as language background.

c) "negotiate correction"

All respondents provide this kind of proofreading, though some also impose some restriction on frequency of use. The term 'negotiate' was deliberately chosen in order to express a broad meaning. This allowed responses to vary according to their interpretation of 'negotiate'.

d) "correct a portion of writing and refer to external resources"

About 85% of respondents to this prompt supported this approach, though only one detailed the "external resources". Chief among the qualifications was time.

e) "correct a portion of writing and follow up in some way"

A similar pattern of response was found to this prompt. Again, details of follow-up were generally absent.

f) "some combination of the above"

Five people responded to this prompt, some with detailed answers. Three of these involved quite elaborate personal practices that involved sequences within sessions and others that depended on characteristics of the student and/or the text.

2. Time per session involved in proofreading

Of the seven responses to this question, six claimed 50% or more (90% in one case) of session time was involved in proofreading. It seems that the proofreading is a significant constituent of many advisers' sessions.

3. No. of sessions involved in proofreading

This 'statistic' was more variable than question 2 with a range of 25% to 90% and two of the eight responses giving reasonably detailed qualification to their answer. The possibility of widely varying typical patterns of session conduct is consistent with this little evidence.

Section C - Use of proofreading

1. Typicality of proofreading practices, compared to peers

This is quite difficult to determine from this sample. Seven of the ten responses claimed some level of typicality but what was significant was their uncertainty about this. Most speculation about this was based on impressions or educated guesses. Of the three negative responses, two qualified their *atypicality* with some specific aspect of *typicality* with peers. Another dimension of variation in typicality was the size and structure of individual centres, which could affect the extent and frequency of peer-to-peer contact or co-operative practices. Other reasons explicitly offered for atypicality seemed difficult to directly relate to typicality. The three main 'atypical' responses identified specialisation, informal centre policies and length of service as the bases for their atypicality.

2. Advantages and disadvantages of proofreading in one-to-one sessions

This was one of the most substantially answered questions with advantages generating nine mostly lengthy answers and disadvantages generating ten, mostly shorter, answers.

Advantages:

- reputation as a service that meets demand, morale boosting.
- lack of insight into grammatical weaknesses.
- relationship building, meeting demand, encouraging literacy independence, affect quality of expression.
- diagnosis of literacy needs.
- can communicate presentation expectations, eg. spelling.
- can communicate conventions.
- promote independent editing.
- promote 'polished' essays.
- utilises student's motivation to maximise teaching effectiveness.

Disadvantages:

- morale boosting encourages dependence, compensates for academics' lack of explication of requirements/standards.
- circumvents students learning by providing answers, encourages dependence.
- dependence on adviser, resistance to learning grammar principles.
- avoidance of learning, time consuming.
- time consuming, rate of learning can't keep up with literacy demands.
- students may not view sessions as learning opportunities.
- time consuming.
- time consuming, distorts practice.
- students may not learn anything.
- unable to teach all errors, risk of not being individualised.

The themes of the advantages were less well represented than the disadvantages and tended to have two strands: interpersonal benefits and literacy standards. The disadvantages strongly centre around the risk of little or no learning and the inefficient use of time. It could be said that through these themes, issues of psychology, literacy, pedagogy, and resource management are all involved in proofreading.

3. Interest in and efforts to reduce proofreading

Eight of the ten responses indicated that some effort to reduce proofreading had already been made in their practice. This supports the claim that there is a widespread belief that proofreading ought to be reduced, an assumption perhaps too glaringly placed into the question. Reasons for this effort to reduce proofreading were not requested by this question, so they remain an interesting point of speculation.

4. Replace proofreading with other tools

Only one out of the nine responses sought to replace proofreading with other tools, namely "worksheets/ideas/other material that students can work on". This left all of the others as some form of 'no', but this alone is misleading. Two features were present in most of the negative responses: complementing proofreading with other tools, and shifting the responsibility for proofreading from adviser to student.

While the question asked about replacement of proofreading, it did not assume that proofreading was the only tool used. However, for a number of respondents, the question of replacement was inadvertently blurred with complementarity. Shifting responsibility for proofreading to the student (or computer) was also an issue for three of the negative respondents. The distinction between adviser generated-proofreading and student-generated proofreading was not made in the question; however, student-generated proofreading is more likely to result in less overall time spent on that function within sessions.

One respondent suggested that the question was revealing of the questioner's lack of pro-activity, which, it implied, was not the case at the respondent's institution.

5. Vary proofreading in some other way.

Seven of the nine respondents to this question simply said 'yes'. One said 'perhaps' and one 'no'. Of the eight that were not negative, only one indicated how his/her practice had been modified, and that was according to language background. The question failed to evoke any adequate account of successful changes in proofreading practice.

6. Basis for varying proofreading practice

Seven of the eight responses indicated that proofreading practice was varied or partly varied, by them. Broadly, the main basis was some individual characteristic, such as language background, educational background, course progress, appointment history, or interest in grammatical issues, etc. All of these depended on a significant level of diagnosis on the part of the adviser.

Section D - Implications of proofreading for group work

1. Contributions to group sessions based on knowledge gained from one-to-one sessions.

Eight responses were recorded with rather little in common. Two respondents saw advantages in terms of the adviser's increased awareness of student difficulties. Group sessions provide many students with the possibility of getting advice that is roughly targeted to the sort of problems raised through individual self-referral. Others said, "not sure", "Little", "not personally involved in group work", and "not relevant". These responses suggest

either untapped potential or significant dissonance between proofreading as a one-to-one experience and a group one.

2. Individual proofreading practice and its potential value in group learning.

This question was the most puzzling to respondents (eg. "Not sure.", "Don't know.") Positive messages suggest that collaborative learning has advantages for grammatical accuracy, though one respondent refuted this confidence.

3. Aspects of one-to-one that have implications for group learning.

This question brought in the smallest set of responses, four. The overwhelming picture generated from these is that proofreading issues have little hope of being adequately addressed or supported by group processes.

Section E - Non-proofreading tools

1. The major learning tools used in one-to-one sessions

Numerous learning issues were identified in the three replies to this question. These included: students' experience, learning styles, motivation (narratives of these), discussion of course and assignment requirements, research strategies, development of argument via critical analysis, disciplinary discourse, grammar handbooks, dictionaries.

Clearly, the majority of these are resources or issues, and not explicitly tools of support or assistance. However, they do represent important components of advisers' work, regardless of whether proofreading is among them. The implications are that proofreading is a very narrow slice of the resources available and in demand from students.

2. Referrals for proofreading

Half of the four responses said 'no' to this issue; however, the question was poor because it compounded three separate questions, two of which could be meaningfully answered 'yes' or 'no'. The other two responses indicated that they did refer proofreading requests to various agencies.

The issue of referrals is more complex than the superficial treatment afforded by the survey would suggest, and therefore, cannot be regarded as adequately addressed here.

3. Alternatives to adviser-centred proofreading

The three responses to this question were interesting because, while none were even similar, they all shared the characteristic of diversion. One claimed that the question was infrequent, while the other two said 'none', and 'see the previous question'. Adviser-centred proofreading appears to be common and supported.

Section F - Reflections on the survey

In many ways, this opportunity to feedback to the surveyor provided the most interesting information.

1. Methodology or content of the survey

Of the four direct responses to these issues, One reported no problems, one identified concerns of confidentiality, one questioned the undefined use of the term 'proofreading', and the fourth identified the

survey as coming "from a very reactive practice". Such diversity made any thought-but-not-uttered methodological criticisms very hard to predict.

[2. Questions to raise at the conference

Eight respondents generated six issues, three of which were clearly statements rather than questions. Summarised and paraphrased, the questions were as follows:

- (i) how do other advisers feel about this issue (proofreading) and what implications might be drawn from this?
- (ii) what is the surveyor's, and the surveyor's centre's role, in the university, and do these roles address the issue of acculturation?
- (iii) is anyone researching the question of confidentiality regarding individual students' attendance at learning centres?

N.B. Question (i) drew some general response but insufficient for any substantial report. Question (ii) was answered simply, and question (iii) received no reply.

The statements were also significant. They made the following claims:

- (i) "proofreading is the least important aspect of my job" ... and must be "kept to a bare minimum"
- (ii) "defining proofreading is the key. Use and abuse of proofreading is more important than its inherent value."]

Discussion

The overall trend of learning advisers undertaking proofreading despite rhetoric to the contrary appears to be confirmed - the proofreading skeleton has been encouraged to peek out from its cosy closet. This may surprise few readers, but the significance of this confirmation needs careful treatment in order to highlight the most effective next steps the skeleton might take in order to bring itself out on a more permanent basis.

While matters of definition are critical, it can certainly be said that some NESB students do exclusively seek a 'quick grammatical fix' for their writing, and that advisers are often placed in the role of being the object of such demands. The conference theme of taking the individual session into the world of group dynamics places this objectification in an even more challenged position - how can students take responsibility for the quality of their texts amongst equally demanding peers, without the individually tailored feedback that they may have become accustomed to in individual sessions?

One clear limitation in describing proofreading practices was the term 'negotiate' which allowed for individual interpretation but failed to adequately describe the pattern of interaction between adviser and student. This is a subject in need of further investigation. One aspect of this negotiation is the variability in any one adviser's practice. It would be worthwhile knowing which situational cues or student attributes determine departures from any hypothetical policy-driven norm.

The results of this survey, though making no claim to be rigorous or representative, do suggest trends in theory and practice that have distinct impacts on the way advisers can handle the problems of proofreading in the larger group context. In order to create any substance for this transition, it would be useful to review the key features of these trends.

Firstly, the survey indicates that institutional, pedagogical, and political positioning of a learning advisory service significantly affects the profile and practices of individual advisory staff. In the current climate of significant reductions in staffing across the university sector, these roles are under increasing pressure to perform, and this performance may not be able to be measured in terms of an adviser's ability to meet students' expressed or unexpressed needs. If an individual adviser takes the step of rejecting a student's explicit request for grammatical correction in favour of a more pedagogically acceptable alternative, then the student may regard the session as a failure because their presented needs have not (directly) been met. Supplementing the session's work with a referral to an alternative support facility, such as a grammar workshop, may meet with varied response, depending on the student's ability to adapt to the adviser's approach to minimising adviser-

centred correction. The large group is one obvious way to increase exposure to language and learning services, despite the fact that valuable interactivity is seriously reduced.

In sheer staff/student ratio terms, some survey respondents are much better able to meet the textual needs of their students than others. The decision to move to group teaching formats is more likely then, perhaps even essential in some institutions, while the capacity to service students' literacy needs is expected to essentially be preserved. This survey suggests that proofreading is an area that will not only fail to easily benefit students' writing in large group settings, it will also require certain levels of curriculum planning that may have been either resisted or treated as otherwise unmanageable or ineffective.

Practical opportunities for proofreading to be done in group settings are limited for a variety of reasons. The most prominent of these is the fact that NESB students, in particular, have limits in their recognition of grammaticality when working alone or independently in a group setting. There is a need for an interactive forum, and the individual appointment appears to provide the greatest access for interactivity of a narrow yet relevant kind.

Alternatives such as the small group and large group offer quite different dynamics, some of which are advantageous. Goss, Ying-Hua & Lantolf's (1994) research into peer pair grammaticality judgements makes two important findings in this regard: firstly, peer pair proofreading of students' L2 texts leads to a higher success in improving texts over operating alone; and secondly, more advanced L2 learners use linguistic resources that are much more similar to those of more elementary L2 learners than their competent ESB peers. The first of these points may seem so obvious as to be unnecessary to report but in view of the second point, perhaps there is less to be certain about. How students might best use a grammaticality learning format as small as the peer pair is less well understood than it might be, but it seems that intuitive expectations are supported: small group editing *is* more effective than solo editing. Clearly, there is an opportunity for learning advisers to shift their role more towards small group facilitation for the purpose of proofreading.

Larger groups have a different dynamic and tend to engender more anonymous responses to linguistic inquiry and have reduced capacity for developed dialogue. Opportunities for effectively conveying grammaticality skills in this setting would seem to be less available. Glover & Stay (1995) emphasise the need for grammatical understanding over grammatical correctness and identify the large group as less effective than smaller ones at generating such understanding. Again, interactivity is important; this time as a basis for distinguishing between these two grammatical objectives. However, this view alone suggests that grammatical understanding is an uncomplicated acquisition, and that the choice of setting is the major determinant in its success.

Grammatical skills and proofreading skills are highly interdependent. An insight into this relationship can be gathered from numerous readings that involve the acquisition of grammatical skills. Glover & Stay (1995), for example, reviewed the linguistic and pedagogical implications of grammar teaching and claimed that teaching integrated grammar in an explicitly broader context that recognises the institutional and pedagogical power issues involved ("grammar of discovery") was the most responsible and effective. They further claim that "writing centres offer the best place to teach such a grammar of discovery because they allow learning to occur contextually within a framework of personal, moral and political growth and because one-on-one instruction can mitigate the political obstacles of the classroom" (p.132). Glover & Stay's broad view suggests that grammatical/proofreading skills ought to be combined into a multifocussed teaching approach that serves the student's needs more holistically.

Storch's research (1996) makes an interesting observation of peer negotiation in terms of the kinds of resources generally available to L2 students in generating grammatical correctness. Her study showed that when presented with an artificially faulted text for grammatical correction via small group discussion, students overwhelmingly targeted verb tense as the most likely and therefore most discussed error type. This is perhaps reasonable in the light of Connors & Lunsford's (1988) survey of 3,000 college essays which identified use of irregular verbs in the three most frequent types of formal error. However, since Storch's text contained no verb tense errors, it could be said that the students were not necessarily identifying errors. Rather, they were predicting errors at frequencies based on previous feedback experiences. Obviously, no such prediction strategy was required by the L1 examiners (paralleling the learning adviser's role) who relied on Hartwell's type 1 grammatical knowledge. Therefore, differences in grammatical focus were to be expected.

Moreover, Storch (1996) found that the sorts of techniques that students used to generate grammatical solutions varied quite significantly from individual to individual. Also, within the group setting, these individuals adopted different strategies for recognising a problem and responded to others' influence in various ways. This again supports the one-to-one context for working with students, but points up the need to re-examine strategic options within this format.

Conclusion

Despite casual claims to the contrary, the place of proofreading in learning advisers' work seems assured from this survey of learning advisers. Matters of policy and practice remain variable, in part due to the isolation of learning centres and individual learning advisers. In many cases, learning advisers are working professionally alone and need to make decisions about how they will handle the demands of their students within their isolated contexts. Not surprisingly, the confirmed demand for proofreading, or more broadly, editing, is frequently supported by learning advisers, and questions of proofreading policy are dealt with erratically. This paper has suggested that if the discrepancy between rhetoric and practice is to be resolved, then some acceptance of the fact that proofreading *is* done needs to be made. From this, a more realistic policy can be generated that moves away from the 'proofreading as wholly unacceptable' stand that is often expressed. This does not mean that educational and ethical concerns regarding adviser-centred proofreading practices are to be ignored. Rather, more reflection and dialogue needs to take place to recognise the position of the demand for proofreading within the student's context, and what fair and equitable alternatives are available, given that proofreading benefits significantly from interactive practices. This means seeking other ways of dealing with the proofreading demand, particularly by continuing to examine alternative external services, and internal options of, for example, peer editing and small group work.

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APPENDIX

Below is the questionnaire distributed to 'unilearn' subscribers in July 1996.

To: unilearn@uws.edu.au
From: p.spolc@npepan.uws.edu.au (Peter Spolc)
Subject: Proofreading survey
Cc:
Bcc:
X-Attachments:

Dear Unilearner,

The survey below has been distributed to all unilearners. It is intended to be a simple way of collecting views about proofreading. I intend to compile yours and others' views on this, at times provocative subject, and present them at the forthcoming conference at La Trobe in November.

If you choose to respond, please note that it could take up to 50 minutes! I apologise for the erosion of your time in dealing with this but I hope to be able to return the favour with some stimulating suggestions from your colleagues of the net.

One more thing before the point of no return: if you bail out half way along, please don't give up. E-mail whatever you've done as every contribution will be useful; and if you don't send it, it will have been just a waste of your time!

Peter Spolc
Learning Centre
University of Western Sydney, Nepean

Survey of Proofreading Practices in Learning Centres

Instructions:

Please complete this survey by answering as many questions as you can (or want to) by typing your responses after the prompt 'A:' for each question, and e-mailing the whole thing back to me (via 'reply'). There are up to five sections to complete.

If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to call me in the vocal flesh on (02) 685 9266.

Name:

Centre:

University:

Section A

This section refers to YOUR CENTRE or UNIVERSITY. Only one person per institution needs to complete this section.

Name of centre:

A:

What is the total population of students in your university? (include distance education students as a separate group)

A:

How many positions (full time equivalent) are there in your centre?

A:

How many students does your centre see on a one-to-one basis, per year?

A:

Does your centre have an official or working policy regarding the use of proofreading? If so, please outline.

A:

Do students have to meet any eligibility criteria (eg. a failed essay) before they can have a one-to-one appointment in your centre? If so, what are they?

A:

The following sections (Sections B and C) refer to YOUR OWN WORK in ONE-TO-ONE appointments only

Section B - Identifying proofreading

Do you provide any one-to-one assistance that YOU would call 'proofreading'?

If so, identify from the following, and/or write your own:

- Correct every grammatical/spelling/punctuation error A:
- Identify errors, but not provide correction A:
- Negotiate correction A:
- Correct a portion of writing and refer student outside the centre for further assistance A:
- Correct a portion of writing and follow up in some other way A:
- Some combination of the above (elaborate if possible) A:
- Other, please explain ... A:

[If you do NOT do proofreading in one-to-one sessions, please go directly to Section E.]

Approximately what proportion of your sessions involve proofreading?

A:

If a session does involve proofreading, how much of the session time would involve proofreading, on average?

A:

Section C - Use of proofreading

Do you know if YOUR use of proofreading is typical of the practices of your colleagues within your centre?

A:

If not, why?

A:

What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of using proofreading in one-to-one sessions?

Advantages A:

Disadvantages A:

Have you taken any steps to:

- reduce your use of proofreading?; A:

- replace proofreading with other tools?; A:

Do you vary your use of proofreading for particular kinds of students or sessions?

A:

If so, on what basis?

A:

Section D - Implications of proofreading for group work

What do you learn from proofreading in one-to-one sessions that contributes to the content or development of group sessions?

What can students learn from proofreading that might assist them in learning within a group?

Are there any other aspects of one-to-one proofreading practices that have implications for group learning?

Section E - Non-proofreading tools

IMPORTANT: ONLY answer this section if you do NOT do proofreading:

What are the major learning tools that you use in one-to-one sessions?

A:

Do you refer students elsewhere for proofreading? Where? Do they have to pay?

A:

What alternatives do you offer students so that YOU do not have to proofread their work?

A:

And Finally ...

Section F - Reflections on the survey (for all respondents)

Do you have any issues that you would like to raise about the methodology or content of this survey?

A:

Do you have any questions that you would like to be addressed at the presentation of the results of this survey?

A:

Thank you very much to all respondents for taking the time to contribute an understanding of the role of proofreading in our work!

If you've got this far, I take my hat off to you in appreciation!

Peter Spolc

1

_expressed as no. of advisers per 1,000 students.

2

'not available', or 'not applicable' .

A DAY IN THE LIFE ...

Marie Stevenson
Flexible Learning Centre
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ABSTRACT

The origin of this paper was a number of one-to-one academic support sessions which occurred on a particular day on a campus of the University of South Australia. The sessions were remarkable in that each student raised large, complex and often unsolvable issues. The study advisers concerned selected four of these sessions and began to analyse the issues raised. The first conclusion from this analysis was that the practice of one-to-one academic support sessions itself needs a thorough critique. A framework for undertaking this critique was needed and this led to a second conclusion. This conclusion was that the work of Michel Foucault could offer a suitable framework which would pivot on his ideas concerning power relations and their workings in educational institutions. An outline of his ideas on power relations and some of the ways in which they might be applied to the practice of academic support workers is given.

