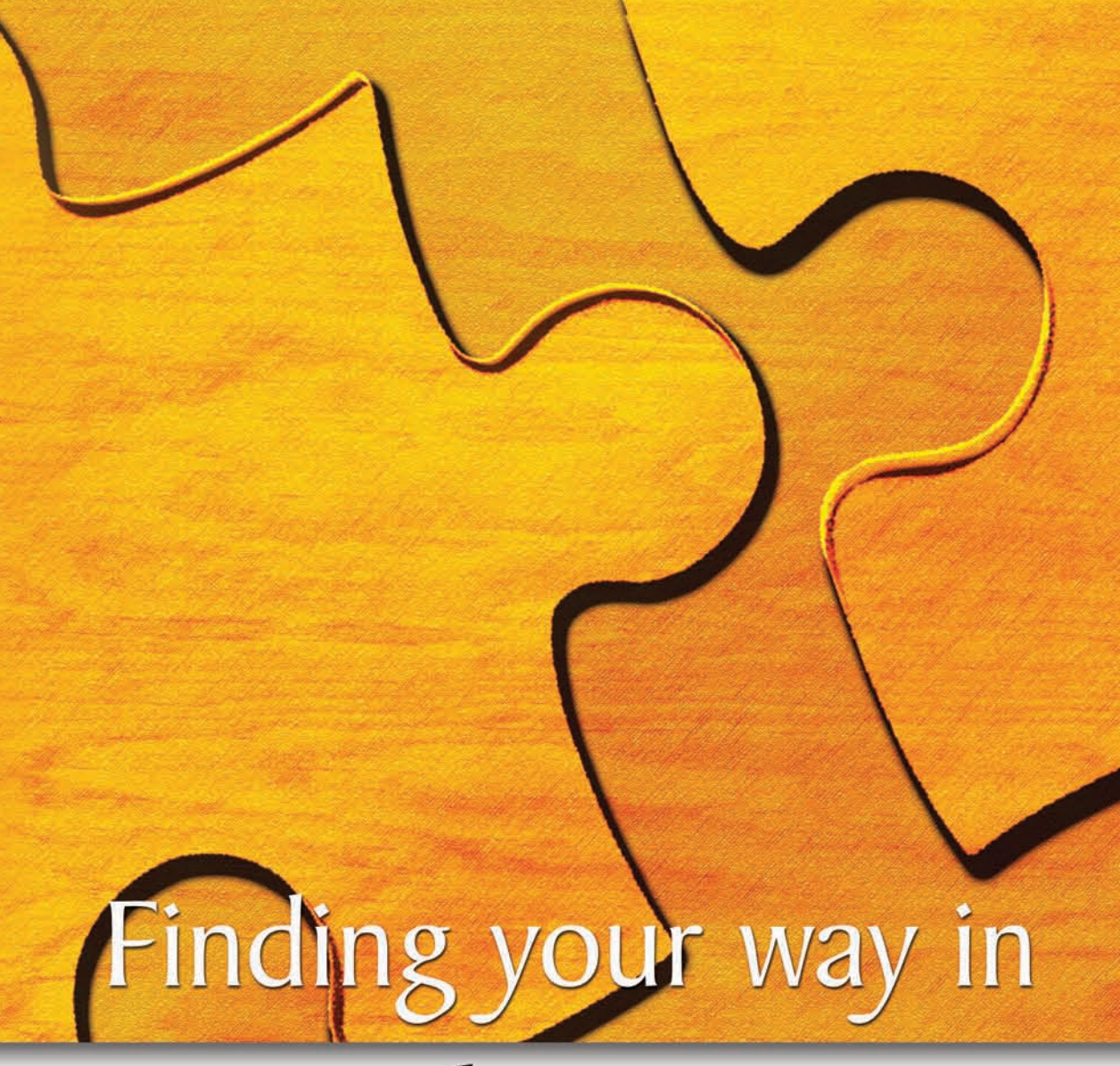


Finding your way in Academic Writing

SECOND EDITION

Elizabeth Henning
Sarah Gravett · Wilhelm van Rensburg

Academic Writing

SECOND EDITION

Elizabeth Henning

Sarah Gravett

Wilhelm van Rensburg

Van Schaik
PUBLISHERS

Published by Van Schaik Publishers
1064 Arcadia Street, Hatfield, Pretoria

First edition 2002
Second impression 2002
Third impression 2003
Fourth impression 2003
Second edition 2005
Second impression 2005
Third impression 2006
Fourth impression 2008
Fifth impression 2009
Sixth impression 2010

ISBN 978 0 627 02583 9

Commissioning editor Leanne Martini
Production Werner von Gruenewaldt
Editorial coordinator Julia Read
Copy editor Wendy Priilaid
Proofreader Danya Ristić
Cover design by Gisela van Garderen
Typeset in 10 on 13 pt Olympian by Pace-Setting & Graphics, Pretoria
Printed and bound by Creda Communications, Cape Town

Contents

List of tasks ix

Preface to the first edition x

Preface to the second edition xiii

Introduction: Using writing as performance of knowledge

The revision of the first edition – the main changes and innovations xiv
How to "read" this book: Writing is an integral part of the research process xv
Reading and research writing xvi
Writing as communicating with a community of readers xvi
How to use this book xvii

Chapter 1: Structuring the writing of your research project

1.1 Introduction: Where and how to begin and to proceed in three phases of writing composition 1
1.2 Pre-drafting: About reading, thinking, taking notes and "seeing" the problem 4
1.3 First draft: Getting the thoughts mapped 6
1.4 Revision: About re-writing and re-thinking – not just "fixing up" 7
1.5 Towards writing the introduction of a text 8
1.5.1 Beginning your paper by developing a thesis statement 8
1.5.2 Composing the introduction (and thinking of the conclusion) of a paper 12
1.6 Summary 15

Chapter 2: Investigating a topic

2.1 Introduction: A case study as an example of exploring a topic 16
2.2 Asking "the right" questions related to the topic 17
2.3 Asking different types of questions 19
2.4 Developing ideas into research problems 20
2.5 What is a good research question? 23
2.6 Summary 25

Chapter 3: Managing the search for literature resources

3.1 Introduction: Locating sources on library shelves and in electronic networks 26
3.2 Reference works: The basic "dictionaries" of a discipline 27
3.3 Journals: Getting to the edge of knowledge 28
3.4 Books: The trustworthy pillars 29
3.5 The Internet: A maze of information 29
3.6 The detail to be recorded 30
3.6.1 The citing of sources in the text of a research paper 31
3.6.2 Compiling a list of references 34
3.7 Summary 34

Chapter 4: Reading your way into academic writing

4.1 Introduction: Identifying and using texts for the writing journey 36
4.2 Different types of sources 36
4.2.1 Encyclopaedias: Condensed and concentrated 37
4.2.2 Blurbs on book covers give a quick overview 37
4.2.3 Abstracts are about the essentials 39
4.2.4 Online articles are essential 40
4.2.5 The foreword and preface of a book outline the reading road 41
4.2.6 The introduction gives us another initial guide to the text 41
4.3 Finding your route through a text: The geography of an academic article 42
4.4 Locating your own position in a text 43
4.5 Summary 45

Chapter 5: Using knowledge by making and managing notes

5.1 Introduction: Types of knowledge and the writing process 47
5.2 Selecting and recording information by taking notes in various ways 49
5.3 Paraphrasing: Rephrasing an author's text 50
5.4 Writing definitions: Defining your understanding 52
5.5 Writing memorandums or memos: Notes to yourself 52
5.6 Writing summaries: Giving the gist in your own words 53
5.7 Summary 55

Chapter 6: Organising ideas and performing knowledge at sentence level

6.1 Introduction: Writing as knowledge organisation and performance 56
6.2 A map for the writing journey – learning to "travel lightly" 57
6.3 Departing from a general statement 58

6.4 The specific destination: The main focus of a section 63
6.5 The angle of your topic: Expository and argumentative writing 64
6.6 Writing clear sentences 65
6.7 Writing an introduction: Another example of sentence construction and links 69
6.8 Connecting sentences for optimal cohesion 72
6.9 Summary 76

Chapter 7: Crafting paragraphs and other organising units of text

7.1 Introduction: From cohesive sentences to coherent, unified paragraphs 77
7.2 Paragraphs as clusters of meaning 78
7.3 Topic sentences as centres of meaning 78
7.4 Writing functional paragraphs 79
7.5 Paragraphs with a purpose and a linking function 80
7.6 Connecting paragraphs 82
7.7 Structure and content: Two sides of the coin 84
7.8 "Sticking it together" 85
7.9 Summary 87

Chapter 8: Developing an argument and an academic style

8.1 Introduction: Why academic style is more formal 88
8.2 Making a vocabulary shift 89
8.3 Sentences, paragraphs and headings in an academic text 90
8.4 Writing definitions for your own use 91
8.5 "I am writing my text" – the first person as author 92
8.6 Argument and style meet in structure 92
8.7 The conclusion: Tying the argumentative knots 93
8.8 Summary 96

Chapter 9: Writing a field study

9.1 Introduction: Telling the story of a field research project 98
9.2 Where do you begin? Presenting the background and the topic 100
9.3 Writing about the design of the inquiry 101
9.4 Presenting the work-plan 104
9.5 Telling how it happened: The details of the inquiry process 104
9.6 Writing the discussion of the consolidated data 105
9.7 Writing your interpretation and integrating theory 109
9.8 Structuring the field research section or chapter 110
9.9 Composing paragraphs with a purpose 111

9.10 In conclusion: Writing up the move from "raw data" to consolidated, interpreted knowledge 115
9.11 Summary 115

Chapter 10: Revising and editing your writing

10.1 Introduction: Revision is a multifaceted process 116
10.2 Removing and moving parts of your text 116
10.3 Revision and critical thinking 117
10.4 Revision and the reader 118
10.5 Writing composition, computers and audio recorders 118
10.6 Guiding questions for the revision process 119
10.7 Personal and academic writing: Tone and style differences 120
10.8 Is your first also your final draft? 121
10.9 Publication requirements as a guide for editing and revision 122
Using synonyms 122
Varying sentence and paragraph length 122
Avoiding wordiness 122
Being aware of gender bias 122
Using the active rather than the passive form 123
Writing numbers 123
10.10 Summary 124

Addenda

Addendum A: Abstracts of academic articles 125
Addendum B: Hypertext 127
Addendum C: Preface by Ruth Merttens to John Head's book *Working with adolescents: Constructing identity* 133

References and further reading 135
Index 139

List of tasks

1.1: Looking at the first paragraph of an introduction 10
1.2: Looking critically at an introduction 14
2.1: Writing ideas and asking questions about a topic 18
2.2: Identifying the quality of a research question 24
4.1: Practising blurb reading 37
4.2: Reading abstracts of academic articles 39
4.3: Performing an online search by hyperlinking 40
4.4: Getting to know a book 41
4.5: Answering questions about text structure/organisation of ideas 43
4.6: Finding a conclusion and the end of the argument 45
5.1: Paraphrasing 50
5.2: Writing definitions 52
5.3: Writing memos to yourself 53
5.4: Writing summaries 54
6.1: Introducing a subsection of an essay 61
6.2: Expanding on the opening statement 64
6.3: Practising argumentative writing 65
6.4: Composing precise sentences 67
6.5: Connecting sentences for a reason 72
6.6: Using transitional words and phrases 73
7.1: Topic or theme sentences as the centre of paragraphs 79
7.2: Analysing the function of a paragraph 80
7.3: Structuring paragraphs with various purposes 81
8.1: Using the language of your discourse community 91
8.2: Looking at conclusions and linking them with introductions 94
9.1: Describing the setting and background of your inquiry 101
9.2: Planning and defining your research project 101
9.3: Writing the design of your inquiry 103
9.4: Writing an excerpt in narrative form 105
9.5: Writing about the consolidated data 109
9.6: Drawing a diagram of the outline of your narrative 110
9.7: Writing a vignette 112
9.8: Writing about idea development and your data-analysis procedure 113
9.9: Writing a paragraph about drawing a conclusion 114

Preface to the first edition

Finding your way in academic writing is a book that was born from our experiences with student writing. In this book we explore ways in which students can experience writing for the purposes of learning. Our exploration takes the form of a journey – a journey in which each student who wishes to use the book will find his or her own way in academic writing.

Although we have learned a great deal from writing specialists in South Africa and elsewhere, the topics we address are directly related to research that we have conducted and experiences that we have shared in our own writing programmes and in other courses and programmes in higher education. The collective experience that has gone into writing this book has come from working with students and their writing endeavours at the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), the Johannesburg College of Education (JCE) and the Soweto College of Education (SCE), where we have taught writing and academic writing for many years.

Elizabeth Henning initiated the foundational course in academic writing in the B.Ed. (Honours) programme at RAU after many years of trying to teach writing incidentally by means of feedback instruction. She has focused on student writing and learning in her research for many years, and is presently Professor of Educational Linguistics at RAU. Sarah Gravett's interest in academic writing started when she had to write academic articles for her professional career. She has subsequently developed writing programmes for students and has co-taught the B.Ed. (Honours) module on Research and Writing Composition with Elizabeth Henning for a number of years. Wilhelm van Rensburg has worked extensively on the writing of speakers of English as an additional language. His work at the Soweto College of Education has led him to investigate the politics of writing, exploring acts of writing in a Critical Literacy paradigm. He is currently researching writing proficiency in higher education.

In learning to teach academic writing we share one major experience: our students have also been our teachers, showing us where their greatest needs are and what their resources are. One of these resources, peculiar to a genuinely multilingual country such as ours, is the skill of using many languages in learning and yet being able to transfer understanding through the medium of English. We did not include this methodology in the book, but we would like to mention it as an important component of our teaching. Our teaching of writing is thus enriched by many translations and code-switchings. It is probably the most humbling experience in the teaching of writing

conducted in English when the writing instructor hears the murmur of as many as eight languages used during group discussions.[1] It puts the teaching of academic writing into the broader South African perspective and it makes us salute our students every year – not only because they travel from far and wide to participate in our classes, but because they become committed learners of "writing to learn"[2] in a language that many of them only heard for the first time when they went to high school. Once they see that good writing is an expression of good knowledge, their writing develops rapidly and we are left marvelling at the skilful way in which our students use language and how quickly they acquire the academic literacy needed for success.

The themes of the book and the short introductory narratives preceding each chapter reflect our awareness of students' needs. We have written the book for the student who has to write up research of the literature, whether it is as a short essay, a term paper, a "take-home" exam or even the theoretical framework of a dissertation or mini research report. We have tried to indicate how research of the literature in a discipline can proceed effectively and meaningfully. The process of research and writing is circular, constantly repeating itself, and the suggested procedures are integrated.

To writing instructors who use this book, we suggest that you guide your students not only through the reading of the book, but especially through the completion of the tasks, and that you supplement them with additional, if not similar, tasks suggested by you. To students who use the book on their own, we emphasise that merely reading this book will have less effect than actively working through it. The tasks have been designed to put you through a writing course, as it were. Write down as many responses to the questions as you can and try to complete all the suggested learning tasks at least once.

You will notice that we use the metaphor of "travelling" in most of the chapters. With this in mind, we would like to point out that you learn to write well in very much the same way as you learn to drive a car and undertake journeys: you have to practise the necessary driving and navigational skills. One such navigational skill, which may also be the first that students acquire in composing a good research essay, is acting on the understanding that good reading precedes good writing. We have also found that many students do not realise fully that the first draft is not the final one. That is why we start our book with chapters focusing on the fact that there are many phases in a writing activity and that you "read your way into writing". We then proceed to discuss ideas, give examples and suggest learning tasks that could help you to develop good academic writing skills in a systematic and integrated way.

1 In our classes we use this wonderful resource. Students bring their home language into the university classrooms and use it as a bridge to the discourse community of academic writing.

2 This is a term used by Olga Dysthe (2000), from the University of Bergen in Norway.

You will notice that we are not presenting this book as a research text, and that we use references only sparsely. There is a reason for this. We did not compose the book as an academic artefact on scholarly writing, but as a personal route we have travelled with our students and that we document for them and for other students and teachers in higher education who wish to travel similar routes. We wish you all a happy journey.

Elizabeth Henning
Sarah Gravett
Wilhelm van Rensburg
Johannesburg, July 2001

Preface to the second edition

When we revised this book we were again using what we have learned from our students to advance our understanding of academic writing. We have used the book for three years in our teaching and have also received feedback from many readers. The need for some conceptual revision was clear: firstly we learned that our short case studies at the beginning of chapters were no longer all needed. We also learned that the sequencing of the book required some attention. We have therefore restructured the order of themes and also the way in which these themes are presented in different chapters. We have, additionally, included a chapter on the writing of field research and we removed sections that we believed to be superfluous. We have added some figures and many new tasks. We trust that our revision is exemplary of the revision process in writing!

Most importantly, however, we believe we have advanced our own thinking about writing. We still see this activity as a process of knowledge making and of "thinking in print". We still emphasise the process and the iterative nature of the activity. We still believe that in looking for the right word, the right thought crystallises. We still believe that revision is inherent to good writing and that the gateway to writing is through reading. What we are adding to our own conceptual framework for this book is the notion that writing is knowledge in performance and that this performance is rehearsed and never ends in a completely final product. The final product of inquiry – the revised and edited text – is one milestone in the author's journey of investigation of and writing about the social landscape.

We wish users of this book many fruitful hours and welcome enquiries and suggestions for our own growth of scholarship. In January 2005 we will be colleagues at the newly established University of Johannesburg, where we hope to continue research in and teaching of academic writing as inquiry-based knowledge performance.

To all our students, especially those in the B.Ed. (Hons) "Writing Composition and Research" classes of 2001–2004, we say a warm THANK YOU!

Elizabeth Henning
Sarah Gravett
Wilhelm van Rensburg
Johannesburg, June 2004

Introduction

Using writing as performance of knowledge

The revision of the first edition – the main changes and innovations

In the first edition of this book, which was published in 2001, we focused on the notion of "writing as thinking and knowledge making". We wanted to emphasise that writing is not a product of thinking, but that it is a procedural part of thinking. In the written expression of thoughts, we argued, thoughts are made. After having used the book for three years with different students, we have taken the notion of thinking and knowledge making further. We now introduce the idea that writing is an observable *performance* of thinking-in-process that is rehearsed many times before the "final" product is delivered. By using the metaphor of performance we are following the direction of writing theorists (Ivanić, 1999; Lea & Street, 1999) who now say that it is in the act of writing performance that thinking becomes alive and ordered and that academic identity is constituted. Composing and revising drafts are therefore processes of both writing and thinking rehearsal – such as happens in live theatre. And as in live theatre, the persona of the actor – the identity on stage – also comes to life.

We also emphasise, in this new edition, the idea that we are in the process of putting together a puzzle about how students learn to write good academic text. The cover of this edition shows parts of a jigsaw puzzle, which for us is an image of the intellectual puzzle that one tries to solve in research and writing, and that we as writing teachers are trying to solve in our investigations into student writing. In addition to this conceptual puzzle, we are trying to show in this revised edition that we are also learning more about issues of writing – such as sequence, coherence, cohesion and overall structure as we teach, write our own scholarly texts and also *revise our book*. Readers of the first edition will notice that the structure of the book has changed. We moved and removed chapters and parts of chapters to align with our experience in using the book. We hope, by indicating this explicitly, that we perform what we say – namely that we really *revised* (see Chapter 10) the book. We trust that we are also performing our knowledge in this way.

Another new feature of this edition of the book is the inclusion of Chapter 9, which covers the *writing of a field inquiry*. The first book was intended for writers of literature research texts. After having completed the second book in the *Finding your way* series, which is about qualitative research (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004), we realised that novice researchers need an explicit guide on how to write up a field study. We could not include a

complex chapter that would be a detailed guide for a writer of a full dissertation. However, we believe that the chapter can serve as a basic guide for writing up field research.

We have been gratified by the reception of the first edition and have listened carefully to critical comments, which we trust we have taken to heart in our revision.

How to "read" this book: Writing is an integral part of the research process

When you start reading a book like this, which is about exploring tools (conceptual and technical) to enhance your academic writing, you need to think for a moment about what academic writing is, and how it links with research. An integral part of any research process is writing: for example writing up the design at the outset, keeping data records, making notes from the literature, drawing up questionnaires, keeping research journals and so on. Right at the outset of the book we also wish to make our stance on writing clear. Writing is not to be viewed as a *representation* of a writer's thinking, but as a process of thinking that uses written language, and also as observable performance of what goes on in the mind of the author (how the author uses knowledge for inquiry). Writing is thus not an externalisation of mental activity, but a direct performance of such activity.

Thus thoughts are not "converted" to writing, but are part of the process of making written text, which in its final form is a product of good thinking and of knowing. Consequently, when one conducts research by reading books and articles to obtain "data" (and also collecting data through interviews, observation or questionnaires), one prepares the mind for thinking and for writing. Thereby reading becomes a form of research and writing is also a component of research. We do not see writing as the "end product" of the research, but as a fundamental part of the process of research. As such it is performed and rehearsed until it is in final draft form, at which time it is made "public".

In this book you will read about how writing helps you to organise your knowledge (converted from literature and field/empirical data) into the type of writing artefacts that are common to academic discourse communities. You will see our own emergent argument in the book, namely that a research paper/text/article is a piece of writing that shows how the writers have neatly organised their understanding of a topic, and the view they have about the topic, in a skilfully structured artefact. The structure and the ultimate display reveal the content in a certain way.

As a student in an academic institution you need to be able to develop the type of writing that forms an essential part of the research process, namely the research report or essay, sometimes also referred to as a paper, or simply as an assignment. If you are an advanced degree student who is embark-

ing on the writing of a dissertation, you can benefit from working through this book to hone your skills of both thinking and writing.

Reading and research writing

For the purposes of this book, the notion of research is limited to finding a way to better understanding and explanation through the texts of others (literature) and a small field inquiry. Therefore, our journey through the book will focus on the management and interpretation of knowledge (data) that you have found in existing texts, published in the conventional way, or obtained from the Internet and also from a small research project in the field. We realise that the reading of conventional academic texts can be daunting for novices, as the texts are often written for a closed group of people, or a *discourse community*, with their own language, their own conventions and even their own rules of writing. We therefore urge you to be patient, and to persist in reading the books, articles and other texts until you become more comfortable with the language and the discourse conventions. That will ultimately be of more value than just the information you extract – you will absorb the writing techniques that you notice in these texts and you will sometimes adopt them without intending to.

In this way the progress you make in reading will eventually be reflected in your writing. When you finally come to the point where you have read widely on a topic, and where you feel that you have acquired the knowledge and that you have organised your understanding, you will be able to write up this understanding in a research essay or paper. The writing itself is a process of improved understanding, because you will find that as you write you understand more. That is why the renowned writing specialist, Olga Dysthe, to whom we referred in the preface to the first edition, talks about writing as learning. As you write you are not only expressing your understanding of a topic while trying to communicate it to readers, you are developing your own perspective on the topic as well.

Writing as communicating with a community of readers

A "report writer" usually sees more clearly the relationship between his or her ideas when research is written up. This is when you "see" your own perspective more clearly. When research results are arranged and rearranged, new connections and contrasts, complications and implications emerge.

Because knowledge is socially constructed, a research "reporter" engages in conversation with a community of readers, who will decide what they think of the text, based on what they already know and on what you provide for them. The writer is usually fully aware of who this community is, what they expect the writer to do for them, what they understand about the writer's concerns, how they will respond to the writer's solutions/answers

and in what forum they are likely to encounter the writer's report. A good writer is also able to position the readers to agree with his or her thesis – to persuade them to agree, or at least to consider it as reliable work even if they do not agree. But this writer has a long way to go in order to do that effectively. In this book we hope to introduce you to many of the mechanisms that will assist you in achieving this.

How to use this book

We suggest that you use the book as a reference guide, working freely from different chapters as the need arises. This is not necessarily a book to read through from beginning to end (although we expect that some readers may want to do that to get to know it – especially teachers of writing), but a book that takes you through the network of activities that surrounds academic writing. These activities are not always in the same chronological order as they appear in this book. However, if you are a novice researcher you may want to work through the book in the order that we have presented the chapters.

Each chapter was composed by a lead author, with the other partners reviewing and giving suggestions. We write in the first person plural, indicating not only the authoring team, but the community of writers in some instances as well. Elizabeth Henning is the main author and also the team's "in-house reviser".

Chapter 1 was largely composed by Sarah Gravett. She provides an overview of the structuring of a research text, showing you ways of planning your research writing route. It provides a conceptual map of the interrelated paths the research writer can take in order to get to the ultimate destination of producing a good research report. The chapter suggests three phases of writing on this path: a pre-drafting phase, an initial drafting phase, and a revision or editing phase, all of which focus mainly (but not exclusively) on the function of argumentation in a research paper. Upon your first reading of the book you may not be familiar with some of the concepts used in this chapter, but we offer it at the outset on purpose, so that you know from the start that there are at least three phases of writing in a good research essay/report/paper.[1] The chapter also attends to the writing of a typical introduction in a short text.

In Chapter 2, Wilhelm van Rensburg explores ways in which to examine a research topic. He emphasises the heuristic of asking questions of inquiry. The chapter shows you, by means of examples, how to reframe your topic by posing it as a question. The question can be asked from various viewpoints, giving the topic a different stance. Van Rensburg also shows you how to "problematise" your topic and to explore its complexities. These activites

1 You will find that we use these terms interchangeably, because different traditions in various disciplines have different conventions for naming students' writing assignments.

are all written and are some of the first research compositions with which you will engage.

In Chapter 3, Gravett guides you through some of the main points to keep in mind when looking for literature sources. She also provides invaluable guidelines on how to refer to sources when you use them in your report and how to list them in a bibliography once you have finished writing the report. The chapter also contains references to websites that can assist you in your writing and search for information.[2]

Chapter 4, lead by Van Rensburg, emphasises reading as the gateway to writing academic texts. The central argument is that the discourse of the texts can assist you to develop not only your knowledge but also your writing style and sense of structuring text. He shows how meta-reading is a way of raising your awareness about writing academic texts.

In Chapter 5, Elizabeth Henning continues with the theme of reading and now focuses on how to start the research writing process by making different types of notes. But first she introduces an epistemological notion, namely different types of knowledge and how they are related and integrated in research. She then continues by showing that reading and note-taking are ways of making and organising knowledge. Readers learn to paraphrase, and write definitions, memorandums and summaries.

In Chapter 6, Henning takes you further on the research writing journey. In this chapter, skills are sharpened, specifically those of organising ideas and writing sentences – the basic components of thoughtful and harmonious writing. In this chapter the learning tasks will be increased, and you will be encouraged to complete them all at least once. You will also find that, although the material we provide for your exercises is relevant to Education and related disciplines, they are not so specialised that students from other disciplines will find them difficult to work through.

Henning attends to the writing of paragraphs in Chapter 7. She examines the characteristics and the purpose of different types of paragraphs, including those that are expository, argumentative, narrative and descriptive. The composition and the linking of paragraphs are presented as central to the coherence and the harmony of a text.

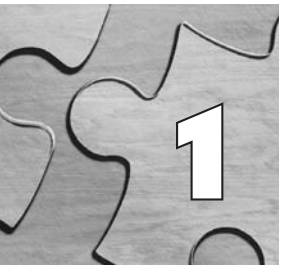
In Chapter 8, Gravett and Henning suggest more tools for developing good academic writing skills. The chapter proposes a suitable style to adopt in your writing, showing how you can nurture your own academic writing style, while at the same time adopting the conventions of the discourse community for which you write. The chapter also suggests ways in which you can advance a good argument by organising smaller units of your report into a coherent whole, paying attention to sections and subsections of a larger unit of writing. The authors close the chapter with suggestions on how to write the concluding part of a text.

2 You will note that the authors mentioned in the tasks are not captured in the list of references, as most of them do not write about writing and knowledge making.

In Chapter 9, Henning introduces a framework for writing up a field research project. She proposes that the sequencing of this type of writing is important and that detail of the process of design and of the processes of the field research itself need to be included. She also suggests that ample examples of data and of ways of analysing data should be included in the writing. She does this by means of examples of writing from two research case examples.

In Chapter 10, Gravett writes about revision and editing, and she shows that revision is an inherent part of the ongoing composition process. She takes the reader back to the first chapter, in which the three phases of the writing process were introduced, and shows that redrafting is ongoing. The chapter also provides suggestions for editing and for polishing the final product. The book is concluded in this chapter.

While you work through this book, we trust that you will agree with us about the proposition that writing is also knowledge "in performance". We have come to the conclusion that this second edition is evidence of that too. We are presently performing our understanding of academic writing for you, the reader. However, although this book seems like a "final, revised and edited product", in some ways it is not. It is just another stepping stone in the continuing search for understanding what academic writing is. Performance is thus also under constant revision, because the very goal of academic writing is to nurture more inquiry and to ask more questions. For us this book is another question that may pave the road to more inquiry and understanding of academic writing. In dialogue with our students and other readers we will see the book in action and hopefully find more challenging gaps in our knowledge.



Structuring the writing of your research project

The objectives of this chapter are to help you to

- create an awareness of the processes and phases of research project writing
- prepare for the rest of this book
- emphasise the relationship between reading, thinking and writing as components of research
- compose the introductory paragraphs to your research report/paper
- identify a thesis and state it as your point of view
- provide your readers with a signposting system, advising them on how you are going to organise your text.

1.1 Introduction: Where and how to begin and to proceed in three phases of writing composition

We often ask students to share with us how they approach the writing of an assignment, research paper or research report based on research of the literature. We also ask lecturers to share their experience of students' writing. The students tell us that they find it difficult to write a research paper and that they are not always sure how to approach it. Furthermore, even though they put in a lot of effort and time, they are often disappointed when receiving the paper back, because lecturers write comments such as: "Incoherent writing"; "What is the point that you are trying to make here?" or "You are just giving a collection of information". Lecturers tell us that many students' research papers do indeed indicate that the students have consulted relevant literature. However, the papers often consist simply of pieces of information "glued" together. Many students do not seem to be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the topic within a developing and coherent argument. Unfortunately many students still copy directly from their sources, usually due to lack of trust in their own writing performance.

We are presenting this book to help students to enhance their writing composition skills in an academic context. The main objective of the book is to present signposts that students can use to help them plot a route for their academic writing endeavours. We hope that the diagram we provide in this chapter and which we explore in detail in subsequent chapters will provide

you with a "travel guide" to make the journey of research report writing more straightforward. We begin with an overview of the route we suggest you take when writing a paper based on literature research. This includes the writing of short assignments, conceptual essays or research papers, and longer research reports based on literature research. We also include (Chapter 9) a specific guide on how to write up field research and how to integrate it with the rest of the text. In the preceding chapters, however, we focus mainly on the way to investigate a research topic and how to write your research of a literature review.

Even though one can distinguish between different types of academic writing, this book focuses mainly on writing in which information gathered from literature sources is arranged and developed in the form of an argument, and how field research evidence is incorporated where empirical work is a requirement. We are therefore focusing on persuasive writing – a genre that requires you to rationally and logically try to persuade your readers that your investigation is reliable and your findings valid. To this end argumentation is used as the primary writing tool. Developing an argument in a research paper implies, *inter alia*, that a central idea (or a thesis) is explored and argued with evidence to back it up, or that a case is presented for a particular point of view. It also implies that the paper is logically and purposefully constructed, leading the reader step by step to a conclusion in which a sense of "completion" is provided consistent with the evidence and arguments that have been presented (Creme & Lea, 2003).

In Figure 1.1 (p. 3) you will see a diagram that displays the main processes involved in planning and composing a research paper. This diagram is based on research findings about how experienced writers plan and compose academic texts. In this chapter we use this diagram as a type of template for our discussion on planning. It is a tool you can apply throughout this book by asking yourself: "Where am I in the process of planning or composing in the activity I am engaged in at the moment?".

Note that as we attempt to explain the diagram it might seem that the process of planning and structuring a research paper is linear, moving from one stage to the next. This is not the case, however. The procedure you follow is recursive and iterative, as the diagram in fact suggests. This means that when you write a research paper you move backwards and forwards between the different writing stages and that you revisit the stages frequently. Writing a research paper is not a process of gathering ideas and information and then arranging them on paper. Writing is a tool for thinking, and the writing of a research paper implies a process of composition, construction and reconstruction (Fabb & Durant, 1993). Writing is *using knowledge* that has been constructed/cultivated in inquiry – it is a form of performance and of demonstration more than of representation of what you think. In writing you do not express your thinking – you are using the act of writing as a thinking mechanism! In other words, through writing about

your topic, you not only consider and clarify your thoughts relating to the topic, you also generate new thoughts and lines of thought in the very act of composition. You also do not "arrive" at a perfectly formed research report in one draft. Each piece of writing you do provides scaffolding that allows you to gradually construct and compose the paper (see, for instance, in Chapter 5 how note-taking assists in creating your research outcome). However, these activities do not happen in a linear fashion, because as one is writing one section it often implies that one needs to modify and revise other sections.

What follows is a summary of the process that we suggest you follow when planning and subsequently writing a research paper. This summary provides an overview only, and as you progress through the book you will explore the phases in more depth. We divide the process of planning and composing into three phases, namely a *pre-drafting* phase, an *initial drafting* phase and a *revision and editing* phase. They are all equally important.

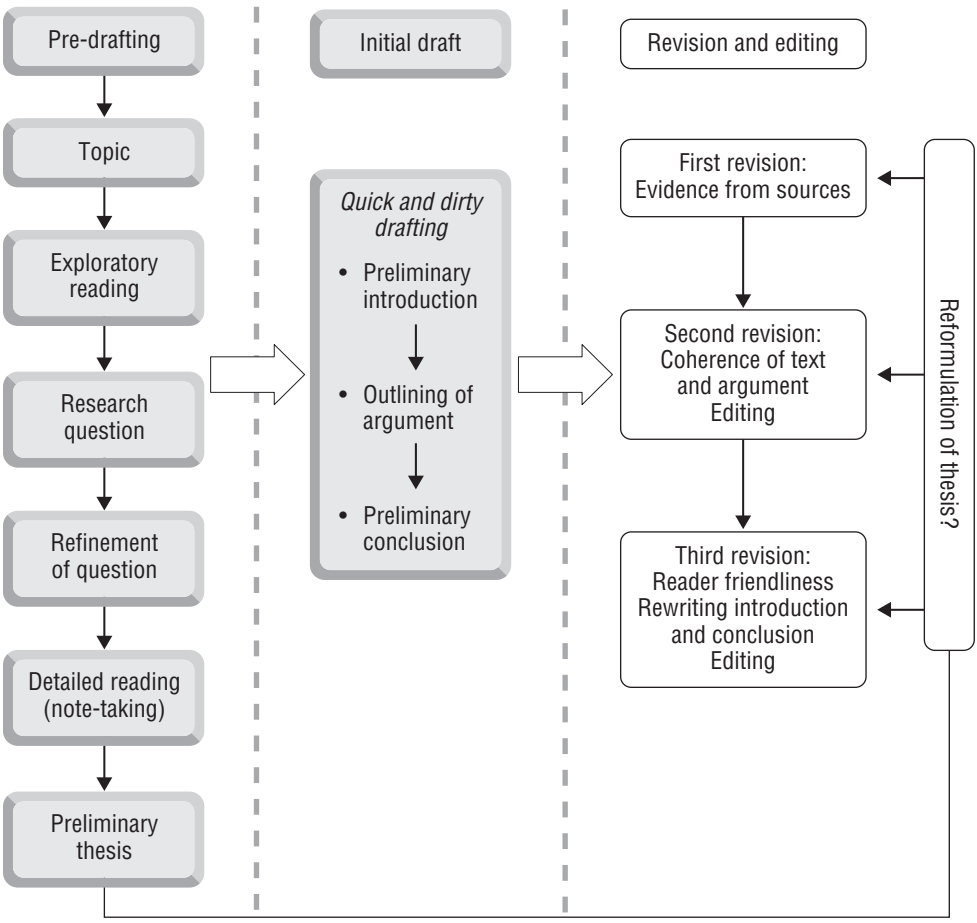


Figure 1.1 Writing stages in composing a research paper

1.2 Pre-drafting: About reading, thinking, taking notes and "seeing" the problem

When you are engaged in literature-based research as part of your studies at an academic institution, your lecturer either provides you with a specific research topic, or gives you the freedom to pursue a topic that interests you within your specific field of study. If your lecturer provides you with a topic or question, the first step to take is to translate it into your own words. This reformulation will help you to make sense of what is expected of you. Another way to start after either having identified a topic that interests you, or having received a topic, is to "problematise" the topic, or formulate it as an issue or problem to be solved. This implies that you generate questions about the topic, eventually choosing a specific, meaningful and significant question inspired by the topic to guide your research. Posing many questions initially helps you to find clarity about different ways in which the topic can be conceived and approached (see the case example in Chapter 2). It also helps you to ascertain what you already know about the topic and which lines of thought about the topic particularly interest you.

In the example of writing about school-entry learning in the second example of writing in Chapter 8, the topic is "Problems that young learners may face upon school entry". Now, when thinking about this topic, not only does one have to pay attention to what one knows about the topic from experience, but one also has to look at how deeply the topic has been covered in the literature. It is important to read about the topic to find out what problems prominent authors in the field have identified. This is what we mean by "problematising" – searching for different viewpoints and trying to see the phenomenon addressed in the topic theme from various sides or angles. The type of questions that you may generate after you have read initially will guide your further reading and will help you to make notes for your research paper. Sometimes lecturers complete the step of converting a topic into a question for you in that they provide a question about which you are required to write a paper. Still, you need to problematise the question before you can adopt a stance. You will read more about this in Chapters 5 to 8, where you will find ideas about how to position yourself, or find a point of view from which you will discuss, analyse and argue in your paper. In the case of the topic on early school learning that we have just referred to, you will see in Chapter 8 that we opt to focus on the change from non-formal to formal learning, adopting the view that it is one of the barriers to learning that is often not recognised when learners of school-entry age are considered. We thus opt for a specific view on school-entry learning and ask research questions to guide our reading, our note-taking and our writing, all three of which constitute the research process.

The posing of a research question remains crucial. A question helps you to establish what you already know about the topic, to narrow it through

"drawing boundaries" round the topic and to focus on collecting information (data) in the literature that will help you to address the problem, and to put forward conclusions that you draw from the data that you have presented. More importantly, the main question also serves as the starting point of the *research argument* that you are going to present in your research paper. Although argumentative writing is not the only form of academic writing, it is, we believe, most certainly the main one, because you want to explore ideas with a view to *persuading* your readers to attend to what you have to say even if they do not necessarily agree with you. This type of writing is also known as *persuasive writing*.

We hope that by now you have gathered that the composing of a research paper does not involve accumulating information about a topic from relevant sources and then patching the information together in the research report. You need to develop an argument in the paper in which you advance a particular *point of view (thesis)* in response to the research question. Let us revisit the example of early school learning. In this example we have adopted a specific point of view, namely that the change from home learning (non-formal) to school learning (formal) is a serious barrier to learning for many young learners. In the rest of our research paper we will cite "evidence" from the literature which will enable us to debate this point of view and from which we will ultimately draw a conclusion.

Yet it is not easy to adopt a point of view if you have not made sure that there will be some literature from which to derive your evidence. Although you may think that you have read enough, it is always advisable to consult some more sources that could illuminate your research question.

After posing the research question, you need to do *exploratory reading* by skimming relevant contributions in subject encyclopaedias, academic textbooks and articles in journals. You will now read with a specific theme in mind, and you will discard material that cannot help you to address the main research question. Exploratory reading often leads you either to formulate an alternative question pertaining to the topic, or to refine the research question.

When you are satisfied that you have posed a meaningful question that is worth pursuing, and that the point of view that you have started to cultivate will resonate well with the literature and will also lead to interesting counter-evidence to use in debating some points, you need to do *in-depth reading* by focusing on a few key sources that you have identified while doing exploratory reading. In-depth reading for research purposes implies the making of notes (guided by the research question) in the form of *definitions of key terms* (in your own words), *memos*, *summaries* and *paraphrases*. In Chapter 5 we will explore the issue of note-taking in research reading in more depth.

Another early warning that we would like to sound relates to the making of bibliographical notes of all sources used. You should immediately record

the bibliographical references of every source. This is the information about the source that you will need when acknowledging the ideas from the source, thus avoiding plagiarism. The way you record this information depends on the style conventions that your discipline applies. In Chapter 3 some guidelines for citing and referencing literature sources will be discussed.

After you have explored the topic, problematised it and posed a main research question, you should start to suggest what you think a possible "solution" to the problem could be. You are putting forward a tentative *thesis statement* when you know enough about the topic to defend the point of view that you have adopted. Thus you are ready to say what you think about the way in which the research question should be addressed. You are airing your opinion, based on the tentative information you have. In the rest of the paper you will explore your opinion and gather more evidence for the argument you are proposing. At this stage you will probably be nearly ready to write your first draft.

1.3 First draft: Getting the thoughts mapped

The second half of this book is mostly about the first draft. At this stage we would just like to make you aware of the fact that the first draft and the planning phase (the pre-draft, which is captured in the first half of the book) are closely related. You cannot start writing if you have not read comprehensively (widely, and in depth as well, once you have found the really good sources) and if you have not constructed a "data bank" of relevant information. In a later chapter we refer to this "bank" as a *master/main list of themes*.

There is no one correct way to approach a first draft. However, many experienced writers write their first draft without editing (not worrying about correctness of style and grammar). The advantage of doing "quick and dirty drafting" (Booth, Colomb & Williams, 1995: 65) is that you can concentrate on outlining the argument that you want to present in the paper without being distracted by detail or "quality control". The disadvantage of trying to be too precise in terms of formulation, grammar and logic during a first draft is that it can "inhibit your ideas to flow freely and your language to develop" (Creme & Lea, 2003).

A good way to start a first draft is to first write a short synopsis consisting of your proposed thesis statement and a summary of your paper's argument. Fabb and Durant (1993) suggest that you approach your synopsis as an answer to somebody asking you what you are writing about. Such an answer will have to be "short, coherent, and sufficiently interesting to hold the attention of a listener who does not have to listen to you" (Fabb & Durant, 1993: 24).

When doing the "quick and dirty drafting" you start by formulating a working introduction in which you state your research question and initial

thesis (central idea of the paper), working on the writing principle known as the "general-to-specific" mechanism (see Chapters 6 to 8 for discussion about the use of this mechanism). Then you continue to write the central argument until you feel that the target reading audience will follow what you have said and that you stand a good chance of persuading them that you have a good point. Finally, you draw an initial conclusion from the argument and you "test" your conclusion by comparing it with what you have said in the synopsis and introduction. Do you conclude something about the issue that was raised in the introduction? Did you follow the logic suggested in your synopsis?

Another way of approaching the first draft is to first write a one-page procedural plan describing what you intend to do in the report and the sequence in which you plan to write it (Fabb & Durant, 1993). Thereafter, write your synopsis, followed by the "quick and dirty" first draft.

Some writers prefer to start with an outline after having written the brief synopsis. One could do this by writing a short introduction and then identifying a few preliminary headings in the form of main points to mark the major structure or sections of the paper (Huff, 1999). One then uses these headings as an initial skeleton that is "fleshed out" while drafting the paper. Fabb and Durant (1993) suggest that it can be beneficial to prepare for the first draft by first writing each main point of the argument on a separate card and then physically arranging and rearranging them, mentally joining the points with a linking commentary. In doing this one tries to establish logical or structural relations between points. Questions such as the following can be helpful: "How do I link this point to the next?"; "Why must I address this point before addressing another?".

1.4 Revision: About re-writing and re-thinking – not just "fixing up"

If you want to write well you should be prepared to write several drafts and revise each carefully. Once you are reasonably satisfied with the outline of the argument in your first draft, you can start focusing on *developing the argument* by introducing more *evidence* to support your thesis (and also evidence that opposes your point of view). Evidence consists of ideas (research data) from sources that you organise coherently to explain and support the thesis and to address counter-arguments. Remember, however, that the argument will very likely change while you are developing it, because the process of writing helps you to clarify your thoughts and to generate new ideas. There is indeed a reciprocal relationship between writing and thinking (Huff, 1999). One's ideas are rarely well articulated until they are written down and rewritten. It is in the performance of writing that thinking is reflected. Booth et al. (1995) rightly assert that writing is "thinking in print". Furthermore, when one is working on the first draft one tends not to focus on the needs of readers, because the first draft really serves to clarify the

research argument for oneself. You should start thinking from the viewpoint of a reader in subsequent drafts. Remember, writing is different from speaking. When speaking to somebody the person listening can tell you if he or she is not following, or can ask clarifying questions. But readers cannot ask for clarification or elaboration (Fabb & Durant, 1993); therefore your writing must lead readers logically and clearly towards a particular outcome (the conclusion). Such clarity is rarely achieved in one or two drafts.

Thus the purpose of later drafts is to expand and refine your argument, work on clarity of expression, establish cohesion and coherence so that the paper makes sense as a whole text, and ensure correct grammar and punctuation. The rest of this book will assist you to experiment with ways to achieve these, and to do so in your own personal style of academic writing.

Once you are satisfied that you have presented a convincing research argument, with descriptions, discussions, analyses and other structures in the body of the paper, you will probably want to rewrite the introduction and conclusion, and assign headings and sub-headings to sections of the paper. These headings will consist of inductively derived phrases or words and will encapsulate what you have said (see Chapter 8). In the same way, you need to give your paper a title that captures the main idea that you have developed in the paper. Consequently, the title will reflect the thesis statement.

1.5 Towards writing the introduction of a text

As indicated, the introduction (and the conclusion) are finalised only when you are satisfied that the paper has explored your thesis statement convincingly and that there is overall coherence. However, you need to consider your introduction and conclusion early in the writing process as the thesis statement, which is placed in both the introductory and concluding sections of your paper, is central to an argumentative research paper. This does not mean that you are already affirming your thesis at the outset – it means that you are thinking structurally about your text and you see "goalposts" towards which you are writing.

1.5.1 Beginning your paper by developing a thesis statement

One of the characteristics of a good research paper is that the authors do more than merely discuss or "cover" a topic in a paper, sharing facts and other information. They explore a thesis by either explaining the thesis statement (expository or explanatory writing) or constructing a research argument (argumentative writing). This implies that in your paper you have to focus on a central idea, which becomes a point that you want to explore and argue logically, based on evidence from the literature and also on the evidence from a field inquiry if this is applicable. This central point that you are going to develop is known as your *thesis*.

Even though we pay more attention here to the role and function of a thesis in argumentative writing, a thesis statement should also be evident in expository writing. The purpose of an expository paper is to explain something to your reader. With this in mind, an expository thesis statement should tell your reader *what* you are going to explain, *how* you will approach and organise your explanation, and *why* you do it in this way. In an argumentative paper or research report, the thesis forms the thrust of your argument and "answers" or addresses the question(s) or problem posed by your paper.

A thesis has the following functions:

- It helps the writer focus on the topic, guiding his or her exploration of it.
- It serves as a unifying idea establishing coherence in that it provides the unifying thread between longer sections of information.
- It becomes a "hook" onto which the writer can "hang" sub-theses that present evidence in support of the main one.
- It guides the reader with regard to the scope and development of the paper.
- It assists in establishing the "problem-solution" mechanism of academic writing, because it contains the problem or issue that is explored and alludes to a way to address it to arrive at a solution.

A thesis can be stated explicitly in one or several sentences, or inferred – not stated explicitly – and left to the reader to deduce (Waddell, 2001). The thesis should be clearly defined or, in the case of an inferred thesis, clearly definable, that is a reader should be able to discern the thesis from the available information. We suggest that novice writers state the thesis explicitly and that it is placed in the introduction section of the paper, that it is referred to throughout the paper, and reiterated and affirmed in the conclusion.

Some writers choose to delay the statement of the thesis until they are ready to write their conclusion. We advise you not to do this. We agree with Booth et al. (1995) that when locating the main point only in the conclusion, the social contract you make with readers is that you as author are in control. By contrast, when you state the thesis in the introduction, you tell readers where you are taking them, thereby respecting their autonomy. You also facilitate communication with readers in that you provide them with signposts to help them navigate your text.

As the thesis is usually stated in the introduction of a completed paper, it might give the impression that writers first need to "find" the thesis of their paper before they can start composing it. You will have gathered by now that this is not the case. In the initial stages of the drafting of a research paper you ask questions about your topic, eventually deciding on a specific question, or set of questions, to guide your research. You then engage in substantial reading regarding your topic, guided by the question you posed

about the topic, noticing patterns of ideas emerging from different sources, most of which you have now documented in your list of themes (see Chapter 5). Based on these ideas you can then write a preliminary trial thesis statement to sharpen your focus and guide your decisions with regard to what to include in the paper. This preliminary thesis statement is usually an informed guess about what you will finally state as the main point of the paper. Remember, a point is a converted and evaluated fact. Making a point is to take a position with regard to the information you have read.

If you find it difficult to come up with a working thesis statement, you might begin with a *purpose statement* to get yourself going. A purpose statement is one or more sentences that announce the topic and suggest the structure of the paper, for example: "This paper examines ..."; "The aim of this paper is to ..."; "The purpose of this paper ..."; "This paper describes ..."; "This paper analyses ..."; "In this paper I report on ...". You can, once you have refined your argument, at some point turn the purpose statement into a thesis statement. You can also start by asking yourself: "What is the main point I want to discuss?"; "What is the main point that I want to *make*?"; "What do I need to include in my paper to make this point clear to the readers and to substantiate this point?". As mentioned, the thesis statement that you begin with is not final. You will probably be able to write the final one only once you are satisfied with your argument and have drawn some conclusions.

The process of moving from a topic to a thesis statement is depicted in Figure 1.2 (p. 11).

By way of an example, we now examine the introduction of a paper, *Democratic school governance*.

Task 1.1: *Looking at the first paragraph of an introduction*

Read this introduction and then answer the questions that follow.

Topic: Democratic school governance

Issues surrounding democratic school governance are currently frequently debated in South African education circles. However, these debates are often fruitless because there does not seem to be a shared understanding of what democratic school governance entails. In this paper I will make the case that democratic school governance essentially comprises participative collaboration and shared decision making involving all stakeholders such as parents, learners and educators. I will also problematise the notion of "participation". In presenting this argument I will first discuss different perspectives on and the rationale for democratic school governance. This will be followed by a discussion on the implementation of democratic school governance. One part of the essay will include the function of novice educators and their role

in governance, indicating that their voices are an important component of stakeholdership. The last section of the paper will allude to the challenges facing South African schools in successfully implementing democratic school governance, and how present research in the country still lacks meaningful findings.

- What is the main point (thesis) of this paper?
- Circle the words that indicate that this paper will not merely be an accumulation of information, but that it will present a research argument.
- We have argued the importance of stating the thesis in both the introduction and the conclusion. Read this introduction again. What else, apart from the thesis, should be included in an introduction?
- Suggest a title for this paper. (Note that only a topic has been provided for the example above.)

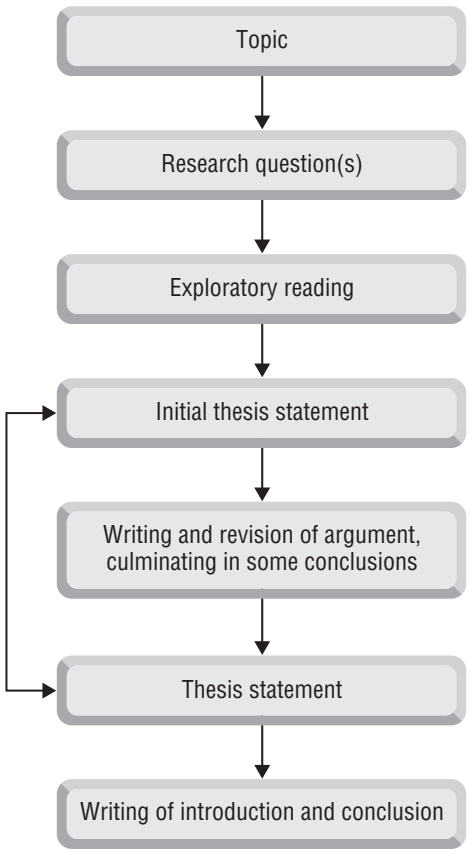


Figure 1.2 Moving from an initial thesis to a final thesis

1.5.2 Composing the introduction (and thinking of the conclusion) of a paper

There is no single correct way of writing the introduction and conclusion of a paper. However, these two structural components have a typical function. They form the "frame" of a paper by delineating its focus and scope. The introduction generally orientates and states intent while the conclusion recapitulates and closes the argument by stating the conclusions drawn from it. The introduction (and conclusion) may consist of one paragraph in a short paper or several paragraphs in a longer paper or whole sections in full dissertations. In our examples in Chapters 6 and 8, we suggest at least three paragraphs to introduce a topic in an essay of more or less 2 000 words.

Most writing theorists agree that an introduction of a scholarly paper generally consists of three parts (Bean, 1996). In our work with students at Honours and Master's level we have found that this is a viable structure because it helps the writer to focus explicitly. The first part, which is often the most comprehensive, introduces the reader to the problem that the paper addresses by locating it in a relevant background or context. This part usually presents background on the problem, moving from general statements to more specific ones. One can also briefly mention previous scholarships that have addressed it, or refer to current policy or scientific news in the domain.

The following are useful phrases to introduce opening statements that invoke the broader, more general context of the problem.

Recently, there has been growing interest in ...

The possibility of ... has generated wide interest in ...

The development of ... is currently a widespread problem in ...

Current developments in ... have led to the hope that ...

The ... has become a favorite topic for analysis.

Knowledge of ... has great importance for ...

The study of ... has become an important aspect of ...

A central issue in ... is ...

The ... has been extensively studied in recent years.

Many researchers have recently turned to ...

Much recent research on ... points to ...

Many recent studies have focused on ...

The relationship between ... has been investigated by many researchers ...

Source: Adapted from Swales and Feak (1994: 179)

In the second part (this can be in a second paragraph) the context is narrowed and made more specific, bringing the disciplinary focus closer to the research topic. If you were assigned a specific topic and the topic seems broad or general, this is the place to explain how you are interpreting it in order to delineate it more clearly. You can now write about the social context as well as the theoretical context. This means that you will introduce references to literature and to documents such as policy papers.

One thing we have not yet explored, although we have alluded to it, is *signposting* or *blue-printing*. This type of pre-organising or advanced organising of the reading is included once you are sure that the readers have been introduced to your research problem, and have read how you have problematised it and how you have placed it in some theoretical context. Now you can tell them what is going to *follow* and how you are going to *structure* the rest of the essay. You also tell them why you are writing your paper the way you are doing it. For example, some papers may make use of extensive descriptions of case studies from research and the readers need to know why this is essential. In another paper the author may want to explain why he or she uses many tables and diagrams as evidence. Readers remain engaged if authors "talk to them directly" about the way the paper will be going. In terms of our travel metaphor, it is as if someone is giving you a specific map with some extra details. Although it will not be possible to give a complete signposting in the pre-drafting phase (as you will have to complete the essay before you can give the final indications of what is to follow), you can present the outline that you have put together from your review of literature.

The final part of the introduction thus gives the reader an overview of the paper by forecasting its structure. Here are a few examples: "First, I will show ..."; "The second part of the paper explores ..."; "In that subsection I will provide some definitions ..."; "The following section will analyse the two cases reported in ..."; "The findings in the main publications of Letlape (1998; 1999) are compared with ..."; "Finally I argue ..."; "I then present the conclusion of this paper, namely that, despite evidence to the contrary, there is also substantial research to show that ...".

This "forecast" is a very important organising structure and will be of great benefit to the readers. During your revision work you need to make sure that these signposts are clear and that the reader is assisted in this way.

In summary, according to Creme and Lea (2003), the introduction may

- give the background or context of the topic to be explored in the paper
- present the thesis or central unifying idea of the paper
- forecast the structure of the paper through signposting
- provide brief reasons for forwarding a specific point of view
- explain how the topic will be interpreted

- introduce the question(s) the paper will be addressing
- relate the paper to other work in the field (previous scholarships)
- present a concrete example which the paper will analyse, explain or elaborate upon
- provide the theoretical framework that will be used to interpret findings of a field inquiry.

Task 1.2: *Looking critically at an introduction*

Read the following introduction and answer the questions below.

The characteristics of adult learners: Implications for teaching

Introduction

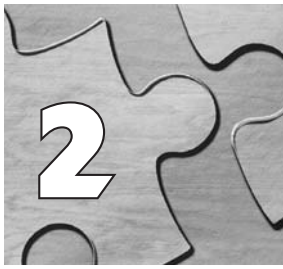
Much has been written in the adult education literature about the characteristics of adult learners. Accordingly, many "lists" of characteristics exist depending on the research background and/or theoretical orientation of the authors. Based on the literature that I have consulted (see for example Long, 1990; Vella, 1994; Tennant & Pogson, 1995), I have extracted three characteristics that I believe are core ones of adult learners because they seem to encompass many of the "smaller" characteristics that are mentioned in the literature. I argue that a sound understanding of the core characteristics I have identified will enable adult educators to design meaningful learning events for adult learners. The focus of this paper is thus to explore these characteristics and their implications for the teaching of adult learners. This will be done by firstly explaining the three characteristics. I will then show the practical implications of each characteristic for the design and implementation of learning events.

- The author does not state the research question (problem) that preceded the thesis in this introduction. One could, however, reconstruct the question based on the information contained in the paragraph. State what you think this question might have been.
- If you had to write a conclusion for this paper, what information would you include?
- Provide reasons why you think the title of the paper is suitable or unsuitable.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has given an overview of the main phases of writing a research report or paper. Our emphasis has been on the fact that there are many phases in composing such a text and that the first draft is by no means the last one. We also stressed that you need to know a topic well in order to be able to write about it and to present it in a problematised and complex manner, which is what one is expected to do in higher education. In your paper you need to show the readers that you are a true inquirer, and do not simply take other texts at face value. If we had to select a "thesis statement" for this chapter, it would probably be: "A research paper, based on literature research, is composed as a result of comprehensive reading in order not only to put forward a point of view, but also to reveal the complexity and the problematic nature of the topic."

Investigating a topic



The objectives of this chapter are to help you to

- investigate a topic in a rigorous way
- explore ways of asking illuminating research questions
- use the research questions as guiding mechanisms in both reading and writing.

2.1 Introduction: A case study as an example of exploring a topic

We often express concerns about issues in our working lives and/or our professional practice, or we want to explore ideas about what we do in a more systematic way. This chapter is about investigating those concerns, issues and ideas more rigorously by converting them to problems and questions to be researched. By way of an example, this chapter looks at a case study: a student's investigation of the topic of *initial reading* and the way in which she relates her real-life experience in the classroom to the research that she has conducted on reading.

The case: A student relates her research to real-life experience

Nomsa is a postgraduate student in Education who teaches first graders at her school. She is presently systematically observing a young learner as part of her research. Although she is not studying Mpho in a field inquiry, she is using this experience as a way to clarify her research topic. In the end she will have to write a paper based only on literature research. She is, however, trying to ground her thinking in her practice. She has heard from many people that when you read, it helps you to think about real instances of the phenomenon, because this anchors your reading to reality. She has been researching initial reading problems of young learners, but now she is observing Mpho to help her clarify her own conceptualisation of reading problems. Nomsa relates:

> Mpho entered the first-grade classroom unable to identify any letters of the alphabet. He could recognise his first name in print but could

not identify the letters in it. Over the first few weeks of school, learners in the class were exposed to the most frequently found words in pre-primer texts, and to letters and letter sounds. I monitored Mpho's progress, carefully noting his responses and activity in my daily field notes. "Why isn't he getting it?" I would ask myself. Early in my teaching career a colleague suggested I write down what I suspected was happening when I encountered such a situation. I began writing.

Experience had taught me that young children often learn through tactile activities. I tried introducing Mpho to the letters in his name by letting him form them with play-dough, feel the shape of sandpaper letters as I spoke their names, and write the letters with his fingers in shaving cream on the top of his desk. My efforts were fruitless.

"Could he be an auditory learner?" I asked myself. I returned to the task with renewed vigour. I secured a variety of alphabet audiotapes, colourful videos with sounds and music, and created my own letter rhyme game. I read everything I could about auditory learners. I documented every strategy I tried as I monitored Mpho's responses.

In the meantime, Mpho had picked up on two of the words taught to the class, *the* and *one*. He astounded me one day when he took an old newspaper I had brought in for an art project and circled *the* with a green marker in fourteen different places in the text.

"Why had he learned these particular words so suddenly?" I asked myself. When Mpho learned the words *she*, *ate*, *see* and *pie* within a week, the pattern was clear: Mpho most easily remembered three-letter words that ended with the letter *e*. "Was this way of learning due to a psychological predisposition?" I asked myself.

"How can one build on this small piece of evidence to facilitate better learning for Mpho?" was my next question, which set me on the path of researching my own classroom practice.

Source: Adapted from Waters (1999)

2.2 Asking "the right" questions related to the topic

In this case study the teacher-researcher had already asked herself questions about her practice of classroom teaching that would assist her in her reading and in posing theoretical questions, questions that she could try to address by means of reading about her topic: the problems of young readers.

All research usually starts with a question. Within an educational context, there might be a problem to solve, or a difficult situation might need to be explained and understood in order to be resolved. The ability to ask a good

research question is a skill. In Nomsa's case the essay topic in reading pedagogy could have been "The problems of initial reading". That is a wide topic and if you turn back to Chapter 1 you will find that the process of problematising the topic is an important phase in planning during your pre-drafting. Using a real-life experience helps you to do this. What you are doing, in fact, is demarcating a topic for possible research by problematising it. Teacher-researchers, for instance, usually identify topics such as coping with a rapidly changing educational context, ensuring quality teaching in their classes, the apparent lack of discipline in their schools and the high failure rate in examinations. All of these are potentially good topics for research because they not only suggest a need to solve a problem, they also address the urge to understand the problem in a more fundamental way.

Task 2.1: *Writing ideas and asking questions about a topic*

Write down as many ideas about the above topic as you can think of, each one making the topic more complex and problematic than it appears on the surface.

The topic we are presently dealing with is simply the reading problems of young learners. It would be so easy to list some of these problems that you have read about and to give them headings that you have found in the books you have consulted. You would then be reproducing and summarising, without defining a point of view or even getting close to problematising and defining, or formulating a thesis statement. This is exactly what good researchers do not do.

If you are struggling to identify the problem in the research topic, you may want to ask questions from different points of view, for example: "What do teachers think they can do to help young learners read well?" or "Are there social and cultural factors that impact on reading?". By way of illustration, let us return to the example at the beginning of this chapter. Nomsa wanted to know why Mpho did not seem to be able to learn how to read. Her question was rather general because virtually any reason could be given to explain Mpho's apparent inability to learn this skill.

A more informed question could focus on the psychology of reading in order to explain Mpho's learning difficulties. Or it could include the notion of individual differences in the rate of acquiring reading skills. Or it could include different theories about reading in particular and about learning in general. Nomsa's initial question: "Why doesn't Mpho learn how to read?" becomes a more focused question when she asks "What explanations and theories exist about impediments to reading?". Can you see how the real-life

example has guided Nomsa to ask good questions for a literature research essay?

Next, Nomsa can answer her own question and generate a number of factors that may be affecting Mpho's reading difficulties. She may, for example, mention Mpho's socio-economic background, the kind of reading valued in Mpho's home, Mpho's schooling history, what Mpho is able to do with a printed text, what she (Nomsa) considers "reading", and so on. In her mind she will be transferring the real experience to the literature and will then read and make notes, with Mpho and herself at the back of her mind. She will be using her experience and practice as a thinking frame or a heuristic. In the end, Nomsa could reformulate her question to read: "What socio-economic reasons can be given to account for reading difficulties?". This question is highly focused and would enable Nomsa to locate suitable literature on her topic. Her literature search would include general keywords such as *reading difficulties*, as well as more focused keywords such as *socio-economic explanations/theories*.

2.3 Asking different types of questions

Research is not only about gathering data and analysing it. It is also about understanding a problem in a more fundamental way. Certain types of research questions tend to generate good data, but not a deeper understanding of a topic.

What, for example, is different in the following two sets of questions?

- What is the number of learners with obvious reading difficulties?
- What gender distribution is evident in these problems?
- What is spent on reading material for first-graders in the province?

- Why are so many poorer children battling with reading in Grade 1?
- Why are there more boys than girls with obvious reading problems?
- Why is so little money spent on socio-economically and culturally suitable reading content material?

The first set of questions would provide accurate, detailed statistical data that might be very useful in decision making or policy formulation. The second set of questions would lead to a more fully developed understanding of problems and issues to do with initial reading. It suggests a more rigorous approach to research and a serious attempt at understanding the problems surrounding this issue in early school education. It would assist the researcher who wishes to write a good essay based on the literature.

2.4 Developing ideas into research problems

In this process a topic of inquiry is problematised – it is seen as an intellectual puzzle that can be addressed by research. The researcher now tries to see more than the problem "on the ground". She tries to see it as an object of inquiry, taking the stance of a researcher. She tries to ask herself how systematic inquiry may address this issue. That is a conceptual shift for her. It is a process of transfer and shift.

The first example about Nomsa's concerns and ideas about how to investigate a topic is the beginning of an intensive process when students want to translate ideas into research problems. This process is necessary because, in academic studies, we do not want to provide obvious, common wisdom answers to research problems, and because we have to be much more rigorous in the way we search for answers. Investigating a topic is more than just providing answers to important questions. It is to propose creative and accountable answers, and to back up our answers with reference to recent and relevant literature (see Chapter 3), and even with evidence from empirical research (see Chapter 9). Investigating a topic, in other words, includes *formulating the right research question,* or asking the best research question about the concern, issue or idea that you want to investigate. It also involves designing a suitable means to obtain the best answers to your question, and outlining the way you plan to do your research. Finally, investigating a topic is about stating your findings and discussing them in terms of the literature you have consulted, the theories you have constructed and the hypotheses you have postulated. But the beginning of the process is to ask the best possible question about the topic and to explore the initial idea as an object of inquiry.

The way to develop ideas into problems is, firstly, to find out what others have said and/or done with the topic. Secondly, you have to establish who or what you want to research. This is known as the "unit of analysis"; it is an idea that has come from the research legacy of sociocultural theory and activity theory (Vygotsky, 1978; 1992; Engeström, 1991; Wertsch, 1991; and Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 32, 71). A unit of analysis is not simply the population or the sample that you are studying. "Teachers" as an object of study is, for example, not a unit of analysis. You have to identify what it is *about* teachers that you wish to research. "Teachers' interpretation of policy" is a unit of analysis. And thirdly, you have to establish what you want to achieve. Consider the following example in terms of whether the writer has indeed investigated his topic – disciplined learning and teaching – in a rigorous way.

■ **EXAMPLE**

Although not confined to the South African education system, the breakdown of a culture of disciplined teaching and learning in secondary

schools in this country presents a problem. Despite the post-1994 radical reform of the education system, Moloi (2002: xiv) tells us that serious problems exist in many of our public schools, especially those in historically black areas. She goes on to quote Christie (1998: 256), giving as one of the consequences of this the declining Grade 12 matriculation results. Each year, the publication of these results raises the question of how they can be improved across the spectrum of participating schools. Recognition is given to top schools which produce the best results and function within a culture of disciplined teaching and learning. This is the common characteristic, whereas demographics such as previous status, resource allocation, school management, geographical location, socio-economic environment, cultural composition, level of teacher training and teacher–pupil ratio are disparate.

Before attempting to establish a culture of disciplined teaching and learning, it may be useful to define each of its components so that they are clearly understood. Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000: 34), in their article in the *South African Journal of Education,* state that discipline in education is a complex phenomenon that may evade the accuracy of a single definition. They also state that discipline in a positive sense refers to learning, regulated scholarship, guidance and orderliness. Lawrence Steed and Young (1989: 45) are also quoted as defining discipline problems as the manifestation of behaviour which interferes seriously with the teaching process and/or intensely upsets the normal running of a school. Mabeba and Prinsloo's article emphasises that researchers and educationalists agree that a safe and orderly school is necessary for learning to take place. This would support the contention that fundamental to improved results would be a disciplined environment. Defining teaching and learning is not simple. Hamm (1989: xxx) states that the concept "teaching" is inexplicable without the concept "learning". He arrives at a possible definition that teaching is an act of appropriately displaying certain subject matter with the intention that someone learns it. Learning is defined as intentionally coming to know (or believe or perform) as a result of experience. With this clarity on what it is that educators would be attempting to establish in their schools, the practicality of establishing an environment of disciplined teaching and learning must be addressed.

Creating a disciplined climate in the wider sense in order to enable teaching and learning to occur encompasses a whole-school approach. Results of extensive research conducted by Mabeba and Prinsloo emphasise that a solution to discipline problems requires that the perceptions of all parties involved in a school, i.e. the educators, learners and parents, must be taken into account. Their recommendations based on this research include an emphasis on shared decision making and rapport among stakeholders, teachers providing role models, lesson preparation enhancing discipline – importantly, the teaching of discipline in teacher training programmes – and that teachers should read more literature on discipline management skills. Pretorius (1998: 200) confirms that authority and disci-

pline are pre-conditions for effective teaching and listening. He, however, emphasises the role of the teacher as a leader and on page 203 states that it is the teacher who defines the classroom situation and that a "good teacher" is one who can achieve acceptable disciplinary objectives through pedagogically justifiable actions. Mwamwenda (1989: 313) tells us that teachers can cause children to misbehave as a result of the way in which they interact with them at school, particularly in the classroom. Covaleskie (1994) sums up Dewey's approach to discipline: Dewey's contention is that discipline in education grows out of the task itself, and that a goal-directed learner will be a disciplined one. This suggests that by appealing to the interest of the child, the teacher can foster a disciplined classroom which allows children to reach their goals consistently. Undeniably, the teacher is seen as having an influential role in creating discipline. Consequently, it is not unreasonable to expect that within a school, each classroom has the potential to become a centre of disciplined teaching and learning. I would venture to say that the expectation of a ripple effect of this classroom ethos feeding into other aspects of school life is not unrealistic.

The manner in which teachers can be empowered to transform their classrooms is the subject of the remainder of this paper. Many issues other than discipline itself will be addressed. The support given to teachers will, in each school, be determined within the constraints of the ingenuity of its school management team and the extent to which it can draw on all available resources. In order to uplift Grade 12 results, a concerted effort throughout all the grades is necessary, as matriculation results build on preceding years of education. As a starting point, the setting up of a planning unit to analyse strengths and weaknesses and to highlight areas needing attention will be discussed. The necessity of introducing the consultation with all parties, as suggested by Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000), and the manner in which this can be implemented and used to find solutions will be addressed. Carrying out a skills audit among teachers and introducing a staff development programme based on its result is an important aspect. Implementing mentoring programmes for less experienced teachers will be addressed. Guidelines for establishing cooperative workshops on discipline for all stakeholders in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the school-specific problems and to reach consensus on solutions will be given, as will suggestions for management on the provision of incentives for those teachers who increasingly act as role models for learners.

Finally, management's role in initiating and encouraging the transformation, having clearly defined their expectations, together with the critical requirements of management's leading by example, will be addressed.

The above example indicates an attempt by the writer to verbalise concerns and issues with regard to disciplined teaching and learning in the classroom. He investigates the topic by alluding to general concerns about the effects that a lack of discipline can have on schooling, and goes on to draw on the lit-

erature in order to show how the topic has been investigated by other authors. In so doing, he is slowly *articulating his own argument,* and showing the reader the way in which he is planning to use evidence in order to motivate it. This writer, it must be pointed out, has not asked a direct question, although he is thorough in his investigation of the topic. His question is implicit in his emerging argument. What would be a good research question for him to ask?

2.5 What is a good research question?

How do you know when you have asked a good research question? Firstly, if you have completed the first phase of reading on the topic you will know if your question is aimed in the right direction. You cannot make this judgement without having read widely on the topic. If there is really no information on the topic – if there are no major theories related to the question you are asking, or very few to choose from – you may want to reformulate your question. Novice researchers are not encouraged to venture into new fields. One has to hone one's research skills and be able to see the "uncharted territory" in relation to the wider social science fields. Secondly, if you have not been able to discover (for yourself) a problem attached to or inherent in the question, and have not used it to help you formulate the question, then you may want to start again. Nomsa, for example, could have asked a question that related to weak reading pedagogy, thereby shifting the emphasis from the reading barriers of young learners directly to the ineffective practices of teachers. Personally, we always advise this type of approach. Before you finally write down your question, try, just once, to ask a question that comes from a totally different perspective. In this case Nomsa could ask: "What are some harmful practices that teachers of initial reading engage in?". Try to problematise this question by reading and thinking and relating your question to practice. You will easily find a point of view and a concomitant thesis statement if you continue.