The genesis of this paper was on a particular day in the life of three study advisers at the University of South Australia mid-1996. On that day it seemed that every student who came for a one-to-one session raised large and complex issues. The study advisers selected four particular sessions from this day and began to identify and discuss the issues which the students raised or which were raised by questions that the students asked. After one colleague was transferred to another campus and the other had to take up another project I continued to ponder on these four sessions. (Details of the issues raised by the four students and the questions which were raised about them initially are contained in Appendix A) Two overall questions emerged. Are university disciplines like some kind of secret society where the successful student is the one who can crack the code and gain entry and if so, what is the function of those engaged in academic support? What kind of institution is it where issues such as these are raised in private interview with a staff member who may not have sufficient influence (either because they are one individual and/or because of their position in the institution) to bring about changes for the students? These questions led to my first conclusion and a second genesis of this paper.

That first conclusion is that the question posed for this conference, "What do we learn from teaching one-to-one that informs our work with large numbers?" is the wrong question. It is the wrong question because it is dependent on unexamined assumptions concerning the place of one-to-one teaching within the context of academic support in universities. One of the major assumptions underlying this question is that one-to-one teaching has a legitimate, permanent and unquestionable place in the practice of those engaged in academic support. It is important to take a critical stance in relation to all aspects of practice. If one to one teaching is important to the practice of academic support workers then it should not be exempt from critique. The questions which we need to ask, before we ask questions about the application of one-to-one teaching, are historical and functional questions such as:

- How did one-to-one teaching become part of the teaching practice of academic support workers? Why was it set in place as a teaching strategy?
- Why did it become a major part of the teaching practice of these workers?

and

- What is the use of one-to-one teaching?
 - What functions does it assure? (colleagues/institution?)
 - In what strategies is it integrated? (institutional/resistance?)
- (Foucault, 1977a:p136)

However, the posing of these questions leads to another set of issues which must be attended to first. These issues concern the framework within which the responses to the specific questions about one-to-one teaching can be formulated.

There is a set of ideas to which many of us would subscribe, about what power is and how it works in institutions such as our universities. These ideas include:

- that power is something that exists 'out there' and is concentrated at one central point, for example, in the state apparatus in society or in the position of the Vice-Chancellor within universities
- that the effects of power are effects of control, prohibition and even repression
- that if the distortive effects of power can be removed in any situation, 'truth' will emerge.

These ideas about power have been challenged in many of the works of Michel Foucault who developed a new concept which he termed 'power relations'. This concept of power relations can offer a framework for the analysis of one-to-one teaching within the practice of academic support workers.

Foucault talks and writes about an 'analytic of power' rather than a theory of power. He finds that difficulties emerge from the development of theories of power based on the assumption that power is substantive - a thing, and from the attempts made in these theories to be 'global', 'systematic' and to 'hold everything in place' (Foucault, 1977a:145). He argues that a more appropriate agenda is to 'analyse the specificity of mechanisms of power, to locate the connections and extensions and to build, little by little, a strategic knowledge' (emphasis added) (Foucault, 1977a:145). Similarly he argues that to see power as emanating from a given point is the result of misguided analysis and 'fails to account for a considerable number of phenomena' (Foucault, 1977b:198). Power should be construed as power relations or 'an open, more-or-less coordinated ... cluster of relations' (Foucault, 1977b:198). It is

a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action (Foucault, 1982:220)

Further he argues that to see power only as repressive or carrying the force of prohibition is inadequate in that it cannot grasp the productive aspects of power, those aspects whereby it 'induces pleasure', 'forms knowledge' and 'produces discourses' (Foucault, 1977c:119). He argues that it is because power can be productive that people respond to it; if it were solely repressive then people would not obey.

It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (Foucault, 1977c:119)

A theme which runs through one of his major works *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1975) is that there was a shift after the 17th and 18th centuries from the 'juridical and negative' type of power to the 'technical and positive' (Foucault, 1977c:119). The new procedures that developed allowed the effects of power to 'circulate in a manner at once continuous, uninterrupted, adapted and 'individualised' throughout the entire social body' (Foucault, 1977c:119) and the disciplinary technologies employed were correspondingly more subtle.

Rather than constructing truth as that which is concealed behind the distortive effects of power Foucault constructs truth as being part of power relations and itself inducing effects of power. He comments that

each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanics and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1977c:131)

So for Foucault truth is to be understood as:

a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements (Foucault, 1977c:133)

There are two aspects of Foucault's concept of power relations which seem to fit usefully into the analysis of the teaching practices of those working in academic support. First, is the idea of normalisation and how it relates to the creation of subjectivities, and second is the notion that professionals produce the knowledge they apply. Although I shall describe each briefly, there is only scope in this paper to begin to apply the idea of normalisation to the practice of academic support workers.

Foucault's work on the modern (post 17th/18th centuries) approach to insanity (*Madness and Civilisation* - originally published in 1961; first English translation in 1965) and to criminality (*Discipline and Punish* - originally published in 1975; first English translation in 1977) demonstrates how power relations operate as normalisation. To Foucault normalisation is a process which not only produces homogeneity but also, almost paradoxically, individualises and differentiates. Foucault sees normalisation as guarding a certain range. It has a tolerance to promote diversity but also constrains and contains the excessive, and the exceptional. Caputo and Yount (1993:6) explain this process in the following way

Far from abolishing the individual, power's strategy is to produce legions of adapted, ambient individuals to move easily through the manifold channels of modern social relations ... By wanting to know everything, all about childhood, the personal history, the fantasies of the patient/inmate/believer, the 'subject' is produced. And power produces its subjects in an unlimited, interminable subjectification, by exceedingly detailed personal dossiers, elaborate records of the individual life and personal history.

The strategy of normalisation is then to produce these adapted individuals or 'subjects'. (Incidentally, this idea is at the heart of Foucault's proclaimed reason for analysing the phenomena of power relations, which was 'to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects' (Foucault, 1982:208).) Foucault contains two notions of subject within his concept of subject, that of being subject to someone else by control and dependence, and that of being tied to one's own identity by self knowledge. He sums up that

this form of power applies itself to everyday life which categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him [sic]. (Foucault, 1982:212)

so that our aim becomes 'not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are' (Foucault, 1982:216).

Another aspect of Foucault's notion of power relations is that professionals create the knowledge they require in order to produce these functioning, normal individuals. The connection with power relations is perhaps more easily seen when it is pointed out that Foucault construes knowledge as power/knowledge, that is, that knowledge is something which is produced by power relations in order to spread more effectively. So, as Foucault has shown in *Madness and Civilisation* (1967), in the eighteenth century when the mad became the 'mentally ill' and were put in the hands of medical professionals these professionals began to produce a body of knowledge parallel to that of bodily illness (Caputo & Yount, 1993:7) Another example of professionals producing the knowledge they apply is given by Marshall (1990) who points out that work done by Valerie Walkerdine (1984) has a Foucauldian flavour. Walkerdine examined the developmental psychology of Piaget and argued that it became a set of scientifically legitimated practices whose object is the 'developing child' and which through surveillance, observation & classification normalise children but do not realise that the 'developing child is an object produced by these same practices (Marshall, 1990:12)

At this point it is possible to bring Foucault's notion of normalisation and the practice of academic support into closer conjunction. Foucault has not written any major works on educational systems as he has on the medico-judicial systems and mainly uses educational systems as exemplars in specific arguments. He describes educational systems as 'a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them' (Ball, 1990:3). That is, they control the access individuals have to different kinds of discourse and so maintain a

society's 'regime of truth'. Schmelzer (1993) applies this to the function of academics in universities. She sees universities/the academy as sustaining two main myths:

- the myth of the professor/academic as sovereign
- the myth of absolute truth

(Note that these myths correspond to the commonly held beliefs about power mentioned early in this paper). She interprets the actual function of academics as 'to preserve an embedded knowledge system and to encourage individual intellectual productivity' (1993:131). These contradictory functions are managed by normalisation. The networks of power 'define', 'confirm', 'support' and 'police' the truth claims of the institution.

Individuality is rewarded only within the limits of this norm ... qualities that, on the surface challenge the norm ... on closer observation, are fully determined by it. (1993:131)

So, academic support workers can be seen as key agents in the process of normalisation in academic institutions. The students with whom they work are typically those who fall outside the tolerance of the system, who are in some way 'excessive' or 'exceptional'. This equates to the sense of 'being different', 'being outside the system' which comes through each of the four sessions with students that are summarised in Appendix A. To say that academic support workers are key agents of normalisation is not necessarily to cast a negative judgement on us or our work. Foucault is describing the operations of power as he sees they have changed and evolved since the 17th and 18th centuries. Those operations can have positive or negative consequences. He argues that it is not a matter of removing the distortions that power produces to reveal truth but to separate truth from the hegemonic products of power relations. In his own words

It is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time' (Foucault, 1977c:133)

Agents of normalisation can also be agents of resistance, that is, they can alter perceptions of what is regarded as 'normal' and hence what is constructed as 'abnormal'. To Foucault, resistance like power is multiple and multi-layered. It is seen in strategies which antagonise power relations and identifying resistances can also enable us to identify power relations, their position, their point of application and the methods used (Foucault, 1982:211). In terms of academic support for example, many would recognise the example of the student who comes to ask how to construct a scientific report. In talking with the student it may be revealed that the student is finding it difficult to reproduce and combine the classificatory, descriptive qualities of the first parts of a scientific report with the expository qualities of the discussion section. How often do we respond to this as a gesture of resistance by the student; as a gesture of critique of a dominant discourse within universities? Are we not more likely to show the student 'how it is done'?

As part of their role as agents of normalisation within universities, academic support workers act as 'experts' practising therapeutic interventions. The students with whom they work are constructed, within the academic system, as having a pathology much as in the same way that this is interpreted in the medical and judicial systems. In fact, it is remarkable how the organisation of one-to-one sessions by academic support workers mimics the organisational strategies or disciplinary technologies that Foucault describes in the judicio-penal system in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). Foucault describe educational institutions generally as containing

a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differentiation marks of the 'value' of each person and the levels of knowledge) and by a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, pyramidal hierarchy) (Foucault, 1982:218-219)

In the medical, judicial and educational systems the disciplinary technology is directed at 'the body'. In each system the body of the individual is first enclosed - in a hospital, prison or university campus. Within these larger spaces there is partitioning into regular units. 'Each individual has a place and each place has its individual' (Foucault, 1975:143). In

universities these units of space are marked out on discipline lines as for example on the campus at which I work the students of Nursing, Physical Education and Art are grouped together in different buildings in different parts of the campus and tend to keep to those parts of the campus. The surveillance of the 'body' is organised largely in universities through the personal dossiers kept on students and through assessment procedures. One of the more subtle insights which Foucault offers is how, in this case students (and also academics) become self-surveillant.

He who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relations in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection [sic] (Foucault, 1975:202-203)

Disciplinary technology in medical, judicial and educational institutions also operates through the organisation of time. The day is organised into regular units of time and types of time (in universities first into non-contact and contact time and the contact time is further partitioned into lectures, tutorials, practicals etc of specific duration). In many, perhaps most universities, the academic support workers are located in spaces separate from those occupied by the students. If then, as the result of a surveillance strategy (failure of, or a poor grade in, an assignment or exam, referral by a staff member) a student makes an arrangement for a one-to-one session with an academic support worker, this session has to occur outside the space normally occupied by the students within the university and also outside the timetable normally followed by the student. In many academic support units additional dossiers are kept on students. These aspects of the organisation of one-to-one sessions reinforce the notion of these students as having a pathology and are particularly close at this level to organisational strategies in the medical profession.

The main ideas that I have tried to establish in this paper are twofold. First, if academic support workers are to analyse and critique their practice no aspect of that practice can be taken for granted. As Foucault says the starting point must be

that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practicing criticism is a matter of making facile gestures difficult (Foucault, 1981:155).

Second, the work of Foucault offers a framework which can be used to distance ourselves from our practice and that to approach the task using the Foucauldian concept of power relations enables us to track the specificity of the educational system and our part in it without trying to universalise but also without reducing the system to specific actors.

However in proposing this I am not unaware of the difficulties that Foucault can present. He offers no formula for critique and specifies no methodology. The closest we can get to a methodology is his notion of genealogy, where genealogy is

a form of history which can account for the constitution of the knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc. without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history (Foucault, 1977c:117),

that is, an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical context.

Moreover, it seems that in the literature the analysis of those who have taken one concept from Foucault, such as surveillance, and applied it narrowly to an educational or institutional context is not as rich as those which have attempted to maintain the connections between that specific concept and the larger fabric of Foucault's ideas (This can be seen by a comparison of the papers in the edited collections of Ball, 1990 and Caputo and Yount, 1993). Nor is the situation made easier by the fact that Foucault's ideas were organic and the works of the approximately twenty-three years of his publishing life, until his death in 1984, show a growth and dynamism not always seen in the products of intellectuals. However, these are not reasons for avoiding the task. At this stage in my study and understanding of Foucault's ideas and their possible application to my work practices my 'intuition' would be that if a Foucauldian critique could be conducted of the work of academic support workers within educational institutions and of the practice of conducting one-to-one sessions with students as part of that work, the one-to-one session would be disclosed as partially, perhaps predominantly hegemonic, that is, as functioning to protect the dominance of a particular kind of culture and cultural

practices within education. An alternative might be that academic support workers could position themselves within institutions and design their practice so that they more actively change perspectives on educational practice and draw attention to and challenge that cultural dominance.

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APPENDIX

Student A

Student A was a mature aged, Anglo-Australian female student enrolled in the first semester of a post graduate midwifery award. Her nursing qualification had been achieved some years previously through hospital based training. Her current enrolment was her first experience of learning in a university context.

Student A came to see a study adviser to discuss how to write a reflective journal which constituted a large percentage of the assessment for one subject. A fundamental issue for the student was the lack of clarity concerning what was expected especially in relation to the use of critical thinking and reflective writing. The student had these skills but did not know how to display them in a way that was acceptable in the university context. She recognized that there was a difference between the expectations of that context and her previous post secondary learning experiences but did not know how to respond.

A second issue which this student raised was related to the teaching process in her subject. The subject was designed so that there were 6 weeks of lectures and then 8 weeks of independent learning where students would have no significant contact with lecturers and other students and would concentrate on preparing a major assignment. The student was concerned about how to manage this type of independent learning. Her previous experience consisted of 'chalk and talk' sessions and rote memorisation for exams, a context which enabled constant student contact.

Questions raised

- What is critical thinking in the university context? What is its importance? Does it vary from discipline to discipline in either degree or kind? If it is important why is it not taught more explicitly?
- How can subjects be structured to draw on students' (especially post-grad, professional students) skills, experience and expertise rather than overwhelming them with feelings of inadequacy?
- Independent learning in an university context assumes experience as a student in that context. An independent adult does not automatically make an independent university learner.

Student B

Student B was a mature aged, Anglo-Australian female student enrolled in the first semester of an undergraduate education award with an adult and community education specialisation. Her opening statement on arriving to see a study adviser was:

'I come from a background which talks straight and people don't understand how academics talk'

She came to see a study adviser because she had tried to do the set reading but could not understand the 'academic speak' of most of them. She found she was spending hours reading and understanding very little. As a result she did not feel confident to speak up about the readings in tutorials or to refer to her work/life experiences as she could be considered dumb. This situation was exacerbated for her by the presence in her tutorial group of a dominant younger student who tended to ignore or talk over others' contributions and questions. As the session with Student B progressed she referred constantly to personal issues such as the attempts of her ex-husband to prevent her from studying which were also affecting her perception of herself as a student.

Questions raised

- As for Student A, the assumption by disciplines within universities that discipline specific discourses and discipline preferred thinking processes are accessible to students. How far removed the academic culture is from the cultures in which most students move.
- There seems to be a requirement that students separate their life from their learning at university with the then contradictory expectation that they will apply their learning to life. What is the role of students' prior experience especially in awards such as this which attract students with extensive professional and life experience? How can universities respond to what is happening in students' lives in such a way that learning is enhanced and not impeded?
- Teaching practice - managing group processes in tutorials.

Student C

Student C was a mature aged, female, Anglo-Australian student enrolled in the first semester of an undergraduate education award with a speciality in adult education and training. The student had a hearing impairment. Her first language had been AUSLAN and her second language English. She had difficulty in lip reading so that the session was conducted almost entirely via written notes. Student C was distressed and agitated when she came to see the study adviser. She was confused by the materials and information that she had been given * and could not understand her first assessment task.

(* the practice in some subjects at the Campus is that if the subject is offered by distance mode as well as internal mode, the distance materials for that subject are made available to the internal students. Although this can be helpful to internal students, the use of the materials when students are also attending lectures and tutorials can lead to confusion because the context of the internal and external students is different.)

Questions raised

- The study adviser had received no notice that the student was on the campus and what needs she might have in terms of learning support. The study adviser did not know that a hearing impaired student was coming to a 1:1 appointment so an interpreter had not been organised. This raises a range of issues to do with the needs of students with disabilities in the university context and especially their needs in relation to learning support.
- Issues as per Students A & B regarding the inexplicit expectations built into the university learning culture and the assumptions about students' prior learning experiences upon which these expectations are layered.
- Issues for hearing impaired students generally. As a group they have a diversity of language backgrounds as a result of factors such as the degree of hearing impairment; the age of the person when the impairment began; the language background of the person; the education history of the person; and whether or not the person is an active participant in Deaf culture.
- Teaching practice - the use of distance materials with internal students
- Teaching practice - teaching hearing impaired students; the role of interpreters and their needs and their knowledge of university learning and culture.

Student D

Student D was a male undergraduate, Anglo-Australian student who had entered university from school. He had been precluded from study at the University for the 2 previous years because of insufficient academic progress and was returning to continue an education award with a primary/junior primary speciality. This was the student's second visit to a study adviser in this semester. He had seen a study adviser before producing and submitting his first essay assignment. He explained that he had failed that assignment and had not applied any of the advice he had received from the study adviser he had worked with. When asked why he had not applied the work he had done with the study adviser he said that he could not be bothered because it was too hard and he thought he would probably fail the assignment anyway. He said also that he was having problems with his tutorial group as no one would talk to him in class and this has been a problem for him when he had studied previously and was one of the reasons he had failed. He had identified himself as having dyslexia on his registration card.

Questions raised

- Why did the student come back to a study adviser especially as he had not applied the work done with one before ?
- The student had sufficient motivation to return to university after the preclusion but seemed unable to push past the immediate tasks and problems that he was confronted with. What kind of strategy is he adopting ?
- Whose role is it to help students to reflect on/reasses directions and goals? In the current system there is no overview taken of student development; no mentoring. Whose role is it to help students assess and develop their interpersonal skill especially in disciplines which lead to occupations where there is a lot of interpersonal contact eg teaching and nursing?.

THE USE OF STUDENT ANNOTATIONS ON DRAFTS AND FINAL VERSIONS OF ASSIGNMENTS

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ABSTRACT

In one-on-one writing tutorials, both NNS and NS students often offer few initiatives in discussing their written work, or else make vague, general comments on their own work. Thus, when instructors try to help students to revise, it can be hard to avoid appropriating student work. One way to make teacher feedback more effective is to encourage students to analyse and articulate their strengths and concerns about a piece of writing by annotating their work before handing it in. These annotations can then be discussed in one-on-one writing conferences. The same technique can be applied to large writing classes. When teaching revision practices, teachers can ask students to make annotations, and then respond in writing. The student/teacher dialogue set up by the annotation process means that many of the students do not need to attend individual writing tutorials. For those students who do have one-on-one writing tutorials with their instructors, the discussion tends to be more student-centred because of the annotation process.

This paper presents a study of annotations made by NNS and NS university students on written assignments which were set in separate ESL and communication skills credit subjects. Data include copies of the assignments with annotations made by students, comments on the texts made by teachers before they read the students' annotations, and students' views about the annotation scheme.

In the data analysis both positive comments and expressions of concern by the two groups of students were categorised and compared. The areas of strengths and weaknesses identified by teachers before they read the students' annotations were compared with the areas identified by students in their annotations. Comparisons of teacher and student areas of comments show that while the writers and readers agree on some issues, teachers are sometimes unaware of items which were issues for student writers. In general, students found the process to be beneficial. Findings are relevant to writing instructors of both NS and NNS students, and give insights into ways in which classroom teaching can be individualised while also encouraging students to take responsibility for their revising and editing practices.