How about saying that many teachers of reading work with their own conceptions of what reading is, and then transfer those conceptions to all the learners? Thus, if a teacher thinks that reading is a complex cognitive act that presupposes knowledge of the world that is represented in the text, and that the emotional state of a young reader affects his or her ability to assign meaning to graphic symbols, then the teaching style of the teacher will reflect this. If, however, a teacher holds the view that reading is direct, linear decoding of graphic symbols, converting them into sound, and that the meaning constructed is the same for everybody, then his or her method of teaching will be totally different. Now one can put forward a point of view and say that teachers' approach to teaching reading is likely to be one of the more important factors influencing reading success, and that this pedagogy itself may be the main barrier to successful reading. Is this not much more

interesting than simply summarising information from books and articles? You are now able to write what you think (of course you are "allowed" to do this – if you do not, then the whole purpose of doing research is lost) on the basis of the systematic way in which you have problematised your topic and formulated your question, and on the literature that you will be using. You will not engage in pedantic writing without deductively, or inductively, setting out your views based on the literature that you have consulted.

Thus, asking a good question is inherently tied to problematising the topic and reading comprehensively, so that you know why you are adopting a certain stance and why you are promoting this specific thesis statement.

Task 2.2: *Identifying the quality of a research question*

Look at the following introduction to a research report and decide whether the author has asked good research questions.

The role of topicalisation in providing classroom language learning opportunities

The research for this report was motivated by my dissatisfaction about some aspects of my own teaching. As a teacher at a secondary school for four years, one of the worrying things for me was an apparent lack of learning opportunities for the learners in a lesson. It seemed to me as though the learners did not create their own opportunities for learning by, for instance, active participation in the lesson. Slimani (1987: 6) defines learning opportunities as interactive episodes in the classroom in which topics – what is being talked about in the lesson – occur (i.e. are initiated and developed and/or controlled) to such an extent that we might claim that learners could have learned them. There are, however, a number of problems with such a definition. What, for instance, constitutes a topic? How are topics developed and controlled? Most important of all, can one assume a causal link between topicalisation and learning?

Source: Adapted from Waters (1999)

- What is the topic of this research project?
- Do you think enough information is given in this short paragraph to contextualise the research topic?
- Is the topic sufficiently problematised in this paragraph?
- Are the three questions focused enough?
- Do you think they are answerable?

- Could you write questions that are more focused?
- Is there any indication of the author's thesis statement?

You may notice that in this introduction, although the author has asked a number of questions, they seem to be related to Slimani's definition of topicalisation, not to the problem the author wants to address, namely: "How do learners generate their own learning opportunities?".

This is a more focused question. It compels the researcher to look for specific instances of learner-generated learning opportunities and to record these.

A thesis statement would reflect the researcher's "answer" to the question, for instance: "In this paper I argue that unless learners develop and control topics, they will not generate their own learning opportunities."

2.6 Summary

This chapter has considered ways in which to investigate a topic in order to formulate good research questions. Every section of this chapter has been devoted to the notion of a research "question" – indicating that research is about asking questions and about a disposition of inquiry. It has suggested that different types of research questions lead to different research paths and different destinations – showing that inquiry is not linear, simplistic or singular in its aims. It has also suggested ways to ensure that you ask a good question, all of which assume that you have read widely in the field you are investigating. If you are still hesitant to start the journey, the next two chapters suggest other paths: managing the search for literature sources (Chapter 3) and reading your way into academic writing (Chapter 4).

Managing the search for literature resources

The objectives of this chapter are to help you to

- explore the ways in which you can access the right sources of the information you need
- learn the various ways of referring to the authors that you use
- find out ways of using authors' ideas and, where needed, their exact words in your text
- learn how to manage the reading and accompanying information-gathering process and keep meticulous records of sources.

3.1 Introduction: Locating sources on library shelves and in electronic networks

Once you have completed the exploratory reading, you are ready to locate literature pertinent to addressing your own research question and building up a knowledge base to assist you in developing your thesis statement. For this you need to locate relevant and trustworthy literature sources.

Unfortunately, there is no quick fix to finding good sources in the literature. You simply need to spend some time on it and you need to learn where to look, what pointers or parameters to use in your search and which sources to accept. Thus you need to learn to evaluate sources in terms of relevancy and authoritativeness. In this search you will need the guidance of a supervisor or a tutor or more experienced peers, because it is difficult to know who the respected authors in a field are without having guidelines of how to identify them. Your teachers should be able to give you the titles of respected journals and also indicate the authors that lead the field of inquiry. You need to learn how to locate the more recent novice researchers' work – usually a librarian will be able to assist you in searches.

You also need to spend time on making your sources traceable so that your readers can locate these texts if they wish to consult them too. That is why you have to be meticulous about bibliographical details. If all else fails, a reader must be able to contact the publisher to obtain the book. Luckily the Internet assists us and at www.google.com you are bound to find help if you are looking for details of an author or a text.

The obvious place to start looking for sources is the library of an academic institution with electronic connections. Such libraries, however, are often rather bewildering if you are unfamiliar with how to use them, especially if you have relocated from a different institution which may use a different catalogue system. Most of these libraries have librarians that specialise in specific fields of study. They can provide you with valuable information on how to locate sources in your particular field. They usually also present orientation courses or workshops in which you learn in a practical way how to use the library independently. We therefore recommend that you ask a librarian to assist you and that you learn to become an empowered user of libraries by enrolling for orientation and advanced search courses in your library.

In libraries of higher education institutions you will usually find a computerised catalogue which deals with material available in the library and also electronic database facilities. Examples of databases are *Education Index* (to locate journal articles on Education), *SA Studies* (for South African journal articles and dissertations) and *SA Media* (for locating newspaper articles). Full-text journal articles can, for example, be accessed through *ProQuest, Emerald* and *SAePublications*. Abstracts of articles are also freely available from most publishers, and individual texts can be purchased if necessary.

As suggested, it is essential that you learn to use the catalogues available in the library. Even then it can be disconcerting when you start your search by typing your topic in the "keyword" section and the computerised catalogue suggests 300 possible sources, or sometimes no sources, probably because your topic is not classified in the catalogue under the phrase that you typed. In this instance we suggest that you use the catalogues only once you know the names of a few authoritative authors on your topic and you are more familiar with the topic. The reason for this is that if you know the names of important authors on the topic, you can use these to launch your search in the catalogues, thereby speeding up the search. Moreover, once you have acquainted yourself with the topic, you might realise how it is connected to other topics, or listed under broader terms. For example, when searching for data about lifelong learning, sources that deal with adult education generally will also be relevant. Additionally, the concept "lifelong learning" is sometimes used interchangeably with "lifelong education" and is often also linked to concepts such as "continuing education", "*education permanente*" and "recurrent education". The more you know about your topic, the easier it becomes to search for information.

3.2 Reference works: The basic "dictionaries" of a discipline

What should you do to familiarise yourself with the topic and simultaneously find good sources? We suggest that you start your search for sources by ask-

ing the librarian to direct you to *reference works* pertinent to your field. Encyclopaedias and specialised dictionaries are particularly useful. You will find synonyms for your topic in the dictionaries that you can use later when searching the catalogues. It is a good idea to use encyclopaedias early in your search because the contributors to an encyclopaedia are usually authoritative authors and researchers in a specific field of knowledge. Once you have discovered who they are, you can try to find books and articles written by these authors. You can also use the list of references at the end of the chapter or contribution in the encyclopaedia to lead you to other sources. A further reason why encyclopaedias serve as a good point of departure is that they usually contain, in condensed form, the best knowledge in a particular field. They also provide definitions and concept clarifications pertaining to your topic. However, make sure that you consult a recent edition. Any encyclopaedia older than 10 years is outdated. This also applies to other sources, except evergreen classics and those with a historical approach.

3.3 Journals: Getting to the edge of knowledge

Once you have exhausted the encyclopaedias and dictionaries, it is time to move to journals. Ask the librarian to recommend the best journals available in the library in the field where your topic is located. For example, if you are working on the topic of school governance that we referred to as an example in the first chapter, you may use journals that are directly related to Educational Management. You may also find articles in general educational journals, but then you have to use the index to find them. Working directly with a few of the latest issues of a journal will give you a hands-on experience. You will get to know the style of the journal and find your way around it more comfortably. You will be making notes regarding the information and the bibliographical details as you search.

The librarian can also recommend which electronic databases you can use to identify relevant articles. (If you attended the library orientation course you will, of course, already know how to search for articles!) Just remember that you will also find references in the databases to articles from journals that may not be available in the library. However, many libraries provide an interlibrary loan service for a limited fee. So if you need an article that is not available in the library you can ask the librarian to try to find a copy at other libraries. In addition, many articles are also available online (electronically), as mentioned before.

Journals are important because the most recent research in a field is published in them. You are reading the knowledge at the cutting edge of research when you consult them. Furthermore, you can once more use the list of references of the journal articles to assist you in finding more sources. Unfortunately, many journal articles are dense and quite difficult

to read at the outset. The secret is to reread and to summarise the important points that you come across, trying to explain to yourself what you are reading and also how it relates to other sources that you have consulted. Writing a few memos showing how you think different authors fit within your framework is one of the knowledge management skills on which we will focus in Chapter 7.

3.4 Books: The trustworthy pillars

As already suggested, you should try to find recent books written by the top authors in the field. Once again use these to identify other sources by skimming the list of references or the bibliography in the subject index commonly found at the back of academic books. This index will show which authors the writer most often used in addressing the topic. If you see yourself as an "academic detective", you will soon find out which authors are regarded as worthwhile at a specific time. Try to refrain from using popular literature on the topic that is selling well in general bookshops. Often these books are published for large profits and you have to be careful not to base your arguments on the popular author's ideas.

When you come across a book that appears to be relevant and is fairly recent, you can also examine the contents pages and the index for words and phrases central to your topic. These you can use as keywords to do a search of the catalogue.

The main point we are trying to make is that you should adopt an attitude of inquiry while you search for sources. Discuss your selection of sources with your lecturer.

3.5 The Internet: A maze of information

A valuable resource available to researchers is the Internet. One should, however, approach information available on the Internet with caution. Remember, anybody with a little know-how can develop a web page and use it to advance their opinions, which might not be well founded. Resources from the Web might not be trustworthy – they are generally not monitored for their quality. Therefore never use information from the Web that you cannot verify as authoritative. How does one know whether an Internet source is reputable? You can trust articles that appear in refereed Web journals (i.e. journals whose papers are peer-reviewed by experts in that discipline) as well as information on websites of well-known associations and institutions in your field. In the list of suggested websites at the end of this book we provide the URLs of excellent ones that provide information on how to evaluate Internet sources.

In evaluating sources, issues such as the following are important: What is the purpose of the site and who is the intended audience? Is authorship clearly indicated? Are there references available to indicate the sources of

information? Does the author display knowledge of related sources, with proper acknowledgment? See Henning (2002) for a review on teaching critical web-reading. Use hyperlinks from respected higher education institutions as well.

It is worthwhile to visit the websites of academic institutions. Again, you can use the names of the influential writers in your field as a starting point for an Internet search. There are also useful search engines and indexes available to help you to find sources. In addition to www.google.com, we have found www.altavista.com helpful in this regard. We also give others in the list of websites. Many higher education institutions and some libraries present courses on how to use the Internet. If you have not yet done so, we strongly recommend that you get acquainted with the Internet.

The sources that you ultimately work with and include in your reference list should ideally include all the types of sources discussed above.

3.6 The detail to be recorded

It is also recommended that you keep complete bibliographical data of the sources you consult. Once you have located a source, write down all its bibliographical information. Record the following:

- **Books and encyclopaedias:** Author(s) or editor(s), title (including the subtitle if there is one), date of publication, place published, publisher, edition. If you use only specific chapters in an edited volume or in an encyclopaedia, record the page numbers as well as the authors and titles of the chapter(s).
- **Journal articles:** Author(s), date, title of article, title of journal, volume of journal, edition number, and the relevant page numbers of the article.
- **Internet:** Author(s), date, title of article, title of journal, volume and edition (in the case of an electronically published journal), URL, date of access, mention of free availability. (The American Psychological Association's website will provide you with the latest information on how to reference online articles. You can also go to one of the online writing laboratories that we list at the end of this book.)

After having located a variety of recent sources (books, journal articles, entries in encyclopaedias and perhaps even papers published on the Internet and so on), and after having done exploratory reading, you are in a good position to formulate a preliminary thesis, directing your reading towards developing this thesis. You are now ready to do detailed reading and note-taking to collect evidence to build an argument, to set out analyses of concepts and examples, and to enrich your writing with examples. A detailed set of exercises on this skill are provided in Chapter 5.

We have suggested that you meticulously record bibliographical data of all sources that you have consulted. This will help you track down a source if you need it again later. More importantly, you need the bibliographical

information to acknowledge the sources that you used for building your research argument or, to quote Booth et al. (1995: 71), to leave a "bibliographical trail". We will firstly discuss how you should cite the sources that you consulted in your text and, secondly, how to compile a list of references.

3.6.1 The citing of sources in the text of a research paper

It takes time for novice research writers to get used to the fact that they should acknowledge the source of their information, which is then interpreted and integrated with other sources and with prior knowledge to become the very knowledge that they are going to use to form their own opinions and viewpoints. To pass off someone else's work (ideas, opinions, facts and phrases from consulted texts) that you have found in sources as if they were your own without proper acknowledgement is plagiarism, a form of theft. Booth et al. (1995) explain plagiarism so well that we quote them directly. They define it as follows:

> You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else's words or ideas but fail to credit that person. You plagiarize even when you do credit the author but use his exact words without so indicating with quotation marks or block indention. You also plagiarize when you use words so close to those in your source, that if you placed your work next to the source, you would see that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow (Booth et al., 1995: 67).

How does one avoid plagiarism? Firstly, when taking notes from sources use mainly summaries, and when paraphrasing use your own sentences (see Chapter 5). Secondly, as we have already mentioned, record all bibliographical information, including page numbers, when taking notes. Then acknowledge paraphrases, summaries of ideas and direct quotations by citing the sources in the text of your paper. If you have read comprehensively and have formed a view on what you have read, you will find that it is very easy to acknowledge what you got from someone else's work. You can use sentences such as: "Although author 'Z' proposes that ..., I do not agree with this suggestion. The view of author 'X' appears to be more relevant to the context of ...". We will spend more time on how to write the sentences that form your text in Chapter 6.

You will find a variety of citation styles in books and journals. There is no single correct style for citing sources and compiling a list of references. It is, however, important that you use the style that you have chosen *consistently*. Find out from your lecturers which style they require. Examples of referencing systems are the Harvard system, the Chicago system (as discussed in the 15th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style,* published in 2003), the MHRA system (the style of the Modern Humanities Research Association) and the APA style. In this book we employ the APA style, which is

explained extensively in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001) and also on their website. We mention only the types of citations that are most frequently used by writers.

Firstly we want to mention page number referencing. It is not essential that you provide a page number when citing a source, for example if you are referring to a general theme in the source and not to a specific argument or example. When, however, you do refer to a specific piece of writing, whether you quote it directly or not you need to provide the page number. Remember, you are assisting your readers, as they may want to go to that page to read the argument or the example that you are referring to. In addition, we advise you to include page numbers when paraphrasing or summarising from sources, because in this way you are setting up a bibliographical trail for readers to enable them to trace the data that you used in the paper. Some readers may want to use this specific piece of information as well and they would like to read it in the context of the text. Although we suggest that you use quotations sparingly and judiciously, a suitable quotation that captures an idea well can contribute positively to your writing.

We are now going to discuss a few in-text referencing techniques, distinguishing between single and multiple authors and so forth.

If one person authored the source, you cite it as follows:

> Vella (1994) emphasised that educators should aim at sustaining dialogue by ...
>
> ... this is a crucial factor in establishing credibility (Brookfield, 1995).

A source by multiple authors is cited slightly differently.

When a work has two authors, always cite both names in the text as follows:

> Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) argue that dialogic educators ...
>
> ... as discussed by Elias and Merriam (1995).
>
> ... a pedagogy of liberation (Freire & Shor, 1987).
>
> (Notice that inside the brackets we change the "and" to an ampersand sign.)

When a work has three or more authors, cite all names the first time the reference occurs and in subsequent citations include only the surname of the first author followed by "et al.".

> Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) claimed that women ... [first citation in text]
>
> Belenky et al. (1986) discussed ... [all subsequent citations]

Groups of authors (e.g. associations and government agencies) are cited as follows:

> It is stated in the Policy Document on ... (Department of Education, 1998) that ...

When referring to more than one source simultaneously, it is done in the following way:

> Several studies (Merriam, 1994; Hiemstra, 1996; Caffarella & Merriam, 1997) indicated that ...

Direct quotations (using the actual words of the original text) should be enclosed in double quotation marks, or, if it is a long quotation (40 or more words), indented on a new line to form a block quotation (without quotation marks). When quoting, ensure that you note down the *exact* text. For a direct quotation in the text, give the author, year and page number(s) in brackets.

> According to Merriam (1998: 69), "Data conveyed through words have been labeled *qualitative,* whereas data presented in number form are *quantitative.*"
>
> She states that "data conveyed through words have been labeled *qualitative,* whereas data presented in number form are *quantitative*" (Merriam, 1998: 69) and she then continues to explore the difference.

As we have said before, direct quotations should be used sparingly. Use a quotation if the idea is expressed so vividly that to paraphrase it would detract from the meaning, or use a quotation by an authority on your topic to emphasise an important point that you yourself have made. The quotation should be linked to foregoing sentences and should always form part of the flow of an argument. It is best to introduce the quotation and to round it off or to link it to a preceding or a subsequent sentence. Quotations on their own can break the coherence of your writing. You need to treat them as one treats figures and tables in the text. They need to be integrated and, if required, discussed or analysed as well. Here is an example:

> Caine and Caine (1991: 58) explain the importance of invoking emotional engagement in learning as follows:
>
> > To teach someone any subject adequately, *the subject must be embedded in all the elements that give it meaning*. People must have a way to relate to the subject in terms of what is personally important, and this means acknowledging both the emotional impact and their deeply held needs and drives. Our emotions are integral to learning. When we ignore the emotional components of any subject we teach, we actually deprive students of meaningfulness.
>
> The way that emotional engagement can be facilitated is, however, not clear from the authors' suggestion. [And then you continue to analyse the words of the authors.]

If you have not consulted a source, you should not cite it, either in the text or in the list of references. Let us use an example from Chapter 10. We refer in

that chapter to Peter Elbow's view of writing as a process of meaning making. However, we did not consult Elbow. We used Bean (1996) and found information on Elbow's view in Bean. We acknowledge this as follows:

> Peter Elbow (in Bean, 1996: 20) describes the role of ...

or

> Elbow (as quoted by Bean, 1996: 20) describes this as follows: "Meaning is not" ...

As you write, using the notes you made while you were reading, you should try to keep reminding yourself that you are required to give evidence and that none of its sources should be in the least questionable. Your interpretations, your views, your opinions and your conclusions drawn from the evidence should be related to the evidence. And when readers have finished reading your text, they will want to refer to some of the sources you have used. As a gesture of scholarly courtesy you need to provide them with a complete list.

3.6.2 Compiling a list of references

Researchers use literature sources as resources. They sometimes use sources to find interesting topics to research. In addition, sources are used to refine the research question, to formulate a thesis and to find evidence for it. When presenting the evidence in the research paper the researcher leaves a bibliographical trail by citing the sources, both in the text and in the list of references.

The list of references at the end of a paper provides the information necessary for the reader to identify and track each source used in the preparation of the paper. Consequently, all references cited in the text must appear in the reference list; conversely, each source in the list must be cited in the text. Sources are listed in alphabetical order according to the authors' surnames. Once again, check with your lecturer which style of referencing you must use, then use it consistently.

3.7 Summary

Having read this chapter, you may have found that the technical skills of meticulous sourcing, and especially of citing sources in the text in an integrated way so that the flow of language is not broken, are not attained easily. As with all aspects of writing, they are perfected by practice. It is hard work because you function at two completely different levels at the same time. On the one hand you are working hard at a conceptual or thinking level, trying to organise your knowledge and express your thinking in clear language, and arguing, analysing and interpreting as you go along. On the other hand

you have to remember to write names of authors, dates and pages – purely technical stuff!

Our advice to you is to get the thinking down on paper first, and then, immediately after you have rounded off the exposition of an idea, to fill in the technical details before you continue with the next conceptual, generative activity. That way, you can focus on generating ideas and language without being diverted by technical issues. When you then focus on the technical issues, you can give them the necessary amount of attention as well.

Reading your way into academic writing

The objectives of this chapter are to help you to

- explore research reading from different angles
- find suitable texts for research
- find your way through a text
- identify topics for research while reading your way into research writing
- develop academic reading strategies
- do preliminary writing for research, such as taking notes and making summaries.

4.1 Introduction: Identifying and using texts for the writing journey

In the same way as prospective travellers orientate themselves with regard to the different routes that they can take, with guide books of the ultimate destination and maps to find the way, writers need to familiarise themselves with the guides to the subject area about which they are writing. The best way to do this is to read your way into writing. Reading does not just broaden your knowledge base, it also introduces you to the discourse of the field in which you are working. It gives you examples of the structure and the general style of the texts in your field, and as you read you are also forming cognitive structures that become "academic grammars". The types of words, the way sentences are constructed and linked, the way paragraphs are formed – these are all exemplified in good texts. If you read these texts, you are preparing yourself for your own writing. You read different texts in different ways. You will also write different types of texts. Reading sensitises you for the writing process in addition to helping you form a knowledge base from which to write.

4.2 Different types of sources

There are many types of texts with which you will become familiar as you travel the scholarly road. Some of the "guides" in the land of academia include

- encyclopaedias
- the blurb on the back of a textbook
- the abstract of an academic article

- an online electronic article
- the foreword and preface of a textbook
- the introduction to a textbook
- a complete chapter in a textbook and/or a full-length academic article.

The way you read these texts depends on whether you are still reading in a search for literature, or whether you are reading intensively in your study of the literature. In Chapter 5 we will pay more attention on how to make notes during intensive reading. In the following sections we introduce different types of texts and guide you in reading them with discernment.

4.2.1 Encyclopaedias: Condensed and concentrated

The fastest way to gain a good understanding of a topic is to consult a relevant encyclopaedia. The short, concise entries will give you an indication of the way in which the topic has been approached in the literature, and what all the current debates about the topic have been centring on through the literature. You can easily build up a frame of reference about your topic which is outlined in clear terms in the encyclopaedia. In terms of our central metaphor in this book, an encyclopaedia constitutes a *pocket-size* "travel guide" to finding your way but, as all seasoned travellers will tell you, such a guide is usually inadequate. Although encyclopaedias often contain a number of "overview articles" and multiple cross-references, the entries themselves are usually short. You need more to help you find your way. With the help of what you have learned in these basic sources, you will be able to identify relevant books. Books are often "summarised" in the blurbs on their covers or in reviews.

4.2.2 Blurbs on book covers give a quick overview

The brief description of a book printed on its cover or used in promoting the book is its *blurb*, which provides a general sense of the content of a book as well as the approach the author has taken. The distinguishing features of the book are usually also mentioned in the blurb. It whets the reader's appetite in the same manner as an advertisement for a foreign travelling destination does.

Task 4.1: *Practising blurb reading*

Read the two blurbs on books dealing with the concept of mentoring and write down brief responses to the following:

- What do you know about "mentoring"? Are you familiar with specific instances where a mentoring approach has been used to train teachers? Have you been part of a mentoring system/programme?
- Are the aims of these two blurbs the same, or do they differ substantially?

- How is the information structured in each blurb? What information is offered first, what second, and so on?
- What questions about mentoring would you like to ask the authors?

Blurb one

***Mentor courses: A resource book for training trainers* by A. Malderez and C. Bodoczky (1999)**

This practical resource book provides a collection of materials for use on mentor courses. It presents a range of activities and processes for exploring the roles and duties of mentors and for practising the skills required to support the development of learner-teachers. The first part of the book discusses the principles underlying the activities and the training approach, and looks at some procedures that can be used throughout mentor courses.

The second part presents a wide range of in-session activities in an easy-to-use format. Each activity includes guidance on aims, materials and timing, as well as step-by-step procedures.

The final part provides suggestions and materials for projects and assignments, including observation tasks and reading and writing tasks. Photocopiable resources for use with the activities are provided in a separate section at the back of the book.

Mentor courses includes activities that can be used in a variety of settings and is an invaluable resource for all mentor course leaders and teacher educators.

Blurb two

***New directions in mentoring: Creating a culture of synergy*. Edited by C.A. Mullen and D.W. Lick (Eds) (1999)**

New directions in mentoring represents an experiment in a new kind of mentoring. The result of action research carried out by teachers, administrators, and professors operating a school–university collaborative, this edited collection offers narrative research accounts that build on theory from inside out. Filled with experiences and terms that recognize a new pedagogy for professional growth, the book includes the concepts of synergistic co-mentoring, partnership support groups, and communities of teacher researchers.

The premise of the book is that educational change needs to directly involve school professionals in designing collaborative instructional/co-mentoring practices. A norm of equality and shared power requires that teachers function as integrated team players and research-authors. A new model of learning is created where guided but flexible structures are used to unleash the creative capacity of the group.

This powerful and compelling book offers insight into the development and reform of mentoring organizations, and covers areas such as lifelong

mentoring, the effectiveness of synergy, and the creation of collaborative relationships and teams. Broader themes include mentorship of new ways of mentoring current and future leaders.

Carol A. Mullen spearheaded this school–university research project on mentoring across professional cultures from its inception to its completion. She is Assistant Professor in Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology, at Auburn University in Alabama. She specializes in leadership (mentorship theory and practice), innovative curriculum and arts programming, and diversity issues. She has conducted research in prisons, universities, and schools, and has published widely.

Dale W. Lick is presently University Professor and Associate Director of the Learning Systems Institute at Florida State University. He has published extensively and is committed to new learning approaches to transformational leadership, managing organizational change, and learning organizations.

You will have noticed that a blurb can invite you to read the book. It may also give you an indication of positive reactions to the book. (Publishers will not place excerpts from a negative review of a book in a blurb!)

4.2.3 Abstracts are about the essentials

The brief statement of the way in which the content of a book or article is structured and what the main content consists of is called its *abstract*. It is not a summary. A summary of a book or article, by way of comparison, would include only the main ideas of the text, not how the information is structured in the text. Writing an abstract is like squeezing a sponge – the matter in the pores, for example water, has been forced out of it. Its shape has been altered, but its component parts are all there, albeit rather squashed. A summary, on the other hand, is more like the water that has been squeezed out of the sponge.

Task 4.2: *Reading abstracts of academic articles*

Read the abstracts from academic articles given in Addendum A (pp. 125–126).

- Write down what you think the aim of each article is. In some cases, the aim is clearly stated in the abstract. In others, you have to formulate the aim by reading between the lines.
- What question do you think the author of each of the articles is trying to answer? The question might not be asked in the abstract, but each abstract contains enough information to reconstruct the original question.
- What answer has each author offered to his or her question? What findings are offered in the abstract?

4.2.4 Online articles are essential

Nowadays, online databases with full-text articles are becoming an almost indispensable research tool. Numerous articles are posted daily on the Internet, providing researchers with the latest information on any conceivable topic. They are fast replacing the conventionally printed book or article that one usually finds in a library. In order to retrieve these online articles, researchers have to have access to the Internet. They also have to have a relevant keyword to enter in the search function of a search engine. The search is like using the subject/topic index of a library catalogue.

Once a suitable article is found, it is not always a good idea to download or print it out because there are usually a number of links on the home page of the article that the reader can pursue in order to gain a fuller understanding of his or her topic. All these links, all the additional information, and all the possibilities of getting more information on and by means of a topic are called the *hypertext*. The task of the reader is to navigate this type of text. It is like following up all the references in an encyclopaedia without having to get all the thick volumes off the shelf. It is like exploring all the high roads and byroads on a map.

Links in a hypertext are usually listed on the home page of an article. When the reader clicks on one of these links, the relevant section appears on screen. There is usually a "return" option at the end of the smaller sections or in the margin of these. Alternatively, links are colour-coded within the main body of a text. By clicking on these, the reader gains access to additional information on the topic or more focused definitions and/or references.

Because there is so much information on the Internet, you have to learn the skills of reading critically. Henning (2002) reviews a book that explores skills for "reading the world" (Burke, 2001). Open the website www.tcrecord.org, type "Henning" in the site's search engine and use the links to access her review on Burke.

Task 4.3: *Performing an online search by hyperlinking*

Read the various parts of one hypertext in Addendum B (pp. 127–132) and identify the various links one can make between them. Once you have identified the key concepts and colour-coded them, draw lines from one concept to the next in order to show the hyperlinks between the various sections. One link has been done for you. In the fourth part of the hypertext, the concept "zone of proximal development" is referred to. If it were highlighted (either in bold or underlined), and should you click on it with the mouse, then the "third" part of the hypertext would appear, providing you with more detail about the concept.

4.2.5 The foreword and preface of a book outline the reading road

Both the preface and the foreword of a book aim to introduce the book to the reader, inasmuch as each states the subject of the book and briefly outlines the scope of it. The preface is usually written by the author or editor, while the foreword is written by a person other than the author. The foreword may introduce the author of the book and state why the writer thinks the book is special. The preface gives the reader a good sense of what to expect in the book; in the case of a series, the author or editor may use the preface to introduce the reader to the aim of the whole series. Reading the preface of the book is a good opportunity for academic readers to estimate the value of the book in terms of the research they are engaged in and to judge its relevance to their research.

These two types of text that precede the full text in the book are often skipped by the general reader.

Task 4.4: *Getting to know a book*

Read the preface that Ruth Merttens has written to John Head's book *Working with adolescents: Constructing identity* (1997) (in Addendum C, pp. 133–134).

- What is her aim in writing the preface? Why has she written it?
- How does Head's book fit into the rest of the series?

4.2.6 The introduction gives us another initial guide to the text

The introduction to any academic textbook is a vital key to the whole text. In it the author usually advances his or her argument and gives a detailed outline of the structure of the book. The author may also use the introduction to position the work within the theoretical framework of a specific discipline. The introduction serves as a short synopsis of the whole book. It is like a travel guide to a big city, including information about how to get there and what places to visit. Good guides usually include a brief history of the city and refer the traveller to the most important sites. The introduction to an academic text fulfils a similar role, its "history" being the overview of what has been written about the topic in the past. Likewise, a good introduction always contains brief notes on what the reader can expect to find in each of the chapters of the book.

You have now completed some important learning tasks that will assist you to become a proficient reader of academic text. These are all introductory exercises and you should try to use the texts that you are reading for your research essay in the same way, exploring different avenues of getting to know the specific book or article. In Chapters 6 and 7 you will practise

making notes from texts and organising the knowledge that you are constructing while you are reading.

In the task on online reading or hypertext reading (Task 4.3, p. 40), you will have experienced a way of meeting with text that is non-linear, where *you* decide the sequence. This dynamic way of engaging with text helps you to refrain from working along the cognitive route decided by the writer. You make your notes according to your emerging understanding of the topic, and in this way you not only become an independent reader, but also an autonomous writer with your own voice and view, and with extensive knowledge to back you up. May we say this again – good writing is largely dependent on good reading in an academic context.

4.3 Finding your route through a text: The geography of an academic article

Depending on the context in which we find ourselves and the aim we have in mind when reading a text, we are inclined to underline or mark the most important parts or put a question mark next to difficult sections or those parts we do not understand. We are, in fact, dialoguing with the *text*. When we have to comment on a writer's work, we normally point out sections that work well or highlight sections that do not make sense to us, the readers. In this case, we are dialoguing with the *author*. When we want to use the text as evidence in our own writing or to strengthen our own arguments, we are reading to find out whether a text supports or contests our own positions. We are dialoguing with the *arguments* in a text.

Academic articles usually consist of three parts: introduction and literature review, methodology, and results/discussions/conclusions. Articles are usually condensed and also dense texts, and we advise you to read the introduction a number of times before you continue to read about the inquiry itself. Many articles that present statistical results may be daunting for novice academic readers and they often give up. We advise you not to do so, but to read the introduction and the discussion parts, and to try to understand the argument. You can then consult with someone who can explain the statistical language to you if you wish to pursue the text in more detail.

The introduction of a research article is important because the writer has to make a number of decisions in this part of his or her paper: what background knowledge should be included, what style should be adopted – an authoritative or a more personal one – what can be assumed of the readership, what approach should be followed, and so on. As a reader you can now also identify these aspects, and on a meta-reading level you can now say to yourself as you read: "Here the author is making a thesis statement, and here he is contrasting two theories. Here he is drawing a conclusion and discussing its significance", and so on. This type of "self-talk" or meta-reading is an excellent tool for helping you to understand the text. More importantly,

for the purposes of writing it sensitises you and raises your awareness about your own writing.

When you read an introduction, for example, you can try to see how the author went about doing what Swales (1990) suggests. He suggests three "moves" in this regard: establishing a territory, establishing a niche within that territory, and occupying the niche (Swales, 1990: 214). The first entails reviewing items in existing research. The second involves indicating a gap in the research or asking a new question about the topic. The third is about announcing your thesis. If you are able to see how an author shows the readers how this was done then you will begin to prepare yourself to do it as well.

By way of illustration, consider the debate about the differences between the Humanities or Arts (e.g. school subjects such as History, Geography and the Languages), and the Sciences (such as Biology, Mathematics, Physical Science, and so on). Although eight learning areas have been demarcated in the new curriculum of education for South African schools, one of the principles of outcomes-based education is to integrate these learning areas as much as possible. Writing about the differences and similarities between the Humanities and the Sciences, one can basically adopt one of three positions: firstly, that these two disciplines are totally different; secondly, that they share certain qualities; and, thirdly, that they are more or less the same.

4.4 Locating your own position in a text

Reading about somebody else's position, like writing your own paper, can be compared to going on a journey. There is a point of departure contained in the title of the article, the abstract preceding the text, and in the first couple of paragraphs of the text or in its introduction.

Task 4.5: *Answering questions about text structure/organisation of ideas*

Read the following extract from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1971), entitled "Banking education versus problem-posing education". Try to answer these questions:

- What does the title suggest to you about the content of the text? Do you think Freire is already taking a position in his title with regard to the debate?
- What does the first paragraph reveal about his position and the way in which he is going to present his argument?
- Identify the argument Freire tries to advance in this article. Write down in the margin the main idea of each of the six paragraphs in one sentence per paragraph.

– Is there a link between these sentences?
– Can you summarise your six sentences in one sentence?

(This is an extremely important reading skill that is essential for any type of research. The researcher has to read extensively, and in order to manage the information has to learn to process the information quickly and coherently.)

Banking education versus problem-posing education

A careful analysis of the teacher–student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified. Education is suffering from narration sickness.

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalised and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated and alienating verbosity. Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorise mechanically the narrated content. Worse still, it turns them into "containers", into receptacles to be "filled" by the teacher. The more completely he fills the receptacles, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are.

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communication, the teacher issues communiqués and "makes deposits" which the students patiently receive, memorise, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is men themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, men cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.

If men are searchers and their ontological vocation is humanisation, sooner or later they may perceive the contradiction in which banking education seeks to maintain them, and then engage themselves in the struggle for their liberation.

But the humanist-revolutionary educator cannot wait for this possibility to materialise, from the outset. His efforts must coincide with those of the stu-

dents to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanisation. His efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in men and their creative Power. To achieve this, he must be a partner of the students in his relations with them.

Whereas banking education anaesthetises and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality.

Source: Freire (1971: 20)

The conclusion of an academic article is like the final destination of a journey. It leads the reader to the place where he or she may ask what the point of the journey was. This means that the reader is now asking what it was that Freire wanted to convey and persuade us to contemplate or believe. When you read a conclusion and the concomitant or preceding discussion, you are still meta-reading.