Although teacher feedback on students' written work has always been considered an integral part of the role of the teacher, the provision of such feedback is nevertheless a contentious area. Two broad issues can be identified in the debate on teacher feedback: The appropriacy of certain feedback comments and the viability of continuing to provide individualised comments.

With respect to appropriacy, some writers (e.g. Allwright, 1988) claim that traditional, corrective teacher feedback may in fact be detrimental because it may encourage a learner dependency on the teacher and discourage the learner from taking charge of their own editing. Reid (1995: 165) reports on such a dependency among her second language students when multiple-drafts were encouraged and notes:

... the more time I spend with students' drafts, the less time students spend on them. Once students see how interested I am in making suggestions to improve their drafting, they do their best to transfer all responsibility to me.

This growing dependency on the teacher is particularly of concern with NNS given research findings that NNSs do less reflection and revision than NS student writers (Silva, 1993).

A related concern is the danger of teacher appropriation of student texts, particularly in one-to-one consultations and multiple draft schemes. This is a concern which seems to have resurfaced recently in the literature on both NS and NNS writers (e.g. Zamel, 1985; Hall, 1995; Greenhalgh, 1992; Reid, 1994, 1995). Appropriation here refers to the possibility that the teacher's feedback comments inadvertently impose the teacher's notion of what the text should look like onto the students' texts. This in turn raises the question of students' voice, students' rights and teacher responsibility, especially with respect to student texts in-progress. This debate on appropriation thus adds weight to rethinking the nature of teacher feedback on the writing of all students.

Another important consideration in the discussion of teacher feedback relates to the viability of providing individualised extensive feedback to each student. In some large faculties at our University, for example, teacher feedback has often been reduced to a numerical system, where students are provided with numbers which correspond to standardised comments. In Language Support Centres teacher feedback is often given in both written and oral form in one-to-one consultations. Such consultations enable the teacher to tailor-make the feedback to the students' needs, elucidate points which are unclear and use the encounter for a teaching situation. However, despite the apparent advantages of such individualised attention, growing student numbers and the budgetary constraints on departments may mean that we will need to reassess how best to provide individualised attention to our students in both Learning Skills type centres as well as mainstream content classes.

One way the above issues can be addressed is via student annotations of their own writing. Annotations simply means getting the students to comment on their own work, either orally or in written form (or a combination of the two). Such comments can be positive or concerns. A number of revision - response techniques have been used with both NS and NNS writers and they go under various names, but the term 'student annotations' is used in this paper.

Annotations have several advantages in addressing issues involved in teacher response and student development as revisers. Firstly, students nominate items to which they want to direct their instructors' attention; areas which teachers may not have commented on without a student annotation. Secondly, because students are the initiators, it is hoped that they will pay more attention to teacher feedback than they do to teacher-initiated comments. Another advantage is that a dialogue may take place between the teacher and student about what the student feels are specific areas of concern (Charles, 1990). In addition, it is illuminating for students to isolate their own strengths and convey these perceptions to their teachers (Sommers, 1988).

This paper will illustrate how the scheme worked in two distinct situations: with NNS writers annotating their drafts of a major research essay in credit bearing ESL classes; and with NS writers annotating final versions of a report based on the students' own field research.

NNS ANNOTATIONS ON DRAFTS

The NNS students in this study came from two credit bearing subjects offered by the Centre for Communication Skills and ESL: Advanced English as a Second Language (AESL) 1 and 2. AESL 1 and 2 aim to develop and extend students' academic writing, reading, listening and speaking skills within content which deals with aspects of Australia's history, and the major legal, political and social structures. AESL 1 is offered to students of low intermediate - intermediate language proficiency whereas AESL 2 is offered to students who have gained an intermediate - advanced language proficiency.

Assessment in both AESL 1 and 2 is based on a number of oral and written tasks. Students are encouraged to annotate all their written work. The annotation scheme is explained to the students at the beginning of their course and examples of how students can annotate their writing are shown.

Data for this study is based on the draft of the students' major essay. In AESL 1, the students are required to write a descriptive essay of about 1000 words, in AESL 2, an argumentative essay of 1500 - 2000 words. The essay is worth 15% of the total grade in each subject. A choice of topics relating to the course content, together with suggested references, is given out. An example of an essay topic in AESL 2 is: "In a truly multicultural society, Aborigines should have the right to deal with offenders from their own communities in their own ways."

Students are required, as part of their assessment procedure, to hand in the first draft of their major assignment and meet the teacher for an individual consultation where the teacher discusses with the student how the draft could be improved.

Participants

Twenty-five AESL students annotated their drafts. Twelve students (from a total of 14) were from AESL 1; 13 (from a total of 15) were from AESL 2. The students came from a range of language backgrounds, including European and Asian languages, with the largest number (8) being Chinese speakers.

There were slightly fewer overseas students (11) than local NESB residents (14). Most of the students (16) have been here for less than 3 years. The students came from a range of disciplines (Arts, Law, Education, Agriculture, Architecture, Commerce) and most were undergraduates (20).

Procedure

In the week immediately before the first draft of the major assignment was due, I reminded the students about annotating their drafts. Students were given a handout which set out the annotation instructions (See Appendix 1) which required them to note not only areas of concern but also aspects or parts of their draft which they felt pleased about. Participation in the scheme was voluntary but strongly encouraged.

Students were asked to submit two copies of their draft : an annotated copy and an unmarked copy. Once all drafts were collected, I read and made comments on the unmarked copies. I then read students' annotations and wrote responses to the annotations as well as unsolicited comments on their annotated draft.

In the one-to-one consultations with the students, the students were given another opportunity to comment on either positive aspects of their essay or areas of concern. Students who had annotated were interviewed briefly for their reaction to the annotation process as well.

Analysis

The data for this study were the two sets of comments. The first set of data was students' annotations made in written form either on the draft or on the annotation sheet and/or oral comments made during the individual conference. The second set of data was the teacher comments on the unmarked draft.

The data were analysed in the first instance for the type of annotations made. That is, comments made by the students and teacher were grouped into categories and subcategories and coded as either positive comments or concerns. The coding scheme grouped the annotation for the following categories and subcategories.

Category	Sub-category
Content	quantity quality
Structure	parts of essay paragraphing coherence/organisation transitions/linking words global miscellaneous
Grammar/Expression	clarity of expression lexis grammar (global & specific) punctuation
Research	gathering information using information acknowledging information
Topic	
Global	

FIGURE 1. Categories and Sub-categories of Annotations

Once all annotations were coded, the second stage in the analysis involved a comparison of student and teacher comments (that is teacher comments on the unmarked copies) for the degree of agreement and disagreement between the two. A total of seven comparative categories were devised from the data.

A =	Agreement
D =	Disagreement
SA =	Some agreement
TC/NC =	Teacher noted concern, no student comment
SC/NC =	Student noted concern, no teacher comment
TS/NC =	Teacher noted strength, no student comment
SS/NC =	Student noted strength, no teacher comment

FIGURE 2. Categories comparing teacher initiated feedback and student annotations

The following examples taken from the data may make the above descriptive categories clearer.

A = Agreement

Student (AESL 2): "I should have mentioned counter part a bit more perhaps. But I was afraid that essay was going to be too long and too messy" {content -ve}

Teacher: "No counter arguments considered" {-ve}

Student (AESL 2): "I tried to take care of my vocabulary by trying not to repeat words but to use synonyms" {vocab, +ve}

Teacher: "Use of vocab is good. There is an obvious attempt to use a range of vocabulary..." {vocab, +ve}

D= Disagreement

Student (AESL 2): The introduction seems not on the right track and is it appropriate to use a case as a start? {Structure, -ve}

Teacher: A good, interesting introduction - contextualising the issues and a strong position statement" {Structure, +ve}

Student (AESL 2): "Because of time constraints I could not research much in the topic. I feel if I could have read more from other sources that I would have written a better essay" {References, -ve}

Teacher: "... consulted a good number of sources" {References, +ve}

SA= Some agreement

The following examples show some agreement, that is, where the teacher and student agreed on the category or subcategory but were not in full agreement on the extent of the concern or the exact nature of the problem.

Student (AESL 1): "Conclusion is not strong enough, the link between sentences should be improved" {Structure, -ve}

Teacher: "Conclusion needs improvement - making more generalised statements rather than repeating details."

Student (AESL 1): "In some places my choosing of article is not correct. I mean I have some mistakes in choosing the, a, an...also where to choose present perfect and past perfect continuous"

Teacher: "A large number of grammatical errors in verb tense/aspect choice, word form, word order, articles and prepositions"

SC/NC = Student noted concern, no teacher comment

SS/NC = Student noted strength, no teacher comment

The following are examples where the student noted areas of concern or strength which however were not noted in the teacher initiated feedback (they did however receive a response on the student draft).

Student (AESL 2): "Are my ideas for and against balanced?" {content, -ve}

Student (AESL 1): "[I] explored the period of the convicts and understood it." {global, +ve}

Results

1. Student annotations

The 25 students made a total of 230 annotations. The number of annotations per student ranged from 2 to 29, with most students making about 5 - 8 annotations on average on their drafts.

Table 1. Frequency of annotations by NNSs

Category & sub-category	Positive	Concern	Total
Content			
quantity	5	5	
quality	8	20	
	13	25	38
Structure			
parts of essay	8	15	
paragraphing	1	1	
coherence/organisation	1	7	
transitions	-	5	
global	7	2	
miscellaneous	1	-	
	18	30	48
Grammar/Expression			
clarity of expression	-	4	
lexis	5	24	
grammar (global & specific)	-	49	
punctuation	-	8	
	5	85	90
Research			
Gathering information	6	4	
Using information	2	8	
Acknowledging information	2	12	
	10	24	34
Topic	5	2	7
Global	7	7	14
TOTAL	58	172	230

Table 1 shows the frequency of annotations by the NNS students in the categories and sub-categories of annotations. As the table shows, there were consistently more expressions of concern (172) than positive comments (58) across all categories and subcategories of annotations. The area which elicited the most concerns and least positive comments is 'grammar/expression', not surprisingly given that the students are writing in their second language. Students seemed particularly concerned about the use of specific grammatical structures, known as problematic to NNS writers, such as: articles, prepositions and verb tense choice. There were slightly more concerns about essay structure (30), particularly about the introduction and conclusion parts, than about content of the essay and research skills, although structure was also an area which elicited the most positive comments (18). Quality of arguments presented was also an area which elicited a relatively large number of concerns (20).

2. Comparing student and teacher comments

As mentioned earlier, the second stage of the analysis involved a comparison of teacher initiated comments and student annotations for the degree of agreement or otherwise between them. Table 2 summarises these results, comparing areas of agreement and categories of annotations.

TABLE 2. Comparing areas of agreement for NNSs and teacher

Code	Content	Structure	Grammar/Ex press	Research	Topic	Global	Total
A	10	11	13	16	-	-	50
D	7	6	-	5	-	-	18
SA	4	11	8	3	-	-	26
TC/NC	33	35	30	33	-	-	131
TS/NC	19	22	5	13	-	1	60
SC/NC	9	8	8	11	-	2	39
SS/NC	4	5	3	3	5	3	23

Table 2 shows that total agreement between the students and teacher occurred in 50 instances in the data. It seemed to occur more frequently when both the teacher and students expressed concern rather than on positive comments. There were fewer instances of total disagreements (18) distributed evenly among the three categories of content, structure and research. Some agreement occurred mainly in the category of structure, where the student was not always aware of the full extent of the concern or in the area of grammar/expression, again where the student was not fully aware of the range and frequency of grammatical and lexical (typing/spelling) errors committed.

Given the opening comments about the integral role of the teacher in providing feedback on written assignments, particularly on early drafts of assignments, it is not surprising that the largest category was teacher concern/no student comment and teacher strength/no student comment. In our role as teachers, particularly in the context of working with second language writers, we try to encourage our students as writers by providing positive as well as negative comments. These negative comments, offering students advice on how they need to improve their drafts, were made in all categories.

The categories which related to student concerns and strengths but where there was no corresponding teacher comment were interesting. On a closer analysis they seemed to relate to the students' level of language proficiency. When in fact I looked at all these descriptive categories more closely and at whether they came from AESL 1 students (the lower proficiency students) or AESL 2 students (the higher proficiency students) an interesting pattern emerged. Table 3 shows how these categories of agreement were distributed among AESL 1 and 2 students.

TABLE 3. Comparing categories of agreement for AESL 1 & 2

Code	AESL 1	AESL 2	Total
A	24	26	50
D	9	9	18
SA	13	13	26
TC/NC	63	68	131
TS/NC	22	38	60
SC/NC	11	28	39
SS/NC	16	7	23

What the table shows is that in the first 4 categories - agreement, disagreement, some agreement and teacher concern/no student comment - there were approximately an equal distribution among AESL 1 and AESL 2 students. For example,

of the total of 50 agreements, 26 came from AESL 2, 24 from AESL 1; for disagreement and some agreement, the comments were evenly distributed, and there were slightly more TC/NC for AESL 2 students (68) than AESL 1 students (63).

However, among the disagreements, most (8 out of 9) of the disagreements in the AESL 1 data arose as a result of teacher concerns contradicting the students' perceived positive comment, whereas in the case of AESL 2 data, the reverse was the case. Of the nine disagreements, seven arose from teacher positive comments contradicting students' concerns.

Furthermore, when we looked at the next three categories - TS/NC; SC/NC and SS/NC - the pattern became clearer. There were more teacher noted strengths for AESL 2 students (38) which had no corresponding student comments. There were also more student concerns among AESL 2 students (28) than AESL 1 students (11) and fewer students noted areas of strengths among AESL 2 students (7) than AESL 1 students (16). Thus what the data seemed to indicate is that the more language proficient students, i.e. AESL 2 students, were harsher in their judgments/self evaluations of their drafts.

NS ANNOTATIONS ON FINAL VERSIONS

Intermediate Communication Skills is an elective subject designed for students in 1st and 2nd year from any faculty (although some upper year students also take it). The content of the subject covers the principles and practice of electronic, graphic, oral and written communication, with a focus on transferring skills into the workplace. There are several written and oral assignments, involving group and individual work.

The data presented in this paper come from student annotations on the final version of a report. Students had to report on a one-day workplace visit to a volunteer host. The content of the report consisted of the analysis of information gathered by student observations and conversations or interviews with their hosts. Important aspects of the report were the organisation, analysis and evaluation of the information gathered. In addition, since this was a final version, layout and expression were important. The report was worth 20% of the total grade for the subject.

Participants

Fifteen students annotated their reports (out of a total enrolment of 23). There were 4 male and 11 female participants, who came from a variety of Faculties: 9 from Arts; and 6 from Science or Engineering. Nine were first year students, 3 were in 2nd year and 3 in 3rd year.

Procedure

The annotation scheme was explained to the class shortly before the report was due. A simple annotation sheet was distributed, and it was made clear that annotations were voluntary. Procedure was similar to that for the AESL class, with students submitting clean copies and annotated copies of the reports. However, there were no mandatory conferences or drafts.

Results

1. Student annotations

The 15 students made 136 annotations, ranging from 1 to 22 per student. Table 4 shows the frequency of these annotations in the categories and sub-categories. The categories of annotations by NSs were slightly different from those of the NNSs. Format/layout was not a feature of NNS student comments, but was important for the NSs who were submitting final versions of a formal report. Also, there were no annotations by NSs on the Topic (which did appear in the NNS findings).

The category with the largest number of annotations was Grammar/Expression (57 or 42% of all annotations), which were nearly all concerns (only 3 positives). This is similar to the pattern for NNSs. Clarity of expression and lexis were the main sub-categories of concerns. This was not surprising, since this was the final version, and in teaching I had stressed the importance of accuracy of expression for workplace communication.

The next most frequent areas of annotations were Content and Structure of the reports. Content accounted for 21% of annotations, with 10 positive annotations out of the 28 for Content. Annotations on report structure amounted to 20% of all annotations and were mostly concerns. It was a challenge for students to organise information and decide on major sections of the report, and since the hosts, workplaces and visits were very different, a standardised report format had not been taught.

TABLE 4. Frequency of annotations by NSs

Category	Positive	Concern	Total
Content			
quantity	-	4	4
quality	10	14	24
	10	18	28
Structure			
parts of report	6	12	18
paragraphing	1	-	1
coherence/org	-	2	2
transitions	-	6	6
	7	20	27
Grammar/ Expression			
clarity of exp.	1	32	33
lexis	2	20	22
grammar	-	2	2
punctuation	-	-	-
	3	54	57
Format/layout	3	6	9
Research	-	4	4
Global	5	6	11
TOTAL	28 (21%)	108 (79%)	136

2. Comparing student and teacher comments

Analysis of agreement between student annotations and teacher comments was carried out in same way as for the NNSs. Below, some examples are given of NS student annotations and teacher comments to show types of agreement.

Agreement

Student: Good summary

((student brackets entire paragraph which explains how the Merit Protection Board members organise a typical week's work))

Teacher: Good observations of the way the Board went about its work and the means of communication between the Board members and their clients.

Disagreement

Student: I like the way I've drawn my observations together in this section, avoiding delving into unnecessary detail ((annotation on last paragraph of report))

Teacher: I wanted a little more in the conclusion to get back to the day-at-work angle

Some agreement

Student: Upon reading this copy, I realised that there were a few changes which I should have made, but did not notice on the computer screen ((student had made some proofreading corrections on items of expression, but had missed several others))

Teacher concern/no student comment

Teacher: You needed a better statement of the purpose of the report

Student concern/no teacher comment

Student: Is this too specific for a report? ((student indicates specific information))

In Table 5 the frequencies for various types of agreement for NS students and teacher comments are shown. Total agreement is the most frequent type of agreement between NS students and the teacher. Teacher comments (TC/NC) and student annotations (SC/NC) about items on which the other party made no comments are also fairly common.

TABLE 5. Comparing areas of agreement for NSs.

Code	Content	Structure	Expression	Other	Total
A	17	14	8	-	39
D	4	3	3	1	11
SA	1	-	4	-	5
TC/NC	9	9	4	-	22
SC/NC	8	3	6	2	19
SS/NC	-	3	2		5

An analysis was also carried out of the grades awarded on the reports and types of agreement, as a way of seeing if annotations by stronger or weaker writers agreed more or less with teacher comments. There were 3 students with percentage grades in the 90s; 6 in the 80s; and 6 in the 70s (with a range of 97 - 72%). The analysis showed that agreement was well distributed across all grades. There was a tendency for TC/NC to occur with lower grade students and for SC/NC to occur with higher grade students. This finding is in agreement with the findings for the NNS students: namely, that AESL 2 students (with more advanced language skills) made more and harsher annotations about their own work.

Discussion

1. Categories and sub-categories of student annotations

In reviewing the categories of student perceptions of their strengths and concerns, an interesting question is how much the categories of annotations reflect what was taught, and what was not taught. Certainly, student annotations can be very useful for teacher reflection on teaching. Annotations also serve as guides for teachers when commenting about strengths and weaknesses on both drafts or on final versions of student work.

2. Teacher/student agreement

The amount of agreement found between student and teacher comments seems reasonable, although the implications are not clear. We sense that "agreement is good" -- that is, students and teacher agree on much of what is good or doubtful in a written text. We also feel that too many teacher comments which do not intersect with student comments show too wide a gap between teacher expectations and student perceptions. However, too much agreement may not be very useful, since one of the major benefits of an annotation scheme is that students may comment about items which teachers do not notice, or do not know are bothersome to students.

Also, it is the teacher's responsibility to comment on items which students are not aware of (hence the relatively large numbers of teacher comments on items which the students do not comment upon).

3. Student feedback

Feedback from interviews with student annotators has been positive. Students praised the fact that they got feedback on their areas of concern, and the NNSs particularly appreciated having the teacher respond to their perceived strengths. A number of students mentioned the fact that the system promotes a dialogue between the teacher and the student. Both NNSs and NSs mentioned that the scheme forced them to re-read their drafts, which they did not normally do.

Some NNS students found it difficult to locate and articulate their areas of concern. Among NSs, some noted that if they were able to locate errors, then they could correct them, and so did not need to make annotations. Such comments show that students sometimes misunderstand what sorts of annotations can be made. In contrast, there were students who used the annotation scheme to make comments about issues which they could not possibly have included in the text itself (for example, NSs mentioned problems of authorial or participant/observer stance in writing up their reports).