Task 4.6: *Finding a conclusion and the end of the argument*

Address the following questions in your final reading of the Freire text:

- How does Freire provide the reader with a sense of arrival?
- How does he bring together all the points he made in this passage?
- How does he link the conclusion with the title and the introduction?
- What main point did he make?
- Do you agree with his view?

These are the questions with which we leave you, encouraging you once more to engage with sample texts and to practise academic reading, with the purpose of sensitising yourself as a reader – *who will also be a writer*. If you are able to identify structural patterns, clever ways of organising knowledge and the use of clear language, you will find that you start emulating good writers. For many of us that is where good writing starts.

4.5 Summary

The different types of texts discussed in this chapter are guides to help you find your way through the wealth of information on your topic that you might find in a library and on the Internet. You will be able to choose the

most relevant information if you employ some of the reading skills discussed in this chapter. The reading skills are intended to sensitise you with regard to the geography of a text and thus also to enable you to become aware of the geography of the texts that you compose. Thus, if you are able to locate an author's structure, you inevitably start applying your knowledge in a skill of personal text structuring. We have said it before: you can read your way into academic writing.

Using knowledge by making and managing notes

The objectives of this chapter are to help you to

- write memos and other short versions of exploratory and investigative text, such as summaries and paraphrases
- learn how to use these to practise writing, document information and make sense of text
- see academic writing as a specific way of using knowledge, starting with the notes you make while you read and review the literature.

5.1 Introduction: Types of knowledge and the writing process

When one starts to engage seriously with the terminology of a discipline, one realises that language constitutes meaning, and that meaning "means" *knowing*. You will realise as you write more and more essays, papers and perhaps later also a dissertation, that writing is dependent on knowing. In this book we introduce you to the type of knowing that is generally referred to as "procedural" knowing or, simply, skills (see Figure 5.1, p. 48). You will hopefully learn many procedures to enhance your writing and your thinking while you work through this book. All of them are, however, dependent on knowing *about* things. If you know the texts you have read and if you understand what the main points in these texts are, you will be able to formulate your own understanding as well. This formulation constitutes your very own academic writing in which you adopt the style and the conventions of scholarly composition, while at the same time cultivating your very own scholarly style. That is why we as writing teachers encourage you to start this personal style development while you are making notes. You will be able to use these notes in your later draft essay only if they are written clearly.

In Figure 5.1 we try to present the notion of how different types of knowledge are integrated. For example, if you are learning new academic writing skills, your main knowledge focus is *skills*. However, you are not learning those skills in a vacuum. You need to be able to write *about* something, about some content; you need to understand and be able to "declare" your knowledge and explain your conceptual understanding (knowledge type 1). The writing itself is the skill you use to embody your knowledge in language

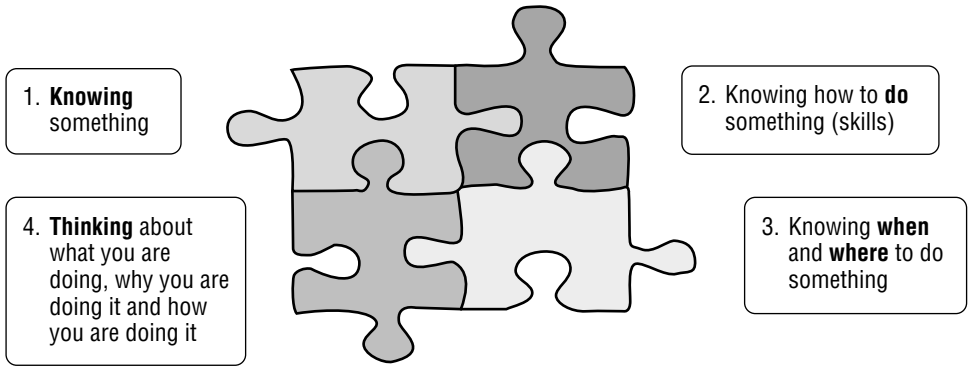


Figure 5.1 Different types of knowledge are interdependent

(knowledge type 2). We have mentioned before that it is not only a representation of your knowledge (1), but also an act of co-creating knowledge, because in the process of searching for the right language one creates understanding. Do you begin to see how the different types of knowledge are integrated? In writing you are thus performing knowledge.

In the process of writing one has to make many decisions about what is appropriate and in which conditions a certain activity is required. This type of knowledge is also known as "conditional" knowledge (knowledge type 3). Again it is clear that knowledge of skills cannot be separated from knowledge of when and where to do certain things. When you write you have to know, for example, that in certain instances it is required of you to make references to the sources you consulted, and in others it is required of you to draw your own conclusions and state your own opinions. This is clearly knowledge of *conditions* of application.

Reflection on and assessment of one's own activity is known as reflective or meta-cognitive knowledge (knowledge type 4). This is the knowledge that helps you to evaluate what you are doing and to change course if necessary. It is what a driver on a journey does when it is time to make important decisions, such as where to stay overnight or how to change the route if a bridge has been washed away by a flood. In terms of writing you also apply this type of knowledge when you engage in "meta-writing": when you address your readers to tell them what you are doing in terms of organising your paragraphs or in terms of why you are including sections and so forth, you are performing reflective knowledge. You may have come across sentences such as: "In this attempt to define participatory school management it has become evident that there are many different interpretations of the concept 'participation'. *The next section of my essay will focus* primarily on the different interpretations and why these may cause many of the misunderstandings that abound in school governance issues." The italicised phrase is typi-

cal of meta-cognition (thinking about thinking) and consequently of meta-writing (writing about writing).[1]

Now think about your writing: do you recognise that you use all these types of knowledge when you write? Do you agree then that when we refer to "writing skills" we can never really isolate them completely from other types of knowledge? At our institution we are working towards integrated writing assistance for students, in which we hope that they have opportunities to develop an identity as academic writers and scholars. One way that you can ensure this integration is to convert knowledge from books, journals, the Internet and other sources to personal knowledge by recording the important information that you come across in various ways.

5.2 Selecting and recording information by taking notes in various ways

In order to make sure that you have read with understanding, and that you are going to use the knowledge that you have gained from reading effectively, it is wise to do smaller chunks of writing as preparation for your ultimate effort. Remember, you are still learning the skills for writing a good essay. You have not yet embarked on the actual writing of the essay. All the skills that you are practising at this stage are in preparation for your final journey. You will have realised by now that learning writing skills is a parallel process with learning knowledge-making skills. You learn to *structure* an essay while simultaneously learning to source and document the *knowledge* that you will need to write the essay. Therefore, the micro skills that you will practise in the writing of different types of notes are at the same time also thinking skills and essay organising skills. Students who try to skip this phase and work straight from sources miss a valuable part of the process of becoming a good research writer. In fact, we suggest that they may never become good research writers, because they do not use writing as a processing mechanism for knowledge and the organisation of knowledge.

The skills we have in mind are generally known as "note-taking" skills. A vital part of writing preparation is to write small chunks, packaging or capturing the main points of the texts that you have read *thematically*. If you use the opportunity to *practise-write* while you are reading, you will reap the benefits later. Usually students make some notes while they are reading. These consist of bibliographic notes that record source details, such as the author and the title. They also record direct quotations from the text. There are, however, other ways of capturing the themes of the texts that you use for research. You can write memos, paraphrases and also definitions.[2] Let us look into some of these.

1 By the way, have you noticed once more how thinking and writing are interrelated?

2 Earlier in this chapter we showed how the writing of definitions can assist you to write more formally. You can also use definition writing as a practising and recording mechanism.

5.3 Paraphrasing: Rephrasing an author's text

Although most of you will have learned to paraphrase in a language class in school, you probably did not have the opportunity to practise this skill often. It is not so much a skill of writing as it is a cognitive skill. You need to rewrite, remaining as closely as possible to the meaning, though not the words, of an author's text. Successful paraphrasing helps you to grasp the meaning of the original text and to rephrase it in your own words. This is in a way a test of understanding. Good teachers often say to students: "Give it in your own words; I want to see if you understand – don't give me the parrot version!". As an academic writer this is your opportunity to make ample use of this technique. In taking notes from the texts that you are studying for your essay you will come across particularly salient passages. You regard them as very important and you wish to record them. If you paraphrase these sentences (never too many), you will, firstly, test your own understanding and, secondly, have a valuable piece of evidence ready for an argument that you may conduct in your essay. You need to have made some "vocabulary shift" in order to be able to do this, though. The more suitable words you know, the better you will be able to "translate" from the author's language to your own.

Task 5.1: *Paraphrasing*

Try to paraphrase the paragraph we wrote above – the one that starts with: "The skills we have in mind ..." on p. 49 (last paragraph).

Now read the following notes on paraphrasing we obtained from a writing centre at a university in the USA.

If you plan to borrow from a source without plagiarizing, you can paraphrase a short extract from a text. A paraphrase is

- your own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in a new form
- one legitimate way (when accompanied by accurate documentation) to borrow from a source
- a more detailed restatement than a summary, which focuses concisely on a single main idea.

Paraphrasing is a valuable skill because

- it is better than quoting information from an undistinguished passage
- it helps you control the temptation to quote too much
- the mental process required for successful paraphrasing helps you to grasp the full meaning of the original.

Six steps to effective paraphrasing

1. Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.
2. Set the original aside; write your paraphrase on a note card.
3. Jot down a few words below your paraphrase to remind you later how you envision using this material. At the top of the note card, write a key word or phrase to indicate the subject of your paraphrase.
4. Check your rendition with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form.
5. Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or phraseology you have borrowed exactly from the source.
6. Record the source (including the page) on your note card so that you can credit it easily if you decide to incorporate the material into your paper.

Some examples to compare

THE ORIGINAL PASSAGE

Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. Lester, James D. *Writing research papers*. 2nd ed. (1976): 46–47.

A LEGITIMATE PARAPHRASE

In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim.

AN ACCEPTABLE SUMMARY

Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper.

A PLAGIARIZED VERSION

Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.

Source: The Online Writing Lab at Purdue University: http://owl.english.purdue.edu

5.4 Writing definitions: Defining your understanding

In addition to making paraphrased notes for your collection of ideas and themes for your paper, you can also note definitions of concepts or phenomena. The reason why one writes concise, clear definitions of concepts is not only to explain them to oneself (although that is a good way of finding out what one knows). There is also another reason. When putting together the sections of your essay, you will find that you need to *explore*, *describe* and *analyse* some of the concepts that you use in your argument. If you keep an organised file of definitions, with the bibliographic details, you can use them when needed. These definitions are preferably not direct citations, because even if you give this type of quoted definition you have to explore it in your own words, giving your own interpretation.

Task 5.2: *Writing definitions*

Write a definition of a term in your field, stating what it is, what it consists of and what its function is. Refer to the advice given at the beginning of this chapter on how to compose a definition. Keep in mind that the adverbs "when" and "where" are often used inappropriately in definitions.

5.5 Writing memorandums or memos: Notes to yourself

Another type of practice-writing that you can do is to compose short memos for yourself. In these memos you can comment on what you have read. Your comment may be a brief evaluation or interpretation, or it may be a cross-reference to another author or text. You may also note where you think you could place the information in your temporary outline.[3]

Here is an example of a memo written by a student who is reading a book on *schools and their communities*. This reader has just read through the section where the author has described two schools – one has an open-door policy and parents and other community members are welcome; the other has a high fence, and in a two-week observation period the only visitors to the school were officials from the education department and repairmen. She writes the following memo, in which she reminds herself about theories that she has read and about aspects of research methodology:

3 At this stage you are still exploring the literature, and the outline that you have in mind is by no means final. As you read and write, your outline will change. Keep this in mind when you try to compose an essay with books and articles spread out on your desk. You need to capture the content of the texts first, so that you can identify the main themes in the literature. You can then also decide what the sections and subsections of your essay are going to be. That is why we say that the outline is temporary – as is the thesis statement. You can change both as you "travel on".

An example of observation research in a Soweto school. What was the rest of the research methodology? What is the author's view on "community"? I need to link this with the Sergiovanni book that I read – his explanation of the theory of "community" of Tönnies – there is also a good link with Dürkheim's *anomie* theory. Why are the people in this school's community so alienated from the school and vice versa?

***Task 5.3:** Writing memos to yourself*

Try to write a memo on something that you have read and that you would like to include in your essay. If you write these memos well ahead of submission time, you will find them very useful. One does not remember all the details while one is reading unless one writes such a memo. File the memo.

Coupled with good (full-sentence) summaries and some neat definitions and paraphrases, memo writing not only gives you good practice in writing; it is also a way of making sure that you capture your thinking in written language – while you are reading. All these pre-composition activities together enhance the *framework of thoughts and language* that you are building prior to actually starting the writing process. Write your memo and file it according to the theme. We suggest that you file all these short chunks of writing in one system – according to themes. You will be thankful when you write the essay of having access to a systematic source of organised information.

5.6 Writing summaries: Giving the gist in your own words

One other way to capture information in your personal information system is to make summaries. Again this is a skill that most of you may have perfected by now. The secret of a good summary is that it gives the most important information and that it does so in full sentence format. Therefore, when you need to use the summary in your writing, you will not be confronted with cryptic one-word entries that mean little to you. When you make cryptic notes or summaries while you read you may fully comprehend what they mean at the time, but once you have made many different types of notes and have covered many different themes, they will be useless. Therefore, go to the trouble of writing in full sentences and, where necessary, even full short paragraphs. Often you will be almost forced to use the paragraph exactly as it is, as is the case with the complete definitions you have recorded.

Summaries are especially valuable when you need to cite compressed lists of information to add credibility to your line of thought. You can also

use summaries to support your statement and to give examples of different points of view, or to bring attention to a specific point.

Task 5.4: *Writing summaries*

How would you summarise the above section on "memos"? What would your first sentence be?

The first sentence

Once more we refer to the "general-to-specific" (G–S) structure of writing. In your first sentence you will say something general about memo writing for research purposes. Here is a possible first sentence: "Memorandums in research are written to comment on what one has read and to note links with other parts of the research."

The second sentence

Now you will write something more specific: "Memos contribute to the temporary outline."

The third sentence

Here you give even more specific information and you follow the lead of the text. In this text the authors have provided an example of memo writing: "The example of memo writing shows how an author linked the information."

The fourth sentence

"The practice-writing activities are valuable as information sources and as writing itself."

Do you see how the G–S structure operated here? Do you also notice that the summary, although much shorter than the original text, gives a good indication of the essentials of the original?

The various note-taking skills are important ones and in our experience, sadly, the most neglected of the process competences needed for good research writing. As milestones along the planning route for good writing, we encourage students to recognise their value and to practise them. See if they make a difference to your writing. To writing instructors we say: "Please encourage your students to use these techniques, because they enhance both structure and content." They help to make students more efficient researchers and writers. Students who practise them regularly report that they find their command of English improves as well.

5.7 Summary

This chapter had a twofold focus. We introduced you to the notion of different types of knowledge, exploring the idea of the integration of conceptual and declarative knowledge with skills to express and construct this knowledge. You read about the need to *know* in order to be able to *write*. The last section of the chapter introduced you to note-taking as a documenting activity, but also as a practice-writing activity. These three themes were grouped together in the chapter because, like the four types of knowledge, they are integrated and have reciprocal value.

Organising ideas and performing knowledge at sentence level

The objectives of this chapter are to you help you to

- practise integrating information from various sources into thematic units, using clear sentences
- use concise sentences to show how you have organised information
- write comprehensive sentences to support your thesis statement and to build a main argument
- write detailed sentences, exploring and analysing concepts
- practise writing sentences as a way to perform knowledge.

6.1 Introduction: Writing as knowledge organisation and performance

Many of our readers may have had the experience of not being able to get past the introduction of an essay. Many of you will also recall only too clearly that the thing to do after the introduction is to write the "body" of the essay. It is, however, easier said than done, especially since the introduction is often amended after the conclusion has been written. It is, after all, only after you have drawn your conclusion and discussed the findings of your research that you can state clearly in the introduction where the essay is going. During the writing of the body of an essay you may come across things that you had not anticipated when you first wrote the introduction. That means that you will in any case change the introduction to suit the content. Remember, you are writing for an audience of readers, and you are giving them a glimpse of the whole essay in the introduction. To write or to compose the rest of the text of a research essay is a *process of knowledge construction and performance*, and you cannot predict exactly what you will be writing because you create ideas as you write. Similarly, you interpret the texts and write about that too. You also have to be able to gather important information from different texts that you have been reading, and then you have to write down what you understand.

Some of your writing will be expository, narrative and descriptive, which means that you will show what you *know* about a topic. Some of your writing

will be argumentative, which means that you will use the information about the topic to *argue* a point. This is usually a point of view that you have developed during your reading. Very few people are trained in doing this. Most of the students with whom we have worked do not know how to write up information in such a way that it serves the purpose of revealing what they *know and understand* about a topic and also what their *view* about it is. We have found in our many years of working with students that even fewer know how to use information as *evidence in an argument*. They also do not know how to conclude an argument, stressing the point they had tried to make – drawing a conclusion from the discussed evidence.

Having learned from our students, we have designed a number of tasks that have served the purpose of writing development well. Some of these tasks are thinking activities, others are reading and writing, combined with thinking activities. In this chapter the focus is on organising thinking in language units – specifically in sentences. These sentences should show (perform) the writer's understanding.

6.2 A map for the writing journey – learning to "travel lightly"

We hope to create a "map" (or a learning environment) for you, to help you in your journey towards writing clear academic text. We will focus on organising the content, starting with the construction of clear sentences. Your ultimate destination will be a coherent and convincing product of writing. Each sentence is in itself a milestone added to your writing journey. The final product cannot come about if you do not attend to all the little details. In this final product you need to persuade your reading audience that what you have written is suited to the topic of inquiry and that your point of view is viable. Each sentence will be evidence towards achieving this goal.

You will also convince your readers that you have understood the texts you have read and that you have used them as evidence for the main argument you are conducting. The sentences you write will reveal your understanding of the sentences you have read. You will write different types of sentences. Some will be expository text, in which you reflect your understanding of the research that others have done on this topic. Others will be persuasive and evaluative, comparing and contrasting what others have written – weighing up the evidence from different sources. This means that you will be able to write not only facts, but what Swales and Feak (1994) refer to as "points". To convert a fact into a point indicates that you have interpreted the meaning and that you have a view about this fact.

It is really quite simple. The key to successful writing is to practise the writing of sentences and later on the writing of paragraphs. Figure 6.1 (p. 59) shows a diagram of your writing "journey", with the point of departure and the "signposts" included on the way. You continue your writing journey after the introduction by planning the route ahead. The destination, or the focus of

the topic, is kept in mind all the time. Every single sentence will move in the direction of the destination. This means that every bit of information that is used should be relevant to the topic. If the topic is about "participatory school management", for example, every paragraph will be written to shed some light on that topic. We again emphasise that some of the writing will be purely expository – explaining concepts or describing research or policy documents. Some of the writing will be argumentative, presenting evidence from the sources that you have consulted and trying to make a point, not just presenting facts. Whatever type of writing you engage in, you will be directing your process towards the destination you have chosen.

In Figure 6.1 we suggest six conceptual steps in mapping your writing (learning) route. You will see that the process is cyclic and recursive. The more you learn to organise your thinking and the information you encounter, the more you are able to write, and vice versa. Also, when you have worked through this chapter, you will return to the foundation of your essay, namely the topic and your thesis statement. You can then ask yourself, upon concluding this chapter, what you have learned to enhance your understanding and your skills related to writing about a topic and doing it from a specific viewpoint or thesis.

Before you continue, we should make sure that you are competent in all the required skills of language, writing and organising of ideas and information. The following sets of tasks are included to assist you to acquire those skills. If you are working through this book on your own, we suggest that you complete all these tasks, rather than just reading through them. If the book is used as part of a course, we suggest that the writing instructor includes these (and additional custom-designed) tasks in the writing workshops.

6.3 Departing from a general statement

Try not to make your opening sentence a general blanket statement that means very little in terms of research. An example of such a sentence could be: "In South Africa the new curriculum is causing great problems for everybody." If you are writing about Curriculum 2005 or the Revised Curriculum Statement (Department of Education), you need to discuss evidence of people who have written about it and then express your interpretation and your view, for example: "Many South African researchers have been engaging in inquiries into the viability of Curriculum 2005, [mention a few of these authors as references], but few have been able to pinpoint the philosophical controversies that I am going to address in this paper. I will also include views on the revised curriculum, showing how the amended policy addressed the flaws of the original policy."

It is not only in the main introduction of your essay or paper that you use this technique. When you start with a new set of information or ideas in a

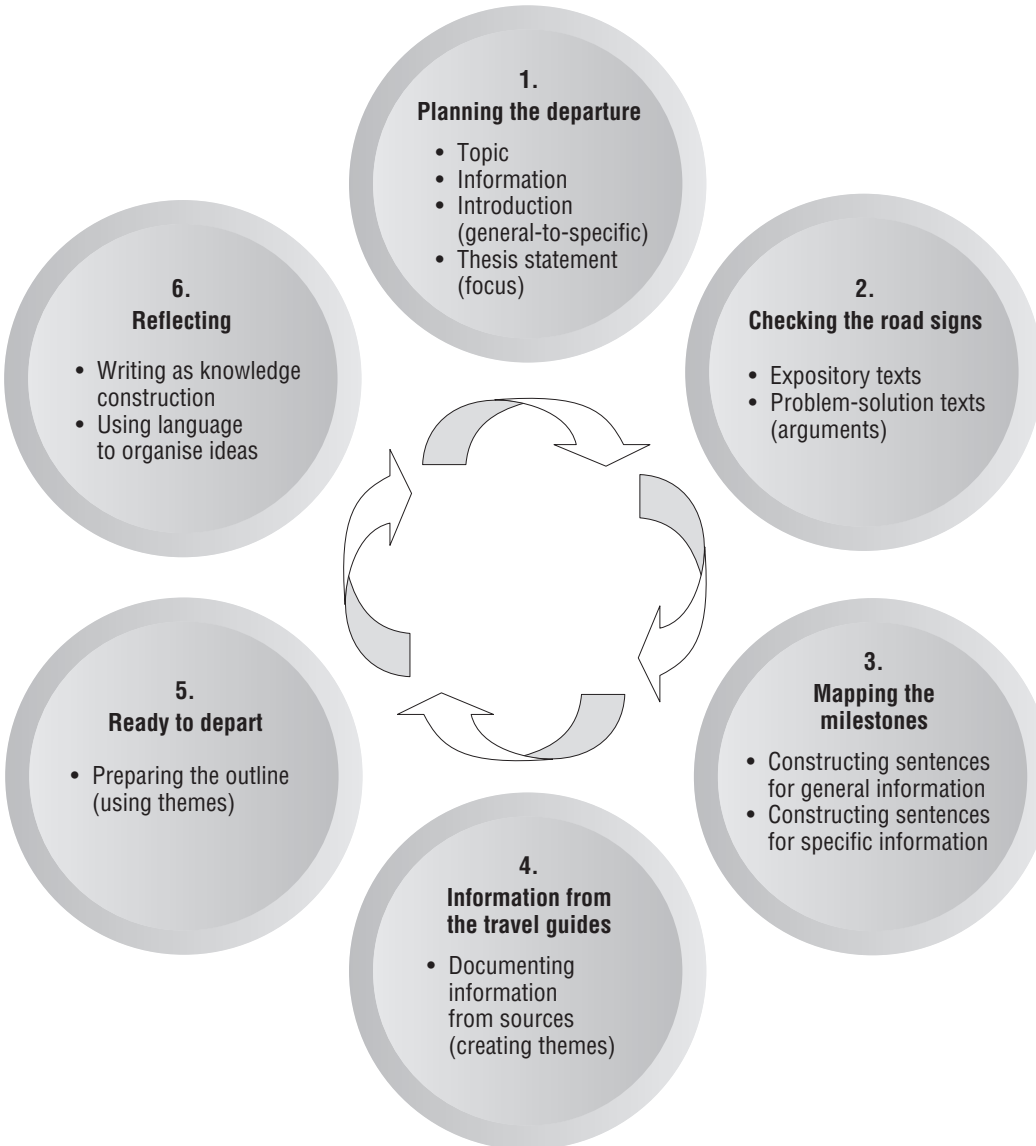


Figure 6.1 Mapping the journey of writing – the role of sentence construction

section of the essay, or a new component of your argument, you need to contextualise the section. As in the writing of the main introduction (at the beginning of your essay), the following structure serves to place your set of ideas or your argument within a *problem-solution* frame:

- You write one or more sentences in which you describe the topic broadly. Let us use the example of participatory school governance again. You could begin

a section in which you specifically write about the participation of novice teachers as follows: "In the discussion thus far I have focused on the participation of the community in school management, and although this factor receives wide attention, there is another facet of school management that is not often emphasised. I am referring to the participation of novice teachers, who are generally regarded as apprentices not yet eligible for real participation in the running of a school." You have now made a *general statement* with regard to this sub-topic and you have also indicated that there is a *problem.*

- The next step is to be more *specific* and to indicate why you regard this as a problem or an issue worth investigating: "Traditionally, beginner teachers have been awarded a place in the school hierarchy and have been expected to execute policy and to learn to teach well. In contemporary school governance, however, inexperienced teachers are expected to contribute their ideas and opinions. Many of these teachers were leaders on the campuses of the institutions where they were educated and many also belong to both teacher and student unions. It would therefore be unwise to expect them to be 'silent'." In these sentences you have now been more specific about the topic (the problem).

- Following on these sentences, you can now allude to a possible solution, or at least a way to address the problem: "In order to create opportunities for novice teachers to have a voice in the management, without expecting them to fulfil full management positions, it is necessary to explore ways in which to invite them to participate. In this section of the essay I will introduce various options, indicating that there needs to be a balance between inducting the beginners into the system and inviting them to change that system." You have now done two things – you have been very specific about the fact that participation of novice teachers is essential in a climate of democratic school governance. You have also problematised this stance, by saying that they cannot be managers (yet) but that they need a space from which to contribute. You have now introduced your readers to the debate you will be conducting in the following paragraphs. Every time you take a turn in the road you need to advise your readers. Like a good driver you have to indicate a change of direction. Using the general–specific structure of writing is an effective way of doing this. If you combine it with the problem-solution structure you are giving your readers a clear indication of where you will be "driving" them to.

The problem-solution introduction to a section of your essay therefore starts with a general statement, which is then explored and analysed in more specific detail. In this exploration you indicate that there is a problem to be solved, and you suggest a way to do this. It is always wise not to make a suggestion without discussing options and giving other points of view. In our example we argue for balance, and we intend to show at least two options for participation in management.

Task 6.1: *Introducing a subsection of an essay*

Select suitable first sentences for an introduction to a subsection of an essay on democratic school governance, in which the focus is the participation of novice teachers.

1. Young teachers need to be part of school governance because they have new ideas to contribute.
2. School management teams do not accept the fact that beginner teachers have experience in management.
3. Beginner teachers have too much to learn about teaching to spend time on assisting the management team.
4. School principals are intimidated by the union connections of young teachers and let them participate more than they should.
5. Both the education department and the teacher unions take the debate on the role of novice teachers in school management seriously.

You will notice that the *fifth* sentence is the more general one.

Having chosen an introductory sentence, you can now write the introductory paragraph to a subsection of your essay. First consider the topic of the essay (always keep the main destinaton of the journey in mind) and then make sure that you know why you are including this specific subsection. Then start the paragraph, with the first sentence being a general statement about the issue and the last one being a tentative solution or way to address the problem.

There is something else you need to keep in mind about the last sentence. It links with the first one, because the solution will also be a fairly general statement. You can check whether you have kept that in mind by simply identifying the words that you used in both sentences. There should be some overlap. Make a copy of Figure 6.2 (p. 62) and write your sentences in the diagram. Also, take the sentences from our example above and place them in the diagram. This exercise is handy not only for the beginning of sections of your essay, but also for the *main introduction.* The introductory paragraph usually closes with the sentence in which you allude to the way to find a solution to the problem you have set out in the first sentence.

You should keep in mind that it will be much easier to write this type of introductory paragraph once you have honed the skills of sentence writing and sentence connection, and of writing dynamic paragraphs. Both these sets of skills will be introduced in this and the following chapter. For the moment we will concentrate on sentences.

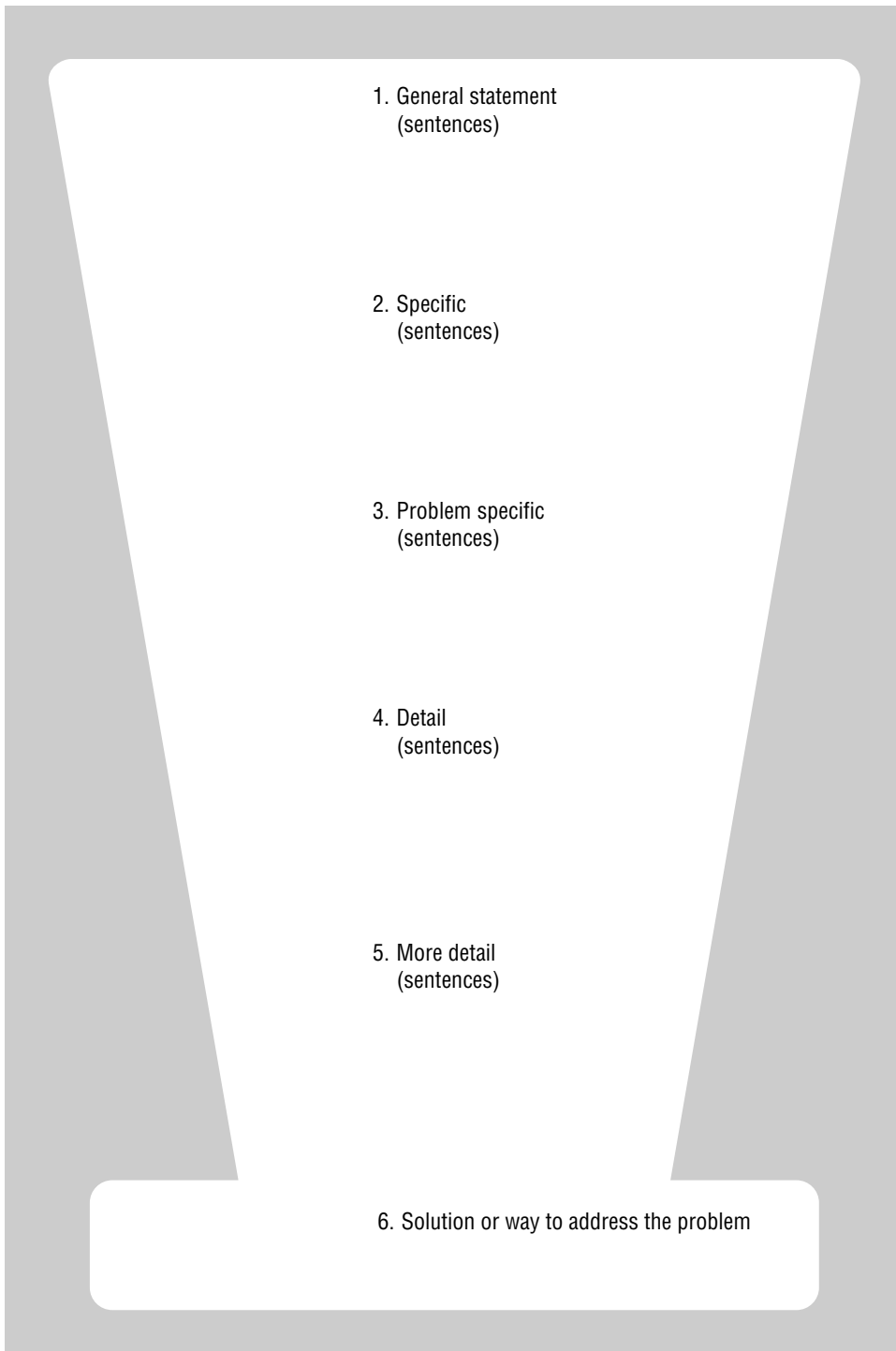


Figure 6.2 Introducing a section or subsection of an essay in one paragraph – sentence detail

6.4 The specific destination: The main focus of a section

The second paragraph of a section ordinarily deals with evidence from the literature which exemplifies your position. This means that you will now write a group of sentences that connect the point that you are trying to make to literature that covers similar issues. This may sound easier than it actually is. You cannot write down lists of references, hoping that they may "connect" with your theme. You have to relate specific studies or specific theories and then also explore them. In the following example we use fictional literature to make the point.

"In the well-known theory of participatory management in learning organisations, conceptualised and developed by Letlape and Anderson (1995), the notion of organic development of organisations is stressed; this means that junior staff are a vital component of the learning organisation."

If you wish to use a reference, you need to explain to your readers why you are including it, and what aspect of it is applicable to your discussion or argument. It is not acceptable to just write, for example: "Participatory management is essential for school development (Letlape & Anderson, 1995)." Your readers will not know what the reference contains and how it fits with the paragraph. You need to refer to the fact that the authors specifically address the issue of the learning organisation, that you position yourself as a scholar who *views* the school as a learning organisation, and that you also hold the view that organic development of staff is important. Then you need to explain what you mean by organic development and how you have found the work of Letlape and Anderson meaningful in this respect. You have to define every single term you use as a point in your writing (we will look into sentences as definitions in the following task). Write a sentence in which you refer to a work by an author. Say clearly what specific aspect of the work you are referring to, why you regard it as important, and what its significance is with regard to the topic. It serves no purpose to refer to literature without discussing the reference.

You may also refer to recent research in this area. "The research of the South African Association of Educational Management and Planning (1998)[1] in several Mpumalanga schools has shown that school management teams that include junior staff in their decision making report fewer staff disruptions." This example shows that you have consulted local research and that you have found something that is directly relevant to your essay.

Your task now is to group the readings you have completed and to find texts that address the same aspect of your focus. This is a very important step in preparing your own writing. We suggest that you cluster the themes of the texts you are consulting and that you file them according to theme. During your reading preparation you then compile a master or main list of themes. Therefore everything that relates to research about *participatory*

1 This is fictional information.

school governance that clarifies the role, function and attitude of *junior staff* can be grouped together. When you start writing the subsection that covers this part of the topic, you will have the information together and you can write your own text, using the other texts as references – as evidence of what you have consulted. Are you ready?

***Task 6.2:** Expanding on the opening statement*

Write a second paragraph in a section, using references and again moving from the general to the specific. In our fictional example we might conclude the paragraph by suggesting: "The issue of the role of junior staff and the management of their participation is emerging as an important component of this essay on democratic school governance."[2] This sentence shows how you are almost writing in dialogue with your reader.

6.5 The angle of your topic: Expository and argumentative writing

During your writing journey you will notice that you sometimes simply *present* and *analyse* information, and that at other times you are *evaluating* it. When one presents information, whether the reference is to a theory or to research conducted by someone else, the writing is often referred to as an *expository text*. Most textbooks are rich in expository text. Some of this text is provided to give information, and some to evaluate it. This is an important function of a student in an advanced degree programme. The value of a text needs to be assessed by your explaining to the reader that you agree or disagree with the statements, and on what grounds you do so. Consider the following examples:

- In the second paragraph of our example text you may want to cite a number of references to research conducted in schools. You may then simply *present* these as items of information that you link with good sentence connectors.[3] You use connectors that indicate addition, such as: "In addition to the work done by Letlape and Anderson ...".
- You may assess the information, for example, by saying: "Despite the extent of the research reported by Letlape and Anderson, their findings are still limited to a number of urban schools, where unions are more active. The situation in rural schools may be different, because we know that teacher unions are

2 You will note that we are referring to the very essay that we are writing. You can do this type of meta-writing – writing about your writing – to guide your reader.

3 Connectors are words and phrases that link one sentence with another. We will explore this component of writing in the next chapter.

reported to be less active in schools removed from the urban centres (Philander & Jacobs, 1999)." In this instance you are *questioning* or *challenging* the work of the previously mentioned researchers. You are thereby claiming your own position in the debate and you are addressing what appears to be a contested issue. Now you are also starting to argue. The essence of argument in writing is that you state opposing views and that you take sides or just explore both argumentatively, providing evidence as you progress. You will have found this evidence in your exploratory reading. Your writing is no longer simply expository or descriptive. You are now engaged in argumentative writing, which is the essence of scholarly texts.

Task 6.3: *Practising argumentative writing*

The task you should now complete relates to writing in this way. Start a third paragraph in your subsection. Select the references that *agree* on a point. Phrase a sentence in which you present the point on which the authors agree. Now problematise the point by saying that there are other views on the issue. Include those views in a sentence that *contrasts* the two different viewpoints. You may find that you are not yet able to write the sentences clearly. In the next task we will concentrate on formulating sentences for different purposes.

6.6 Writing clear sentences

In writing up your research you need to compose sentences that are specific and clear. Not a single sentence should be redundant. When you write what you think, supported by evidence from what you have read and studied, you will express your thinking in writing and the writing will influence your thinking. The process of writing is in itself a form of thinking, because the writing act demands organisation of thoughts and ideas. It is often in the search for the right word or a suitable turn of phrase that a thought becomes clearer. Processes of writing and thinking thus influence each other reciprocally. In a doctoral dissertation on student writing, Angelique Estherhuizen (2001) found that students who understand the topic that they are writing about structure their thoughts well. They also use appropriate words. On the whole they organise their writing logically. Students who are less at home with the topic are inclined to write haphazardly.

■ EXAMPLE

- Read this fictional example:

  Educational management has progressed in recent years (Reddy, 1996; Pretorius, 1998; Mokaba, 1999) from a discipline for managers of schools, in other words school principals, to a discipline that many people now

> study. Democratic school governance is an important issue in school management (Mhlangu, 1998). Many teachers are not happy with the way schools are managed and many students also agree.

You will notice that there is no real problem with any of the sentences individually. Together, however, they are not that significant. They are vaguely related to the general background of the topic, namely educational management, but they are not specific enough. They also refer to "research" that is neither explained nor discussed for relevance. Can you see now that a sentence on its own does not carry that much meaning in a research essay (or in other texts)?

It is therefore not enough in itself to learn to write clear, meaningful sentences. In Chapter 4 of this book we stressed the importance of reading good academic texts, aiming to illustrate to you that reading is imperative for the development of good writing skills. If you can identify the techniques, the style and the way good writers organise their writing, you are learning from them. In the reading of good academic texts you may have noticed that each sentence is laden with meaning which contributes to the argument or thesis. That is why we often hear about a text being *dense*. That is also why it is impossible to skip sentences when you read worthwhile texts. You will have noticed that it is also quite difficult to summarise academic text after having read it only once or skimmed it. You really need to come to grips with the meaning in order to capture it in summarised form. Therefore, when we say that the writing of a good sentence is not in itself a guarantee of the quality of the whole text, we mean that it is essential to know so much about your topic of investigation that you can create sentences without too much trouble. The language, although formal, does not have to be elaborate and rich in jargon. As long as you can demonstrate that you are schooled in the topic and in the general discipline from which it originates, your vocabulary does not have to be embellished with fine phrases and extraneous additions.

■ **EXAMPLE**

- Read the following fictional example, which is another version of the one in the previous paragraph:

> From research conducted by Pretorius (1998) and Reddy (1996) on how school staff in six urban secondary schools view educational management, it is evident that there is a greater awareness of both the practice and the research of management in educational settings. In this regard Mokaba (1999) found that many teachers now study educational management, not only because they want to enhance their chances of promotion, but because they want to be informed about the latest trends and about the policy that informs it. This author conducted research in 12 secondary schools in both rural and urban settings in the Free State and Northern Cape. Additional findings from these three inquiries are that teachers are

not happy with the way schools are managed, and that, according to them, the parents and other family members of students agree.

In the second example you can see how well the sentences are linked and, more importantly, how *specific* they are. There can be little doubt in the minds of the readers what research was conducted and what the relevant findings were. If you wish to tell the readers *how* the research was conducted, you can mention whether the researchers used written survey questionnaires, survey interviews or focus groups (see Chapter 9 for field research writing). The more specific the information is, the better. There are various ways of ensuring that the sentences are precise.

Task 6.4: *Composing precise sentences*

Try the following exercises:

1. Complete these sentences:
   - A school management team *consists* of ...
   - Junior teachers *are identified* by ...
   - Research in educational *management* covers ...
   - A successful school management team can be recognised by its ability to ...
   - Novice teachers are not by definition unable to ...
   - On the other hand, not all experienced teachers are experts in ...
2. Fill in the missing parts of the following sentences:
   - ... exercise great power in the running of a school.
   - Student participation in governance is still ...
   - Participatory ... is an ideal in a democratic country, but ...
   - Despite the introduction of a policy that requires ...
   - Notwithstanding the fact that education departments in the country are training school governing bodies, the ...
   - The concept of management and the concept of leadership are sometimes mistakenly used interchangeably, with the result that ...

You will find upon completing the sentences that some are much longer than others. In some sentences you will use more than one verb, and in others you will use phrases (groups of words without a verb) to support a noun. Without becoming too technical, we need to pause for a moment at this juncture where sentence structure and meaning meet. The structure of language is truly remarkable, because it is always possible to express meaning clearly, even in the simplest sentences. Let us take a closer look at some of the sentences you completed.

1. "A school management team consists of the principal and other members of the school staff."
   - This sentence has the basic characteristics of a finite or independent sentence (a sentence that is complete within itself and in which you can recognise the components of subject and predicate):

     A school management team *(= the subject)* consists of the principal and other members of the school staff *(= predicate:* consists = *verb,* and the principal and other members of the school staff = *object).*
   - It is also a simple sentence, because it consists of only one clause, namely the main clause. It is therefore not a compound sentence consisting of more than one clause.

It is important to know about different sentence structures, because they help you to focus and stop you from "rambling". Use simple sentences whenever possible.

There are, however, more complex sentence structures, and they also have an important role to play in research writing. Let us look at another of the examples that you completed.

2. "Notwithstanding the fact that education departments in the country *are training* members of school governing bodies, the educational backlog of most of these members, *created* by decades of impoverished education, *remains* enormous."
   - This is a complex sentence, because it contains one main clause and two subordinate clauses (these three clauses are identified by the three verbs in italics).
   - The main clause is: "The educational backlog of most of these members *remains* enormous."

If you write longer sentences with sub-clauses and adverbial or adjectival phrases (phrases which tell you more about a verb or a noun respectively, but which do not contain a verb), you must make sure that you can identify the main clause and that it is complete on its own.

This is an important skill for connecting sentences, for conducting arguments, and also for connecting paragraphs and creating coherence.

Let us make sure that you have identified the rest of the characteristics of this long sentence. Both the remaining clauses are non-finite or dependent.

- "Notwithstanding the fact that the education departments in the country are training members of school governing bodies" is not a complete sentence. How would you complete it by adding only a main clause?
- Now let us look at the other sub-clause: "... *created* by decades of impoverished education ...". This is clearly not a finite sentence. It describes or qualifies the "backlog" (a noun), and thus serves the purpose of an adjectival clause. It contains an incomplete verb, therefore it is not a phrase. A phrase

would have read, "... the result of decades of impoverished education ...", with no verb.

We will not go further into the structure of a sentence except to say that the language faculties of the human mind seem to be wired to function optimally at sentence level. If your thoughts are clear, your sentences will be clear too. If you have developed precision in your planning, you will compose precise sentences. The reason for our emphasis on sentence construction is that we have learned from experience that students who write in a language other than their primary or home language often find the use of verbs in particular problematic. This is because structure differs from one language to the next. Verbs are the cornerstones of sentences. Be extremely precise in your use of verbs. If you take care of your language at sentence level you will find the larger units of organisation and meaning much easier. You will then be able to link different parts of your essay without too much work having to be done at sentence level. Your very first paragraph should provide evidence of your ability to organise and use knowledge in such a way that you "invite your reader into your text".

6.7 Writing an introduction: Another example of sentence construction and links

The first paragraph has to give evidence of your writing performance and use of knowledge. As we said before, the first few paragraphs always need a revision when the research has been completed because you have to prepare the reader for what is to follow. Still, an example of the process of writing the first paragraph will give you an idea of how to go about it. You have to build or craft an introduction, consisting of a few paragraphs, which will form a base for the essay. In the following example we use a topic from the field of Educational Psychology and we use the "problem-solution" structure (see Figure 6.3, p. 70).

Once more, the *micro*-skills (composing and linking sentences) are the ones that will help you to craft the whole. The individual sentences and how they are connected to form paragraphs will support the structure with its content. In the language of the travel metaphor that we use in many instances in this book, when you are moving on your journey, you encounter stretches of the road that are situated between two places on your map. When you travel 30 km between Mogale City and Magaliesburg, you cover this distance in one stretch and you focus only on the intermediate destination – Magaliesburg. Although you may be aiming to get to Sun City eventually, while you are travelling that stretch of road you focus mainly on it, looking for signs that say "Magaliesburg".[4]

4 It may interest you to know that both "Magalies" and "Mogale" refer to the headman Mohale-Mohale who used to reign in these parts of Gauteng and the Northwest Province. In terms of

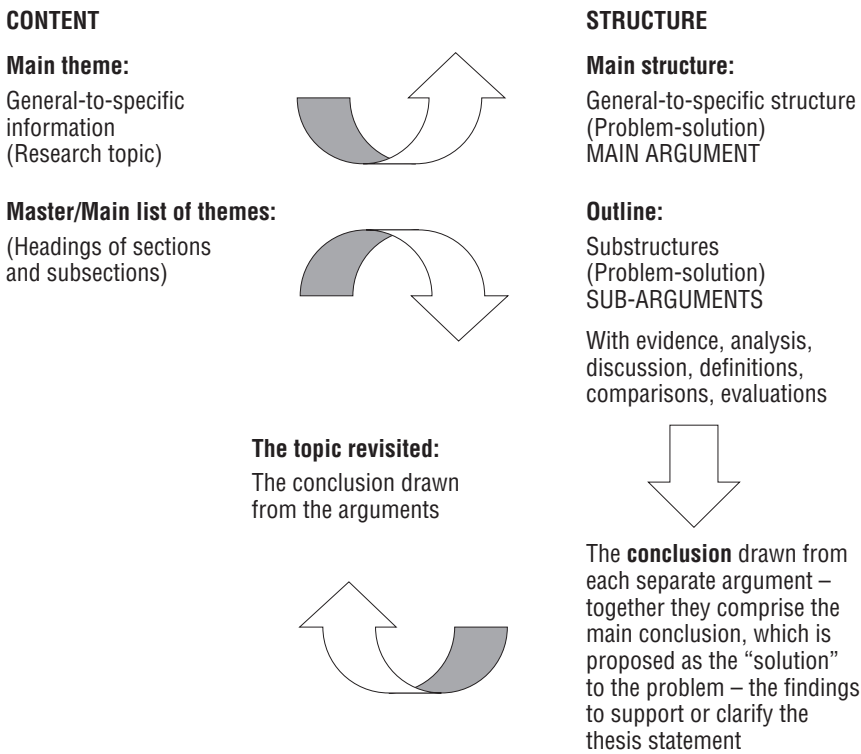


Figure 6.3 The problem-solution structure of a research essay

The shorter stretches of road are like the sections of the essay with their constituent paragraphs. If Educational Psychology students are researching a topic related to the development of learning in the foundation phase, they will have broadly placed their topic within the *discourse* of Educational Psychology, but *more specifically* in the psychology of learning, and then *even more specifically* with regard to young children in the early years at school. They will have identified a problem (an issue worth researching), for example the fact that school learning is formal and that the transition to formal learning is not an easy one. They may analyse the topic even more, giving examples of how the two settings differ.

The home learning takes place without design and formal instruction, and young children learn many skills, make vast leaps in terms of conceptual knowledge and language development, and also learn attitudes and values, and personal habits of cleanliness and so forth. The Psychology students may then point out that school seems to slow down this process of rapid learning and also expects the youngsters to be more inhibited and to con-

our analogy, it is quite serendipitous that the two centres should be linked conceptually. It may well serve the purpose of illustrating coherence later in this chapter.

form to the norms of the school. The students, if they are well prepared and have read widely, will now invoke the literature, perhaps beginning with the well-known theories of learning and development, discussing the stage development theory of Piaget, the social learning theory of Vygotsky and the more recent research in both these theoretical domains.

If they have read sufficiently, they will have identified themes that could give more substance to the problem they have identified, namely the difficulties young learners experience in the forced conversion from free learning in apprenticeship mode at home to formal learning in classroom mode. Some of these themes may be the following:

- The drastic cutting of emotional ties with the home and family
- The difficulty of adapting to rigid rules and habits (like sitting on a chair at a table for so many hours per day)
- The head-on encounter with literacy and numeracy instruction at the same time
- The cognitive overload of learning to read and write at the same time
- The adaptation to a single teacher's communication and learning style (especially if it differs vastly from the style of family and caregivers)
- Interacting with so many peers and older children

The list could be quite long; the above will suffice. You will notice that the focus is very distinctly on the problems that the children may encounter. The teachers, the parents, the curriculum designers and all other peripheral issues are not included in the "main list" of themes at this stage. You need to *stay focused.* You need to organise and package your ideas, and compress them into this list of themes. The list will, of course, be complemented by organised systems of your information in the form of memos, summaries, paraphrases, quotations (and the accompanying bibliographical notes).

Once you have formulated the outline, which will include the main list of themes, you can start writing. One last quick reading of all the notes in the information system you have compiled will help you to think towards the themes in your writing. If you remain satisfied that these themes will be the main focus of your discussion and argument, you can convert them into headings. Headings are thus crafted as a result of your reading and note-taking. There are different views on what the length of a heading should be. Suffice to say that a heading should be clear and should convey the specific meaning of the section that it "heads". Single words for headings are often not suitable.[5]

Prepare for the writing phase as you would prepare for the writing of an "open-book" or "take-home" examination. Make sure that you are familiar with the content – the information that you have gathered in your research.

5 We will come back to this point again in the chapter on editing and revising, where we will suggest ways to finalise the title of your paper as well as the wording of the headings.

When you start writing the first section, you will assign a preliminary heading and then you will write a paragraph, which will consist of sentences that are linked together in an ordered fashion. It is to this linking that we will now turn our attention.

6.8 Connecting sentences for optimal cohesion

Being able to connect sentences does not mean that you need only a few good words to do the linking. As with all aspects of writing, understanding of the topic and increased awareness of where your thoughts are leading contribute to good sentence coherence and cohesion. To learn more about the words or phrases that connect sentences, you can complete a number of tasks.

Task 6.5: *Connecting sentences for a reason*

We begin with the example of the Education Psychology students who are writing about learning in the foundation phase. In our example the student writer has identified the problems experienced by the young learner. Here are some of the sentences that this student wrote in her introductory paragraph. The sentences are not in any particular order.

1. When young children leave home for the first time, they have to spend hours in a strange institution where there are many unfamiliar faces, which may cause separation anxiety.
2. In studying the issues surrounding early learning in school, it is necessary for scholars of Educational Psychology to take into account the changes that the young child is faced with upon entering school.
3. The field of Educational Psychology comprises many areas of great complexity, with studies about and theories relating to the developing learner as one of its challenges.
4. It is not enough just to accept that these changes are often traumatic for young learners; research needs to advance more in order to explore and explain this field and to design schools, teacher education and learner support that will address the problems of novice school-goers.
5. One of the main changes that young learners experience in school is the move from informal learning to formal learning.
6. If teachers could try to make this change gradual and maintain aspects of informal learning, the change would not be so dramatic and the adaptation to school might be smoother.

These six sentences have the potential of becoming an introductory paragraph, but they are clearly in the wrong order. Let us first see which are the more general and which the more specific sentences. After that we need to

also decide which sentences contain the thesis statement, or the indication of the problem-solution structure. Do you agree that the sequence should be: 3, 2, 1, 5, 6 and 4? Do you also agree that sentence 5 is the thesis statement?

The next step is to connect these sentences. Let us have a look at them in the correct order:

The field of Educational Psychology comprises many areas of great complexity, with studies about and theories relating to the developing learner as one of its challenges. [General]

In studying the issues surrounding early learning in school, it is necessary for scholars of Educational Psychology to take into account the changes that the young child is faced with upon entering school. [Specific]

When young children leave home for the first time, they have to spend hours in a strange institution where there are many unfamiliar faces, which may cause separation anxiety. [More specific]

One of the main changes that young learners experience in school is the move from informal learning to formal learning. [More specific]

If teachers could try to make this change gradual and to maintain aspects of informal learning, the change would not be so dramatic and the adaptation to school might be smoother. [Problem-solution: thesis]

It is not enough just to accept that these changes are often traumatic for young learners; research needs to advance more in order to explore and explain this field and to design schools, teacher education and learner support that will address the problems of novice school-goers. [Problematised and also again more general]

Although the order or sequence of the sentences now appears to be correct, the sentences are not yet connected.

Task 6.6: *Using transitional words and phrases*

Now read the sentences again, but this time note the transitional words or the connectors which have been inserted.

When you have identified the linking mechanisms, decide what the function of the linking word or phrase is. What type of relationship between the two sentences does it establish?

1. The field of Educational Psychology comprises many areas of great complexity, with studies about and theories relating to the developing learner as one of its challenges.
2. In *addition to* studying the issues surrounding early learning in school, it is *also* necessary for scholars of Educational Psychology to take into account the changes that the young child is faced with upon entering school.

3. *One of these changes is that* when young children leave home for the first time, they have to spend hours in a strange institution where there are many unfamiliar faces, which may cause separation anxiety.
4. *Another* one of the main changes that young learners experience in school is the move from informal learning to formal learning.
5. If teachers, *however,* could try to make this change gradual and to maintain aspects of informal learning, the change would not be so dramatic and the adaptation to school might be smoother.
6. It is, *therefore,* not enough just to accept that these changes are often traumatic for young learners; research needs to advance more in order to explore and explain this field and to design schools, teacher education and learner support that will address the problems of novice school-goers.

Together these sentences now form a coherent paragraph, focusing on the topic of the research and also fulfilling the functions of an introductory paragraph. We introduced a number of transitional words and phrases to connect the sentences. Each of these fulfils a specific cognitive function and we selected them because they fit the meaning of the individual sentences as well as the meaning of sentences *combined.* The last sentence, in which the connector "therefore" has been used, will make no sense on its own now. The connector indicates that this sentence represents the result of a path of reasoning.

The connectors available for use in this way are numerous. We are listing a few which you can use in your writing. They are grouped broadly according to the semantic[6] function they will perform in a connecting position. Locate the transitional mechanisms that we used (or related ones) and see if the function that they perform relates to the functions we set out in Table 6.2 (p. 75).

The single words and the phrases in Table 6.1 are known as *verbal connectors*, which means that they function as a linguistic, structural and conceptual bridge.

Sometimes, however, one thought links with another in the next sentence without such a structural bridge. For example, the link between sentence 3 and sentence 4 in the final version of the introductory paragraph on p. 73 could have been obtained without the use of connectors. The flow of the notion of change was so strong in the writing that the two sentences would have read well without the logical connection:

> Sentence 3: *One of these changes is that* when young children leave home for the first time, they have to spend hours in a strange institution where there are many unfamiliar faces, which may cause separation anxiety.

6 This term here refers to the meaning of the word as a cognitive bridging mechanism, rather than to its technical function of bridging.

Table 6.1 Linking words and phrases

Function	Transitional words and phrases
To add	In addition; furthermore; moreover; and; again; equally important; similarly
To "prove"	Because; for; since; for the same reason
To compare and contrast	Yet; while; whereas; in contrast; however; on the one hand … on the other hand; conversely; on the contrary; by comparison
To show exception	Yet; still; nevertheless; in spite of; despite; of course
To indicate time	Immediately; thereafter; soon; finally; then
To repeat	In brief; as I have noted
To emphasise	Obviously; definitely; extremely; in fact; indeed; in any case; positively; naturally; surprisingly; undeniably; unquestioningly; without reservation
To show sequence	First; firstly; secondly (etc.); and so forth; next; then; following this; at this time; at this point; after; before; previously; consequently; simultaneously
To give example	For instance; for example; in another case; take the case of; to demonstrate; to illustrate; as an example
To summarise or conclude	In brief; on the whole; summing up; to conclude; in conclusion; as I have shown; hence; therefore; as a result; on the whole; consequently
To show cause-and-effect relationships	Because; since; therefore; as a result; consequently; hence; thus; because of; due to; as a result of
To show adversative position	Although; even though; despite the fact that; notwithstanding the fact that; nevertheless; in spite of
To clarify	In other words; that is
To intensify	On the contrary; as a matter of fact; in fact

> Sentence 4: *Another* one of the main changes that young learners experience in school is the move from informal learning to formal learning.

The fourth sentence could have read:

> One of the main changes that young learners experience in school is the move from informal to formal learning.

There is no foolproof recipe to guide you in the use of suitable connecting words. We believe that if you are well read in the topic of your research and if you understand the texts and have compiled your main list of notes, sum-

maries, memos and paraphrases, you will write with greater ease. You will also be able to link sentences both structurally (using sentence connectors) and semantically. Using the table we have provided in this chapter may help you, but it will not replace your ability to create logical links based on understanding.

6.9 Summary

The focus of this chapter was the composition of clear sentences that are linked in coherent stretches of language. The chapter started with an exploration of how skilful research and note-taking can lead to skilful writing. We showed you how the process of looking for information and the thinking that underpins it are essential for the linking of ideas, and thus also for the linking of sentences. We also emphasised that the linking of sentences is a micro-writing activity that reflects larger ones, such as the overall structure of the problem-solution mechanism and the general-to-specific structure, which also guide one in making sentence connections.

Crafting paragraphs and other organising units of text

The objectives of this chapter are to help you to

- compose paragraphs with a purpose
- write paragraphs that show unity, development and coherence
- create structure in sections of an essay that cohere.

7.1 Introduction: From cohesive sentences to coherent, unified paragraphs

Let us start by again looking at the structure[1] of a typical essay. By now you will have grasped the idea that a topic has to be placed in a broader framework. You started your main introduction by invoking *general* information regarding the topic, then narrowed down the discussion to a more *specific* area, in which you situated the *thesis statement*. You then set out a *process description* of how you intend approaching the essay (and by implication also the research that has preceded it). In this introduction you will have alluded to the structure of the essay, which also represents the temporary or *preliminary outline* of the essay. We ended the previous chapter by mentioning that this structure is the result of the inquiry (the literature research) you have completed – the outcome of the themes you identified in the literature and that you will be using as the *organising mechanisms* of your writing. Your research of the literature may have been intended to precede a field inquiry as well. (In Chapter 9 we will look at writing that is specifically geared for writing up field research.)

Once you have reviewed the literature and have made relevant thematic notes, you can write up your knowledge. In the introduction (you can choose whether you want to do this in the second, third or fourth paragraphs of the

1 Keep in mind throughout this book that when we refer to "structure", content is immediately implied as well. The two concepts are inseparable. One cannot write about what one does not know.

introductory section), you will "signpost" the rest of the essay. This outline of the "route" of your essay gives the reader an overview or a *signposting* of the essay.[2] Once you have decided which themes of knowledge (consolidated from your notes) to use as the structuring mechanism for the essay, you can think of them as *headings* for your paper. Each of these themes (which can/will now become a section or subsection of your essay or paper) is now also a *problem-solution* section on its own. The question arises as to whether you will be able to structure these coherently, and whether you will be able to use your writing tools in such a way that the sections and subsections are linked in a coherent, logical whole and to the main problem-solution structure. Figure 6.3 (p. 70) sets out this structure. The main structure is made up of substructures. The main theme/topic consists of sub-themes/sub-topics/headings. The building blocks for these structures are sentences and paragraphs and it is to paragraphs that we now direct your attention.

7.2 Paragraphs as clusters of meaning

Once you have practised the use of connectors or transitional mechanisms with which to link sentences, you will find the construction of paragraphs less daunting. Paragraphs are units of organisation; they serve to "chunk" your thinking and therefore also to group your writing. If you remain aware of the fact that you are writing in paragraphs and of what purpose each one serves, you will start thinking about paragraphing as you plan your writing. Paragraphs also serve as scaffolds to develop your reasoning, because each paragraph develops a theme that leads to another. Thus one paragraph leads to another – one theme develops from another. In terms of the travel metaphor of this book, a paragraph represents the distance covered between points on the way to the final destination. Each paragraph is therefore characterised by a controlling theme, which is usually found in the sentence that "governs" the paragraph.

7.3 Topic sentences as centres of meaning

This sentence – the main sentence – is known as the *topic sentence*. In a way it can be seen as the "title" of the paragraph, although formally a paragraph does not have a title. It is the nerve centre of your set of sentences. If you have a learning style that prevents you from writing until you have made a detailed outline, you may even have a skeletal topic sentence in mind for each paragraph that you plan to write.[3]

2 You may recall that we refer to this "writing about your writing" as meta-writing. This is a tool you use to assist your readers to see the structure of your essay.

3 We do not advocate this type of planning, because we suggest that you build your scheme as you go along, but we acknowledge that for some of you a neat and complete writing plan is essential to prevent writer's block and anxiety.

Task 7.1: *Topic or theme sentences as the centre of paragraphs*

Read the sentences we used in the two tasks of the previous chapter as they now appear in paragraph form.

> The field of Educational Psychology comprises many areas of great complexity, with studies about and theories relating to the developing learner as one of its challenges. In *addition to* studying the issues surrounding early learning in school, it is *also* necessary for scholars of Educational Psychology to take into account the changes that the young child is faced with upon entering school. *One of these changes is that* when young children leave home for the first time they have to spend hours in a strange institution where there are many unfamiliar faces, which may cause separation anxiety. *Another* one of the main changes that young learners experience in school is the move from informal learning to formal learning. If teachers, *however,* could try to make this change gradual and to maintain aspects of informal learning, the change would not be so dramatic and the adaptation to school might be smoother. It is, *therefore,* not enough to just accept that these changes are often traumatic for young learners; research needs to advance more in order to explore and explain this field and to help to design schools, teacher education and learner support that will address the problems of novice school-goers.

There is one sentence that performs the leading function in this paragraph. Can you identify it? Is it the sentence about research that is needed to understand young learners' problems upon entering school (the second sentence)? Why do you think this sentence, or another one you have identified, is the topic-indicating sentence of this paragraph?

You can now write the topic sentence of a paragraph in your own research essay. Although it is not essential that the sentence should be the first one, we suggest that you place it near the beginning so that it can assist the reader to focus.

7.4 Writing functional paragraphs

A good paragraph will guide your reader towards a better understanding of your main topic and will serve to persuade the reader to find your view and your argument and explanations plausible. There are specific functions that paragraphs fulfil towards this end. These include the notions of *unity* of thought and style, *coherence* of ideas, and *development* of ideas:

- Paragraphs provide *unity* to a group of ideas. The leading thought within a paragraph is present in each sentence in that paragraph, but if there is a leading sentence, the overall link is more pertinent. When you read a paragraph you should be able to conceptually link each sentence with the topic sentence.

Try to do that in our example paragraph above. Do you think that each of the five other sentences has some thought link with the topic sentence?

- Paragraphs also serve as mechanism to promote *coherence*. This means that if the sentences within a paragraph cohere, if they are linked to one another both technically and conceptually, the paragraph will be a unity. The coherence lies as much in the thinking as it does in the structure (the technical links that you make with transitional devices). Moreover, it is easier to link already coherent paragraphs with one another. One can pick up the thread (which may be the topic sentence, or the last, conclusion-drawing or summarising sentence) and weave it into the next paragraph. In this way the one paragraph's ending is in fact the beginning of the next one.
- Paragraphs show *development* of thought. The knowledge you express at the beginning of a paragraph is not the same as that which you express towards the end. There is development of the main theme; the development is usually towards a more specific focus. This development can be in the form of an expansion of the argument, with examples from the literature. It can be in the form of definitions of terms and an interpretation of their meaning. It can also be the analysis of a claim you are starting to formulate with regard to your research. This claim will be related to your initial thesis statement and will develop as you read and research more.

***Task 7.2:** Analysing the function of a paragraph*

Read the example on p. 79 again and try to identify the development of the paragraph. In this case the development is quite obvious, because as an introductory paragraph it develops from a general statement to a specific problem and the suggestion of a solution. The very structure of a typical introductory paragraph facilitates development. In your own writing you should make sure that this development is not a list of items of information. You have to structure the information so that the content "grows" or develops.

Now try to find the flow of ideas and decide whether the paragraph is unified and coherent. Usually a G–S paragraph with a problem-solution structure is unified and coherent. Introductory paragraphs that do not follow these (or other) structures may be incoherent unless the authors use other devices, such as narrating background information.

7.5 Paragraphs with a purpose and a linking function

When crafting paragraphs you can decide on the structure according to the *purpose* of the paragraph. You have asked yourself what the function of this specific paragraph will be in the section or subsection. Now you want to ask yourself what you hope to achieve with the paragraph. Where do you hope your readers will be when they have read this paragraph? The following are

possible *objectives* for a paragraph. In your mind you should actually be saying: "After having read this paragraph the reader will

- *know* the definition I have provided
- *understand* the problem I have presented and analysed
- *see* the picture I have described
- *grasp* the anecdote and the reason I included it with some discussion points
- *see* the differences and similarities between some concepts, theories, research findings, activities or events that I compared and contrasted
- *follow* the reasoning of my argument and understand why I am drawing this conclusion, because I have argued clearly with evidence that I explained."

Let us now discuss three examples of paragraph purpose:

1. You may decide that the purpose of an individual paragraph is to narrate the anecdote you briefly referred to as evidence in the preceding paragraph. The paragraph is then just the *description* of one piece of evidence. There is no need to make each paragraph a complete little argument. Paragraphs are components of larger structures. Just make sure that they fit into these appropriately. This paragraph will be purely *descriptive* and there is a reason for this.
2. Another paragraph may consist of an extended *definition* of a term. This is then plain *expository* writing in which you clarify a term for your readers, who want to make sure why you place so much emphasis on this term. Again it is evidence in your argument. You merely need to make sure that this paragraph, and every successive one, is linked to its referent. We would like to repeat that the best way to ensure this is to start thinking about the next paragraph towards the end of the one you are currently composing. One of us never closes a file on the computer when she is writing until she has made sure what the governing idea of the next paragraph is.
3. In another paragraph you may want to *compare* two views. You will then write *argumentatively*, showing what the two views have in common, where they differ, and why one view is more acceptable than the other. Your selection of a preferred view is then your conclusion (drawn from the mini-argument) and also the end of the paragraph. Moreover, you have also left a nice "cliffhanger" with which to begin the next paragraph.

Task 7.3: *Structuring paragraphs with various purposes*

Your task is to now select a body of information and use it to write three different paragraphs, each with a different purpose. Select as your purposes three of the six types of purpose above.

For example, if the information is about the cognitive development of a young child:

- You may decide to *define* the stages of cognitive development according to the theory of Jean Piaget, *arguing* that there is sufficient research to indicate that the rules of biological growth alone cannot define cognitive development. Your paragraph therefore contains both *expository* writing (the definitions) and *argumentative* writing (drawing conclusions from the definitions).
- You may *compare and contrast* the stages theory with the theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as propounded by Vygotsky, *arguing* that mediation and scaffolding, as well as culture and language, play important roles in the development of cognition.
- You may also use the same information and *narrate* one case that you have read about, giving full *descriptive details* of how a feral child (a child growing up in the wild without human care) has developed cognitively.

In each of these three examples you will use the same theme, but you will write a paragraph with a different purpose each time. We believe that it is very important to keep the purpose of an individual paragraph in mind and not to mix modes/purposes within a single paragraph too much. (You will find, however, that you will often mix argumentative writing with other kinds of writing.) This way the content of the paragraph (governed by the topic sentence) is not the only binding factor – the format and the style of the paragraph also contribute to the unity and coherence. Even if the overall purpose of groups of paragraphs is to contribute to the main argument, an individual paragraph may have a different focus. This focus will, however, be a component of the larger picture. That is why a purposeful paragraph is much easier to link with a subsequent purposeful paragraph.

7.6 Connecting paragraphs

The connection of one paragraph with the next is similar to the connection of one sentence with the following one. The premise is exactly the same. The flow of language has to proceed logically to the next utterance or stretch of language. However, the connection is not directly between the last sentence of the first paragraph and the first sentence of the subsequent paragraph. The link is more conceptual and has to do with the way the topic sentences are linked (in your mind). The link is also between the purposes of the two to-be-linked paragraphs. That is why it is so important to know the exact purpose of a paragraph.

What do you consider is the purpose of the example of a paragraph that we have been using in this chapter (p. 79)? Was it to *state the main proposition* of the essay/research topic? This would mean that it proposed that there was a problem, that there was a possible research solution, that the general

context and the specific setting of the phenomenon were clearly contextualising the problem, and that the thesis statement was worthy of investigation. In Figure 7.1 (p. 84) we illustrate the connection of three hypothetical paragraphs flowing from the one we created at the beginning of this chapter. The example sentences come from Chapter 6.

To write a second paragraph, one would have to consider its purpose as well. Would we perhaps write a fully *descriptive* paragraph, pointing out the research that has been conducted in recent years, and identifying the void in the South African research setting? Would we then continue into a third paragraph, *comparing* the findings of research from the two main theories that we have included (stage development theory and the theory of the zone of proximal development), aiming to *debate* the matter and get to the contested issue? In this case the contested issue could be the role of the teacher in initial formal education with regard to mediating and scaffolding learning (ZPD theory-related) and/or the role of the teacher as facilitator and guide in encouraging individual cognition to flower within the possibilities of present cognitive development. How would one then connect these paragraphs?

The same connecting devices that we presented in Table 6.1 (p. 75) can be used to link paragraphs. One can also pick up specific words in the previous paragraphs (not formal connectors) and *repeat* them. The repetition itself serves as a linking device. How could you use a word from the paragraph in our example (p. 79) and implement it as a device to create between-paragraph coherence? What about using the term "informal learning" in the next paragraph too – to illustrate that the research that you are reporting (the topic of this second paragraph) also emphasises the maintenance of as many "informal characteristics" as possible in the classroom? You are then "picking up" a concept in one paragraph and carrying it over to the next. The second, descriptive paragraph thus describes research in the field, emphasising *informal learning*. You can then also say that a void in South African research is a result of our failure to conduct any such investigations. That could be the entry into the third paragraph and you might find that "research" would in fact become the word to lead into the topic sentence of the third paragraph.

You have now already prepared yourself for the third paragraph, because in referring to informal learning you touched on the two main theories, which you will now be exploring in the third paragraph. If you continue like this you will note that there is a system developing – a system that shows coherence between the paragraphs, i.e. which paragraphs belong together and can be given a communal heading. This introductory section can be titled: "An introduction to the essay" or "Introduction: The bridge from home to school".

This is a very different approach from what many of our students tell us about their writing histories. Many of them admit that they take headings from books and then "squeeze" information about the headings into the

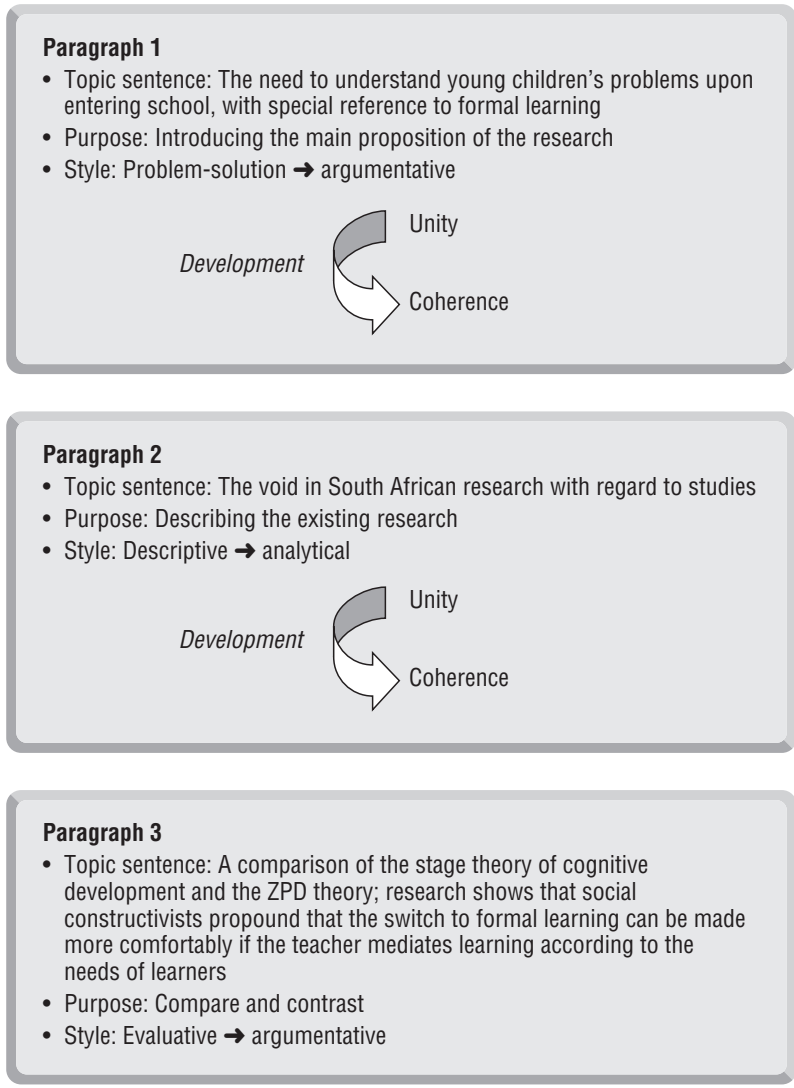


Figure 7.1 Conceptual links between paragraphs

paragraphs. If you work with themes you have noticed in the literature and organise these in your own main list, you will work inductively and label sets of knowledge in your paper according to their "natural" coherence. You will also use your own understanding – your knowledge as performance in writing – as an organising mechanism.