It was also interesting that the NS student with highest grade liked using annotations because she could save time by not worrying too much about a specific issue, but simply cover it in an annotation and then receive teacher feedback. There was a similar attitude expressed by the NESB student who was awarded 90% on the essay, and made the largest number of annotations (29). Perhaps we could call this a high-level type of dependency!

4. Individual patterns

There were some discernable patterns in individual student uses of annotations, eg proofreaders; students who focussed on only one area of writing (eg content only, or expression only); and the over-anxious very competent student writers.

Implications

This research project was small-scale and involves many variables. For example, how serious were the participants about annotating? Were they doing it to please the teacher, or did they really use the opportunity to institute a dialogue with the teachers?

Other issues arise: if the annotation scheme is as useful as we think it is, then what of the students who choose not to annotate? There are several paths for further research - notably, does the annotating process contribute to better student revision? We plan to pursue some of these issues in a new research project.

However, at this point, we need to point out the relevance of this research for the theme of this conference. Getting students to use annotations is a way of finding out what is important to students as writers of specific texts. This means that teachers can respond to student-initiated perceptions and concerns (in addition to teacher-initiated comments), and thus teacher feedback may be more efficient in reaching the student writer.

Annotation schemes can be used for one-on-one tutorials, for large group teaching, for peer-responses to student texts, by writing and study skills instructors, and by content teachers. When annotation schemes are used, one-on-one meetings may be shorter, because often student annotations have already raised and even clarified items of concern. For teachers of large groups, if students use annotation schemes, individual conferences can be cut out except for the most needy students. Finally, in cases where teachers hardly ever meet individually with students to discuss written work, then an annotation scheme is a way for student and teacher to replace some of the benefits of individual face-to-face discussion with a written personal dialogue about student texts.

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APPENDIX

Annotation Sheet

Please submit two copies of your assignment.

On one copy, please make annotations according to the following suggestions:

1. Which parts or aspects of this piece of writing are you pleased with?
Please say why you think this.
2. Which parts or aspects of this writing do you think still need attention?
Please say why you think this.

You can write comments in the margins or anywhere else on one of the copies of your assignment, and also on this annotation sheet.

These annotations help me to respond to aspects of your writing which you identify as important or of concern. I will also give you feedback on aspects of your writing which I notice, but which you might not have commented on.

TRANSFERRING CONTROL OF LEARNING - A COMPUTER-AIDED STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

Current practices for assisting individual students with their language and academic skills include giving corrective feedback on grammar and style in academic writing. One of the challenges for teachers in providing such assistance is to determine useful ways of using the individual consultation as a springboard for the student's further independent learning. This paper considers a computer-aided strategy that language teachers can introduce to students to direct their independent learning of grammatical and stylistic features in academic writing. It also explores ways in which the computer-aided strategy might be used outside the 1:1 consultation to assist a larger number of students.

To provide the corrective feedback and independent learning strategy training, accessible facilitative computer software is used in two separate stages. In the first stage, the teacher uses Microsoft Word's revision facility to provide comprehensive "in-text" corrective feedback on a section of the student's writing. Control of the learning is transferred to the student in the second stage - a simple *concordancer* is used as a tool for focusing on self-selected linguistic and stylistic features in an accumulating corpus of the student's corrected texts. This computer-aided approach introduces the student to an independent strategy for 'discovery learning', and aims to facilitate the consolidation and transfer of learning to other writing tasks. It is likely to have enhanced motivational value for the student due to the factors of ownership and relevance of the written resource.

INTRODUCTION

Most language and academic skills staff would agree that serious problems at the structural or discourse level of a student's writing need to be addressed before other problems relating to surface level grammar and style. Most would also agree that, inevitably, on reaching the final draft stage, it is common practice in a 1:1 consultation to spend some time with a student providing corrective feedback on surface error in an attempt to facilitate the learning of new patterns in the language (Clerehan and Moody, 1996). Due to the time consuming nature of this activity and other language support priorities, we need to be confident that the time spent providing corrective feedback on writing is quality time spent. Our objective should be to provide the minimum of instruction for the maximum return in terms of facilitating consolidation and transfer of learning to other writing tasks. In other words, we should aim to use the corrective feedback (and thus the individual consultation) as a springboard for extended learning. One way to achieve this is to equip students with strategies which facilitate extended independent learning from the corrective feedback provided. The concordancer is a tool which can be used for this purpose. Its major attribute is its power to make visible to the eye those linguistic patterns that are not readily discernible from continuous text (Kerr 1992:2; Tribble 1990:11). Concordancing has been used in classroom teaching in recent years with great success as a research tool for both teachers and students to explore regularities in patterns of language usage (Garton 1996; Ilse 1991; Johns 1986, 1988, 1991a, 1991b; 1996; Levy 1990; Mparutsa, Love & Morrison 1991; Pickard, Chan & Tibbetts 1994; Somogyi 1996; Stevens 1991a, 1991b, 1995; Tribble 1990; Tribble & Jones 1990). It is my view that if students are encouraged and trained to use a concordancer independently for exploring their individual language problems as highlighted by corrective feedback, the instructional value of the feedback will be maximised.

This paper presents a computer-assisted approach to error treatment - a 'corrective feedback - discovery learning' approach which involves the learner in exploring corrective feedback with the aid of a concordancer. Following a detailed description of the approach, different contexts for its use are explored. This discussion includes, not only the 1:1 context, but also other contexts including small group grammar workshops. Further discussion considers how various factors including different learning styles and motivation impact on the effectiveness of this computer-assisted 'discovery learning' approach; and conversely, how the approach impacts on individual learners. Discussion of the approach and related issues are based on my own recent teaching practice and case study research.

RATIONALE FOR THE COMPUTER-ASSISTED APPROACH TO ERROR TREATMENT

Development of the idea

The perceived need for an efficient system for error treatment arose as a result of my own and others' experiences in teaching. Based on this experience, it seems that the potential value of corrective feedback on students' writing is hindered by three major factors: the time-consuming nature of providing corrective feedback; the absence of systematic approaches available to teachers for providing the feedback; and the inadequate attention students are inclined to give to the feedback.

For maximum efficiency and to address the needs of both teachers and students, a comprehensive and systematic approach to error treatment is required. Such an approach, in my view, needs to include i) providing the student with clear and consistent corrective feedback on writing; ii) encouraging the student's independent learning strategies for focusing on the corrective feedback; and iii) consulting with the student to give further feedback in response to observations made or questions raised following an independent focus on the corrective feedback.

The advantages of computers in terms of their accuracy in data processing and efficiency in reducing unauthentic labour encouraged my search for a computer-assisted approach to error treatment. The idea for a computer-assisted approach developed from a personal interest and subsequent research into the potential applications of accessible computer software for facilitating language learning. In recent times, the ability of word-processing software to manipulate text has been used in a variety of ways to facilitate learning (Hall 1991; Johns 1986, 1991a; Neu & Scarcella 1991; Newton 1991; Schcolnik 1987; Stevens 1991a, 1991b; Tribble & Jones 1990). Two applications which have inspired my own research are: (i) the use of the word-processor to provide language learners with 'in-text' feedback on their written work (Newton 1991); and (ii) the use of concordancers to provide language learners with sets of authentic examples of text which can help them to understand the correct sense of how a word is used. (See, for example, Johns (1991a), Stevens (1991a), Tribble and Jones (1990).)

Selection of Tools for the Approach

The search for an efficient means of providing corrective feedback on students' written work led to my discovery of *Microsoft Word's revision facility*. This word-processing feature appeared to provide a useful alternative to handwritten corrections. The clarity of the 'in-text' corrective feedback is one obvious advantage, but even more appealing is the freedom to insert unlimited feedback without restrictions on space (See Figure 1). The issue of 'consistency' in corrective feedback is not as easy to address as the issue of 'clarity'. Although both factors are largely reliant on human input, it would appear that, whereas 'clarity' can be improved by the computer-assisted mode, 'consistency' is totally reliant on the human factor.

In addition, the importance of attitudes is explicitly expressed **(WHERE? BY WHOM?) relating to directly to in respect to their direct relationship with language shift and maintenance.**

Figure 1. In-text corrective feedback using Word's Revision facility

The method of corrective feedback adopted in this computer-assisted approach is 'total correction' (or reformulation) of a small section (approximately 100 - 150 words) of the student's writing. In practice, this means that all errors relating to grammar, lexical choice and academic style in the selected section are addressed. There are good reasons for adopting the 'total correction' approach. Firstly, it's possible to give comprehensive feedback on matters of grammar and style in a consistent but practical way in terms of time constraints. Secondly, the student can be assured that "faulty linguistic structures" have not been overlooked. According to Lalande (1982:140) "unless all errors are identified, faulty linguistic structures, rather than the correct ones, may become ingrained in the student's interlanguage system". Thirdly, the "total correction" stage is an important and necessary element of the computer-assisted error treatment approach as, during the second stage, the student's reformulated texts become a learning resource for independent learning. Total correction of the texts ensures their accuracy and appropriacy as learning resources.

While the benefits of 'total correction' within a computer-assisted approach to corrective feedback are considerable, it is also recognised that excessive corrective feedback has been known to produce a negative affective response in some learners (Krashen 1982). Clearly, the 'total correction' method of providing corrective feedback should be used with

sensitivity. It is one method which will suit some learners but not others. Therefore, the choice regarding preferred type of corrective feedback should be given to the learner at the outset. In the case of the proposed computer-assisted approach to error treatment, the learner can be made aware that the 'total correction' stage facilitates a second stage of independent learning where the instructional value of total correction is maximised.

Microsoft Word's revision facility is the tool that has been selected for use in the proposed approach to error treatment. It not only facilitates provision of clear 'in-text' feedback, but also allows the teacher to provide feedback in two formats: i) a text in which both the error and the correction are highlighted, and ii) a fully reformulated text with no corrections shown. The particular advantage of the second format is that reformulated texts can easily be converted into a suitable format for use with a concordancer. This feature provides a convenient and time-saving means for building a corpus of learners' own corrected texts for the second stage of the error treatment - the independent learning stage.

For the independent learning stage of the error treatment, I explored the potential of training students to use a simple 'no-cost' concordancer as a tool for accessing their corrected texts and for focusing on features of the corrective feedback. The manner of its operation is to search text files and generate a keyword in context (KWIC) concordance, ie, a list of all occurrences of a selected language item, each in a one-line authentic textual environment and centred on the page. (A wider contextual environment is possible with more sophisticated concordancers). A reduced example of a KWIC concordance on the verb ending *-ed*, generated from a corpus of one student's corrected texts, is illustrated in Figure 2.

1. esent world. This book, entitled "Multilingualism", attempts to outline
2. anguage varieties which resulted from the contact of the language communi
3. his chapter. It should be noted that language competition and conflict d
4. ', 'beautiful' or 'harsh'. Based on such language attitudes, popular attit
5. These attitudes are associated with styles, accents and dialects and ar
6. nts and dialects and are linked to the nature of social stratification.
7. nguages themselves but are based upon the social connotations within spec
8. ttitudes is explicitly expressed (WHERE? BY WHOM?) in respect to their di

Figure 2. Concordance for '-ed'

Based on corrective feedback received, the student was interested in investigating the use of the passive construction *are associated with* (reformulated from **associating with*). On examining the concordance output (reduced for this paper), she remarked on the greater number of present tense passive forms and past participles compared to past tense verb forms. Although there were no further occurrences of the phrase *are associated with* in this particular corpus of texts, the data available was able to reveal other valuable information for the student. Her observation led to a discussion of the prevalence and purpose of present tense usage in academic writing. To pursue her investigation of the usage, *are associated with*, the student then conducted a search using the search term *with*. This enabled the observation of other examples of verbs followed by *with*. The student's use of the concordancer, as outlined in this example, illustrates how the student was able to make observations about language use which were not apparent to her before studying the concordance output.

Initially, the simple Freeware concordancer XCONCORD was selected for use in the independent learning stage. Later, an upgraded and more useful version of the program XCONC2¹ was used. The new version accepts spaces as characters and therefore allows for more specific searching. This simple concordancer was selected on the basis of its accessibility (from the Internet), no cost factor and compatibility with an IBM platform².

The Value of Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback (otherwise known as *negative feedback*, *negative evidence* or *negative data*) is a pedagogical term used in second language teaching/learning to refer to the practice of providing external information to the L2 learning student regarding unacceptable or deviant forms in L2 output, in order to draw attention to such errors (Schachter 1991:89).

A great deal of research has been devoted to corrective feedback since the early 1970's, both in respect to oral and written errors. With regard to the role of correction of written errors, some researchers have suggested that corrections do not have a significant effect on student errors and that teachers should adopt less time-consuming efforts to direct students' attention to surface error (Robb, Ross & Shortreed 1986). On the other hand, a common belief among

advocates of corrective feedback (Lalande 1982; Carroll and Swain 1993) is that failure to progress in language proficiency is the result of inadequate or insufficient corrective feedback.

Recent research suggests that corrective feedback may indeed have a significant effect on student errors. It is possible that the corrective feedback triggers change in the acquisition system by drawing the learner's attention to the form of the utterance (Gass 1991; Schachter 1991, Carroll et al 1992 and Carroll & Swain 1993). Other research investigating the *consciousness-raising* role of grammar instruction also lends support to the facilitative role of corrective feedback (Pienemann 1985; Rutherford & Sharwood Smith 1985; Lightbown 1985; Harley 1989 cited in Ellis 1994; Schmidt 1990; White et al 1991; Ellis 1994).

With regard to the relationship between grammar instruction and second language acquisition (SLA), Ellis (1994) in his review of SLA research formulated a 'selective attention hypothesis' which suggests that formal instruction facilitates SLA by 'helping learners to notice a new feature in the input'. Gass (1991) points to the similarity between the functions of corrective feedback and grammar instruction in language learning. She claims that error correction, like grammar instruction, is a 'selective attention device' which provides 'a means of alerting learners to the mismatch between their learner language form and the target language form by focussing attention on those specific forms' (Gass 1991:140).

Presumably, those of us who engage in the practice of providing corrective feedback on surface error support the view that corrective feedback is a form of instruction which has the potential to facilitate language learning.

The Value of Concordancing as a Tool for Independent Learning

Applications for concordancing in language teaching and learning

A decade of research and use of concordancing has uncovered a powerful investigational tool which has been reported to have a number of useful applications in language teaching and learning. In tertiary English for Specific Purposes programs, its applications include course design (Flowerdew 1993; Ma 1993 cited in Pickard 1994), materials development and teacher-guided and student independent language learning (Ilse 1991; Johns 1991b, 1996; Levy 1990; Mparutsa, Love and Morrison 1991; Stevens 1991a; Tribble 1991; Tribble and Jones 1990; Wong, Cheung and Ching 1992). In addition to the use of concordancing in tertiary settings, benefits of its use for language learning and teaching in a secondary school setting (Pickard 1994) and in an E.L.I.C.O.S. centre (Somogyi 1996) have been reported.

The contribution concordancing makes to language learning in each of these applications is "in supplying, on demand and in an organised fashion, masses and masses of authentic language" (Higgins 1991 cited in Stevens 1995:8). Of particular interest for the purposes of this paper is the way in which students can manipulate and analyse concordanced data, and the gains they receive from doing so. Many specific suggestions for concordance investigations can be found in the references above. A list of some of these is given below.

Vocabulary

unfamiliar expressions

- collocations
- idiomatic expressions
- special terminology

Grammar

- the use of articles and determiners
- noun pre and post-modification
- tense
- gerunds and present participles
- past participles
- conjunctions
- modal verbs; bare infinitives; passive infinitives
- order of adverbs (search: -ly; auxiliaries and modals)
- the use of sentence conjuncts
- behaviour of transitive verbs
- thematic structure of texts (search: full-stops)

Three major benefits of concordancing in language learning are i) authenticity of the text, purpose and activity; ii) students' increased responsibility for their own learning; and iii) the potential for self-discovery of underlying linguistic patterns in the data. (Stevens 1995:2; Johns 1988).

The strategy of searching for patterns in the language represents an 'inductive learning' or 'discovery learning' approach. With access to a concordancer, students can investigate the facts of language usage to form their own hypotheses about language rules and patterns. Investigations may be based on either "what interests them or what they feel they need to find out" (Pickard 1994:306). Johns (1988:14) explains that a learner is like a researcher, who, after testing, rejecting or refining hypotheses based on the evidence of the data, finally integrates them within an overall model. Murison-Bowie (1993 cited in Somogyi 1996:30) describes 'discovery learning' in terms of a 'bottom-up approach'. The student selects a language point for investigation. Then, through a series of inductive steps s/he tries to discover patterns in the language by focusing on, observing and classifying salient features of the selected language point in its different linguistic environments. Finally, the student tries to generalise rules for future use of the language item in other writing tasks.

It is this application of concordancing for student independent language learning that forms an integral part of the proposed computer-assisted model for error treatment.

The benefits of concordancing students' corrected texts

The computer-assisted approach to error treatment employs an innovative use of the concordancer. After studying the corrective feedback provided on a piece of writing, the final version of the written text is added to an accumulating corpus of student texts. The student then uses the concordancer to explore problematic language features based on the corrective feedback.

Three benefits of using concordancing in conjunction with students' own corrected texts have been identified. Firstly, the beneficial aspect of authenticity is further enhanced because student-owned texts in the concordance corpus are certain to contain highly relevant content for the student's independent 'discovery learning'. Secondly, it is likely that the immediate relevance of using student-owned texts in the corpus will lead to enhanced motivation for implementing independent learning strategies. A third benefit of concordancing students' corrected texts is that it provides the student with added stimuli which encourages extended investigative strategies. For example, the student can investigate both the linguistic item used incorrectly or inappropriately and the corrected form provided. In addition, the corrective feedback enables the student to make cognitive comparisons between environments where a language feature was used correctly in the original text and environments where it was not.

Johns (1991b:2) describes the investigation and discovery of patternings in language use as "data-driven learning" (DDL). Rutherford (1987 cited in Johns 1991b:3) supports the view that this type of "data driven learning is a new style of grammatical consciousness-raising". It is my view that extended focusing strategies of the type described above may lead to even higher levels of language awareness.

The following section provides a model and description of the proposed computer-assisted approach to corrective feedback and independent learning.

THE COMPUTER-ASSISTED APPROACH TO CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Stages in the Approach

Providing Computer-Assisted Corrective Feedback

After the final draft stage, and after self-editing, the student submits an electronic copy of a piece of writing. The teacher uses the 'Revisions' facility in Microsoft Word (Ver. 6) to reformulate a section of the text (100-150 words) while proof-reading for errors of grammar and style. This may be with the student present or absent at the time. (The ideal situation is when the student is present and involved in the correction process.)

After reformulating a section of text, two printouts are generated and given to the student:

- 1) a copy with the *corrections showing*
- 2) a copy of the *final version*

Encouraging Computer-Assisted Independent Learning Strategies

The student is advised to:

- 1) read the *final version* to check that the intended meaning has not been changed.
- 2) read the copy with *corrections showing* to study the errors in grammar and style.
- 3) select specific features of language use for computer-assisted independent study.

The *final version* of a section of writing is converted to a text file for use with the Freeware simple concordancer XCONC2. A copy of both the text file and XCONC2 are given to the student for use in the independent learning stage. (Subsequent final versions of corrected texts form an accumulating corpus of the student's own work to be used as a resource for the concordance work. If individual student texts are added to a corpus of other discipline-specific student texts and expert texts, a larger and richer resource of language can be accessed at the independent study stage.)

The independent learning stage involves an initial 1½ hour introductory tutorial to demonstrate to the student how to best use the concordancer for further investigation of correct and appropriate use of language. The tutorial includes:

- 1) an explanation of the purpose of concordancing work
- 2) a demonstration of how to conduct searches for selected language items from the corrected text.
- 3) advice in selecting appropriate search terms which will provide useful data to investigate particular aspects of language usage.
- 4) advice in analysing the concordance data for underlying patterns of language use.

Finally, the introductory tutorial is supplemented with a written summary of instructions and general strategies for using the concordancer and analysing the concordance output.