7.7 Structure and content: Two sides of the coin

You will have become aware that every skill of writing and of organising knowledge that we have discussed or referred to has a counterpart in know-

ing. Your knowing "how to write" is dependent on your knowing "what to write". This is prominent in the linking of paragraphs and in deciding which paragraphs to group together. Writing is iterative – i.e. it repeatedly develops and extends an argument. Just think of the sentences you have written and the ones you have used as examples thus far. The one main idea becomes a topic sentence and creates a paragraph, which leads to the next one. In this process of generating new paragraphs you are, of course, guided by the main plan of themes you compiled while you were reading, and you are now organising and perhaps rearranging them in a sequence in your outline. This is why we said earlier that when you start writing you will possibly change your outline.

Try to plan a paragraph structure for a section of your essay, using Table 7.1 as a guide.

Table 7.1 Coherence in content and structure of a section of a research essay

Section of essay: theme generation of paragraphs	Section of essay: topic sentences
Thematic (content) coherence 1. Introduction (general–specific) 2. Theme taken from paragraph 1. 3. Theme taken from paragraph 2. 4. Theme generated because of development of paragraph 3. 5. Theme generated because of conclusion of paragraph 4. 6. Theme is the conclusion drawn at the end of the argument put forward in this section. All the themes are related to the main topic as well as the section topic. Themes are generated because of the knowledge (and insight) of the writer.	***Structural coherence*** 1. Introduction: topic sentence of this paragraph captures theme of section. 2, 3, 4 & 5. Topic sentence captures theme of the paragraph. Connectors are used to link with previous paragraph. 6. Topic sentence captures the conclusion. All the topic sentences should relate (conceptually) to the main topic. Topic sentences are constructed to reflect a summarised version of the theme of the paragraph.

Now give a title to this section of your essay. You can use a title you have put in your outline and perhaps just modify it to suit the contents of the section better.

7.8 "Sticking it together"

Eventually you should be able to use this type of guide to gauge the overall coherence of your essay. You should ask yourself how the sections finally

cohere. One section should lead to the next and their headings should reflect this coherence. The English meaning of the word "coherence" is "to stick together". It comes from the Latin "cohaerere" – to stick. One way of enhancing coherence is to see if the sequence of ideas makes sense. This you can do at sentence level, at paragraph level, at subsection and at section level. Ultimately you can gauge whether the first paragraph of your whole essay coheres with the last.

We would like to emphasise that coherence is not achieved through structural-technical means. It is firstly obtained because the writer knows the topic well and then because the writer uses certain techniques and writing methods with which to perform knowledge. If you look at Table 7.1 (p. 85) you will see that content coherence is reflected in structural coherence and vice versa. If a topic is clear in your mind and if you have collected enough reliable information about it, the chances are that you will write a rich, coherent essay, making use of some of the techniques you have learned.

One last figure (Figure 7.2) may illustrate this.

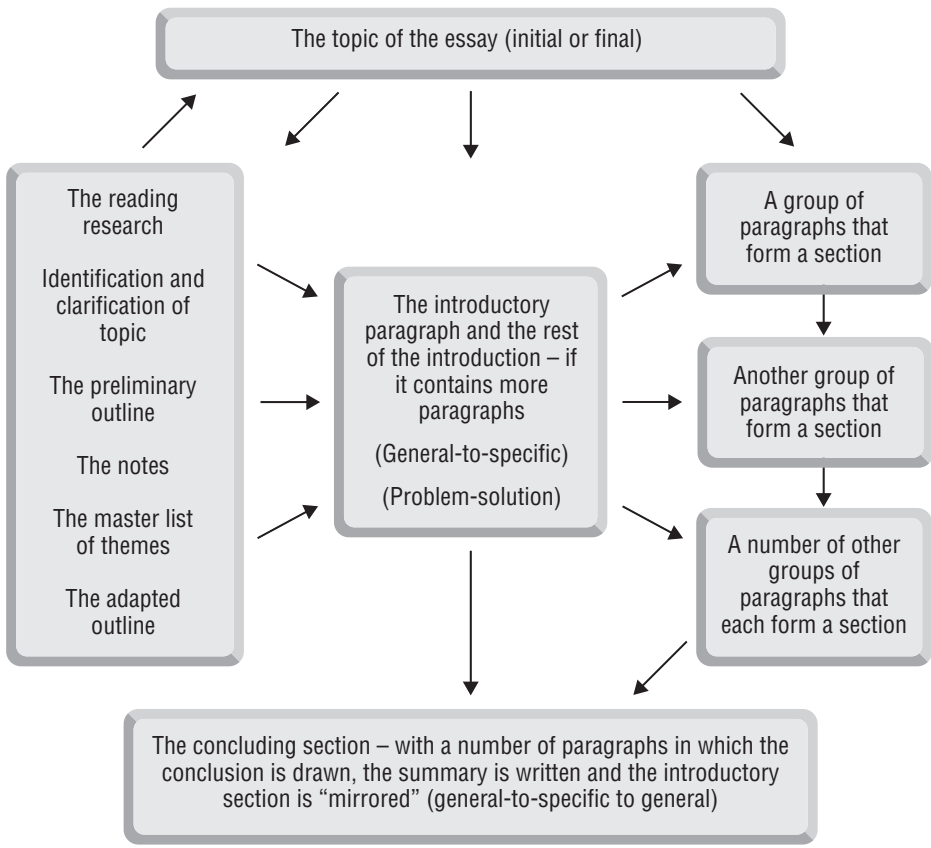


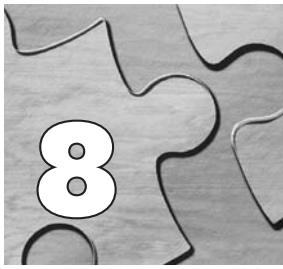
Figure 7.2 Coherence in an essay

7.9 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce you to ways of achieving cohesion and coherence in your writing. The focus was on paragraphs as organising units. We would like to suggest that if you are able to link sentences and to create unified paragraphs that develop an idea, you will be able to do this with the linking of paragraphs. If you have not been a confident writer in the past, one way of developing your skills of academic writing is to write individual paragraphs well and then to join them with linking sentences. You will learn to trust your author's intuition if you work from good notes and a clear understanding of your topic. This means that you will also learn to trust your ability to *manage your writing* and to *organise your knowledge*. As we have suggested in this chapter, writing and knowing are two sides of a coin. On the one side "of the coin" you "know". On the other side you "perform" this knowledge.

We, on the other hand, trust that you will now start practising the writing of paragraphs "with a purpose" and then see how you can logically group these into sections of your essay. The focus of this chapter was on coherence at various levels, as indicated by the two figures in particular. You have seen that coherence is not just a technical accomplishment, but that it is a cognitive one that comes from knowing your topic and then using technical skills to embody your knowledge in writing.

Developing an argument and an academic style



The objectives of this chapter are to help you to

- start using or improve your style of academic writing
- see the link between the style, the discourse and the general characteristics of scholarly writing
- structure your essay by using explicit headings
- link introductions and conclusions.

8.1 Introduction: Why academic style is more formal

In our practitioner research with many students through the years, a common trend we found is the belief that the use of jargon in itself indicates understanding. Students often say they have found it useful to memorise a few "catchwords" and phrases to use when they write examinations, and that it paid off. This way of writing is often transferred to essays and dissertations. It is a habit not easily broken, because many novice research writers develop the habit of not trusting their own expression and understanding, and using this default technique as a safety mechanism. They then revert to using these default techniques in the hope of creating an "academic style". We concede that there is some merit in learning new phrases and words, on condition that one understands them fully and can use them in different ways. An academic style, however, cannot be cultivated by words and phrases alone. You have to be well grounded in the discourse of the field of study – and that means that you have to understand the way in which language is used and topics are discussed in a specific field of scholarship. You can, especially as a novice, model your writing on the examples of good texts, but you have to understand those texts in order to do so.

Although there are advantages to this type of "modelling", you have to continue to read and to make notes from texts that contain the language and the organising principles suited to the field in which you work. If you are not well grounded in a field, you should obviously refrain from using terminology from that field. We are repeating – the only way to make sure you become acquainted with the discourse conventions of a discipline or a field is to read

widely in that field. You will adopt the *ways of writing* by reading them. Then you can blend your personal language, enriched by words and conventions of the discourse, to cultivate an academic style that suits you and in which you feel comfortable. Most of the students who use this book are not doing so to learn a completely "new" language, but to *convert* a personal and informal style to a *slightly more formal* one that incorporates the "rules" of certain discourse communities. In terms of changing your language, the best place to begin is therefore to become acquainted with the authors in your discourse community. For example, the community of Human Resource Management scholars will have typical words and ways of organising texts, and these may differ from the way in which Educational Psychology scholars write about their field of interest. With the help of discipline-specific terms and ways of organising your text, you will be able to express yourself clearly. Therefore you need to make a "vocabulary shift" that entails more than simply using new words and phrases. The way you use these newly learned terms will be as important as the words themselves.

8.2 Making a vocabulary shift

An academic style is not as far removed from personal writing as we are inclined to think. Athough some writing instructors talk about a "vocabulary shift" (Swales & Feak, 1994), the shift is more a conceptual one – you think and reason in a way that makes your writing more persuasive and perhaps less "expressive", and therefore you use the language that will help you do this. In addition to using the terminology of a discipline, the shift also implies that colloquialisms[1] and contractions (such as "can't" for "cannot") are not acceptable – because the type of persuasion that is required is based on a tradition of reasoning and argumentation that requires "formal" language with a "rational" character. We again stress that the vocabulary shift further implies that the writer should know the typical terms in the field. A student of educational management, for instance, should be comfortable with terms such as "the learning organisation", "educational policy", "pedagogy", "curriculum", and so forth. You are writing for a specialist audience in an academic setting and you need to be comfortable with the terminology. Knowing the terms implies that you know the meaning of the words, and by now you will agree that this again implies that you have the relevant knowledge. Once again we come to the point that underlies our own argument for good scholarly writing – the need to know the field.

The logic of the vocabulary shift is straightforward. If you know the terminology of a field and use it in the way that suits the conventions of that field, you are showing readers (in that field) that you know the contemporary discourse! If, on the other hand, you use terms that were in fashion 30 years ago and you write in the style and discourse that reflects your reading of

1 This refers to informal jargon.

only these older sources, your work cannot be regarded as relevant for contemporary purposes. If you read the recent literature and pick up the writing conventions of this literature, your own writing will be infused with the style of this discourse. Yes, you have to read and make notes abundantly in order to be able to write academically!

8.3 Sentences, paragraphs and headings in an academic text

Keeping in mind the two issues we touched on in the preceding section, you can now write a few sentences that are typical of the discourse community for whom you write. As we have said before, a discourse community consists of people with the same interest and knowledge background. We assume that members of this community understand one another. A clinical psychologist will not use the same type of language, examples and anecdotes as a student of educational management and planning. They belong to different discourse communities, although they may share some common terms relating to educational matters generally. A nuclear physicist will write language that may be completely incomprehensible to most of us. Members of highly specialised discourse communities have made huge vocabulary shifts, but they have done so over a long time.

The sentences you write will also be linked in a certain way. The table of sentence connectors that we introduced in Chapter 6 (Table 6.1 on p. 75) will be of help to you when you link sentences written for academic purposes. But these sentences on their own, and in their linked state, are inherently part of a paragraph. We would also like to refer you to Chapter 7 in which you learned that paragraphs are the "communicators" of texts in persuasive academic writing. Therefore if you wish to assess paragraphs you have written, you can look for the topic sentence and see if a *main topic* has been *developed* and become more explicit as the paragraph progresses, and whether the paragraph has a specific *purpose*. And then you add the notion of academic style and ask yourself: "Is this paragraph written in the discourse of my field? Are the sentences and the words exemplary of what authors do when they write in my field? Is the language persuasive?"

Furthermore, you will group paragraphs together and decide on a heading for such a group. These groups become sections with their own headings. Again, a single word is rarely suitable as a heading. A heading must give some sense of the content of the group of paragraphs and also indicate how you have argued a point in the section. If you write about community entrepreneurship and are focusing on the social welfare net that does not "catch" a group of marginalised people because of certain "holes", you would hardly use "Social welfare" as a heading. Your heading needs to capture the essence of a section and could be: "Rural women as caretakers of multiple children and the issue of social welfare". You may think that the heading is too long. Our view is that it can be rather too long than so short as to mean

"anything". Composing explicit headings contributes to your argumentative style, because your reader gets a cursory glance at the main points at your argument by looking at the headings (even as they are contained in the list of contents!) and identifying the flow of the text from the headings themselves.

Task 8.1: *Using the language of your discourse community*

Write five sentences that each contain a special term from your field of interest, keeping in mind the readers (the members of the discourse community) for whom you are composing these sentences. Make sure you have kept the language formal. If you have trouble with a word and you are not sure whether you should use it, do not hesitate to use a dictionary or thesaurus. Also write a heading for these sentences, as if they are part of a whole section in your essay.

8.4 Writing definitions for your own use

As we have pointed out in this chapter so far, the danger of using terms from a discipline is that you may be enticed to use words that you do not fully understand and to compose headings that look impressive, but that do not capture the content of the text that is to follow. Henning (1998) refers to this habit of some students as "suspending cognition". The meaning of the unknown terms literally "hangs in the air". She also refers to this habit as the use of "fraudulent discourse", meaning that the use of the unknown terms is a dishonest language activity. The only way to make sure that you do not engage in this practice is to define each and every term you use. You can now write a *definition* of each of the discipline-related words you used in the previous exercise. We have found that the writing of clear, concise definitions helps students to develop a more formal style. Some students have gone as far as creating a glossary of terms in a file in their computers (or in a little hardcover book). They then define these terms as leading scholars do and use quotes to do so. Next to that they write a definition in their own words and also use their primary language to make it clearer if English is an additional language for them.

You may have found that it is not so easy to write a definition. Firstly, we wish to emphasise that there is one thing that you should *not* do when trying to define a term, and that is to use the phrases "is when" or "is where". Few definitions actually refer to time (when) or place (where), yet many definitions start with these phrases. Here are two examples:

> "Participatory school management *is where* the people ..." and "Participatory management *is when* a school ..."

A clearer option could be: "Participatory management is a form of school governance that relies on the engagement of stakeholders at all levels."

Did you notice that the language of the definition is formal? What aspects of the definition contribute to the formal style? The sentence construction is a factor, as are the clarity and the absence of emotive language. The main factor is that the choice of words indicates that the tone is serious.

Now you can rewrite your definitions and make sure you are not misusing the phrases as mentioned above, and that you write for an audience that is as serious as you are about the topic.

8.5 "I am writing my text" – the first person as author

The final aspect of style that we wish to mention is the use of the first person – "I". There are different viewpoints on this. In the field of Education, for instance, generally we have no problem with an author referring to himself or herself in the first person. We agree with the American Psychological Association (1994: 29) that it can seem contrived to refer to oneself as "the author" or "the researcher". The person who writes is in fact composing the text from the position of his or her own self. The issue of objectivity or distance does not relate to the use of the first person. Rigorous research depends on measures taken to do good research, not on the use of a pronoun in the writing of a report.

An additional advantage of using the first person is that it helps to limit the use of the passive form, which does not usually make for good academic writing.[2] The discomfort of writing about "the researcher" while referring to yourself often brings a certain clumsiness to the text. It feels contrived to talk about oneself in the third person and goes against rules of language as performative practice. This convention is a remnant of positivist objectivist writing in the natural sciences, which was transferred to the social sciences and the humanities – probably to try to give it the status of the hard sciences.

The use of the first person does not impact on the formality or the persuasive character of the language, but could add to it. Notice in the following example how use of the first and the third person changes the tone of the sentence: "In contrast to what many see as the function of education, I would agree with Pinker (1999: 222) that 'education is a technology that tries to make up for what the mind is innately bad at'." Now replace the "I" with "the researcher" and see how the tone of the sentence changes. It becomes contrived.

8.6 Argument and style meet in structure

When you look at Figure 7.2 (p. 86) which depicts the coherence in an essay

2 There are instances where the passive voice serves a good purpose, such as in the description of laboratory processes, e.g. "The solution is then poured into the beaker", or when general truths are stated.

structurally, you can now add content and trace your argument. Firstly you can make sure that your *topic* is presented in such a way that there is room for problematising it and also for arguing a thesis statement. Then you can read the introduction to your essay to make sure that there is a solid *general–specific structure* as well as a *problem-solution* structure. This does not mean that you are anticipating the outcome of your research by giving a solution beforehand, but that you have a *viewpoint* from which some intellectual problem solving can be done. We must remember that doing research is like "solving an intellectual puzzle", and your indication of a research direction towards solving the intellectual problem gives the reader an idea of what you know and also what you wish to find out. One cannot take a stance or a viewpoint if one does not know the literature!

Then you can go through the different sections of your essay (or the chapters of your dissertation) to see if you have argued your point by using evidence from your literature review and whether you have come to any conclusions about the theory. You may disagree with some of the viewpoints of other authors, and that is always a good thing to do in scholarly writing. In any event, you must come to a conclusion. You cannot list many pages of evidence from the literature, and even discuss and analyse it well, without making an ultimate point. To be able to do this, you will have to make sure that every section in itself draws a "mini" conclusion.

8.7 The conclusion: Tying the argumentative knots

You will have written the sections and subsections of your paper in which you conducted smaller arguments, presented expository writing, and included anecdotes and vignettes or cases and narratives as examples of the point you are trying to make, as well as descriptions of existing research findings. When you have rounded off all the subsections and you are sure that you have presented evidence logically and in good order, you can now draw the final conclusion and present it in the section of the paper that is also known by the term "conclusion".

Shorter research papers may not have a section titled "Conclusion", but all have a paragraph or two that conclude the paper. To conclude implies more than a mere summary. It implies the statement of a judgement or decision reached after deliberation, the deliberation being the research argument in the "body" of the paper. Thus the conclusion serves as a culmination point of the research argument, where you basically tell the reader: "This is where all that I have been saying and arguing has been leading. This is what I want you, the reader, to think, understand or support at the end of my paper" (Creme & Lea, 2003). The conclusion echoes or mirrors the introduction. Hence, through recapitulating what you stated or claimed in your thesis statement, you are suggesting to the reader that you have indeed accomplished what you set out to do. This does not imply a mere duplication of

your thesis (mere repetition is a reminder, not a conclusion), but that you state the thesis more definitely, fully, assertively or powerfully than in the introduction, giving a sense of completion. Thus, do not introduce new ideas in the conclusion. An exception to this is if you want to point the reader to other related ideas or to further questions that emanate from the argument you have been presenting.

In summary, Creme and Lea (2003) suggest that the conclusion may

- refer to the question that may have been posed in the introduction, summarising the "answer" to this question
- refer to important related issues that the paper has not addressed
- point out that the paper has accomplished what it proposed to do
- restate the thrust of the argument developed in the paper
- point the way to further work to which your argument in the paper could lead.

Task 8.2: *Looking at conclusions and linking them with introductions*

Read the examples of introductions and conclusions that follow:

- What links can you can find between the introduction and conclusion of the papers?
- Locate the thesis of each paper.

Sculpting the learning community:
New forms of working and organising

Introduction

Schools today are in the midst of unprecedented changes of the kind being faced by other organisations. We are in the midst of an information era, yet many organisations are still functioning in ways that suit the industrial era. To meet new challenges, innovative companies, as well as those on the brink of crisis, are experimenting with new forms of working and organising that call for a fundamental rethinking of the role of learning. Senge (1990) put a name to this phenomenon that has captured the imagination of many: the "learning organisation".

Schools are also reinventing themselves (Glickman, 1993). A centrepiece of reform recommendations is that parents, teachers, administrators, staff members and students join together to learn their way through change as communities of inquiry and experimentation.

In discussing the notion that schools need to function as learning organisations, the first part of this paper focuses on the meaning of the concept "learning organisation". This is followed by a discussion of action imperatives of a learning community.

Conclusion

Schools are communities in which learning is supposed to take place, but they do not always function well as learning communities. The hope for the future is to enhance the likelihood that schools will be designed and run for the kind of learning that is needed for the 21st century, which will surely move far beyond the current information era.

Schools need to be highly effective places for children to learn, for parents to influence school actions, and for teachers and principals to change curricula to foster the kind of continuous learning that is being demanded of parents and children alike. The learning organisation concept suggests a way of thinking about the school in its community as a system that can consciously choose to create a new vision and learn its way together towards implementing that new vision.

Teaching as dialogic mediation

Introduction

In the current adult education discourse, teaching is generally conceptualised as learning facilitation. This paper discusses a view of teaching in adult education that is based on an integration of the notions of dialogue and of mediation. We argue that the fashionable notion of "facilitation" of learning as educational activity appears fuzzy when compared to the activity of mediation. Based on a constructivist perspective on learning, we propose an approach to teaching where teachers and learners are involved in a co-learning and co-mediating process with the aim of assisting learners to increasingly appropriate an expert way of thinking and doing in their field of study.

The first part of the paper provides a framework in which teaching as dialogic mediation is conceptualised from a constructivist perspective on learning. The discussion then shifts to the challenge of intentionally establishing an affective-social context conducive to dialogue as two-way mediation, and we highlight the crux of teaching as dialogic mediation. The last section of the paper deals with strategies for the employment of dialogic mediation.

Conclusion

We argued in this paper from a constructivist perspective that learning in the teaching situation is mediated by dialogue between the learner and the educator as human mediator. Based on this notion we discussed why and

how the educator should establish a context conducive to dialogue. This was followed by an exposition of some mediational strategies that invite learners to form learning partnerships with each other and with the educator as mediator. We believe that the main role of the educator is to assist and guide students in moving from the position of novice in their field of study towards becoming increasingly expert. We claimed in this paper that this necessitates that adult educators should approach teaching as dialogic mediation.

By now you will agree that conclusions are not merely a way to "end" the paper. They really are a way of tying the final knots. You need to remind the reader that you have provided substantial evidence, that you have understood the topic and that the conclusion you have come to is based on your understanding. The fact that you now refer to the introductory section of your paper, in which you gave *background* (general-to-specific) and also forwarded your *thesis statement* and thus your point of view, and in which you *signposted* the route of your paper, shows the reader that you have worked coherently, aiming to reach your destination in a systematic way.

8.8 Summary

This chapter emphasised that academic writing style is not merely the application of certain rules and the use of words that come from the jargon of the discipline, but rather a way of thinking and of using knowledge in performing persuasive writing. Persuasive writing consists of arguments about a point that you try to make, and these cannot be conducted in a knowledge vacuum. Therefore, in order to write persuasive text in which you wish to convince your reader that you "know what you are writing (talking) about", you need to have the knowledge at your fingertips and then you need to use the writing technologies – such as the ones you are learning about in this book – to express your knowledge in the style of the academy. In this way, by going through a type of rite of passage, you enter the discourse community of your academic discipline, where copying and plagiarising do not exist.

Towards that destination you need to continually gauge whether you are still occupied with the core activity of paper writing, namely arguing. On the next page is a little mechanism our students use. It is colloquially known as the "homemade formula to test for good argumentation".

Equation	**Key**
$A = \frac{E(a + d + d + e)}{C}$	A: Argument E: Evidence a: analysed evidence d: discussed evidence d: described evidence e: evaluated evidence C: Conclusion

Writing a field study

The objectives of this chapter are to help you to

- use sequencing as a tool in writing up a field study
- write out the design of the study
- write up the steps taken in data gathering and analysis
- write the discussion and interpretation of findings and the conclusions that you have drawn.

9.1 Introduction: Telling the story of a field research project

Honours and Master's students are often required to complete a field inquiry in their chosen discipline as part of their research agenda and also as part of their practical experience. Often they have not been educated in writing up field research. After many years of writing conceptual papers, or "thinking pieces" in which they are required to show how they have read the literature critically, the more advanced student is now also required to investigate the everyday manifestation of the theories that she or he has read in everyday situations – in the "field". In many ways this seems to be easier than critically gathering information from and forming opinions about printed or electronic texts – one merely writes up what one has done in the field and there is not so much "reading" and interpretation involved! Yet writing up a short field research project can be as daunting as writing a dissertation, that is if one has not learned the skills of both research and of writing up this research.

The good news is that these skills of writing are easily learned and blend well with writing about theory. At the same time they also have much in common with writing a story of one's everyday experience. Let me explain. If you have had an interesting experience that you want to relate to others, you select the experience (it has a topic!) and then you systematically, and usually also chronologically, tell your audience about what happened. If you narrate a travelling experience, you will tell your listeners where you started and what happened to you on the way, and you will complete the story by saying how it ended. You will focus on the main theme of your story and

emphasise what you think is important – thus highlighting the topic. I listen to people telling jokes and try to see these as "research stories". It does not take long to find out what the point is that the joke-teller wishes to make. Thus I locate the "thesis" statement of the joke – especially if it is one in which social biases are portrayed! The fictitious story of the joke is constructed to make a point and also, of course, to make people laugh.

When you have to write up a field research project, the principles of narration are the same as telling a personal story and even a joke. You have to now "tell" your readers about your inquiry and you have to do so systematically and chronologically, and also in great detail. Imagine if you change the sequence of a particularly suspenseful yarn – and you lose the humour because the sequence was all wrong. Jokes aside now – the most important requirement for this type of writing is that you must have had some education in *research methodology* in order to know how to tell your story. In other words, you must know what *type* of story to tell and how to structure it. *Research methodologies* and *types of designs* have their own structural requirements. Despite the fact that certain design types need to be related in a certain way, they share some common principles. In addition to the writing being systematic and chronologically sequenced, field research is reported so that the reader

- can follow the pattern of actions taken by the researcher
- is able to understand the reasons for all the research steps that were taken
- has sufficient data evidence (as data presented in the text) to trust the writing
- reads a field text (the data that you bring) that is rich in its *description* and *exposition*, and detailed in its *analysis*.

This means that when you write up your field study you need to make it as vivid and as "real" as possible for your reader. You will write descriptively, expositorily, narratively and analytically. The reader should be able to "see" the people, the places, the documents, the artefacts and the interactions between people – all based on the detailed representation that you have given in your text. You as author (and your text) are the only source to which the reader has access. Therefore you have the responsibility to show, step by step, what you have done *in the field*, and also what you have done *with the information* (the "data") that you so diligently gathered in the field. To this end you will have to illustrate your text almost abundantly with examples of "raw data" (specific words used by participants and pictures, or other visual information directly drawn from the field). As you tell your story of the inquiry, you will illustrate and annotate your own telling with these examples of "raw data". This will make your account of the inquiry more accountable and therefore more reliable. (People who tell good jokes usually provide detailed accounts of actions and settings.)

In addition to telling the reader how you collected data and giving examples, you also have to show your reader how you *worked with these data*. This means that you will give ample examples of how you *analysed*, or processed, or "worked" the data (see Chapters 6 and 7 of *Finding your way in qualitative research* by Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit (2004) and also works by Holliday (2002), and Wolcott (1990; 1994) for examples of how to write the data-working processes). In order to be able to do this you will need some skills for analysing data and you will need to explicate them so that your reader can follow exactly what you are narrating. The reader wants to "see" what you did with the data. You have to show that in your writing.

This introduction to how to compose the story of a field research project has alluded to the fact that you will not be able to write such a report if you are not familiar with specific research methods. In this chapter I assume that you have some basic knowledge of two types of research, namely (a) *surveys using descriptive statistics* and (b) *basic qualitative studies* in which individual interviews and observations of activities are used to collect data. There are many other types of design, using a variety of data collection and analysis methods, but for the purposes of this chapter we will only refer to these two design types (see Chapter 3 of Henning et al. (2004), also Mouton (2000), and Babbie & Mouton (2001)).

9.2 Where do you begin? Presenting the background and the topic

The best place to start is by taking copious notes of all the processes of your inquiry. This means that you will use a *diary* or a *research logbook* in which you make chronologically dated notes on what you did. In this chapter I am using the example of an inquiry into a rural development programme. In this research project a student wanted to find out how a small social and economic development programme was progressing and what its participants were experiencing, showing characteristics of entrepreneurial culture.

The project: A brief description

In the village of Mokashong (a pseudonym) in a rural part of the country, 12 women, who are also social welfare pensioners, have started a home-based enterprise. They received a small amount of seed money, and the project started with making and selling bread and "vetkoek" at schools, funerals and society meetings. Gradually the project evolved to include transport arrangements, cellphone communication rental and fence construction. Two years after the first bread was baked and sold, the women are running a multifaceted project, generating a small profit that is a most welcome supplement to their state pensions.

Task 9.1: *Describing the setting and background of your inquiry*

Write a paragraph that describes the setting of your inquiry and that gives some background to it.

A student who wishes to research this project will firstly have to decide what her *topic* is, what she should focus on as her *unit of analysis*, what she aims to achieve in her research (not in the development project itself, unless she is involved in a long-term action research project, which I do not include in this chapter) and what her *main research* question is. She will do this in the same way that she would think about a theoretical research paper (see Chapters 1 and 2 of this book).

The project: Planning and defining the research

A possible topic for this inquiry would be: "The first two years of a multi-faceted rural enterprise project".

The unit of analysis could be: "How women show entrepreneurial behaviour in a small project".

The main research question could be: "What characterises the behaviour of women in a small enterprise in a village?"

The aim of the research would be to find out what the behaviour of women in a development project is and how their project is progressing after two years.

You may want to consider the thesis statement here as well. It could relate to the fact that women who engage in and have some support in a project are likely to succeed if they show some entrepreneurial spirit.

Task 9.2: *Planning and defining your research project*

Write the topic, the unit of analysis, the main research question, the aim of the research and the thesis statement of your research project.

9.3 Writing about the design of the inquiry

In your learning about research you will have encountered the following step – you have to decide *how* you are going to capture the information that

you need to address the main research question. You have to *design* a research project. As I have mentioned before, for the purposes of this chapter we are going to limit ourselves to two options. We are hypothetically going to (a) conduct a survey and (b) conduct a qualitative study in which we will use interviews and observations as data-gathering methods. We are going to use (a) *descriptive statistics* to analyse the survey data and (b) *content analysis* and some narrative analysis to work with the qualitative data. We are therefore going to show two ways of doing this study.[1]

The project: Writing up the research design

Your reader has to know how you designed the research and also why you decided on a certain *type of design* and certain methods of data collection and analysis. You therefore have to include a section in your report that will present the design and the reasoning behind it. Following are two possibilities. In both cases the participants in the inquiry are drawn from the *intact group* of pensioner-status women in the village. There is thus no probability sampling and possibilities for generalisation beyond the sample itself. The sampling is thus *purposive* (Henning et al., 2004: 71).

Example of some writing about the design for the first possibility: A small survey

This study is a survey inquiry in which descriptive statistics will be used to analyse the data. I am going to construct a 20-item questionnaire that will be individually completed with the help of a multilingual reader who records the information with the participants. The items will pertain to the womens' experiences in the project (or lack thereof) and their understanding of and views on enterprises in the village.

The sample will consist of 24 women who receive social welfare pensions and who live in the village. The 12 women who are in the enterprise project, known as the *Letsatsi* project, will also be included in this survey. The reason why I include 12 other women in the same age cohort and presumably of the same socio-economic status is that I would like to see what distinguishes the women in the *Letsatsi* project from the others. I want to see if there are characteristics or a disposition that entrepreneurial women share.

Once the questionnaires have been completed, the data will be processed/computed and descriptive statistics will be displayed and discussed according to the items. One example may be that a certain percentage of the women in the project indicated that they did this work because it brought them social contact. Another percentage may indicate that

1 In the end we may suggest that you combine the two types and present a *mixed method* study.

financial gain was the main reason. Of the women who are not in the project, a certain percentage may say that they did not believe that they were able to make such a project work. I am thus using the questionnaire to find out how certain ideas and dispositions are distributed among the women.

Example of some writing about research design for the second possibility: A qualitative inquiry

The qualitative data will be collected in two ways in this basic or generic type of qualitative design – by means of interviewing and by means of participatory observations. Two multilingual participatory assistants will conduct and record the interviews with the 12 members of the project. The *topic of the interviews* will be the progress of the project and how the women see their own roles. These will then be transcribed and the texts will be analysed for content – broadly according to grounded theory principles of content analysis (Charmaz, 2002).

Observations will be conducted by the principal researcher (myself) who will attend three project management meetings and also participate in the selling of goods and in the administration of the project for one month. These observations will be field-noted. The observation data will also be analysed in content analysis mode. Thereafter the two sets of content analysis will be combined to search for main themes and in an attempt to see pervasive patterns in the information. I will also write a narrative of the project's development, using the same data.

When the analysis of both types of data (survey and interviews plus observation) has been completed, the final consolidated data will be interpreted, using the literature that has been studied/reviewed. I will at the same time also view the findings from the perspective of the theoretical framework of the study, which is "the culture of entrepreneurship" according to authors such as Brigitte Berger (1991) and Gillian Godsell (2000). Recommendations will be made on the grounds of the interpretations.

The above is a very brief example of how a design is written up.

Task 9.3: *Writing the design of your inquiry*

Write the design of your inquiry in one page. Explain how and why certain methods are used and how the research question will be addressed.

9.4 Presenting the work-plan

In addition to the design, you also have to indicate what your *work-plan* is. This entails specific dates for completing specific research activities and a time line for writing up activities as they are completed. This writing during the research process (including data gathering and data analysis) shows your ability to manage and "file" all research writing artefacts that you make. A work-plan is typically written up in a table with columns indicating deliverable outputs and envisaged dates of completion, and stipulating the tasks of individual researchers.

Once you have indicated your work-plan, you are ready to conduct your research. This book is not about how to conduct research – I will therefore not refer much to what you do in terms of the inquiry itself, but more to how you record your work and how you "write it up".

9.5 Telling how it happened: The details of the inquiry process

In the section of your essay (or the relevant chapter of your dissertation) in which you inform your reader about your research journey, you begin with the research topic, unit of analysis, research aim/purpose and main research question. You then present your design as aligned with the main research question. I have discussed this and given examples above. In writing about your design you have to convince your reader, by means of persuasive writing, that you are selecting a suitable type of design and also feasible methods of data gathering and analysis. For this you will need the type of methodological knowledge that is contained in typical introductory books to research methodology. Use this knowledge to *argue the logic of your design.* This means, mostly, that you must say *why* your methods are suitable and also how they complement each other and cohere.

Having completed your inquiry you now write the narrative of what you did. This will form the bulk of the "data section" in an essay or paper, or the "data chapter" in a dissertation.

The project: Writing about gathering and analysing the data

Examples of writing in the small survey research

In the design that I have discussed, I indicated that I would conduct surveys with 24 participants. I started this process with the help of two assistants who documented the responses in July 2004. The data gathering from the village was completed by the end of August. An appendix (Appendix X) contains the questionnaire items and the reasons for setting the questions in the way that I did. I also referred to the questions in Section X of this

essay when I discussed relevant theory about rural women and their livelihoods.

With the help of a friend who is a mathematics teacher, I worked out the statistical representations of each of the items and then started reasoning about them. The findings will again be referred to at the end of this section and will be presented and interpreted in Section Y [or the relevant chapter in a dissertation].

Examples of writing in the qualitative inquiry

I have indicated in the discussion of the design that I would capture the progress of the *Letsatsi* project by means of interviews and observations. With the help of two multilingual assistants I conducted interviews with the 12 participants in July 2004. I transcribed and analysed these in August and September, using the content analysis technique that I have already alluded to. I then combined the main themes that I found in the two sets of data and also traced patterns from these themes.

I also used the data to write a narrative of the project.

Task 9.4: *Writing an excerpt in narrative form*

Write an excerpt from your data collection experiences in a narrative format.

9.6 Writing the discussion of the consolidated data

The "findings" that you are now going to discuss are not "final". They are the data that have been consolidated into themes and also patterns of meaning. You will write in detail about their interpretation a little later, and after that discussion you can finally refer to the *findings*.

■ THE SMALL SURVEY

In this part of your report you set out the main themes. In the survey research you will now present all the "numbers" that are of interest. You discuss issues such as the following:

- How many women did "X" and what is the meaning of this?
- What does it means that "X"% of the women say "Y"?
- Why do the women who say "X" all do "Y"?
- What are the main reasons the participants give for being/not being in an enterprise project?

In writing about the data, you need to give examples of pertinent "raw data". This is especially relevant in writing up a qualitative inquiry.

The project: Writing up examples of data collection

In the qualitative inquiry, many women referred to the support they received from their group. Lebo, an 80-year-old woman, commented:

> I surely will die without these women who do my baking when I am sick. They fetch me on the cart when I can't walk to the stall. They lend me money from our box when my grandchildren need school money, and also ... eish ... when I bury family. For this I will knead dough till I die.

In an observation, a researcher noted the following in her field journal:

> The women come together very early. They walk in small groups to their "factory" and "stall". Then they share a mug of coffee – mostly without milk and sugar. In winter they make a fire to keep warm and then conduct their daily meeting around the fire, starting with song and dance, and then prayers. Then the daily chores start – all of which appear very well organised. Each woman has a designated task and the group seems to work like a machine!

In writing up the processes of data analysis, it is essential to provide ample evidence of the logic of your analysis. In this chapter we focus only on content analysis.

If we were to allocate "code" to the examples of "raw data" that were presented in the box above, the coding could be as follows:

The project: Writing up examples of data collection

In the qualitative inquiry, many women referred to the support they received from their group. Lebo, an 80-year-old woman, commented:

Code

- A supportive group
- Members are loyal

I surely will die without these women who do my baking when I am sick. They fetch me on the cart when I can't walk to the stall. They lend me money from our box when my grandchildren need school money, and also ... eish ... when I bury family. For this I will knead dough till I die.

In an observation, a researcher noted the following in her field journal:

Code

- Work starts early
- Work day starts with social and managerial sharing
- Clear work division

The women come together very early. They walk in small groups to their "factory" and "stall". Then they share a mug of coffee – mostly without milk and sugar. In winter they make a fire to keep them warm and then conduct their daily meeting around the fire, starting with song and dance, and then prayers. Then the daily chores start – all of which appear very well organised. Each woman has a designated task and the group seems to work like a machine!

You can use all the items of the questionnaire to discuss the possible meaning of the numbers of women who say something and how that relates to something else they say, or how it relates to the research question.

In this "telling of the data" you use your knowledge of the data to inform the discussion. Try to write as much as possible and try to get as much as possible from the analysed data. You may want to present some of your discussion in figures, tables, graphs (line graphs, pie charts, bar graphs) and diagrams. You will use descriptive statistics and reason about the possible meaning of the numbers you have harnessed in the workings of the data.

■ THE QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Again you now have to discuss the findings. However, this type of inquiry will not yield numbers of people who say or do things. You will have conducted content analysis, which means that you will focus on what the participants said and what they did, as well as what their surroundings were like. You will then present the main themes derived from this detailed analysis. Some of them could be the following:

- The women in the projects believe that they are contributing to social development.
- They became involved largely because they wanted to have more structured social contact.
- They started the project because they wanted to add to their pension income.
- They saw possibilities for job creation.
- They were not afraid to diversify and branch out into different types of entrepreneurial activities.
- They see themselves as community leaders.

Once you have written these types of themes (you will find more), you can then start discussing them and see if they are conceptually related. In other words, is there some reason why the women see themselves as community leaders and creators of jobs, and what does this mean? You select "raw data" and also examples of "data-in-analysis" to illustrate your reasoning from the data. Your data are your evidence and you should remain close to the data in this discussion. It is important to amply quote "raw data". It is also vital to provide examples of how you analysed the data.

The project: Writing about the findings

Example of writing from the small survey inquiry

From the final data consolidation it is evident that the women in the project and the other women have different views of social engagement and of community development. From the survey data it is evident that the main reason for non-participation in such a project is the fact that the women did not think that they could "do business", that they regarded "business" as having to be "distrustful of others" and they were not happy with this idea. They also did not participate because they felt they would lose respect in the community as older women who are "dealing in business". There were many other reasons as well, but the main finding seems to be that the women had ethical issues with the notion of "making money" by selling their expertise and also doing so while they received a state pension. Many theorists have addressed the issue of the discourse of business being of necessity a discourse of dishonest profiteering and breaking of trust. *[Now you continue with references to what you have read and give short summaries of relevant theories.]*

In contrast to the non-participants, the project women saw themselves as community leaders who made profits to improve their livelihoods and those of their extended families. They did not see a business venture as unethical, and shared much of their extra income with needy family and community members. Interestingly, 80% of the non-participants said that they had very little to give to the needy in the community.

The type of community participation and membership of these two sets of women is clearly different. Although the apparent "honesty" of the non-participants appeals to one's sense of ethics, it is questionable whether the project women who have given evidence of their sense of *gemeinschaft* are less honourable. *[Where you use a foreign word, it is preferable to define it. Now you continue this discussion and draw from the literature. You also come to a definite conclusion if you can, or you leave the topic "open" for further debate and research.]* You ultimately draw a conclusion on what makes for good community entrepreneurship, based on the two sets of

questionnaires and the distinguishing features that the women who were in the project displayed.

Example of writing from the qualitative inquiry

In the observations and the interviews, the main themes formed a coherent pattern that showed how these women were willing to take the risk of puting their reputations on the line for the development of a functional small enterprise. It would thus seem as if it is a certain type of older woman who is willing to gauge what is possible, and to put her energy to work with others. It was also evident that teamwork is not easily achievable and that it has to be managed. The leadership in the project was very strong – two women seemed to hold the reins tightly, and the system of checks and balances seemed to be in place. There was also a sense of fairness in the project, because the income and the expenditure were controlled by all. *[Now you can refer to relevant literature and continue the discussion, coming to a conclusion about what the entrepreneurial characteristics of these women are and why the project has been progressing reasonably well.]*

Task 9.5: *Writing about the consolidated data*

Write the first three paragraphs about the consolidated data (the empirical findings before they were discussed in an integration with the literature).

9.7 Writing your interpretation and integrating theory

Once you have explicated the data you can integrate it with your knowledge of theory. You now refer to the literature and the theoretical framework that you have already written up as part of your research project (this would mean the first and second parts/chapters of your essay or dissertation). You now try to interpret the findings, using the lens of the theory you have selected to frame your inquiry. If, in the case of our example, you used "The culture of enterprise" as your primary theoretical pillar, you will again cite your main sources of theoretical information and show how your findings can be better understood by what others have already said about it. For example, if one of the theorists that you used has as the main argument the fact that people (as social and cultural capital) make opportunities for profit (economic capital), you will now discuss your findings in terms of how cultural capital, social capital and economical capital are interdependent. You now use the language and the discourse of your theoretical framework as explored in Chapter 8. In terms of argumentative writing you are here bringing together different types of evidence to make your point and to sup-

port your initial thesis statement. This is how you will end the narrative of the inquiry.

9.8 Structuring the field research section or chapter

At the beginning of this chapter I indicated that sequencing of the research process is important in writing up the fieldwork. The way that subsections follow on one another in the "data section" will impact on the reader's understanding. I suggest that you follow the sequencing logic of your work. This means that you will tell the reader what you did and give examples from your information/data. Therefore, the section could begin with an introduction in which the design is set out in accordance with the five main conceptual pillars of social research, namely

1. the research topic
2. the unit of analysis
3. the main research question
4. the aim/purpose of the inquiry
5. the type of design.

Thereafter, you introduce and explain the sampling or selection of participants, along with the work-plan. You then need to provide detailed descriptions of how you *gathered* the data – including where, by whom and from whom – and of how you *documented* the data – including fieldnotes of observations, transcription of interviews and processing of survey items in the examples we have used – and of how you *managed* the data, that is filed and collated it. You should now narrate specifically how you *analysed* different sets of data, remembering to give examples of the actual process (see Henning et al., 2004: Chapter 6 for examples). In this section you will round off the data into main themes, and often also patterns. Next, you need to present your interpretation of the final data, using literature to place the findings in a broader framework of research and also as a theoretical lens through which to make meaning of those findings. Finally, you will give recommendations for subsequent research, for the practice of the object of inquiry (such as the *Letsatsi* project) and also for policy. In Figure 9.1 (p. 111) we present these sections in diagrammatic form. You can use the sections as "headings" for your narrative.

Task 9.6: *Drawing a diagram of the outline of your narrative*

Draw a diagram showing the outline of the narrative that you will write about your field inquiry.

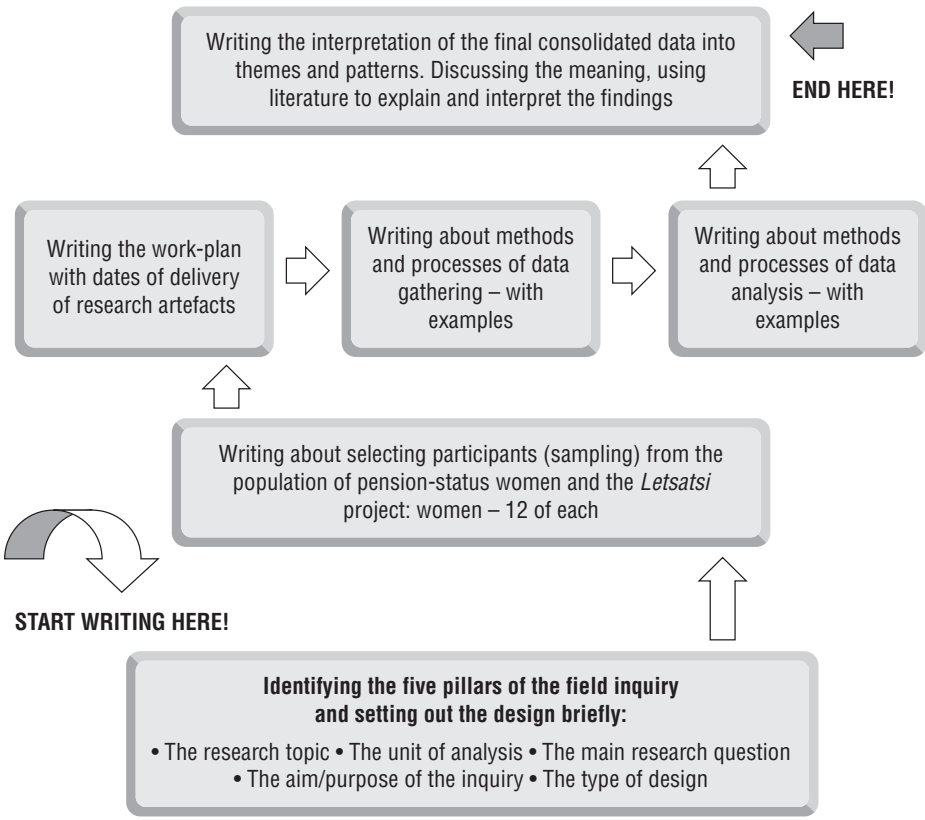


Figure 9.1 Sections of the fieldwork narrative

In the writing up of this narrative, the conventions of academic writing such as sentence connection and overall coherence apply as well. More importantly, paragraph structuring becomes especially important.

9.9 Composing paragraphs with a purpose

In Chapter 7, we discussed paragraphs as units of meaning in academic texts. You may want to go through that chapter again as preparation for writing your field inquiry narrative. For the purposes of the research narrative component of your essay/dissertation, the purpose of a paragraph is vital. This is because the nature of the text is such that paragraphs will vary more than they will in a literature review and general argumentative text. For example, you may wish to provide a short *vignette* in the narrative when you discuss data collection. A description of an incident or a section of interesting data is known as a *vignette*, which in its original French literally means "small (grape) vine". It serves as a "word" illustration (instead of a visual one) of what you are trying to present in your writing. A paragraph, the purpose of which is to illustrate in this way, is almost "lifted out" of the

main text and the "little description" ("little vine") or story or example is described in full. It is literally an "illustration". After that the text picks up on the point of the previous paragraph and continues.

In some instances you may wish to describe a place in detail. Then the purpose of that paragraph will be *descriptive*. The topic sentence will contain the place or scene that is described and all other sentences will be linked to this topic. The same would be applicable in the description of a person who is an important character in the inquiry and who can be regarded as a key informant and role-player. A brief biographical sketch of the person would then take up a whole paragraph. In the following example a vignette is used in the section where data gathering is discussed, and a whole paragraph is awarded to a little story that relates to the theme of the inquiry.

The project: An example of writing a vignette in the data-gathering section

[Extract from the researcher's interview notes is used as a vignette in the final text]

"The first breadwoman"

As I was conducting interviews, there was a continuous request by the interviewee to talk about her grandmother. I did not want the interview to be diverted to "non-related issues", because the topic of this interview was the *womens' entrepreneurial behaviour* in the context of their village. I wanted to focus on the "here and now" and could not see the relevance of this grandmother who had long since passed.

Eventually the speaker tapped my shoulder and said in Sepedi: "You must listen to me now. It is my grandmother who started this project – long before there were NGOs and money for start-up. There was no interest in homeland women who had no money except the little bit that was sent from the mines. She grew up near wheatfields and knew how to grind wheat in a traditional 'stamper'. She sometimes came home after a 'night out' with sheaves of ripe wheat and she taught us to make flour by using the 'stamper'. And she baked enough bread for our big family and then people started asking her to bake for them too. She did this in return for other favours and later she started selling. *She became the school's first breadwoman.** It is in my blood."

* Topic sentence

***Task 9.7:** Writing a vignette*

Write a vignette from your inquiry.

In this illustration in the text that you are writing about on how you conducted interviews, this is a "story within the story" and you can use it fruitfully to lift out important and also illustrationally rich information. This vignette gives a glimpse of the sociocultural and historical origins of entrepreneurial culture. Such a paragraph would have a narrative purpose and the topic sentence would probably be the second last one in the paragraph.

In *data analysis* paragraphs, the topic of a paragraph (and therefore its aim or intention) will depend on which part of the process of analysis is being captured. If, for instance, you are discussing how you decided on codes in the first phase of content analysis (see Henning et al., 2004: 106, Figure 6.2), you will devote a paragraph to explaining your thinking about certain codes, and in the next paragraph you will give examples of how you awarded them to bits of text. The idea is to be concerned only with *one thinking and writing activity per paragraph.* The obverse is also true, though. Do not split your discussion of selection of codes across three short paragraphs. Broken paragraphs lead to lack of cohesion and also contribute to breaks in coherence. There must be a very good reason for a paragraph in a research narrative to be shorter than five sentences.

Task 9.8: *Writing about idea development and your data-analysis procedure*

Write a paragraph in which you show how your idea develops and in which you set out a data-analysis procedure with example of analysis.

In a paragraph towards the end of the analysis write-up you may want to explain how you came to identify the *first main theme*. That will then be the topic of the paragraph, in which you will explain your thinking and how you came to draw together the analysed data, how you examined the place of this theme in the inquiry, and why you regard it as a main theme and as part of your findings. In this type of paragraph you are writing analytically and you are also synthesising, because you are pondering on how meanings come together across themes. One way to do this is to discuss *one main research theme per paragraph* and to round off each paragraph by saying why this theme is so important in the set of findings. Breakdown of paragraphs takes place frequently in the analysis section. I find that in this section, paragraphs tend to be short and broken. One way of making sure this does not happen and does not destroy your hard work in establishing coherence is to use one finding per paragraph – even if the paragraph becomes somewhat extended. This does not mean that you will not refer to other themes you found. You will also indicate how themes are related.

The same would apply to writing the *interpretation and discussion* section. In this instance you would most likely choose a *theme* from the final data and then discuss it with references to relevant literature. In such a case a paragraph will once more be about *one main finding at a time*. By now the paragraphs will be characterised by *explanatory* and *interpretive* writing, with ample references to the literature. The function of the literature is to clarify and enhance your findings. It could also be used to show a different interpretation with which you do not necessarily agree. These "literature rich" paragraphs that you write when you discuss your findings are powerful units of meaning. You need to know the literature well and you have to have your data at your fingertips. If you are competent in this way you will write with ease and will hardly have to search for the literature because it will be organised in your mind. This is definitely not the time to have a selection of books and articles strewn all over your desk! The knowledge should by now be organised and managed in your own research management system.

Eventually, when you *draw conclusions* about the inquiry and when you refer again to your thesis statement, you may want to compose more *argumentative* paragraphs again. They will have the same characteristics as the paragraphs that I have just discussed. In conclusion-drawing, argumentative writing, you need to ensure that you actually end a paragraph with a conclusion about the argument that you have been conducting, related to the evidence that you have used in this specific paragraph. You may want to refer to

- your thesis statement
- your empirical (field) inquiry and its findings
- the literature
- the way in which you conducted the inquiry.

All of these are chunks of scholarly evidence which act as witness to your rigour. Conclusion-drawing paragraphs are complex, because their unifying factor is the conclusion that has to be drawn from the discussion of evidence. It is also important that such paragraphs *develop* and grow in depth, while being *cohesive/unified* and *coherent*.

Task 9.9: *Writing a paragraph about drawing a conclusion*

Write one of the last paragraphs in your narrative in which you draw a conclusion about a piece of evidence from the literature that you have used and applied to one of the themes in your findings.

I would say that the secret of paragraphing in the writing up of the field inquiry is that there is more variety of purpose (see Section 7.5, "Paragraphs

with a purpose and a linking function" in Chapter 7 of this book, p. 80). You can move from writing an argumentative paragraph, to a paragraph consisting of a vignette that is narrative and then to an analytical expository paragraph, or a fully argumentative paragraph. This is because you move between different types of information (which by now you can begin to regard as *knowledge*, because you have interpreted the information and awarded your own meaning – thereby giving yourself the status of the "knower" more than simply the "data gatherer"). It is in this type of craft writing that your work will be distinguished from superficial "data lists".

9.10 In conclusion: Writing up the move from "raw data" to consolidated, interpreted knowledge

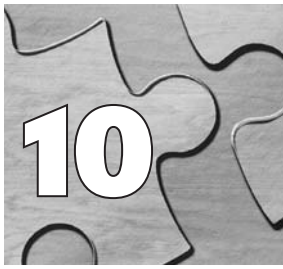
If you write in a way that will assist your reader to follow the research path with you, you will be able to persuade him or her that you are a true inquirer who worked systematically and who came to findings by way of an honourable path. You should not risk leaving anything to the reader's imagination. I would argue for more information about processes rather than less. If the telling of the story of the inquiry develops into a rich text that gives a detailed account of what you did and how you did it, you should be able to convince your reader that your findings are valid and your processes have been reliable. In the example of the *Letsatsi*[2] project the author has to write about her plan for the inquiry and argue its validity. Then she has to show her research processes in detail, using appendices where needed. She then has to argue the value of her findings by referring to the literature and to the reliability of her research procedures. She cannot do so unless she makes the project and its participants "come alive" for the reader. The reader wants to get to know the researcher as a scientist; he or she wants to get to know the process of science and the object of inquiry. It is up to your writing to succeed in providing a text that will facilitate this.

9.11 Summary

This chapter comprised a guide to writing up a small field study. It showed you how to write up the phases of an inquiry, from the conceptualisation of the study, through the refinement of the topic and the research question, through the sampling, and to the writing up of the design in full. It then proceeded to show how data gathering and data analysis can be written up, and also how notes can be used in this text. It was concluded with suggestions on how to write up the discussion of the findings and the drawing of conclusions.

2 Terms from other languages are normally italicised in research writing.

Revising and editing your writing



The objectives of this chapter are to help you to

- revise your paper in a systematic way
- use a checklist to ensure that you attend to the core issues involved in composing a scholarly text when you revise and edit.

10.1 Introduction: Revision is a multifaceted process

We briefly discussed the importance of revision in Chapter 1, where we made the point that revision is a vital part of clear, argumentative writing. Thus you need to plan for revision by allowing for several drafts, each one devoted to a different facet of your writing. You could, for instance, focus in a specific draft on sharpening the argument and the logic of your paper, while another draft could deal with looking at your paper through the eyes of the prospective reader. Remember that the final revision and editing of your paper always takes longer than you anticipate, so allow sufficient time for this.

As stated in Chapter 1, revision should not be confused with editing or proofreading. When you revise you usually also edit, inasmuch as you rectify grammatical errors, rephrase sentences, reorganise paragraphs, replace words with more descriptive synonyms, and check the use of punctuation marks. However, revision entails much more than editing. It implies expanding, reorganising, clarifying, and also tightening up and cutting. During this process you are performing and demonstrating what you know about the topic and you have, by now, learned so much more – the result is that you are able to see gaps in your writing (and your thinking). Now is the time to devote yourself to improving your text, both conceptually and technically.

10.2 Removing and moving parts of your text

It is very difficult to remove some of one's text – to "cut" and then to reorganise some of the paragraphs accordingly. However, if a part of the paper or a specific insight in the paper does not advance your argument, you need

to cut it, even though the insight may be interesting or original. Huff (1999: 120) reminds us not to "fall in love with anything you have written. Be willing to cut, revise, and reorganize every word of every draft".

Thus revision involves "re-seeing" and reconceptualising what you have written. Knowing at the back of your mind that you will be revising the paper enables you to be more creative in earlier drafts and to put all your ideas and insights regarding the topic on paper. In subsequent drafts you critically examine your writing, focusing on refining your argument, ensuring that the paper is coherent, and attending to the needs of the reader in order to communicate clearly with him or her.

Experienced writers know that one's ideas are rarely well articulated until they are written down and then *re*written (Huff, 1996). As suggested, revision of a view implies reconsidering your views – casting doubt on your own creation. Thus when revising a paper, you are rethinking and evaluating the argument presented in earlier drafts and you may also rethink some of the evidence you have used. A citation may no longer seem fitting and a specific vignette from your data from a field study may no longer serve the attractive purpose for which it was originally intended. These may be replaced by ideas that have come out of the completed write-up. Only now do you see a point that you had not noticed before and that you think is crucial to your final product. You change your performance! We often gain new insights while redrafting, because the act of writing helps our minds to make new connections, and thus new meaning. Peter Elbow (in Bean, 1996: 20) captures the role of writing in meaning making as follows: "Meaning is not what you start with but what you end up with ... Think of writing then not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and cook a message." We have frequently experienced how writing shapes thinking, in that one sometimes realises one's actual thesis or point of view only once one has started writing about it. In the words of Huff (1999: 6): "... we write to think better, and as we think better we write better." You even often change your initial thesis after having redrafted a few times. When writing your first draft you usually have only a vague notion of your argument. The argument is developed and shaped *while you are writing* about it. Writing is indeed, as we discussed in Chapter 1, thinking in print, and when you are revising your writing you are engaged in critical thinking.

10.3 Revision and critical thinking

The definition of critical thinking by Kurfiss (in Bean, 1996: 30) makes the link between the writing of papers and critical thinking even clearer. Kurfiss defines critical thinking as "an investigation whose purpose is to explore a situation, phenomenon, question, or problem to arrive at a hypothesis or conclusion about it that integrates all available information and that can therefore be convincingly justified". Likewise, as you know by now, when

one composes a good research paper, one builds an argument that culminates in a justified conclusion about a research problem or issue. However, very few people, even experts in a field, are able to build a convincing argument in one draft! A high-quality final product is usually the result of a lot of critical thinking taking place while redrafting. Critical thinking, resulting in critical writing, is probably the ultimate performance in academic writing.

10.4 Revision and the reader

Apart from using revision to refine your research argument, you also focus in the revision process on the needs of readers. As you may recall, we discussed in Chapter 1 that you tend to write for yourself in a first draft because you are still trying to formulate an argument that makes sense to *you*. Other people, however, are going to read the final product. Therefore you should write in such a way that it will also make sense to *them*. Readers cannot follow the thought processes you went through while you were writing, so you must provide them with all the information they need to understand what you have written. You need to guide them by presenting a clearly organised and unified text. In our experience, accomplishing clear and coherent writing requires several drafts. Performance improves with practice. Think of a stage play that is rehearsed and directed by a competent director. Every rehearsal leads to some changes until the play is eventually staged in a live performance in a theatre. Before being made "public", the production undergoes many alterations. Your draft also needs to undergo many changes and refinements before it is made "public". The "public" (your readers) will see your "play" from a different position than you and your peers do. They "see" it for the first time and you need to imagine what it will be like to read the text for the first time and with different knowledge at their disposal. Writers become so involved with their texts that they find it hard to imagine what it is like to read the text as a "novice in the text". If you can read your last draft as a "novice in the text", you will be able to see gaps from prospective readers' points of view. This can only be to your advantage.

A good way to achieve "novice" status like this is to ask one of your peers, a fellow student or colleague, to read your text and to tell you what they do not understand or what they do not agree with. You will be surprised – and thankful! If they are honest and sufficiently "ruthless" they will spare you the embarrassment of hearing from your evaluator/assessor for the first time that you missed a conceptual link or that a part of your argument just does not make sense.

10.5 Writing composition, computers and audio recorders

Work has been made much easier by computers. If you are not computer literate yet, we urge you to master a word-processing program as soon as pos-

sible. To revise handwritten or typed material is a laborious task and to have someone else type your work entails a loss of time and money. There are many advantages to composing your paper from scratch in word-processing format. Firstly, note-taking via word processing allows you to incorporate relevant summaries and paraphrases directly while your paper is in progress. You can simply "copy, cut and paste" as you move along (only from your personally written notes and never directly from other texts, unless cited and referenced). Moreover, you can do several quick early drafts that can then be synthesised into a first draft. The main benefit of word processing is that it allows continuous revision. You can, for example, easily move around in the text. This is useful because while reworking a particular section you often get ideas for other sections of the paper. Furthermore, if you get stuck with a specific section you can easily move to another section and return later to the first one. However, we recommend that you print drafts from time to time. One sometimes discards good ideas and deletes them because they do not seem plausible at that specific stage of drafting. With subsequent drafts you might, however, want to use these ideas again. In addition, we also seem to detect problems and errors in our writing more easily when we read it in printed format.

When you are revising, we suggest that it may be useful to read each subsequent draft aloud into a tape recorder and then play it back to yourself. Listening to what you have written seems to enable you to spot clumsy phrases, sentences and paragraphs more readily. This also applies to detecting gaps in your argument. Another useful strategy is to revise "top down" (Booth et al., 1995). This implies that you first look at the broader picture and then attend to detail. You start by revising the argument as a whole, ensuring that you are indeed explaining and supporting your thesis in the paper clearly enough, and that different sections of the paper relate logically to one another. Once you are reasonably satisfied that the revised argument is well grounded and coherently presented, you pay attention to individual sections, paragraphs, sentences and words.

10.6 Guiding questions for the revision process

Use the questions that follow to guide you while revising. You will find that they summarise the important issues we have discussed in this book about the composition of scholarly texts.

- Have I stated my thesis (central idea) explicitly in the introduction and reiterated it more assertively in my conclusion?
- Does my introduction guide the reader with regard to the structure and/or scope of the paper?
- Am I *indeed* advancing the stated thesis in my paper? In other words, is the central idea apparent throughout the paper?

- Is there a sense of an argument developing and unfolding in the paper? Would a reader be able to devise an outline of my paper that would reveal the development of my argument?
- Is it possible to locate sub-theses in the body of the paper, and do these sub-theses support the main one?
- Do I guide readers by making the links between different sections and subsections clear?
- Is the evidence I provide for the thesis relevant? Am I making the relevance clear to readers?
- Am I writing what I mean and am I meaning what I write? In other words, do *I* understand *every word* that I have written and is every sentence conveying my understanding explicitly?
- Have I used language concisely and economically? Is every single word necessary inasmuch as it contributes directly to the meaning I am trying to convey?
- Does each paragraph have a main idea (topic sentence) and are all other sentences in the paragraph linked to it?
- Does each paragraph link with the previous one?
- Does the whole paper "hang" together?
- Have I acknowledged all the sources I used in preparing the paper?
- Do all references cited in the text appear in the reference list?
- Do headings and sub-headings encapsulate the meaning of the text that follows the heading? Conversely, does the text relate to the headings and sub-headings?
- Does the conclusion serve as a culmination point of the research argument, giving a sense of completion?
- Does my title contain the key concepts developed in the paper and/or reflect the thesis statement?
- Have I meticulously checked the text for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors?

These questions serve as a guide. You may also wish to revise other components. In the text containing your field research you may want to make sure that the sequence is right and that the report is sufficiently detailed to make it possible for the reader to imagine the setting of the research and to get to know the research participants through your descriptions (see Chapter 9 again for details of how to ensure that your field research processes are written comprehensively).

10.7 Personal and academic writing: Tone and style differences

At this stage it is also important to reconsider whether your tone of writing is appropriate throughout the text. Do you refrain from using an informal register that is typically used in personal written communication? Table

10.1 briefly suggests the major differences between "personal" and "academic" or scholarly writing (adapted from Creme & Lea, 2003).

Table 10.1 Major differences between personal and scholarly writing

Personal writing	Scholarly writing
Describes, recounts a personal story	Analyses, develops an argument
Non-technical, casual language	Subject-specific, precise and reasoned language
The writer' s experience, personal feelings and opinions are at the centre	Evidence and argument are at the centre; referencing and citing are used to acknowledge others' ideas.

In Chapter 8 we paid more attention to stylistic shifts and the type of language and thinking that constitute academic writing. The object of your writing will determine the style. Therefore, if your object is a reader who wishes to read a personalised account of your experiences, you will write that up and have it forwarded/published accordingly. If, on the other hand, your object of writing is the informed audiences of the academic discipline, you will write in a way that will be suitable for this platform of production.

10.8 Is your first also your final draft?

According to Booth et al. (1995: 171), the way a first draft is approached clearly distinguishes experienced from novice writers. They state that "the experienced writer takes it [a first draft] as a challenge: *I have the sketch, now comes the hard but gratifying work of discovering what I can make of it*. The beginner takes it as a triumph: *Done! I'll change that word, fix this comma, run the spell check on the computer, and press <Print>!*" Thus, novice writers view their first draft as a final product that only needs editing and proofreading. We hope you are convinced by now that editing alone is not sufficient to ensure a coherent, convincing and clear paper. However, we are not suggesting that editing is not important. A good argument is often obscured by grammatical and stylistic errors in that these become a barrier to clear communication with the reader. We do not focus in this book explicitly on grammar, punctuation and style. However, we recommend that you consult one or more of the books that we find helpful (Zinnser, 1991; Sabin, 1992; O'Conner, 1996; Strunk & White, 2000) and also access the websites we suggest after the reference list in this book. The publication manuals of the *American Psychological Association* (www.apa. org), the *Modern Languages Association* (ww.mla.org), and publications such as the *Chicago Manual of Style* (www.press.uchicago.edu/misc/chicago/cmosfaq/cmosfaq.html) are all helpful, depending on the discipline in which you work.

10.9 Publication requirements as a guide for editing and revision

Even though we edit on-screen when working on the computer, frequently using the spell and grammar check, experience has taught us to do final editing on the hard copy, as one sometimes misses errors when reading on the screen. The spell and grammer check, when used without full awareness, can implement mistakes! We print the paper, read the draft slowly aloud and edit carefully with a pencil in hand, touching each word with the pencil. This helps to focus on each word.

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001) provides excellent guidelines with regard to editing. In the following section we mention a few pertinent issues. We suggest that you also revisit Chapters 6 and 7, in which the construction of good sentences and paragraphs are discussed.

■ USING SYNONYMS

Use synonyms to avoid repeating a term, but use them with circumspection, because synonyms sometimes have subtle differences in meaning. Do you own a thesaurus (a book of synonyms)? If not, we strongly recommend that you buy one. Most word-processing packages have a built-in thesaurus.

We have used synonyms extensively in writing this course. For example, we have referred to a thesis statement also as a main point and a main idea, or a point of view.

■ VARYING SENTENCE AND PARAGRAPH LENGTH

Vary the length of sentences and paragraphs. Rather write shorter sentences because lengthy ones are difficult to read and understand. The same applies to paragraphs. On the other hand, *too many* short paragraphs lead to an abruptness in style and usually indicate a lack of detailed argumentation.

■ AVOIDING WORDINESS

Novice writers often use more words than necessary, which leads to "cluttered" papers. Cut all unnecessary words, ensuring that the central ideas are not obscured by words that do not contribute to clarity of meaning.

■ BEING AWARE OF GENDER BIAS

Many writers use gender-biased pronouns in their writing, generally favouring the masculine form: e.g. *A good writer always edits* his *papers meticulously*.

Avoid sexist language by substituting gender-neutral words and phrases for gender-biased words. We suggest that you use the plural form in cases such as the above: e.g. *Good writers always edit* their *papers meticulously*.

Another example: *Researchers often neglect their wives*. (This sentence implies that all researchers are men!) The preferred wording would be: *Researchers often neglect their spouses*.

Other examples:

Gender-biased words	**Gender-neutral words**
man, mankind	humanity, humankind
chairman	chairperson
manpower	workforce, human resources

■ USING THE ACTIVE RATHER THAN THE PASSIVE FORM

Some of us received advice from teachers and lecturers to use the passive form when writing research papers and to avoid using the first person, based on the erroneous view that the passive form reflects scientific objectivity. Do not suppress your own voice in your writing. Thus you may use statements such as: "I argue in this paper that ..." instead of "It is argued in this paper that ..." (see p. 29 of the APA manual).

As we emphasised before, verbs are powerful, direct communicators. Thus, use the active voice (in which the verb is prominent) rather than the passive voice, whenever possible.

Look at the two sentences that follow:

> *A research argument needs to be built in your paper in which a particular point of view is advanced in response to the research question.* (passive voice)
>
> *You need to build a research argument in your paper in which you advance a particular point of view in response to the research question.* (active voice)

The second sentence explicitly states the actions the writer needs to take, which is not the case with the sentence in the passive form.

Another example: *This paper has chosen to explain ...* This writer clearly thinks she is not allowed to use "I" in her writing, or she might perhaps think that it sounds more "learned". The correct way is: *I choose to explain ...*

However, the passive voice is acceptable when you want to focus on the recipient of the action rather than on the actor, for example: *Adults are viewed as people who take responsibility for their own lives*. Here, the adults are the focus of the writer's point.

■ WRITING NUMBERS

Use figures (e.g. 11, 36, 121) to express numbers 10, and above and words (e.g. five, nine) to express numbers below 10.

10.10 Summary

A scholarly paper advances a coherent and reasoned argument. Furthermore, good writers are *in dialogue with their readers*. They know readers need *coherence* and *clarity* when reading texts. Experience has taught them that sound argumentation, coherence and clear organisation require extensive revision and editing. Consequently, their polished final product is the result of several drafts.

The final draft is the result of comprehensive research and note-taking, and of good research management. The research process may include a combination of literature and field inquiry. In this process, academic writing features from beginning to end. You start writing when you read and search for a topic of inquiry and continue to write up to the final revision. In the final draft, the integrated product of your knowledge performance is presented. You have shown your readers how you worked and this is all they will have. Write for yourself, to articulate your thinking and to scaffold your understanding. Write for your readers so that they can share in this understanding.

Addendum A

Abstracts of academic articles (Task 4.2) (p. 39)

"The assessment of learning in higher education: Guiding principles"

This article focuses on the crucial role that assessment procedures play in the academic life of students, in that assessment arrangements embody the purposes of higher education for students. Research suggests that learners' perception of the assessment procedures in a course is the single most important influence on student learning. In view of the significant role that assessment procedures play in student learning, assessment development is a powerful instrument for promoting the aims of higher education. Six guiding principles focusing on the promotion of the aims of teaching in higher education via assessment are discussed in the article.