After the initial introductory tutorial, continuing guidance on concordancing strategies is provided until the student feels confident enough to conduct independent investigations. The degree of guidance may range from simply suggesting appropriate search terms to more intensive guidance such as providing printouts of specific searches with questions to guide the analysis (See Appendix A).

Conferencing with the Student

Following a tutorial in concordance use and after the student has conducted independent concordance work, a follow-up consultation is arranged to discuss the student's observations and any questions triggered from the corrective feedback or the concordance output.

A discussion of the above stages in practice, together with examples of concordance data, is presented in the next section of the paper.

IMPLEMENTING THE COMPUTER-ASSISTED APPROACH

The computer-assisted approach to error treatment described in the previous section derives from observations and lessons learned from my own recent case study research and teaching practice. The following discussion gives details of this research and teaching practice and highlights some of the problems and concerns that have been taken into account in the development of the computer-assisted approach. Other possible applications for the approach are also considered in the discussion.

Case Study Research

The case study research was conducted over a period of 7 months and involved two NESB (non-English speaking background) postgraduate students. One, a female Japanese student (Participant A), was undertaking a coursework Master's degree in Applied Japanese Linguistics. The other, a male Indonesian student (Participant B) was undertaking a coursework Master's degree in Public Policy and Management. The main aim of the research was to determine whether the computer-assisted approach would assist learners in focusing on and learning from corrective feedback on grammatical and stylistic features in their academic writing. This research trialed a slightly different version of the proposed computer-assisted approach to error treatment compared to that described above. Firstly, because the research aimed to explore the potential value of using corrected student texts as a resource for concordance work, the corpus for text analysis comprised only the individual student's corrected texts. Secondly, these texts were longer (approx. 500 words) than the length recommended above to enable the accumulation of a reasonable sized corpus in as short a time as possible. The third difference was that continued guidance on concordancing strategies was not provided after the initial 1½ hour introductory tutorial because the purpose of the study was to determine whether concordancing work could be undertaken independently by the students with a minimum of training provided.

The specific issues investigated in the research were:

- 1) the students' ability to use computer technology independently
- 2) the appropriacy of the students' research strategies for investigating and analysing concordance data
- 3) the students' attitudes regarding the usefulness of the computer-assisted approach to corrective feedback and independent learning.

Originally, it was intended that five academic texts from each of the participants would be used in trialing the computer-assisted approach. However, delays in receiving texts have meant that only four texts from each participant could be used. (The fourth text has just recently been received from Participant B and is yet to be corrected). The concordancing stage of the approach was not introduced to the participants until the second text had been corrected. As well as building up the corpus for concordance work, this enabled a gradual introduction of the two separate computer-assisted stages of the approach. Essentially, this means that at the time of writing this paper, Participant A has used concordancing for independent language learning on three occasions and Participant B on two occasions.

Competency with computer technology

After some initial problems with manipulating the technology, *Participant A* was able to operate the concordance program without too much difficulty. However, other more general computing operations, such as file conversion, created major problems in the first instance for this student. *Participant B*, on the other hand, did not have any difficulties with the technical aspects of operating the concordancer or working with text files.

Research Strategies

Participant A, in a summative evaluation of the computer-assisted approach to error treatment, reported a progressive development of useful search strategies for concordance work. She admits that on first being introduced to the program, she "was not sure in which way it would be useful". After reading through the information on concordancing and becoming familiar with using the program independently, she began to develop her own systematic strategies for investigating patterns of usage in the concordance output. For example, she explains that "at first, I just searched for the words which were corrected. But [now] I search for both the corrected words and the words which I originally employed in order to make sure the patterns of their usage." She believes that the corrective feedback and concordance work "have different roles" in language learning. She explains that "studying revised work is for mainly to identify what kind of errors or mistakes you made. Using a concordancer is for find out rules and memorizing academic expressions". The concordance illustrated earlier in Figure 2 is the output from one investigation which this participant undertook. Other of her significant observations from concordance output are described below.

Figure 3 shows one of the first independent searches conducted by this student using a corpus of two corrected texts. Her aim was to investigate the different functions of *that* following a sentence reformulation which introduced the

expression reports that, of these, ... (eg. 2). From the concordance output (reduced version), the student observed both regular and irregular environments for the conjunction *that*. Firstly, she identified and classified the regular environments where a reporting verb was followed by *that* plus the content of the report (1,3,6,8). Then, she observed the unusual structure where *of these* (2) is inserted between the reporting verb and the content of the report. Finally, after checking the full context from the corrective feedback, she was able to classify as a quite different structure the example (7) *the most disappointing aspect of the National Policy on Languages is that ...*

1. Dawkins writes that approximately one million Australian a
2. tasks in Australia. He reports that, of these, about 700,000 people are
3. icient ESL support. He claims that "proficiency in English is central to
4. However, despite the fact that economic and social development is e
5. racy policy, it should be noted that such development in Australia, specif
6. It can be said that the most disappointing aspect with re
7. National Policy on Languages is that even though the principles of multicu
8. literacy policy, it is thought that further developments will unfold in
9. ge learning, it should be noted that all Australians need to understand th

Figure 3. Concordance for "that" (Participant A)

Figure 4 represents a small part of the concordance output for the word *the* following a search on two of the student's corrected texts. While the student was unable to discover any particular rules of usage from the data, she was able to make some interesting observations, nonetheless. Based on the reformulation of **in a sense that to in the sense that* (4), the student identified and classified expressions such as *in the world* (1), *in the sense that* (4), *the same* (5), and *the importance of* (6) as idiomatic expressions which always use *the*. While this is not always true of the word *world*, (consider *a world of her own* or *worlds apart*), it does seem to be true of the other expressions observed. In effect, the student has classified these expressions according to perceived similarities in their usage. Further additions and refinements to the student's classification of 'idiomatic' expressions (or formulaic chunks) are likely to take place with further opportunities to analyse language data.

1. he association of languages in the world with regard to multilingualism.
2. WHAT YOU MEAN?). Chapter 4 of the book, 'Language in Conflict', specifi
3. a crucial point in relation to the concept of multilingualism in the sens
4. concept of multilingualism in the sense that non- dominant languages obta
5. non- dominant languages obtain the same status as dominant languages. In
6. inant languages. In addition, the importance of attitudes is explicitly
7. ng his multilinguistic view to the phenomena of language spread and decl
8. Edwards does not move beyond the matter of linguistic hierarchies, spec
9. vestigated and the features of the language contact phenomena of each of
10. ity languages are reported for the lexical, semantic, syntactic, phonolog
11. considerably small and most of the Japanese residents in Australia are so
12. portant Japanese community for the nation of Australia does exist (Dawkin
13. ote a better understanding of the nature of Japanese people/society?. I

Figure 4. Concordance for "the" (Participant A)

Another of Participant A's searches which led to an interesting observation for her was on the word *for* (See Figure 5). An error in the use of *since* instead of *for* (in example 5) prompted this investigation. On exploring the data, the student was able to identify and classify two separate functions of *for*. In example 5 "it functions as an expression of length of the time" and in the other examples it "functions to express some reasons of the actions" (purpose).

1. enomenon and a great necessity for the majority of people in the present
2. tudes towards those varieties. For example, they may perceive them to be '
3. anguage shift and maintenance. For example, Baker states that attitudes t
4. a fundamental promoting factor for language in a multilingual corpus.
5. the post-World-War, but also for the past 20 decades or so, Australia h
6. ommunity languages are reported for the lexical, semantic, syntactic, phon
7. ly important Japanese community for the nation of Australia does exist (Da
8. and comprehensive explanations for undiscovered and concealed aspects of
9. interest in Japanese culture. For this reason, in this paper, some featur

Figure 5. Concordance on "for" (Participant A)

The last example for discussion involves Participant A's use of the concordancer to investigate the difference between *however* and *nevertheless* (See Figure 6). This investigation followed corrective feedback (in example 9) which suggests *nevertheless* as an alternative word to vary the academic style. As only one example of *nevertheless* is present in the data, the scope for observations of patterning is restricted. Despite this, the student concluded "I think my intention to express the meaning is rather different [in the case of the other examples]". Clearly, a knowledge of the wider context is necessary with investigations such as this one to ascertain the intended meaning. Although this can be done by referring to the corrected text, a concordancer with a facility for providing wider contexts would be more convenient when investigating discourse level language items of various kinds.

1. s framework of "transference". However, Clyne (1991) emphasises the necess
2. Clyne, and Pauwels 1995: 30). However, a substantial and economically impo
3. 993). [IS THIS WHAT YOU MEAN? However, these studies were not thorough in
4. ekiguchi 1993; Nakayama 1993). However, they did not thoroughly examined t
5. transfers (Kinder 1984: 142). However, Kinder points out that these featur
6. However, despite the fact that economic and
7. However, at this stage, instead of expandi
8. els of language (Clyne 1991). However, Clyne emphasises the necessity of f
9. Clyne, and Pauwels 1995:30). However (OR NEVERTHELESS) a substantial and

Figure 6. Concordance on "however" (Participant A)

Unlike Participant A, Participant B had no success in using the concordancer for language learning. He found concordanced data confusing. In his words, "it provides data, but you don't know what to do with it". He could not justify spending time using it because he felt that it was ineffective. When using the concordancer independently for the first time, he spent about 10 minutes observing data on the screen without generating printout. He expressed a preference for explanations of language usage (ie, deductive learning where rules are provided rather than inductive learning where language is analysed and hypotheses about the rules of the language are formulated). The student appears to lack motivation to use the program because of his inexperience with an unfamiliar learning style.

Although the student spent more time (approximately an hour) using the concordancer on a second occasion, he reported that he was unable to observe from concordance printouts any language patterns that were not clear to him beforehand. He reported further that the concordance printouts did not trigger any specific questions about irregular patterns of usage. Any questions about usage arose from the corrective feedback itself. (To date, the student has used the concordancer independently only on two occasions.)

The student's negative comments about the effectiveness of concordancing are understandable if we consider three particular examples of his concordanced output. The first point to be made is that the participant saved and printed out the concordance output without changing the format in the way instructed to generate an aligned KWIC concordance. This appeared to be more an oversight or lack of attention to the procedural details than any difficulty in manipulating the technology. The result of this oversight meant that the concordancer's principal attribute of highlighting patterns in the data was not being exploited. Figure 7 shows a small section of the student's concordance of the definite article *the*. This search term was chosen because the student would like to have a better understanding of when *the* is required and when it should be omitted. Clearly, in this case, the concordanced data, without central alignment of the key word, is of no more use in highlighting underlying patterns in the data than unconcordanced continuous text.

1. country which stands on law, so the development process in Indonesia sho
2. ee ultimate laws that are used as the basic principles in the Indonesian p
3. used as the basic principles in the Indonesian political system. These
4. These three principle laws at the superstructure level which guide poli
5. itical life in Indonesia are : (1) The basic constitution of Republic Indonesi

Figure 7. Concordance for "the" (Participant B)

The second problem with this student's concordance use was in selecting appropriate search terms and text files to generate enough data for a productive analysis to take place. For example, in Figure 8, Participant B has selected the phrase *political institution*, in order to gain a better understanding of word order in nominal groups. In the corrective

feedback, the phrase **formal existing political institutions* was reformulated as shown in example 1, *existing formal political institutions*. Unsurprisingly, the data generated by the concordance was unable to provide other examples of nominal groups which might shed light on the correct word order of *formal* and *existing* in such contexts.

1. realised through existing formal political institutions and be guided
2. is channelled through the formal political institution.
3. in Indonesia, there are 3 formal political institutions: PDI, PPP

Figure 8. Concordance for "political institution" (Participant B)

In a third concordance which investigated usage of the word *because* (Figure 9), the student was unable to make any observations about the different patterning exemplified in three quite different environments. This investigation was conducted further to two sentence reformulations in a corrected text which involved the word *because* (1,2). If the student's search strategy had involved a search on all three text files available in the corpus at the time, rather than just one, the concordance output would have included additional data as shown in 1. and 2. of Figure 10. (The use of *because* in these examples also arose from reformulations of the text). Although the data is still limited, it does introduce yet another environment for the use of *because*. The student might have benefited from this data had he compared the different environments and attempted to group similar and different patterns of use, and had the search term been centrally aligned. While the context provided does allow for certain inquiries related to patterns of use, there is no doubt that a larger context is needed if the purpose of the investigation is to explore the particular structural patterns of clausal linking and the clausal relationships denoted by the conjunction *because*.

1. certain rules of the game' is because a collective consensus requires a s
2. will go to other parties. Because voting is compulsory in Indonesia, i
3. erate this type of behaviour, because it is not in line with the existin

Figure 9. Concordance for "because" (Participant B)

1. te ? [IS THIS WHAT YOU MEAN? (Because of "dedication to Australian societ
2. a guilty party". Why? Is it because of an internal party management fau
3. certain rules of the game' is because a collective consensus requires a s
4. will go to other parties. Because voting is compulsory in Indonesia, i
5. erate this type of behaviour, because it is not in line with the existin

Figure 10. Concordance for "because" (larger corpus)

The above discussion of the three concordances generated by Participant B indicates that this student was not familiar enough with concordancing strategies to maximise the full potential of using a concordancer as a tool for language learning. His comments "Maybe my weakness is I'm not really familiar enough with the concordancer" and "I think it takes time to learn to use the concordancer" indicate that this was indeed the case.

Student attitudes towards the computer-assisted approach to error treatment

Computer-assisted corrective feedback

Both participants in the case study commented on the clarity of the "in-text" feedback and were "happy" with the "total correction" approach to different degrees. Participant A explained her positive attitude toward the correction, "I prefer all errors to be corrected otherwise there is no way of knowing whether other errors have been made... I can reflect on my own English usage and see my weakness". She found "total correction" useful for learning "natural expressions". Also of value to her were the "in-text" comments querying and checking meaning. While Participant B preferred to have all errors corrected because "it is a more polished product", he did not feel as comfortable about the corrections as Participant A. He commented on a negative affect, "It makes me think that my English is weak". As more

reformulation was necessary with Participant B's text compared to Participant A's, it is possible that the extended amount of total correction was a little overwhelming for him. Perhaps, corrective feedback on a smaller section of text would have been more face-saving as well as manageable in terms of directing the focus for the independent learning stage.

Computer-assisted independent learning

There is no doubt that using highly relevant authentic texts (in this case, students' own corrected texts) as a language resource is a good starting point for motivating a learner. For some students, "hands-on" concordancing work, providing the opportunity to actively participate in the learning process, is also highly motivational (Somogyi 1996:30). Whereas this was indeed the case for Participant A, who became increasingly more motivated and enthusiastic about using the combined corrective feedback/concordancing system for language learning, the same cannot be said of Participant B.

This study has shown that the appeal of concordance work for individual learners may vary. For Participant B, the inductive learning approach was an unfamiliar learning style which, without ample preparatory training in using text analysis strategies, was discarded as ineffective. Without sufficient background knowledge about concordancing techniques, the student was not motivated to spend time using the concordancer. Concordancing techniques require some familiarity with using inductive research skills to analyse raw data. Johns (1991:31), Stevens (1991a:39) and Tribble and Jones (1990:58) suggest that providing learners with preliminary concordance-based activities is one way to stimulate the inductive learning strategies of perceiving similarities and differences and hypothesis testing. Stevens (1991a:41) provides a step by step guide on how students can be taught to run exploratory concordances on their own.

Participant A, although unsure of the concordancer's potential when it was first introduced, soon realised that she could use it as a tool "to find patterns of usage systematically". This student seemed very comfortable with independent inquiry strategies and as a result conducted many productive searches with the concordancer. No doubt, her metalinguistic competence helped her to gain linguistic insights from the data. It was also useful for discussing these insights during the conference sessions. When asked about the most useful aspect of concordancing, Participant A explained "I can obtain list of the words immediately after I searched and try to find some patterns". She found the concordancer useful for investigating (in order of priority) the use of new expressions, appropriate academic style and grammar. For this student, the two stages of independent learning (ie, studying the corrective feedback and using the concordancer) made different contributions to her learning. She described the different roles each has. "Studying revised work is for mainly to identify what kind of errors or mistakes you made. Using a concordancer is for find out rules and memorizing academic expressions."

Participant A's use of concordancing provided evidence that concordancing can be used as an independent strategy for maximising the instructional value of corrective feedback. Her experience in using concordancing for independent language learning led her to comment that she would like to use this strategy for exploring language usage, not only in her other proofread work, but also in expert texts. She is even considering the purchase of a scanner for this purpose!

The concordancer's limitations

Both participants reported that for some searches the concordance output from their own corrected texts was insufficient for identifying patterns of language usage, as new expressions and words were limited. Another problem reported by both participants was the restriction of a one line context. For some investigations, for example, the use of the definite article and sentence connectors, a wider context is necessary. Although it is possible to refer to the corrected text, this is inconvenient and becomes even more inconvenient as the number of texts accumulates in the corpus.

Conferencing after corrective feedback and concordancing

According to Participant A, language learning is assisted by the corrections and concordance work alone, but, when possible, "a conference will help [even] more".

The conference gives students the opportunity to ask questions triggered from the corrective feedback or concordance work. For Participant B, who expressed a preference for explanations of language usage, the conference was the most useful aspect of the error treatment approach.

Refining the computer-assisted approach to error treatment - other teaching practice

On using the computer-assisted approach to error treatment in my normal teaching practice, I was able to address some of the concerns raised from the case study research. In a series of 1:1 consultations with a male Hong Kong Chinese student enrolled in a Graduate Diploma of Digital Systems, a slightly different approach to the stages of corrective feedback and concordancing was taken. A shorter section of text (approx. 100 words) was selected for the error treatment. The correction was jointly negotiated by the student and teacher while viewing the text on the computer screen. This was considered preferable to providing corrective feedback without input from the student as it is commonly agreed that "self-repair is more conducive to acquisition than other-repair as it is less likely to result in a negative affective response" (Van Lier 1988 cited in Ellis 1994:586).

The same student has recently been introduced to concordance work. When introducing the student to this second stage of error treatment, I decided to adopt a gradual approach. Thus, the introductory demonstration tutorial was followed up with concordancing worksheets to familiarise the student with appropriate strategies for conducting searches and analysing the output. An example worksheet designed to introduce the student to text analysis strategies is illustrated in Appendix A. For this activity, additional discipline-specific student texts were included in the corpus to ensure sufficient examples in the concordance output. A selection of the examples generated were then used for the purposes of the exercise. The aim of the activity was to focus the learner's attention on verb forms following modals. The student was confusing active and passive verb forms and was unsure about adverb placement. In the original text, the student's errors included **can done*; **can posted*; **also can get*.

Part 1 of the exercise introduced the student to the category of verb forms used after a modal. Part 2 introduces a second category of extended verb forms with other regular components. Part 3 stimulates the inductive strategy of identifying similarities and differences of patterns in the data. Part 4 encourages the student to hypothesise about rules for using the different patterns of usage. Similar worksheets were prepared for the modals *may, will, could, should, would*) to demonstrate the regularity of verb patterning and adverb placement after modals. With guidance, the student was able to discover rules of language usage relating to modal verbs, active and passive bare infinitives, and order of adverbs with modals. I have found that these activities are a useful means of introducing the student to ideas for formulating productive queries and for analysing the data. They also serve to sharpen the metalinguistic skills needed to think about and discuss patterns of language usage.

A further application for the combined corrective feedback/concordancing approach to error treatment is the small group grammar class. I have been experimenting with various concordancing exercises as follow up activities to error analysis work. Deciding to tackle some problems with definite article use, I presented the group with some examples of definite article use and zero article use. Following a revision session on the concepts of "definite", "specific" and "generic", the students were asked to complete a series of exercises developed from concordances of student texts. By editing the text file with a word processor to show examples of zero article use, as well as definite article use, it was possible to present a concordance showing both types of usage. From these concordances the students worked together to explain and classify the different examples according to the "definite" "specific" "generic" criteria. The level of difficulty of these exercises increased as the students became more accustomed to the concordance format and the different uses of the definite article. The first four of six introductory exercises are presented in Appendix B.

Apart from the case study research, my additional experimental work in the 1:1 consultation and grammar class contexts is very recent and has not progressed to the stage where students begin to conduct their own independent concordance work. It is, therefore, not clear at this stage how effective the transfer of inductive learning strategies to independent concordance work will be for these students. However, according to Stevens (1991a:46)

even students with little computer experience and/or with discerning patterns in raw data can, with proper guidance, be successfully introduced to concordancing and thus started on the road to using concordance tools to explore a target language for purposes of their own.

Options for Concordance Use

In the discussion above, I have suggested that the combined corrective feedback and concordancing approach can be used in 1:1 consultations and in small group grammar workshops. This idea of a combined approach, however, need not necessarily be confined to teacher-student instructional settings. Any student who has received 'total corrective feedback' on a final draft from any source (friend or professional) can be encouraged to use concordancing strategies to gain maximum value from the corrected work. One way to promote extended independent learning from corrective feedback may be through student access centres. This could be facilitated by making available prepared guides for concordancing together with worksheets promoting the development of appropriate 'discovery learning' strategies.

CONCLUSION

From my research and teaching practice, I have concluded that a combined corrective feedback/concordancing approach to error treatment is an effective way to maximise the instructional value of the corrective feedback. The case study research provided evidence that concordancing can be an accessible, motivating and effective tool for independent learning. It also highlighted the importance of adequate training for learners who are unfamiliar with the type of inductive research skills required for analysing the raw data of concordance output.

The computer-assisted approach has shown its potential for adaptation to a variety of contexts. Preliminary experimentation has indicated a place for the approach in 1:1 situations and in the grammar classroom. Potential independent learning contexts include the self-access centre or the student's own home.

ENDNOTES

1. Nic Witton, Macquarie University, Sydney designed this non-commercial concordancer to accommodate teachers on a tight budget who wanted to experiment with concordancing before investing in more sophisticated software. It is freely available to anyone wishing to use it: (<<ftp://ftp.mq.edu.au/home/nwitton/concordancing/english>>).
2. Freeware concordancers for Apple Macintosh computers are also available from the Internet at <<ftp://archive.latrobe.edu.au/pub/CELIA/english/mac>>.
0. This document stands in its own right and is based on work done for a research project which is to be submitted as part of an M.A. (Applied Linguistics) at Monash University.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Use of modal *can* + bare infinitive

----- A:\TEXTS_JW\STUD_JW3.TXT
communications. Nowadays, computers can do everything in our living environment. For instance, they can receive TV signals, decode video signals from the Internet, since messages can be posted to the world in a short time. This means that underaged children can also get access to a lot of sexual information.

----- A:\TEXTS_JW\COMPTXT1.TXT
with such a facility, the programmer can define an instruction such as PUSH which reduces. This series of operations can be placed in a file and the quoting of executes? From these examples it can be seen that a programmer must be aware of GET (or PUT) but GET and PUT can be regarded as co-routines. To differentiate the repeated instructions can be placed in a subroutine and that subroutine (PL/I) There is nothing that can be done by recursion which cannot also be expressed somewhat differently, it can be stated that: the program is completely sequenced. It can be readily appreciated that the procedure up, the user's working environment can be reaccessed by the re-entrant procedure.

Exercise 1

1. From the examples above, note that the form of the verb that follows the word *can* is a bare infinitive (infinitive without *to*), eg. *can do*.
2. Note that in most of the examples the verb after *can* is *be* and that this is followed by another verb form. Can you identify this other verb form?
3. How many examples of bare infinitives, other than *be*, can you find following the word *can*? Are these also followed by another verb form?
4. Can you explain the functions of the two different patterns?

Appendix B

Use And Non-Use Of The Article In Concordanced Examples

The following examples are taken from students' writing and have been generated by means of a concordancer. (It is a feature of the concordancer to provide one-line examples of a selected key word in context. It is also common for the first and/or final word of the line to be truncated, ie, incomplete. Rather than ignore this feature, try to guess from the context what these truncated words might be).

Exercise 1

The articles between the X's were incorrectly inserted in the original draft. Why should there be 0 article in these examples?

replacement cost because most X of the X companies prefer to replace an asset
figures are not very useful for X the X decision- making whereas net market v

Exercise 2

In the original draft, the writer omitted the article 'the' from the following examples. Why is the article necessary?

these three accounting methods , the CCA system presents the most relevant
ined very easily. This is unlike the net market value system where any gain

Exercise 3

Study the following examples and explain why the article 'the' is not required.

ng else. Since the early '80s, X the X people have worked on data communica
faster. If you want to transfer X the X a file from one site to X the X ano
nsfer a file from one site to X the X another site , in the early '80s yo
nication . In the future when X the X better and faster cable technology
is developed, then we will get X the X even faster data communication.

Exercise 4

Study the following examples and explain why the article 'the' is required.

. The data communication speed in the '80s was around 280 bps , in the 90s
the '80s was around 280 bps , in the 90s it was 14 kbps and in the mid 90s
in the 90s it was 14 kbps and in the mid 90s it was 28.8 kbps, that is, 28
ite to X the X another site , in the early '80s you needed 10 minutes but n
logy was that slow is because, in the early days, telecommunications mainl
y. Telecommunication technology in the early days was not designed to be u

IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING IN PHYSICS—A COTTAGE INDUSTRY?

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ABSTRACT

In Health Sciences it is increasingly the case that enrolling students have had little or no previous introduction to the basic concepts and skills in physics and chemistry which are assumed prior knowledge in many of the physical science service courses. Then, lectures in these subjects, no matter how impeccably delivered, tend to result in a variety of qualitative understandings of the material among students. Indeed, recent research has shown that physical science concepts can be understood by students in a variety of ways, these ways differing not only amongst themselves but also differing from the accepted scientific view. The high level of tolerance of students, particularly younger students, towards *not* understanding exacerbates the problem.

The value of informal one-to-one discussion in which the student can talk through physics problems with the teacher is that it restores the ambience of the classroom where such basic knowledge used to be taught and reinforced, very successfully. It also provides opportunities for the teacher to explore student understanding, the better to present lecture material in ways which can assist students to develop the accepted scientific view of these basic concepts. Students who encounter teaching, both formal and informal, which encourages them to improve their qualitative understanding and then rewards their efforts by providing a style of assessment which allows them to demonstrate their mastery, are less likely to be content with a superficial acquaintance with the subject. They are then better placed to benefit later from the attentions of the clinical staff whose teaching assumes a confident grasp of key concepts and principles as a basis for clinical practice.

INTRODUCTION

Student competence in problem-solving activities in physics has been a focus in educational research for many years. A diversity of research approaches into the examination of the nature of the difficulties students experience with problem-solving is evident in the literature, for example student approaches to problem solving (Chi, Feltovich & Glaser, 1981), and Helm (1980) on misconceptions. Clement (1981) reported that students who are adept at using mathematical equations in the solution of physics problems are not necessarily able to demonstrate understanding of the underlying physics concepts, nor provide a physical interpretation of the solution. This discontinuity has also been noted among physics graduates (Lindner & Erickson, 1989). Other research (Driver, 1989, Rosenquist & McDermott, 1987, and McDermott, 1991) including alternative conceptions research, has shown that students understand scientific concepts and principles in a number of distinct ways which themselves may differ from the accepted scientific understanding.

The purpose of this paper is to report, briefly, on the results of a research project into student understanding in the discipline of physics (see, for example, Bowden *et al.* 1992, Dall'Alba *et al.* 1993, Walsh *et al.* 1993, Walsh *et al.* 1995). The research approach used, phenomenography, provides very powerful insights into student understanding of learning content (Marton, 1986, Bowden & Walsh, 1984). Phenomenography focusses on the relation between the learner and his or her conception of some phenomenon of interest, not just with the learner undergoing this experience nor solely with the phenomenon itself; for this reason it has been described as a "second-order perspective". Learning, in this view, is seen as a change in the learner's conception of the world, so that the task of the research is to examine the learner's experiences of phenomena, rather than to propose an internal mechanism which determines what and how he or she learns. The results of the research, phenomenographic descriptions, are based on ways of understanding particular phenomena and are therefore qualitative. This does not, however, limit phenomenographic investigations to the exploration of qualitative content. Quantitative phenomena may equally usefully be investigated phenomenographically and the results provide qualitative descriptions of how quantitative content is understood. The

value of a phenomenographic study is that it is able not only to reveal differences in understanding among students, through a detailed mapping of those differences, but also to explore the nature of those differences. By making explicit the relationships between different understandings, phenomenography is distinguished from other research approaches, for example alternative conceptions research.

The implications of the results of this research for teaching practice are profound and point to the need for a re-assessment of the role of the teacher, particularly in the teaching of fundamental concepts and principles. The research further indicates a need to recognize the relational nature of learning and the importance of teaching for conceptual change, that is, teaching so as to encourage students to change their understanding towards the accepted scientific view. In the light of this, teaching practices, science curricula, the use of textbooks, and methods of assessing understanding of scientific concepts all require thoughtful re-examination. At a time of continuing resource constraints these concerns may not merit a high priority. But teachers, especially those giving service courses, nevertheless need to consider these questions. The requirement is to equip students with sufficient background knowledge to enable them to succeed in their chosen profession. The further intention of this paper is to show how one aspect, teaching of fundamental concepts and principles in physics, is being addressed, in the light of the implications for practice of the results of phenomenographic research.

(It should be noted that, while the phenomenographic approach has proved to be fruitful in the exploration of students' understanding of concepts and principles in science, it is by no means confined to the science content area. Phenomenographic studies have been undertaken in other single subject areas, including economics (Dahlgren, 1984), history (Hounsell, 1984), mathematics (Marton & Neuman, 1990), business administration (Sandberg, 1991) and literary texts (Marton et al, 1992). Studies which relate to general aspects of learning include conceptions of academic learning, conceptions of understanding, conceptions of learning among pre-schoolers, and conceptions of teaching in higher education. Other studies have focussed on conceptions of political power (Theman, 1983) and patients' conceptions of side-effects of drugs (Dahlgren & Fallsberg, 1991)).

THE PHYSICS PROJECT

A full description of the rationale and research methodology used in the Physics Project is available in the literature (see for example Walsh, Dall'Alba, and Bowden, 1995). Briefly, the research team designed a number of questions in kinematics which were then put to physics students from Year 11 and 12 and first year university and discussed by students in phenomenographic interviews. The data then was analyzed phenomenographically to arrive at categories of description (see below). In the context of this paper however, there are three points which should be elaborated a little further. They concern the initiation of the Project, the style of the phenomenographic interview, and the way in which the results of the phenomenographic analysis are presented.

(a) The Project was commenced as a result of observations of student academic performance within several teaching departments of a large, prestigious metropolitan university. Students entering the university did so as a result of high performance in competitive examinations at the end of secondary school. But in later years of study in undergraduate courses students' academic achievement was substantially lower than it was reasonable to expect, given the superior examination performance in the relevant subjects prior to entry.

Further investigation showed that even those students performing well in first year assessment did not necessarily understand the concepts they were manipulating in problem-solving activities (Ramsden et al., 1987). This was particularly true of physics students. These findings are usually to be expected where methods of assessment, intentionally or otherwise, are directed towards displaying mastery of the capacity to reproduce information, formulae and procedures. Development of understanding of underlying concepts and principles is not encouraged by such a style of assessment and students are able to pass despite limited or inaccurate understandings of key concepts and principles.

The aim of the Project was to investigate students' qualitative understanding in one field of physics, namely kinematics, and to make the results of the research available to secondary and tertiary teachers. In this way a framework can be provided for teachers in which they may make decisions about the range of their students' understanding in the discipline, and the need for further instruction.

(b) The style of the phenomenographic interview is non-directive, comprised of open-ended questions. The interview has a focus which is the way in which the student understands the chosen concept, and this way of

understanding is pursued throughout the interview. The particular follow-up questions put to the student depend on the way of understanding. Interviewers use non-directive questioning, and encourage students to express their qualitative understanding of the concept under investigation. It is important that the student is free to choose and order the aspects of the question which is being discussed, and thereby choose the way in which the question is answered. The purpose of the research is to arrive at the different ways in which the concept under investigation is understood, and so the focus is always on the content of student understanding, not on the ability of the student to solve problems. The questions are designed in such a way that the student would normally be able to arrive at a solution to the problem (which may or may not be the accepted scientific answer).

During the phenomenographic interview, the student usually chooses to discuss aspects of the problem which are seen as important to the solution. The interviewer may ask the student to clarify what has been said, and ask for further explanation of the meaning displayed using questions such as "Could you explain that further?", "What do you mean by that?", "Why does that happen?". These questions from the interviewer are intended to get students to reflect on what they have expressed, to explain their understanding more fully and to reveal how they are understanding the phenomenon. It is an important part of the phenomenographic interviewing technique that the interviewer refrains from pointing out errors in the student's reasoning, and debating with the student, as these actions may distort the understanding which the interviewer is attempting to get the student to reveal.

In summary, the purpose of the interview is to explore and try to capture the student's present way of understanding, rather than to suggest ways in which an expert would approach and think about the problem. There is no attempt during the interview to teach the student how to change the present understanding to the accepted scientific view.

c) In phenomenographic studies it has been found repeatedly that

...each phenomenon, concept or principle can be understood in a limited number of qualitatively different ways (Marton, 1986:30)

The Physics Project assumed a limited number of conceptions, or different ways of understanding, of the concepts and principles being explored.

The main outcome of the phenomenographic analysis is the different conceptions of a phenomenon, presented in categories of description. These categories of description are drawn from the data and are based on the most distinctive features that differentiate one conception from another. The categories of description are typically presented in the form of a hierarchy of conceptions. The hierarchy reflects increasing levels of understanding and displays the relationship between the conceptions. The focus on making explicit the relations between the conceptions is one of the characteristics of phenomenographic research that distinguishes it from other approaches, such as alternative conceptions research. Although displaying the relations between conceptions, it is not claimed that the categories represent a developmental sequence; the way in which the development of conceptions occurs is an empirical question.

AN EXAMPLE ON RELATIVE SPEED FROM THE PHYSICS PROJECT

One of the questions which was the subject of the phenomenographic interviews in the Physics Project is given below, together with a summary of the categories of description. A more detailed account can be found in Walsh *et al.* (1993). The summary of the categories of description also includes the student focus for the question, that is the features of the discussion about the question which characterize what the students considered important to discuss with the interviewer. There is also an explanation of the principles used by the research team to ascribe a hierarchy to the categories of description obtained from the data.

Martha and Arthur are running along a straight, level road at constant speed. Arthur is ahead of Martha.

Arthur's speed is less than Martha's speed.

How far must Martha run before she catches up with Arthur, and how long will she take to do this?

Table 1: Summary of categories of description for the question on relative speed and focus of student answers.

Question 1 Categories	Summary of Categories of Description	Student Focus
Rs	Relative speed as a new entity: initial distance as a fixed quantity.	Runners as a system. Relative speed is catching speed.
Rd	Relative speed as a variable quantity, a function of time.	Runners as a system. Relative distance diminishes with time.
Di	Distance M = distance A + initial distance.	Individual runners run for same length of time. Individual distances related through distance.
D	Distance M: Distance A	Individual runners run for same length of time.
Ut	Discontinuous perspective: unitizing time.	Individual runners. Distance each runner runs determined in successive units of time.
Ud	Discontinuous perspective: unitizing distance (Zeno's paradox).	Individual runners. comparison of distances run by each in the same (decreasing) time interval.

The categories of description have been ordered in terms of the level of understanding of relative speed that is displayed. In all of the categories, speed, distance and time are treated as significant elements, although their treatment varies. The identification of conceptions and ordering of the categories is based on the way in which these elements are treated, in particular, on what constitutes the focus of the conceptions. Categories Rs and Rd describe the highest level of understanding identified, with understanding decreasing through Di, D, Ut, and Ud.

Conceptions Rs and Rd each consider the gap (the initial distance between Arthur and Martha) as an entity, combining the individuals into a system. In Rd the primary focus is on the instantaneous magnitude of this gap, whereas in Rs the initial gap is subsidiary to the relative speed. The key feature in Rs is a focus on the speed of the system, by treating the motion of Martha as relative to Arthur's motion. In Rd this same notion of relative speed is imported through the mathematical derivation from the kinematic equation. An expression is chosen that describes the instantaneous gap and from which the particular solution emerges as the gap closes. In Rd relative speed is acknowledged but it is not the focus.

Conceptions Di and D focus on the total individual distances travelled from the initial positions in the same time interval. In D, only the individual path lengths are examined and therefore, a solution is not reached. In contrast, in Di the individual paths are linked through the initial distance between the runners, leading to a solution.

In Ut and Ud there is a focus, in a stepwise fashion, on the total distance covered by each individual but the two distances are not linked through the initial separation. In Ut time is unitized and in Ud distance is unitized.

In categories Rs and Rd the initial distance is seen as a relative distance. In Di, D, Ut and Ud the initial separation is not focussed on as the initial distance between individuals. However, in Di the initial distance is inferred in order to link

the total distances of the individuals. Categories Rd, Rs and Di lead to algebraic solutions of decreasing generality and elegance. In category D, an attempt is made at an algebraic solution that is only partially successful. Category Ut leads to an approximate numerical solution. Category Ud does not lead to a solution at all.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING RELATIVE SPEED

In teaching the topic of relative speed, teachers would normally aim to teach so that the students achieved Rs or Rd understanding, after a course of instruction. Developing an Rs or Rd understanding can assist in developing a flexibility of outlook, that is, being able to change one's perspective. For example, an intuitive understanding usually assumes ground as a frame of reference (Aguirre, 1988) while relative speed presents an alternative perspective, namely, the motion of one runner with respect to the other. (Results from two other questions in the Physics project (Bowden et al., 1992) and from other research (Aguirre, 1988) also suggest that students generally have difficulty in establishing alternative perspectives.) Such flexibility is important in developing problem-solving competence in physics.

Rd is superior to Rs because Rd generalizes Rs so that the size of the gap can be calculated at any chosen point in time. This allows an answer to questions such as: "After Martha has run for some specified time, by what amount has the gap closed?", or "How far must Martha run before the distance between the runners is less than 30% of the original distance?". (A student who gives a category Rs response would be able to answer these questions but would need to use more mathematical steps because the general expression is not employed.) The Rd response also allows application of the equation to a wider variety of initial conditions, as noted in the description of the Rd category. In order to generalize an Rs level of understanding to an Rd level, the student would be required to express the relative distance ("gap") as a function of time, starting from the equations of motion, and would also be required to incorporate the initial conditions of the problem.

A category Di response is logically removed from Rs; a new idea is needed in order to achieve Rs, as it cannot be done by simple extension. In teaching, one approach might be to develop the concept of frame of reference within which the new idea of relative speed can then be introduced. It is reasonable to assume that students have experienced travelling in lanes of traffic (multiple cars passing one another); this may be a familiar place to start. Imagining what you would see if you were in the car that was overtaking and what you would observe from inside the car that was being overtaken, leads to the idea of frame of reference. It would be necessary to alert students to the fact that considering the question from the point of view of an observer standing at the edge of the road is to choose a frame of reference with respect to the ground.

When students have developed the concept of frame of reference, relative speed may be introduced. In category Di responses, the runners are linked via the distances that each runs. Students could be asked to treat the two speeds in a parallel manner, that is, to find the difference in the two speeds. It is important to make the distinction that even though the actual speeds of the cars may be quite large, the difference in their speeds - the speed at which one car approaches or recedes from the other (as observed from inside one of the cars) - can be quite small. To consider only the difference in the two speeds promotes a category Rs solution strategy in terms of the mathematical procedures, but may sidestep the question of frames of reference, which is essential to a complete understanding of the question.

In category D the runners are not seen as part of a system. The attempt at an algebraic solution is superior to those in categories Ut and Ud, which are dependent on the use of numerical values and so do not allow the procedures to be generalized. Unlike the Rs category, there is a failure to bring more powerful and sophisticated concepts to bear on the problem. Again, it would be necessary to introduce the concepts of frame of reference and relative speed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING PHYSICS IN HEALTH SCIENCES

As a result of findings from the Physics Project, and other related research (for example, Prosser & Millar, 1989) it is evident that one can reasonably expect there to be in a class of students a variety of qualitative understandings of any given concept or mathematical procedure. This is despite the fact that the class may agree on the answer to a *quantitative* problem in which the concept or procedure is contained. It is therefore important for a teacher to listen perceptively to individual students to try to comprehend their qualitative understanding and their perspective on a problem on those occasions when they seek individual assistance. That is, while it may be thought expeditious to ask leading questions of the student, to have them arrive rapidly at the correct answer to the problem, this strategy is not productive if the

object is to encourage students how to question and reflect upon their own understanding, as they progress toward developing the intellectual skills characteristic of confident independent learners.

The experience of teaching a discipline over a number of years is a tried and true way of becoming aware of the range of possible understandings of a concept or principle that students are likely to display. It also constitutes a powerful argument for assigning experienced teachers to first year classes! When the basic concepts and principles in physics have been grasped, and the student has also identified an appropriate way of approaching the study of physics, so that the status of independent learner is achieved, the structure of the discipline should be able to be relied upon to take the student to higher realms.

It may be useful to illustrate these remarks with some recent examples of learning problems encountered in teaching Health Sciences students and the teaching strategies proposed to deal with them:

(a) Orthoptics students appear not to appreciate the nature of the interaction between light and a material. In experiments in optics they observe the passage of a light ray through perspex and note the reflection and refraction of the ray at the boundaries of the optically denser material. Interviews with a number of students have shown that they appear not to focus on the possibility of a redirection of energy within the material. It is important to understand this idea, because in clinical practice students will observe an apparent yellowing of the hitherto transparent lenses in the eyes of older patients. Discussion with the clinical course coordinator has led to the proposal that a solution may be to modify the syllabus to include a further experiment to demonstrate attenuation of the intensity of electromagnetic (light) waves incident on a filter and to ask students when they have completed this exercise to suggest clinical applications of their observations.

(b) A second problem is student understanding of the mathematical procedures required when manipulating an equation. This understanding is fundamental to success in physics and is a pre-requisite for entry into Health Sciences courses. (In practice, lack of course pre-requisites in physical sciences does not usually preclude entry into a Health Sciences programme.) In one-to-one teaching where the student works through a physics problem as the teacher observes the procedure, it can be the case that the student proceeds by selecting only those parts of an equation which are perceived to be useful for the solution, rather than focussing on the entire equation. Clearly this is a fairly easy thing for a teacher to correct once pinpointed. The value of being in a position to note this lack of understanding through observing an individual student in the process of problem-solving, is that it can give insights into difficulties other students may encounter, but may not articulate, in solving tutorial problems.

(c) In analyzing some of the data from the Physics Project it became clear to the research team that there was potential for limited understandings of the concepts of velocity and acceleration. Some Health Sciences students have asked how to think about these concepts qualitatively to clarify them as distinct. The relevant quantitative expression in kinematics given in lectures focusses only on the relation between velocity and acceleration. Usually students can grasp the idea of velocity because they have observed the behaviour of the speedometer in a car and the magnitude of velocity is what is measured on a speedometer. The difficulty comes in trying to elucidate the difference, in qualitative terms, between velocity and acceleration, the instantaneous rate of change of velocity. In practice it is not easy to assess the value of acceleration, the ratio in which the value of the velocity is changing as well as the value of the time. But as Health Sciences students are usually professionally interested in issues to do with sports and athletics, it is appropriate to point to the way in which in a sprint, the group of athletes 'take off' from the starting position, as a visible and comparative indicator of their individual accelerations, their instantaneous rates of change of velocity from rest.

IS THE TEACHING OF PHYSICS DESTINED TO REMAIN A COTTAGE INDUSTRY?

As noted in the Introduction, research focussed on investigating the nature of difficulties which students encounter in studying physics has been a protracted enterprise. The research has been widely disseminated over the years, through international conferences and publication in international journals. But reports of success with improved teaching programmes in physics, programmes amended in the light of research findings, are not found very often in the literature. This is rather surprising. Research carried out in the Physics Project, as elsewhere, points to the need to teach physics conceptually, to emphasize the importance of qualitative understanding of concepts and principles and to reward the efforts of students who pursue mastery of this aspect of understanding the concepts. Such a recommendation does not debase the importance of students learning to deal competently also with the mathematical aspects of physics. Indeed,

a sounder grasp of basic concepts in their qualitative guise may promote better performance in coping with the quantitative sphere.

At the University of Sydney a small number of physicists has formed a research group with the aim of carrying out research into tertiary physics education. In a recent article (Sydney University Physics Education Research Group, 1996) they argue that several factors combine to discourage academic physicists from embracing the results of research into physics teaching and incorporating it into their own teaching practice. They cite the inherent mistrust of practitioners of the 'hard' sciences for the methods commonly used in educational research, which are generally regarded as 'soft', giving unreproducible results compared with the physical sciences. They also note a conservatism which leads to a continuance of the traditional lecture technique in the face of evidence that there are better ways of conducting physics classes, and the belief that only those academics actively engaged with physics are best placed to give instruction, unlike those who, lacking intimate engagement with the discipline, must comment from the outside. Not surprisingly, the recommendation of this article is that educational research into physics teaching should be conducted within physics departments by physicists. It is argued that repositioning educational research into a physics department, while not changing the methodology in any way, will make it more acceptable intellectually and so less able to be dismissed by academic physicists.

There may be further reasons why research into physics teaching, and its consequences for instruction, is regarded askance by physicists. For example, teaching physics conceptually, which is one of the recommendations of the research, requires a style of teaching which is more participatory and inclusive of student input than has hitherto been the case. Teaching in the physical sciences has traditionally been characterized by didacticism, the 'top-down' approach or, as is often described approvingly by physicists, the 'master-apprentice' model. Conducting a physics class with the aim of encouraging students to express and discuss their understanding of concepts may not therefore be a technique with which lecturers would necessarily be comfortable; usually this technique has to be learned and practised. But learning to teach in a participatory way requires a reconsideration of the role of the teacher in the class. It exemplifies the difference between teaching in secondary schools and teaching at the tertiary level. Dissolving this difference in approach between secondary and tertiary physics teaching, at least at the first year level, might require lecturers to spend more time on their teaching and so have less time available for their other pursuits, for example research. Where tertiary institutions and the profession value research activities over teaching this consequence would be unacceptable.

Most physicists would say that they engage in physics because they find the discipline intellectually challenging and ultimately very rewarding. So it is a puzzle, although a well-known one of long-standing, that many students find physics unendingly difficult and dull. This phenomenon seems to have been accepted by the physics profession as a lamentable, but unavoidable, concomitant of study in physics being made available to one and all. Surely, if research findings suggest that the teaching of physics and associated factors such as the style of assessment ought to be reexamined, suggestions which will make the study of physics more accessible to students, the physics profession has a duty to the up and coming student generation to take serious note of these concerns? And if leadership in the profession continues to side-step these questions, it seems that physics will be doomed to remain the boutique discipline, available to the few who are able to persist in their studies, but forever divorced from the mainstream of those who study physics as a service subject, and then pass on.

CONCLUSION

The aim of seeking to make explicit how students conceptualize their learning in service subjects such as physics can be achieved through the results of phenomenographic research. The research provides qualitative descriptions of the content that is being understood and points to similarities and differences between the various understandings. Individual teachers can use these results to inform their practice and to encourage students to seek a deeper understanding of the learning material. The possibility of extending such teaching strategies on a wider scale is not yet realized in practice in tertiary teaching. For the sake of the discipline and also the students, it is hoped that the profession of physics as a whole may yet come to recognize the contribution of pedagogy to physics teaching and to consider amending educational practices which have been shown to be less than productive.

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BRIDGING THE READING-WRITING GAP : IS NOTE-MAKING A USEFUL STRATEGY FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND STUDENTS?

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ABSTRACT

Although study skills advisers in one-to-one situations are generally confronted with the product of students' academic work, they are also in the unique position of being able to gain insights into individual students' assignment preparation processes. These insights can be very helpful in teaching larger groups. This paper reports a qualitative study of note-making strategies used by non-native speaker (NNS) students which was initiated as a result of casual observations in one-to-one sessions. It suggests that note-making in the assignment preparation process may be an important element in enabling students to develop their own 'voice' in writing. More controversially, the paper also suggests that if NNS students incorporate wordings taken from the source texts into their notes, they may be able to use these pieces of text to good effect in their writing. The implication is that 'plagiarising', that is using pieces of the source texts in an assignment (Whitaker 1993), may be a necessary coping strategy (Adamson 1993) for students with insufficient language skills.

The background: the conundrum of plagiphrasing

In working one-to-one with students in learning support situations, study skills advisers are generally presented with the end-product of students' work and often with the students' false expectation that their essays can somehow be 'fixed up'. In my own experience of working with non-native speakers (NNSs), the essays that I am shown all too often present a 'patchwork' of ideas and wordings taken directly from source texts, sometimes with no reference to the original author. Such essays often consist of chunks of language copied from the sources and cobbled together with topic sentences, sub-headings and probably an introduction and conclusion in the student's own words. Whitaker (1993) calls this '*plagiphrasing*'.

Coming from a cultural background which has instilled in us that plagiarism is a crime, our first response to this kind of writing is probably to explain to students that it is not acceptable and that they should endeavour to 'put it in their own words' and use proper referencing techniques. Pennycook (1996) points out the ethnocentrism of this approach and suggests that copying may in fact be a valid way to learn. Pennycook goes on to suggest that there may be such a thing as 'good' plagiarism and 'bad' plagiarism. In addition, as Adamson (1993) noted in his case studies in American universities and as we are aware as study skills advisers, using the words of the source texts in essays often results in good grades: while the rhetoric of academia strongly censures plagiarism, the practice tends to condone it, as NNS students quickly learn.

Looking at plagiphrasing more closely two issues are apparent. At one level, it is a surface problem of expression: many NNS simply do not have the language skills to express their ideas in their own words. This is apparent when we respond to our students' urgent call to 'fix up' their essays. The result is often a disaster. We spend time teaching students how to paraphrase the copied chunks of text and use correct referencing conventions. Having carefully scaffolded students in developing these skills, we send them off to rewrite their essays. However, their once readable essays often deteriorate into a barely intelligible morass of misused grammar, vocabulary and cohesive devices. As Adamson (1993) points out, students not only need pragmatic knowledge of the types of discourse expected of them but also basic language skills in order to handle tertiary study. Without these fundamental building blocks, Adamson (1993) claims, students have to resort to '*coping strategies*'.

At another level, plagiphrasing can be symptomatic of a fundamental lack of 'voice' in the student's essay. The patchwork appearance may be caused by the lack of a coherent argument, as the student has taken chunks of text and strung them

together without developing a clear and organised line of thinking, sometimes without even understanding the content of the chunks that they have copied.

In either case, dealing with plagiarising from the product end (the finished essay) is merely a whitewashing process, as experience in one-to-one situations tells us. I began to look for more effective solutions to the problems of writing from sources by investigating the assignment preparation processes of my students, asking particularly if note-making strategies could offer some useful practices for NNS students.

This paper describes the project that I undertook and suggests that good note-making is not only interactive and analytical, but that, as a resource for NNSs in writing the essay, it may be beneficial to include wordings from the source texts which enable students to use 'good' plagiarism as a coping strategy in academic writing.

The project: an exploration into note-making

I undertook a qualitative research project which could well be reduplicated as an action research project in one-to-one consultations. I identified a second year Humanities unit in which there were a number of NNS students who had been asked to prepare a medium-length essay. I wanted to collect introspective data in which the students reflected on their note-making strategies in an authentic situation, so I trained the students in think-aloud techniques (see Ericsson & Simon 1984 and Faerch & Kasper 1987) and asked them to make a recording on cassette-tape about what they were doing in their note-making and why. I asked them to do this during their note-making or as soon as possible afterwards. Note-making was defined as activities which were carried out in direct response to the source texts such as highlighting, pointform notes, margin notes or diagrams. I also conducted interviews with each student before and after they wrote the essay. I gathered the students' notes, essay drafts, copies of the source texts and also the finished essays together with the lecturer's comments.

My thinking on note-making strategies was largely guided by Chamot and O'Malley's (1994) inventory of cognitive, metacognitive and affective strategies for the acquisition of academic language and Oxford's (1990) more comprehensive SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning). This work on learning strategies lies in the information processing framework of cognitive psychology. Chamot and O'Malley (1994) classify planning, monitoring and evaluating as metacognitive strategies; resourcing, grouping, note-taking, elaborating, summarising, induction/deduction, imagery, and making inferences as cognitive strategies; and questioning, cooperating with others and self-talk as social/affective strategies. As White (1996) has pointed out, however, most strategy theorists have failed to distinguish between overt behaviours, such as highlighting and making margin notes, and the cognitive strategies underpinning them, such as relating new knowledge to prior knowledge, making comparisons and contrasts, making inferences and exemplifying.

The literature contains many studies of how cognitive strategies contribute positively to reading comprehension (Meyer 1984; Brown, Palincsar & Armbruster 1984; Armbruster & Anderson 1980 cited in Gagne 1985; Sarig 1987; McCagg & Dansereau 1991 etc). In particular, it has been shown that training students in the use of certain note-making strategies can improve their reading comprehension. For example, Amer (1994) taught Arabic students reading academic texts in English to use highlighting and knowledge-mapping strategies, and found significant improvements in the students' ability to recall the text and write summaries. However, I was unable to locate any studies which related note-making strategies to authentic academic assignment writing other than to the sub-skill of summarising texts.

When turning to the quality of the students' essays, I was particularly interested in the quality of voice. Voice, in Bakhtin's terms, is '*the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness*' (Wertsch 1991:51) in an utterance. All utterances take place in a socio-cultural setting and the words which we use have meaning only because they are used by particular social groups. These social groups have their own social languages, or genres, which are invoked in the utterances we produce. Learning to use these genres is, for Bakhtin, a kind of '*ventriloquation*' (Wertsch 1991: 127) for in using the social genre, the speaking consciousness is speaking with the voice of others:

...the word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!) but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own. (Bakhtin 1981, cited in Wertsch 1991:59)

In academic writing, it is often hard for students to achieve the fine balance between speaking with their own voice, that is presenting their own construct of the issues, and 'ventriloquating' in the genre of the target discourse community.

The findings: reproducing and reconstructing the voices of others

Of the six students I worked with in my study, all of Chinese origin (Hongkong, China and Taiwan), I will describe only four who demonstrate with clarity the key contrasts that I discovered.

The first student, Annie, is a very thorough note-taker. I use the term *note-taker* advisedly as her strategy was indeed one of 'taking' notes, that is *reproducing* ideas from the texts in point form using keywords, symbols, indenting, brief paraphrases and so on. She made an outline of her intended essay and took notes under her proposed sub-headings, using different coloured pens to denote different sources. Underpinning her note-taking behaviour was a wide range of cognitive strategies: identifying the rhetorical structure of the texts (see Meyer 1984), identifying specific details when she needed them, relating the text to her prior knowledge and to other texts, relating her reading to the task, categorising, exemplifying, self-monitoring and self-evaluating. She read very widely. But she did not read analytically: she did not evaluate the ideas in the text, make comparisons between them, look for advantages and disadvantages, problems and solutions. When it came to writing, she abandoned her notes and went back to the texts, writing directly from the books open in front of her. Her essay was almost entirely plagiarised: about 90% of the essay consisted of language taken directly from the source texts, some properly quoted, but most simply plagiarised. She produced a good synthesis, that is a blending of reproduced ideas from the sources, but her own voice was almost silent as she deferred entirely to the source texts and gave no hint of a personally constructed viewpoint. In particular the conclusion was very weak. However, her essay read well: she appeared to 'ventriloquate' competently in the target genre. The vocabulary, the sentence structures, the cohesive devices, the logical structure of 'her' argument sounded convincing. Her grade - Credit Minus.

The next student, Jim, was more interactive in his approach to the texts than Annie, but his note-taking strategies were still in some respects reproductive rather than reconstructive. Jim read each text twice, first highlighting the main ideas of the text and on the second reading highlighting the sections which related to his task. Unlike Annie, however, he also added comments and questions in the margins. Jim had another strategy which could also be classified as a form of note-making: he discussed the texts with his friends, relating the content to his home country, and debating the advantages and disadvantages of the ideas presented. The cognitive strategies underlying his note-taking behaviour include relating the texts to his prior knowledge, relating one text to another, categorising, exemplifying, self-monitoring, and in addition Jim used analytical strategies such as asking questions, making comparisons, evaluating, looking for problems and solutions. At the third reading, Jim's note-taking was based on his planned essay-outline: like Annie, he wrote down sections of the source texts under each heading but, unlike Annie, Jim used his notes rather than returning to the source texts when it came to writing. Only about 50% of the wording of Jim's essay was taken directly from the source texts. He managed to create a good balance between voicing his opinion and deferring to the texts. But sadly his voice faded out at the end of his essay, in which he resorted to the outline-summary type of conclusion. When I asked him why he did not voice his opinion more strongly, he said that it was not his place to do so: students should be '*humble*'. If Jim had not retreated from expressing his opinion, he would have received an excellent grade. As it was, he received a credit - the highest mark amongst the NNS students in the unit.

Toni, the next student, was terrific. She was thoroughly involved in her topic and her note-making strategies could not have been more interactive and more reconstructive. Her note-making behaviours included highlighting, margin notes, page markers, concept maps, charts, point-form notes and diagrams. She used no wordings from the text apart from key terms. Her cognitive strategies included all those used by Jim, particularly the analytical strategies, the difference being that she seemed to use them more vigorously. In her think aloud protocol the excitement of her personal involvement and deep interest in the issues was striking. She compared the writing process to an international flight: if you plan carefully and get everything fixed up, once you are on board you can just sit back and enjoy the ride! In writing her essay, the ideas flowed from her pen and while she did check back to her notes, she did not refer to the source texts at all. There was no difficulty with paraphrasing, which had troubled both Annie and Jim, because she was writing her own ideas. Her voice in the essay shouts aloud, taking on a confident position of authority. Unfortunately though, her position is too authoritative, because she omits to refer (or defer) sufficiently to her source texts. Her language too is inappropriate: she uses the right lexicon in general and her argument is coherent, but her writing is riddled with errors in sentence structure and sub-technical vocabulary. Her essay for all its interaction, analysis and deep, personalised understanding of the issues received a Credit Minus - the same grade as the essay which was almost totally plagiarised and lacking in 'voice'.

The last student is a sad case of a student who was successful at high school (she had a TER of 76) but who has not been able to adapt her study strategies to the tertiary environment. In her note-taking Mei Wen used the strategy of copying slabs out of the textbook directly on to her word-processor. She identified the slabs which she thought 'looked' useful by using the index of the book. When I asked her why she used this technique, she said: *'Just to give my mind more balance and ... to give your mind more understand what that's all about ... Probably it won't be important but it give me idea.'* The cognitive strategies she used in this technique were minimal: relating the text to the task was perhaps the only one. As a result of the research project she decided to see a study skills adviser for the first time and he gave her some ideas about looking for the advantages and disadvantages of the topic she had to discuss. This gave her essay more substance. She wrote her essay by deciding upon some subheadings, mainly taken directly from the text, and then using the cut-and-paste technique from her word-processed 'notes'. She added her own introduction and conclusion, based on the advantages and disadvantages structure she had been advised to use, and her own topic sentences. In the end about 75% of her essay consisted of derived language, some sourced, some not. In contrast to Toni's enthusiastic declamation, Mei Wen's voice could be said to be a mere mumble. Her essay was criticised because it used only one main source, but not because it was seriously plagiarised. It received a pass grade.

Discussion

Only two of the students in the study, Jim and Toni, achieved an expression of their own voice in their essays. The other two were silent behind the chorus of voices from the source texts, or in the case of Mei Wen, behind the voice of the single source she had used. The students who were able to express their own point of view in the essay were those who

- reconstructed the source texts in their notes;
- used underlying cognitive strategies which were both interactive and analytical;
- wrote from their notes rather than from the source texts.

This finding does not conflict with conventional wisdom, for most study skills advisers would probably agree that *'successful note-taking ...is interpretation, not recording'* (Garner, 1995:27).

On the other hand, it is somewhat contrary to the academic skills creed to note that those students who were successful in approximating the required genre were those who used a high degree of plagiarising. In fact, plagiarising seems to have been actively rewarded in these students' work; whereas Toni, who failed to ventriloquate in the genre but who had approached the task constructively and interactively, lost marks for failing to refer to the sources sufficiently and for her poor grammar and expression. This finding matches that of Adamson (1993) who also found that copying from sources often resulted in high grades. In fact, none of the students in my study was sufficiently competent in basic language skills to write adequately in the genre without relying heavily on the coping strategy of using the language of the source texts.

There is a difference, though, in the way the students in this study used plagiarising. Although Annie and Jim both lifted sections from the texts into their essays, their underlying preparation strategies were highly interactive, whereas Mei Wen had simply copied texts hoping that the act of copying alone would enable her to understand them. In fact, she admitted she was *'not too bothered'* about whether she understood the sections that she had copied into her essay or not. In addition, Jim, who was the most successful writer of the sample group, did not write directly from the source texts, but used his notes as the basis for his writing. The fact that his notes contained wordings from the sources helped him to find the right language to use in expressing his own construct of the topic. In this way he was able to write in his own voice, and also to ventriloquate in the target genre. Perhaps this is what Pennycook (1996) means by 'good' plagiarism.

To synthesise these findings, it seems that

- interactive and analytical note-making is useful as a process in enabling students to develop a 'voice'; and that
- the notes themselves may be more effective as a product from which to write if they include wordings from the texts which students can then incorporate into their own writing.

The implications for study skills advisers

While helping students to understand the 'product' features of the target genres is essential, study skills advisers both in one-to-one and in large groups should not ignore the processes which enable students to emulate these genres. The one-to-one consultation offers a unique opportunity for study skills advisers to observe study processes and learn what works. By observing students' assignment preparation processes we may gain greater understanding of how to work with students in larger groups.

The observation of individual students' note-making processes discussed here is limited by the typical features of qualitative research, particularly by the small sample. It suggests, however, with Pennycook (1996), that rather than preaching that plagiarism is necessarily a crime, it might be more realistic and helpful to NNS students to admit that plagiphrasing, using wordings from the source texts, may be a useful coping strategy, provided it is backed up by reconstructive, interactive and analytical note-making strategies which can enable students to develop and present their own voice. An approach of this sort which focuses on process as well as product may take us some way towards solving Pennycook's (1996) distinction between 'good' plagiarism and 'bad' plagiarism in academic writing.

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MEETING STUDENTS' LEARNING NEEDS: REFLECTIONS ON GROUP AND ONE-TO-ONE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The University of Auckland's Student Learning Centre (SLC) teaches generic skills to students in matters relating to their academic learning and performance. Areas covered include time management and study organisation, reading and writing skills, test and examination preparation, motivation and stress management, and critical thinking. Services offered include workshops, one-to-one consultations, and daily drop-in times when tutors can be seen briefly without an appointment. In addition, specific courses and individual assistance are provided to Maori and Pacific Island students. In most cases, students choose the type of assistance they want. This seems to depend not only on the specific nature of their problem, but also on cultural influences, and their general preference for a group or one-to-one situation. As a tutor at the SLC, I reflect on my experience of teaching both groups and individuals. My group work focuses on integrating the theoretical and the practical, allowing students to apply what is taught, share their experiences and learn not only from the "teacher", but from each other. My work with individual students tends to be of a more specific or personal nature. While I focus on the differences between group and one-to-one teaching, I highly value the two methods and encourage students to seek the benefits of both.

To address the question of *"What do I learn from teaching one-to-one that informs my work with larger numbers?"*, I begin by describing the services provided by the University of Auckland's Student Learning Centre (SLC). I then reflect on the distinct processes of teaching individuals and groups—what I do and how I do it. My final thoughts emphasise the importance of both group and one-to-one teaching and how each method of teaching informs the other.

The University of Auckland's Student Learning Centre (SLC)

The SLC assists students in their academic learning and performance. It focuses on teaching generic skills and strategies which students can apply to their own course of study, rather than teaching specific academic course content. Areas covered include time management and study organisation, reading and writing skills, test and exam preparation, motivation and stress management, and critical thinking.

The SLC offers assistance through workshops, one-to-one consultations, and daily "drop-in" times when a tutor can be seen briefly without an appointment. Through two specific programmes, Te Puni Wananga and Fale Pasifika, it also provides courses and individual assistance to Maori and Pacific Island students.

Generally, students choose the type of assistance they want. This seems to depend not only on the specific nature of their problem and their general preference for a group or one-to-one situation, but also on cultural differences. Using 1995 SLC registration statistics, Table 1 shows the ethnic background of students as a percentage of total enrolments at the SLC, and as a percentage of students seeking individual assistance. A Chi-square analysis showed that the proportional representation of ethnic groups was different for those enrolled and those seeking individual assistance, $\chi^2(4, N = 3298) = 233.57, p = .001$. Maori and Pacific Island students preferred individual assistance, while Pakeha students preferred group assistance through workshops.

Table 1

Ethnic background of students as a percentage of total enrolments at the SLC and students seeking individual assistance in 1995.

	Pakeha	Asian	Maori	Pacific Islander	Other
Total Enrolments (n = 1994)	48.8	27.0	8.8	9.9	5.5
Students Seeking Individual Assistance (n = 1304)	29.4	25.9	18.7	23.0	3.0

The group situation

Through workshops, my group teaching integrates both the theoretical and the practical aspects of any topic. In preparing a workshop, I anticipate problems commonly encountered by students—this comes from what students have told me in previous workshops and individual consultations, talking with other tutors, and my own experience as a student. My teaching plan is structured around these anticipated problems, but flexible enough so it can be adapted to meet the specific needs of those who attend.

The general process of my group work is:

- Identifying the specific problems of the students present. (Are these the problems I have anticipated? What is the emphasis on different problems? Are there other problems? What are their current strategies for dealing with these problems?).
- Covering important principles on the topic, linking them to the presented problems as much as possible.
- Teaching useful strategies to deal with these problems.
- Giving students the opportunity to apply what is taught.
- Allowing time for students to process and reflect on how these strategies can be useful.

Through interactive exercises, students are also able to share their experiences, meet others with similar concerns, and learn from each other. I also encourage these students to seek individual assistance at any time—if they have any problems with some of these strategies, a more specific question, or general comments on how their studies are going.

The one-to-one situation

Students seeking individual assistance tend to have a more specific or personal question or problem. These include preparing a study timetable, feedback on the structure of an essay, stress, or specific learning disabilities. While some students require ongoing assistance and we always encourage students to seek further assistance when necessary, we aim to help students become independent learners.

The general process of my individual work is:

- Establishing rapport—finding out about the student, what they are studying, how it is going, etc.
- Identifying needs and assessing the problem or situation.
- Determining appropriate action and addressing the problem or situation. This may involve demonstrating new strategies, providing feedback on work, encouraging attendance at workshops, or referring the student to a counsellor, lecturer, or other adviser.

Is what I teach in groups informed by one-to-one?

By reflecting on my work with both groups and individuals, my answer to the question is, certainly, what I teach in groups is informed by my one-to-one work. There is however, a reciprocal learning process—each way of teaching informs the other. Both methods are invaluable, and the challenge is to continually improve our teaching regardless of the method or economics.

A reciprocal process

Every contact with a student, in some way, informs my subsequent work, whether it be with an individual or in a group. Both situations give me insight into the problems that students are encountering.

My individual work gives a more personalised and human view on student experiences. I have more immediate feedback about whether suggested strategies may be suitable and how personal styles of learning may affect the student. This is incorporated into my group work, which adopts a catch-all approach by providing several flexible strategies to common problems. Students can then select, experiment with or adapt the strategies they prefer.

Group teaching has the potential to create an environment where all students are treated the same—it can be less personal and more formal. This can reinforce the impersonal and often isolating environment of the university as a whole. From my individual work, I am continually reminded of the importance of creating a supportive and non-threatening learning environment in groups. Students can experience the benefits of interactive exercises and at the same time are empowered through sharing resources and learning from each other.

In turn, the sharing of experiences in groups also informs future teaching. It often equips me with a variety of strategies to suggest to students in the one-to-one situation. The group time allocated to processing and reflecting is also essential as I gain further insight into personal responses to suggested strategies, and any other problems students are experiencing.

Thus, developing my knowledge and becoming a more effective teacher with both groups and individuals is a continual and reciprocal process.

Further considerations

The personal and cultural preference for either group or individual teaching still remains. While there is certainly nothing wrong with this, I believe that students should be encouraged to seek the benefits of both methods. One of the challenges is to address those factors that would enable students to do this.

As already noted, the ethnic background of a student may influence the method of teaching they prefer. Through Te Puni Wananga and Fale Pasifika, Maori and Pacific Island students can seek both group and individual assistance from Maori and Pacific Island tutors. These students may prefer the one-to-one situation as it provides a less threatening and more personal interaction with a tutor from the same ethnic background. As isolation is an important issue for many of these students, they could also benefit from group teaching by meeting other students and sharing experiences.

On the other hand, Pakeha students may prefer the group situation as the teacher-student dynamic is more aligned with learning in Western culture. Pakeha students may also see the one-to-one situation as indicative of a more "serious" problem.

It is necessary to gather concrete evidence on how culture and other factors affect learning styles, and to identify how these can be incorporated into our teaching. The challenge is to consider different styles and preferences to enhance the learning of all students. We must take what we learn from both group and one-to-one situations to provide quality teaching regardless of the method.

PLENARY: INFORMATION SHARING

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This report is a compilation of methods and strategies to support students' academic learning contributed by Conference participants in the information gathering session. The aim of the session was to share ways in which we teach and promote our teaching, in order to help individuals and units enhance the learning of students, and adapt to the changes that are characteristic of higher education today.

PART A

Initially, the 58 participants were asked a series of questions.

How many teach one to one? 53

How many teach groups? 56

What size groups?

Less than 10 55

10 - 30 55

Over 30 43

How do you teach those groups?

Workshops 57

Lectures 38

Other:

tutorials in accredited units

classes

seminar groups

team teaching with academics

adjunct tutorials

computer lab. classes

orientation courses

discussion groups

What other ways do you teach?

pairwork

peer mentoring

individual learning centres

drop in

What other ways do you reach students?

telephone

printed materials

email

WWW

video

informal contact

videoteleconferencing

voice mail bulletins

letters

fax

CD Rom

professional development of academic staff

How do you publicise what you do?

orientation programs

first lecture of courses

student diary

Student Union activities and publications

new student information

International student office activities and publications

Faculty handbooks

announcements by first year lecturers (supply OHT)

notification with assignments

brochures distributed through support services and teaching staff

posters

email to staff and students

bookmark to new students

fridge magnets to staff

staff information book

Open Day displays

Faculty and university-wide newsletters

information with student results mailout

library displays

personal contact with staff

video

PART B

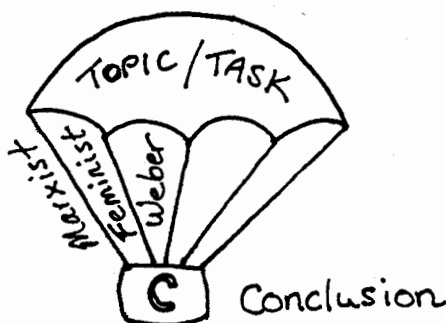
Participants were then asked to write down a strategy that had worked well for them recently. Thirty responses were collected and grouped according to the context of the strategy.

Strategies that work with individuals

1. Summarising techniques at the end of an individual session

I summarise the main points for the student at the end of the session and include practical ways of addressing the points. The student writes a summary of their essay (following the sequence of the essay to check for cohesion and coherence once they've written it, rather than before).

2. Mind maps and diagrams



The above diagram can be used to show a student, whose essay lacks cohesion, the structure of an academic essay and the relationship between the topic, themes and conclusion. I find I am increasingly teaching the use of mind maps and other diagrams to assist students in organising their writing.

3. Reading aloud

Reading an essay aloud helps to reveal surface errors, through the tendency to correct errors in speech. These errors should then be explicitly compared to the writing.

4. Highlighting structure

To clarify structure and to show how an essay needs revision, hand students a highlighter pen and get them to analyse: (a) main idea of paragraph; (b) something about what the paragraph is doing, for example, background, detail, opposing views, argument, conclusion.

5. Games

I create activities which utilise games and materials that require self-reflection and empowerment. These strategies motivate students and overcome their preconceptions about their own learning.

6. Identifying issues

As a substitute for correcting a whole paper, I read the first few paragraphs closely, and any linguistic/stylistic issues are identified and discussed with the student. The student then goes through the next few paragraphs and attempts to identify issues. These are then discussed. Then the student goes away and re-reads the whole of the essay. They come back later and issues they have identified are discussed.

7. Speaking to overcome writer's block

When a student cannot write, ask them to speak the outline of the conclusion. Write what they say.

8. A Critical Reading Template

A strategy to process journal articles is the use of a template which includes questions such as: How is it relevant? Does it add new information (content)? Does it reinforce old information? Does it show a gap (structure)? What else do I need to know? This latter question leads in to the next article. The strategy can be used in 1:1 sessions as well as with groups, and with post-graduate, as well as undergraduate students.

9. Asking: What do you think?

This strategy worked for a student who was in the group commonly said to have problems "thinking/writing critically" ie. international postgrad. The student had indeed produced a draft of a piece of writing; however, it only summarised and did not evaluate the readings he had done, when the latter was required. I simply *asked* him what he thought about the question the literature was addressing (and followed up with a couple of questions about his thoughts on the various readings). He responded with enough material for an excellent evaluation. He just needed a suggestion of how to express his evaluation in academic English.

10. Editing on computer

Work with student's computer writing. On screen correction allows for self-repair, in some cases.

Strategies that work with groups: general

1. Demonstrating that a well-thought out logically developed plan facilitates writing

This strategy is useful with overseas students who find it hard to express a point of view and develop arguments to support it, then write a clear essay plan. Understanding each step precedes implementation.

- (a) Take a topic;
- (b) Define the issue/problem/question raised;
- (c) Look at the (+) For /Pros/Advantages, (-) Against/Cons/Disadvantages, as appropriate;
- (d) Individual students plan a balanced argument (essay format);
- (e) Students swap PLANS, then write up the essay for the other person's plan, in the form of introduction, topic sentences, conclusion.

The writing process checks the "readability"/logic of the plan.

2. Developing vocabulary

I ran a 6 hour workshop with a small group of Thai speakers (postgrads) involving Latin origins: wordbuilding, word families, prefixes and suffixes. The students enjoyed this very much. It helped them with reading prediction/guessing, eliminated reliance on a dictionary. It was useful because so many (Latinate) abstract/conceptual words are involved in intellectual work.

2. A model for students to evaluate

This strategy was the basis of a thesis writing workshop:

- (a) Present the target language for different chapters;
- (b) Deconstruct the text;
- (c) Analyse the language (using Systematic Functional Grammar);
- (d) Reconstruct the text.

Get students to practise writing on topics imitating the model.

3. Rewriting from OHTs

This strategy was used with small groups of MBA students whose writing showed persistent sentence level grammar problems. Writing, in the form of a Business report, was generated in a class based on listening. Chunks, containing typical problems, were displayed on OHTs for peer correction. The strategy was previously used successfully to rewrite "spoken" writing style ...)

4. Oral presentations to groups

- (a) Give students a model (based on, for example, sections, sequencing, body language);
- (b) Give students appropriate target language;
- (c) Have students use the target model and language to prepare and deliver presentations to peers in small groups;
- (d) Have students use "peer-comment" to help each other improve talks.

Strategies that work with groups: discipline specific

1. Peer review groups

Encourage postgrad students in a specific discipline to set up peer review groups for improving writing. The groups provide higher/lower order editing. Supply each group with proofreading checklists to adapt/modify to suit their needs and feedback sheets (from reader to writer).

2. Reading groups

This strategy was used with International students from same subject. The students encountered particularly complex reading material. Groups of the students met once a week prior to tutorials to clarify meaning of texts. I would ask about main idea of chosen text. The students then identified difficult areas. We would discuss the ideas of text at the end and draw parallels with the students' experiences.

3. Architecture workshops

I attended a few Architecture criticism sessions and jotted down common questions posed by lecturers. In a workshop with International students we discussed the purpose of criticism sessions, looked at how to prepare talks, and analysed the meaning of lecturer's common questions and comments. This was great for discussing implied meaning.

4. Group work on argument

This strategy worked in conjunction with a credit subject. Its aim was to develop skills in arguing a position and in discussing/refuting alternative positions (orally, but leading to 'Discussion' essay). Students individually read teacher-given texts which took a position on an issue. The students were grouped according to the texts they had read, and discussed that text together, consolidating the main arguments. THEN mixed groups were formed, where individuals defended their position against the positions of others. A debriefing session followed.

4. Peer tutoring scheme in Commerce program

In 1st Semester, 12 first year students (Tutees) were paired with successful 2nd and 3rd year students (Tutors) who participated in a workshop on tutoring and the aims of the peer tutoring scheme. The workshop identified strategies and provided materials for tutors to use with their tutees. Ongoing workshops and support were offered to tutors and, at the end of semester, a debriefing took place. Evaluation (Questionnaire) was carried out by both Tutees and Tutors. Tutors were awarded a \$50 - \$75 book voucher plus a formal letter stating their participation. The procedure was repeated in 2nd Semester, but with about 24 tutors and 45 tutees.

Students' evaluations have been very enthusiastic and course results are very good. There are some organisational problems to be overcome. There may be some mismatches in personality, and motivational problems with some students. The tutors are very enthusiastic about the learning experience.

5. Briefing session prior to workshop

When invited to give a session for a group of Postgraduate students in social work on academic writing, I held a preliminary briefing session with the group to identify their specific areas of concern, rather than me give a workshop on what I thought they might need.

6. Sharing experiences

Context: NESB postgraduate Education students doing preservice teacher training who had already been on teaching rounds. All were professional educators.

Aims: (a) to improve the profile and self-esteem of students with no Australian educational background amongst their peers; (b) to facilitate one of the 'critical thinking' skills (making links between theory, practice and social context); and (c) to facilitate the development of oral presentation skills.

Activity: I organised a group of students to describe their "other" educational system, and to present their ideas as to how students from this system might encounter problems in their local system, and what strengths that system might have.

Miscellaneous strategies

1. Screen applicants for courses

Applicants for an intensive NESB course are interviewed: (a) to clarify for them the actual aims and nature of the course; and (b) to dissuade inappropriate applicants. This results in a much more effective and well-focussed course.

2. Self-evaluation

As a team of study advisers, over a period of several weeks, we developed a self-evaluation questionnaire. A series of statements were to be judged on a scale of 1 to 5, for example:

The expectations of adviser and client were discussed	1	2	3	4	5
The student left with a clear idea of what had been achieved	1	2	3	4	5

The process of developing the questionnaire was a valuable experience. It pulled us together as a team; gave us a clear idea of what we wanted to achieve; inducted new members of the team; and gave us a forum to debate issues, for example, proof-reading.

We now use it from time to time as a basis for discussion in relation to 'problem' sessions. It is a tool to wave at the university administration.

3. Ways to raise the profile of the Unit

(a) Web page, including staff profiles, courses, resources, appointment details. This exposure has resulted in benchmarking opportunities with staff from other universities, and has also resulted in many visits by advisers from other institutions.

(b) Newsletter to academic staff, including details of our current programs and research projects.

4. Staff development

I taught a member of academic staff about thematisation in writing. She then referred a crowd of students for individual tutorials.

5. Progress report

I suspended workshops in the middle of a program and substituted personal interviews which addressed progress in our topic (and other topics), identified issues, and discussed strategies for enhancing the study experience.

6. A carrot for a non-credit course

Arrange for individual letters from the Dean stating that students have attended 80% of classes. Students may show these letters to employers.

7. Reflective learning journals

8. Refer students to specific reference books

9. Use annotated examples of students' work

Conclusion

This pool of information highlights the variety of ways in which students are supported with their academic learning, and the variety of ways in which language and learning units promote their teaching. It is hoped that the information will provide new ideas for those working in the field.

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An important function of a conference is to put participants in contact with far-flung colleagues. We hope the following details will help you to follow up these contacts. We have compiled two separate lists (to meet the constraints of label format!) from information supplied by participants:

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