"The Process Syllabus: A case study"

The Process Syllabus has excited much debate in the literature. The debate has, however, remained predominantly in the realm of theory as very few, if any, written accounts exist of the implementation of this syllabus in the classroom. This paper is a case study of the implementation of the Process Syllabus with Higher Diploma (postgraduate) in Education studied by teacher trainees in the English method course at the University of the Witwatersrand. It includes an analysis and evaluation of the process by all participants. The paper concludes that it is not possible to assume that a "negotiator syllabus" is necessarily empowering for all students.

"Introducing teachers to OBE and EE: A Western Cape case study"

This article reports on a participatory research project aimed at introducing teachers in a localised community to outcomes-based education (OBE) and environmental education (EE). The case study involved a collaborative learning programme development process through a partnership between a university and teachers from primary schools located in the Cape Town suburb of Grassy Park. lnitial reflections indicated that the intended curriculum as stated in documents produced by the National Department of Education may not serve the needs of teachers in specific local contexts. Teachers appeared to have difficulty with making meaning from new terminology associated with what may be perceived as a sophisticated OBE system. Fur-

ther, emerging constraints and possibilities of the collaborative curriculum research process are reported.

"What counts as numeracy? Four approaches to numeracy education for adults in South Africa"

The provision of adult numeracy education has been largely neglected in South Africa, despite the large number of innumerate adults and the numeracy demands placed on people in times of economic hardship and technological change. Local efforts to explore the theoretical and practical contexts of adult numeracy have also been meagre. This paper analyses four approaches to adult numeracy education in South Africa and highlights some of the implications of each approach for the practice of adult education. The paper argues against the prescriptive, highly structured, decontextualised, standardised approaches to numeracy education which prevail in traditional and functional programmes in South Africa. It advocates the development and implementation of a "social" approach to numeracy, in which mathematical skills are taught alongside literacy and critical thinking.

Addendum B

Hypertext (Task 4.3) (p. 40)

1. Vygotsky's cultural development of memory

If one wants to trace the development of memory in an individual from childhood to adulthood, one needs to consider two things: how memory develops and what characterises it during its development.

If one were to look at the memory difference of a 5–6-year-old to that of a school-age child, one would find that in each child memory takes different forms. A 5–6-year-old would memorise things naturally and immediately, and would use no devices to help him- or herself. On the other hand, a school-age child "has at his disposal a large number of devices which would help him memorize the necessary information. He is able to link the material to be memorized to his previous experiences, and use an entire system of association. In essence, both have memory, but only the school age child knows how to use it to his advantage. Development of the memory from child to adult consists precisely of this transition from natural to cultural forms of memory" (Luria, 1992). The mass of memory development in a child is "a result of mastering associations and images and also the ability to use them functionally for the purpose of memorization" (Luria, 1992).

The following is an actual experiment that was done to show the development of memory:

> A number of ordinary pictorial lotto cards were laid out in front of the subjects, each bearing pictures of animals, things, etc.
>
> The subjects were given a series of words to be memorised by choosing whichever card they thought most helpful for memorisation – cards provided did not exactly match the words involved, but could be linked with them by able subjects.
>
> Children of age 4–5 were not capable of successfully using the tool (the cards) suggested to them.
>
> Children of age 6–7 were able to accomplish the task, but only when the relationship was straightforward.
>
> Example: *Tea if picture is a cup. Milk if picture is a cow.*
>
> Children of age 11–12 were able to successfully complete the task no matter whether the relationship was straightforward or not.
>
> Example: *The given word is "want". Child chose a picture of an airplane; his explanation was "I want to fly in an airplane".*

Example: *The given word is "spade". The child chose a picture of some chickens digging in a pile; explanation: "Chicks dig in the earth with their beaks, like spades do."*

The difference in the subjects was the difference between the external symbols being used. As we mature, we have more cultural devices available to use, and the ability to use them appropriately to help us solve complex tasks.

Return to home page.

2. Three stages of speech development

lst stage – Social Speech (or external speech)

"In no way is this speech related to intellect or thinking" (Luria, 1992). In this stage a child uses speech to control the behaviour of others. A child uses speech to express simple thoughts and emotions such as crying, laughter and shouting.

An example of speech in this stage is "I want milk".

2nd stage – Egocentric Speech

This is typically the type of speech found in a 3–7-year-old. "It serves as a bridge between the primitive and highly public social speech of the first stage and the more sophisticated and highly private inner speech of the third stage" (Lefrancois, 1994). In this stage, children often talk to themselves, regardless of someone listening to them. They think out loud in an attempt to guide their own behaviour. They may speak about what they are doing as they do it. They reason that language must be spoken if it is to direct their behaviour.

Example: A child in school who counts out loud one block at a time saying each number as he or she goes along to get five.

3rd stage – Inner Speech

This is the final stage of speech development. It is inner, soundless speech.

This is the type of speech used by older children and adults. This type of speech allows us to direct our thinking and behaviour. Once one has reached this final stage one is able to engage in all forms of higher mental functions. In this stage one is able to "count in one's head, use logical memory-inherent relationships, and inner signs" (Hanfmann, 1962).

Return to home page.

3. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

"The Zone of Proximal Development is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Cole, 1962). A child's

actual developmental level indicates a child's level of mental development at a particular time. It indicates the functions that have already matured in the child. A child's ZPD defines those functions that have not matured yet, but that are in the process of maturing and developing. A child's ZPD permits us to outline the child's immediate future and his or her overall dynamic state of development. "Experience has shown that the child with the larger zone of proximal development will do much better in school" (Hanfmann, 1962).

Example: Taken from Lefrancois (1994).

Take, for example, two 5-year-old children, who can both, under normal circumstances, answer questions that other average 5-year-olds can also answer. Their mental ages might be said to correspond to their chronological ages, and their intelligence would be described as average. But if, when prompted, one of these children could successfully answer questions corresponding to a mental age of 6 but the other could not, it would be accurate to say that the first child's zone of proximal development is greater than the other's (i.e. it spans a wider range of higher functions).

Return to home page.

4. Applications of Vygotsky's theory to education

The most important application of Vygotsky's theory to education is in his concept of a **zone of proximal development**. This concept is important because teachers can use it as a guide to a child's development. It allows a teacher to know what a student is able to achieve through the use of a mediator and thus enables the teacher to help the child attain that level by him- or herself.

A second important aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the role of play in his theory. According to this perspective teachers need to provide children, especially young children, with many opportunities to play. Through play and imagination a child's conceptual abilities are stretched. Vygotsky argues that play leads to development. "While imitating their elders in culturally patterned activities, children generate opportunities for intellectual development. Initially, their games are recollections and re-enactments of real situations; but through the dynamics of their imagination and recognition of implicit rules governing the activities they have reproduced in their games, children achieve an elementary mastery of abstract thought" (Cole, 1978).

Since language holds a central role in Vygotsky's theory and is essential to the development of thinking, the school needs to provide many opportunities that allow children to reach the third stage of speech, which is inner speech, since it is this stage which is responsible for all higher levels of functioning.

Return to home page.

5. References

Cole, M., John-Steiner, V., Scriber, S. & Souberman, E. (Ed.) & Vygotsky, L.S. 1978. *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Hanfmann, E., Vakar, G. & Vygotsky, L.S. 1962. *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press.

Lefrancois, G. R. 1994. *Psychology for teaching*. Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth.

Luria, A.R. 1992. *Ape, primitive man, and child: Essays in the history of behaviour*. Orlando, Fla: P.M. Deutsch Press.

Webster's New World Dictionary. 1980. Collins.

Return to home page.

6. Mastery of tools

Through the use of tools one is able to make the transition from elementary mental functions to higher mental functions. However, according to Luria (1992), "a child needs to develop to the age of about 12 before he can for the first time use external objects as tools, and assess any given external object not merely as such, but as an object that can be used to achieve some goal". Using an object as a tool is a child's first step toward an active rather than mechanical connection between the outside world and the child. A child's ability to master a particular tool is a sign of high psychological development. Below are two examples of tool use.

Example 1:

A child is seated at a table. On the other side of the table is a piece of candy tied to a string. The child is told that in order to be able to eat the piece of candy he or she has to stay in their seat to get it. At first the child tries to reach across the table and grab at it. However, after doing this a couple of times the child realizes that it's impossible to get it.

The instructor then prompts the child, by asking if there is anything there that can help him or her get it. The child then notices the string, but isn't sure how it will help. The child puts a hand on the string and the piece of candy moves. The child then gives the string a hard pull and gets the candy. The tool is this case is the string.

Example 2:

A child is placed in a classroom with an examiner. On top of the chalkboard is a lollipop. The examiner tells the child that if they can get the lollipop down they can have it. At first the child tries to jump up and reach it. However, it is too far up to reach in this manner. The examiner jumps in and says to

the child, "ls there anything in the room that can help you?" The child then gets on top of a desk. However, the desk is too far away from the chalkboard. While on top of the desk, the child notices a stool right near the chalkboard. The child jumps down from the desk and climbs on top of the stool. However, the lollipop is still out of reach. While on top of the stool the child continues to think. At last the child exclaims, "I can use this [pointing to a pointer on the chalk tray] to reach it!." The child then gets off the stool, grabs the pointer, climbs back onto the stool and knocks the lollipop down. In this case the child had two tools that needed to be used: the stool and the pointer.

Return to home page.

7. Importance of culture

According to Vygotsky, in terms of development, the thing that separates us from other animals is our use of tools and symbols. As a result of these we create cultures. Our cultures grow and change as we develop, and impose extremely powerful influences on all of us. They dictate what we have to learn, and the sorts of skills we need to develop.

Vygotsky makes a clear distinction between what he calls "elementary mental functions" and "higher mental functions". As we develop, these elementary capacities are gradually formed into the latter, largely through the influence of culture. The essential difference between these two functions is in the stimulus–response relations of each (Lefrancois, 1994).

Return to home page.

8. Elementary and higher mental functions

Elementary Mental Functions

Elementary functions are natural and therefore unlearned capacities. These functions include sensing and hunger. There is really no thought involved in these types of functions.

Higher Mental Functions

The central feature of these types of functions is that they involve self-generated stimulation. Self-generated stimulation is "the creation and use of artificial stimuli which become the immediate causes of behavior" (Lefrancois, 1994). Examples of higher mental functions are language, thinking, attention, abstraction and perception.

Return to home page.

9. Who was L.S. Vygotsky?

Len Semyonovitch Vygotsky was born on November 5, 1896 in Byelorussia (Soviet Union). He was first educated as a lawyer and a philologist ("one who

studies written records, esp. literary texts, in order to determine their authenticity, meaning, etc." *Webster's,* 1980). He began his career as psychologist in 1917 and pursued this career for 17 years before his death from tuberculosis in 1934.

His scientific contemporaries included those strongly in favor of stimulus–response theories, such as Ivan Pavlov and John B. Watson, as well as the founders of the Gestalt psychology movement such as Wertheimer, Kohler, Koffka and Levin. However, in Vygotsky's opinion, none of these theories succeeded in developing a complete description or explanation of higher psychological functions in terms acceptable to natural science. Even though Vygotsky wasn't able to accomplish these goals either, he was able to provide us with an intelligent and precursory analysis of modern psychology (Cole, 1978).

Return to home page.

10. Central role of language

Language is made possible because of our culture (tools and symbols). The learning of language (or signs) is brought about by social processes, and language or signs ultimately make thought possible. Therefore, when a child is an infant at the preverbal stage of development, his or her intelligence is a purely natural, useful capacity. As a child begins to develop, so does his or her language. As a child begins to speak, his or her thought processes also begin to develop. In essence, it is language or signs which direct behavior. Vygotsky describes *three stages in the development of speech.* Each of these three stages of speech has its own function (Lefrancois, 1994).

Return to home page.

11. Vygotsky's theory

According to Lefrancois (1994), "three underlying themes unify Vygotsky's rather complex and far-reaching theory". The first is the importance of culture, the second is the central role of language and the third is what Vygotsky calls the zone of proximal growth or development.

Return to home page.

Addendum C

Preface by Ruth Merttens to John Head's book *Working with adolescents: Constructing identity* (Task 4.4) (p. 41)

It has become a feature of our times that an initial qualification is no longer seen to be adequate for life-long work within a profession, and programmes of professional development are needed. Nowhere is the need more clear than with respect to education, where changes in the national schooling and assessment system, combined with changes in the social and economic context, have transformed our professional lives.

The series *Master classes in Education* is intended to address the needs of professional development, essentially at the level of taught Master's degrees. Although aimed primarily at teachers and lecturers, it is envisaged that the books will appeal to a wider readership, including those involved in professional educational management, health promotion and youth work. For some, the texts will serve to update their knowledge. For others, they may facilitate career reorientation by introducing, in an accessible form, new areas of expertise or knowledge.

The books are overtly pedagogical, providing a clear track through the topic by means which make it possible to gain a sound grasp of the whole field. Each book familiarizes the reader with the vocabulary and the terms of discussion and provides a concise overview of recent research and current debates in the area. While it is obviously not possible to deal with every aspect in depth, a professional who has read the book should be able to feel confident that they have covered the major areas of content, and discussed the different issues at stake. The books are also intended to convey a sense of the future direction of the subject and its points of growth or change.

In each subject area the reader is introduced to different perspectives and to a variety of readings of the subject under consideration. Some of the readings may conflict, others may be compatible but distant. Different perspectives may well give rise to different lexicons and different bibliographies, and the reader is always alerted to these differences. The variety of frameworks within which each topic can be construed is then a further source of reflective analysis.

The authors in this series have been carefully selected. Each person is an experienced professional, who has worked in that area of education as a practitioner and also addressed the subject as both a researcher and theoretician. Drawing upon both the pragmatic and theoretical aspects of their experience, they are able to take a reflective view while preserving a sense of what occurs, and what is possible, at the level of practice.

Working with adolescents: Constructing identity

This book, the first in the series, takes a broad view of the field, providing a theoretical overview, reviewing the findings of recent and relevant research and dealing with some of the practical issues of living and working with adolescents. It is interdisciplinary, using notions derived from psychology, notably that of personal identity, but at the same time recognizing the importance of the social context within which identity comes to be constructed. The author is aware of the dangers of producing an unfed subject, a universal "adolescent". The diversity of adolescent experience and practice is addressed through a consistent awareness of the actual and specific differences, including gender, which divide adolescents from each other as well as from the "adult" world.

It is often the case that those writing in a reflective capacity about a field as diverse and as riven by dispute as this one, take up a particular position and read all research and practice from this perspective. John Head avoids such particularity, displaying unswerving faithfulness to the intentions of those writers which he discusses. The text, accompanied by suggestions for further reading, provides a good understanding of theorists such as Freud, Erikson, Marcia and Gilligan. The treatment provides the reader with the opportunity to engage with different perspectives in the confidence that the inevitable simplification does not lead to distortion.

Adolescence may be defined as that period of our lives in which the question of identity assumes momentous proportions. As the writer Annie Dillard (1987) puts it:

> So this was adolescence. Is this how the people around me had died on their feet – inevitably, helplessly? Perhaps their own selves had eclipsed the sun for so many years the world shrivelled around them, and when at last their inescapable orbits had passed through these dark egoistic years it was too late, they had adjusted.

Adolescence is a complex and important construction, about which we learn not only through reflection but through our own experiences. Always aware of these pragmatic considerations, John Head never lets us forget that what we do, as well as why we do it, is theoretically grounded.

Ruth Merttens
Joint Series Editor

References and further reading

American Psychological Association. (1994). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association.* 4th ed. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association.* 5th ed. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2001). *The practice of social research. South African edition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bean, J.C. (1996). *Engaging ideas: The professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking and active learning in the classroom.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Berger, B. (Ed.). (1991). *The culture of entrepreneurship*. San Francisco: ICS Press.

Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.G. & Williams, J.M. (1995). *The craft of research.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Burke, J. (2001). *Illuminating texts: How to teach students to read the world.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Charmaz, K. (2002). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: context and method.* London: Sage. pp. 675–694.

Clark, R. & Ivanić, R. (1997). *The politics of writing*. London: Routledge.

Creme, P. & Lea, M.R. (2003). *Writing at university: a guide for students*. 2nd ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Daniels, D. & Henning, E. (1999). Language issues in a multilingual Masters program in Community Education. In L. Limage (Ed.), *Comparative perspectives on language and literacy*. Selected papers from the work of the Language and Literacy Commission of the 10th World Congress of Comparative Education, UNESCO-BREDA, Dakar.

Dysthe, O. (2000). The mutual challenge of writing research and the teaching of writing. Keynote address at the conference, *Teaching academic writing across Europe*. Groningen, The Netherlands, 18–20 January.

Engeström,Y. (1991). Activity theory and individual and social transformation. *Activity Theory*, 7(8): 6–17.

Estherhuizen, A. (2001). *The impact of a Masters program in Education on student writing.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg.

Fabb, N. & Durant, A. (1993). *How to write essays, dissertations and theses in literary studies*. London: Longman.

Godsell, G. (2000). Religious and familial networks as entrepreneurial resources in South Africa. In S. Houseknecht & J. Pankhurst (Eds.), *Family, religion and social change in diverse societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 205–234.

Henning, E. (1998). *Language and cultural diversity in higher education: Obstacle or opportunity*. Inaugural address at the Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, 9 May.

Henning E. (2002). Essay review of Burke, J. *Illuminating texts: How to teach students to read the world.* Online. Accessed 07/06/04. http://www.tcrecord.org/ Content.asp?ContentID=10884

Henning, E. & Estherhuizen, A. (2001). *A socio-cultural learning environment for the nurturing of students' writing composition competence.* Conference proceedings of the annual Conference of Improved University Teaching. Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, July.

Henning, E., Mamiane, A. & Pheme, M. (2001). Entering the academy as "the other": About writing competence and the bridge to the discourse community. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 15(1).

Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W. & Smit, B. (2004). *Finding your way in qualitative research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Holliday, A. (2002). *Doing and writing up qualitative research.* London: Sage.

Huff, A.S. (1999). *Writing for scholarly publication.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ivanić, R. (1999). *Writing and identity. The discoursal construction of identity in academic writing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Janks, H. & Ivanić, R. (1992). Critical language awareness and emancipatory discourse. In N. Fairclough (Ed.), *Critical language awareness*. London: Longman.

Kerlin, S. (2002). Scott Kerlin's resource pages. www.geocities.com/HotSprings/ 4668/living.htm

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews. An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.

Lea, M. & Street, B. (1999). Writing as academic literacies: Understanding textual practices in higher education. In C. Candlin & K. Hyland (Eds.), *Writing, texts, processes and practices*. London: Pearson.

Lester, J.D. (1976). *Writing research papers*. 2nd ed. Glenview: Scott, Foresman & Co.

Mouton, J. (2000). *How to succeed in your Master's and doctoral studies. A South African guide and resource book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

O'Conner, P.T. (1996). *Woe is I. The grammarphobe's guide to better English in plain English*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Pinker, S. (1999). *The blank slate: The modern denial of human nature*. London: Penguin Books.

Pinker, S. (2002). *The blank slate: The modern denial of human nature*. London: Penguin Books.

Sabin, W.A. (1992). *The Gregg reference manual.* 7th ed. New York: Glencoe/ McGraw-Hill.

Strunk, W. & White, E.B. (2000). *The elements of style*. 4th ed. New York: Longman.

Swales, J.M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J.M. & Feak, C.B. (1994). *Academic writing for graduate students: A course for nonnative speakers of English.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Swales, J. M. & Feak, C.B. (2000). *English in today's research world: A writing guide*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Turabian, K.L. (1996). *A manual for writers of term papers, theses, and dissertations*. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

University of Chicago Press. (1994). *The Chicago Manual of Style: The essential guide for writers, editors and publishers*. 14th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1992). *Thought and language*. (Edited and revised by A. Kozulin. 6th ed.) Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Waddell, C. (2001). *Thesis writing*. http://www.rpi/edu/dept/llc/writecenter/web/thesis.html

Waters, R. (1999). Teachers as researchers: Making sense of teaching and learning. *Language Arts*, 77(1), September.

Wertsch, J.V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wolcott, H.F. (1990). Writing up qualitative research. *Qualitative research methods series*. Vol. 20. London: Sage.

Wolcott, H.F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zinnser, W. (1991). *On writing well*. New York: HarperCollins.

SOURCES USED IN TASKS

Castle, J. (1991). What counts as numeracy? *Perspectives in Education*, 13(1).

Freire, P. (1971). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder & Herder.

Gravett, S. (1996). The assessment of learning in higher education: Guiding principles. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 10(1): 6.

Merttens, R. (1997). Preface. In J. Head, *Working with adolescents: Constructing identity*. London: Falmer Press.

Le Grange, L. & Reddy, C. (2000). Introducing teachers to OBE and EE: A Western Cape case study. *South African Journal of Education*, 20(1): 21.

Malderez, A. & Bodoczky, C. (1999). *Mentor courses: A resource book for training trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mullen, A. & Lick, D. (1999). *New directions in mentoring: Creating a culture of synergy*. London: Falmer Press.

Stein, P. & Janks, H. (1992). The process syllabus: A case study. *Perspectives in Education*, 13(2): 93.

Tomlinson, P. (1995). *Understanding mentoring: Reflective strategies for school-based teaching preparation*. London: Open University Press.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

A+ Research and writing
A general writing site that links to other writing sites.
www.ipl.org/teen/aplus

Alan Murdock
Research for academic writing.
http://www.alanmurdock.com/apiculate/archives/000248.html

OWL at Purdue
A writing "lab" at Purdue University that gives assistance in most aspects of academic writing. The links are presented as "handouts".
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/index2.html

Search engines
http://www.google.com
http://www.altavista.com

TCRecord.org: The voice of scholarship in education
The art and structure of a first paragraph.
http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentID=10707

The Writing Centre, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Advice on the preparation and writing of a research paper, and the writing of literature review.
http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/PlanResearchPaper.html
http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html

University of Toronto
General advice on academic writing, and on the use of a thesis statement.
http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/advise.html
http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/thesis.html

WC4
This site at Princeton University gives general assistance in writing and has good links to other sites.
http://web.princeton.edu/sites/writing/wc4.htm

What is an argument?
This is a page from the writing centre site at Harvard University.
http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/argument.html
http://www.rpi.edu/dept/llc/writecenter/web/thesis.html

Writing@CSU, Colorado State University
Writing guides, a glossary of key terms used in research guides, and advice on combining field research with library and Internet research.
http://writing.colostate.edu/references/index.cfm?guides_active=empirical
http://writing.colostate.edu/references/research/glossary/
http://writing.colostate.edu/references/trad_research/intro/com2h1.cfm

Index

A

abstract 37
  structure of content 39
academic identity xiv
academic style
  grounded in the discourse of the field 88
  model your writing 88
  understand texts 88
academic text xiv
academic writer
  identity as 49
academic writing
  critical writing 118
aim
  research 101
argument 2, 121
  central 7
  change 7
  conclusion from the discussed evidence 57
  smaller 93
  unfolding 120
argumentation 2
  core activity of paper writing 96
argumentative paper
  thesis 9
argumentative writing 65, 109
argumentatively 65
article
  dense text 42
author
  group 32
  multiple 32
author's intuition
  manage your writing 87
  organise your knowledge 87

B

bibliographical data 30
bibliographical trail
  source 31
blanket statement 58
blurb 36
  general sense of content 37
  invite reader 39

C

challenging 65
chapter 37
citation style 31
citing 121
cognitive structure
  academic grammar 36
coherence 92
  arguing a thesis 93
  between-paragraph 83
  conclusion 93
  content 86, 93
  general-specific structure 93
  label sets of knowledge 84
  natural 84
  paragraph level 86
  problem-solution structure 93
  problematise 93
  section level 86
  sentence level 86
  sequence of ideas 86
  structural 86, 93
  subsection 86
  the writer knows the topic 86
  trace the argument 93
  various levels 87
  viewpoint 93
  work inductively 84
composing into three pages
  initial drafting 3
  pre-drafting 3
  revision 3
computerised catalogue 27
concept clarification 28
conceptual paper
  read the literature critically 98
  thinking pieces 98
conceptual structure
  problem-solution structure 69
concluding section
  functions of 94
conclusion 120
  culmination point 93
  echoes or mirrors the introduction 93
  final destination 45
  making an ultimate point 93
  more than a summary 93

provided substantial evidence 96
reach your destination in a systematic way 96
state the thesis more definitely 94
statement of a judgement 93
understood the topic 96
conclusion drawing
discussion of evidence 114
paragraph 114
connecting devices
link paragraph 83
repeat specific words 83
connector
link sentence 78
consolidated data
interpreted 103
content analysis 103
contested issue 65
critical thinking
revising 117

D

data
analysed 110
documented 110
gathered 110
main themes 110
data-gathering methods 102
data-in-analysis 108
debate 60, 83
definition 28
absence of emotive language 82
clear 52, 92
concise 52, 91
develop formal style 91
discipline-related words 91
explain 52
glossary of terms 91
language is formal 92
misusing the phrases 82
not direct citation 52
of concepts or phenomena 52
organised file of 52
own words 91
sentence construction 92
tone 92
detailed account 115
dictionary 28
direct quotation 33
discipline-specific terms
organising your text 89
discourse
language and the organising principles 88
topic within 70
discourse community
highly specialised 90
knowledge background 90
same interest 90
vocabulary shifts over a long time 90
discourse convention
read widely 89
draft
different facet of your writing 116
earlier 117
evaluating 117
needs of the reader 117
prospective reader 115
sharpening the argument 116

E

edit
guidelines 122
hard copy 122
on-screen 122
electronic database 28
encyclopaedia 28, 36
concise entries 37
current debate 37
frame of reference 37
literature 37
evaluate
explaining to the reader 64
value of a text 64
evidence 65, 120, 121
draw final conclusion 93
explicit heading
argumentative style 91
exploratory reading
authoritativeness 26
bibliographical detail 26
good source 36
relevancy 26
expository text
textbook 64
expository writing
expository thesis statement 9

F

fact
as points 57
interpreted the meaning 57
view about 57
field inquiry xiv
discussion section 114
everyday manifestation of the theories 98
theme from the final data 114
writing the interpretation 114
field research
chronologically sequenced 99

common principles 99
education in research methodology 99
principles of narration 99
processes 120
systematic 99
tell readers 99
field text
detailed in analysis 99
exposition 99
raw data 99
rich in description 99
fieldwork narrative
sections of the 111
final product
point of view 57
topic of inquiry 57
finding
data consolidated into themes 105
literature 20
theories 20
first draft 6, 121
early draft 119
outlining the argument 6
quick and dirty drafting 6
without editing 6
working introduction 6
write a short synopsis 6
first paragraph
evidence of your writing performance 69
organise and use knowledge 69
use of knowledge 69
first person 123
author 92
clumsiness 92
objectivity 92
passive form 92
researcher 92
rigorous research 92
foreword 37
formal language
argumentation 89
reasoning 89
fraudulent discourse
dishonest language activity 91

G

general-specific 60
general-to-specific 7
general statement
analysed 60
explored 60
general style 36
grounded theory principles 103

H

heading
clear 71
encapsulate meaning of the text 120
flow of the text 91
inductively derived phrases 8
note-taking 71
reading 71
sense of the content of the groups of paragraphs 90
single word 71, 90
specific meaning 71
hyperlink
search engine 30
hypertext reading (*see* online reading)

I

ideas
articulated 117
rewritten 117
improving text
conceptually 116
technically 116
informal style
convert 89
information
analyse 64
evaluating 64
evidence in an argument 57
manage 44
new set 58
present 64
view about it 57
write up 57
inquiry
intellectual puzzle 20
interpret the findings
lens of the theory 109
literature 109
theoretical framework 109
introduction 13, 119
background knowledge 42
craft 69
establishing a niche 43
establishing a territory 43
key to text 41
occupying the niche 43
position work 41
readership 42
style 42
synopsis 41
three moves 43
introductory paragraph 61, 74
introductory statement 61

J

jargon
  catchwords 88
journal
  recent research 28

K

knowing
  how to write 85
  what to write 85
knowledge
  different types 47
  integrated 47
  performing persuasive writing 96
  skills 47
  source 49
  structure 49
  write about something 47
knowledge in performance xiii
knowledge making xiii

L

language
  formal 66
  precise 121
  reasoned 121
link 120
  coherence 72
  cohesion 72
  micro-writing activity 76
  understanding of the topic 72
list of references
  track each source 34
list of themes 10
literature
  clarify findings 114
  enhance findings 114
  relevant thematic notes 77
  reviewed 77
logic of your design
  argue 104
long quotation 33

M

main list
  memo 76
  notes 75
  paraphrase 76
  summary 75
main point
  discuss 10
  make 10
main research question 101
main themes 107
  organise 71
  package your ideas 71
  stay focused 71
mapping
  cyclic 58
  organise your thinking 58
  recursive 58
  writing 58
meaning
  means knowing 47
memorandum
  brief evaluation 52
  comment 52
  cross-reference 52
  for yourself 52
  interpretation 52
memorise
  catchwords 88
  default technique 88
  habit of not trusting 88
  write examination 88
memos (*see* memorandum)
memo writing
  capture thinking in written language 53
  file it 53
  framework of thought 53
  pre-composition 53
method
  cohere 104
micro-skills 69
mixed method study 102

N

narrative 103, 110
notes
  different types 49
  essay-organising skills 49
  personal style development 47
  process of your inquiry 100
  taking copious 100
  thinking skills 49
note-taking
  capture main points 49
  capture themes 49
  incorporate relevant paraphrases 119
  incorporate relevant summaries 119
  packaging 49
  write small chunks 49

O

online article 37
  critical reading 40
  hypertext 40
  key concepts 40
  link 40

navigate 40
online reading
autonomous writer 42
cognitive route 42
decide sequence 42
emerging understanding 42
non-linear text 42
opening statement
general context 12
outline
include the main list of themes 71
preliminary pages 7
short introduction 7
own voice 123

P

paragraph
analysis of a claim 80
breaks in coherence 113
broken 113
chunk your thinking 78
communicators of text 90
data analysis 113
definition of terms 80
descriptive 112
discourse 90
expansion of the argument 80
explanatory 114
format 82
generating new 85
group 90
interpretive writing 114
lack of cohesion 113
link 120
literature rich 114
main idea 120
main topic 90
narrative purpose 113
objectives for 81
own heading 90
promote coherence 80
provide unity to a group of sentences 79
purpose 78, 80
purposes of the two to-be-linked paragraphs 82
rearranging 85
scaffold to develop reasoning 78
section 90
short 113
short vignette 111
show development of thought 80
specific purpose 90
style 82
synthesising 113
topic sentence 79
units of meaning 111
units of organisation 78
vary in length 122
writing analytically 113
paragraph purpose 111
clarify a term 81
compare two views 81
comparing 83
definition of a term 81
descriptive 83
expository writing 81
follow the reasoning 81
grasp the anecdote 81
know the definition 81
narrate the anecdote 81
purely descriptive 81
see the differences 81
see the picture 81
understand the problem 81
write argumentatively 81
paragraph structuring 111
paragraphing
field inquiry 114
variety of purpose 114
paraphrase 31, 33
cognitive skill 50
salient passage 50
vocabulary shift 50
passive form
scientific objectivity 123
performance
using knowledge 2
personal language
academic style that suits you 89
conventions of the discourse 89
persuasive writing 2, 5
arguments about a point 96
knowledge at your fingertips 96
plagiarism
avoid 31
planning phase
data-bank 6
main list of themes 6
pre-draft 6
point of view 4
evidence 5
thesis 5
position
hold the view 63
yourself as scholar 63
possible solution
way to address the problem 60
precision
precise sentences 69
preface
estimate value 41

prepare
  familiar with the content 71
preparing your own writing
  cluster the themes 63
  file 63
  group the readings 63
problem 60
  issue worth researching 70
  read sufficiently 71
  substance 71
problem-solution 59, 60
  research direction 93
  solving an intellectual puzzle 93
problematise 18, 60
  different viewpoints 4
  question 4
  various side or angles 4
procedural plan
  first draft 7
  synopsis 7
processes
  of thinking 65
  of writing 65
pronouns
  gender-biased 122
proofreading 116
purpose statement 10
purposeful paragraph
  link with subsequent purposeful paragraph 82

Q

qualitative study
  content analysis 102
  narrative analysis 102
questioning 65
quick and dirty draft 7
quotation
  analysed 33
  discussed 33
  integrated 33

R

raw data 108
  code 106
  examples of 106
reader
  meta-reading 42
  needs of 118
  novice in the text 118
  peers 118
  revision process 118
  self-talk 42
  tool for helping 42
reading
  dialoguing with text 42
  emulating good writers 45
  examples of structure 36
  form knowledge base 36
  good writing skills 66
  identify structural patterns 45
  intensive 37
  introduces discourse 36
  search for literature 37
  sections that do not make sense 42
  sections that work well 42
  sensitise 36
  sensitising yourself as reader 45
  smaller chunks of writing 49
  summarise academic text 66
  thematically 49
  understand the argument 42
  ways of organising knowledge 45
  with understanding 49
reading for research purposes
  bibliographical notes 5
  definitions 5
  making of notes 5
  memos 5
  paraphrases 5
  summaries 5
reading preparation
  compile a master list of themes 63
  information together 64
record your work
  write it up 104
redrafting
  critical thinking 118
reference
  applicable to your discussion 63
  argument 63
  explain why you are including it 63
referencing 121
  general theme 32
  page number 32
  quote directly 32
  specific piece of writing 32
register
  informal 120
reliability
  of research procedure 115
research argument
  main question 5
research journey 104
research logbook
  chronologically dated notes 100
  taking copious notes 100
research path 115
research question 4
  different angle 23
  exploratory reading 5

point of view 23
problematised 23
reading on the topic 23
refine 5
thesis statement 23
research writing artefact 104
revision
clarifying 116
critical thinking 117
cutting 116
expanding 116
guiding questions 119
not to be confused with editing 116
read aloud 119
reorganising 116
re-seeing 117
tape recorder 119
tightening up 116
top down 119
reworking 119

S

sampling 110
purposive 102
scaffolding 3
scholarly evidence 114
scholarly writing
contemporary discourse 89
infused with the style 90
know the field 89
older sources 90
read and make notes 90
relevant knowledge 89
writing conventions 90
second paragraph
evidence from the literature 63
narrower context 13
of a section 63
relate specific studies 63
section
constituent paragraphs 70
selection of participants 110
sentence
adjectival phrase 68
adverbial phrase 68
argument 66
clear 65
coherent stretches of language 76
complex 68
components 68
connectors 90
finite 68
independent 68
link 67, 72
logical connection 74
main clause 68
not specific enough 66
phrases 67
predicate 68
show writer's understanding 57
specific 65, 67
subject 68
subordinate clause 68
thesis 66
transitional words and phrases 74
vary in length 122
sentence level
language faculties of the human mind 69
larger units of organisation 69
sentence structure 67
complex 68
sequence 120
signpost
outline of the route 78
overview 78
pre-organising 13
simple sentence 68
skill
conducting arguments 68
connecting paragraphs 68
connecting sentences 68
social context 13
source
acknowledge 120
electronic connection 27
library 27
specific
issue worth investigating 60
story of a field research
compose 100
specific research methods 100
story of the inquiry
accountable 99
annotate 99
data-working processes 100
illustrate 99
reliable 99
story within the story 113
structure
typical essay 77
structuring a research paper
iterative 2
recursive 2
style
object of writing 121
style of the academy
enter the discourse community 96
rite of passage 96
sub-heading
encapsulate meaning of the text 120
sub-thesis 120

summary
capture information 53
full sentence 53
full short paragraph 53
main ideas 39
most important information 53
survey
descriptive statistics 102
suspending cognition
unknown term 91
systems of your information
memo 71
paraphrases 71
quotation 71
summary 71
themes 71

T

teacher-researcher 17
telling of the data
descriptive statistics 107
discussion in figures, tables, graphs 107
text
dialoguing with 42
dialoguing with arguments 42
evaluative 57
evidence 42, 57
expository 57
grammatical errors 120
persuasive 57
punctuation 120
sections that do not make sense 42
sections that work well 42
spelling 120
understand 57
theme
conceptually related 108
convert them into headings 71
heading 78
section or subsection of essay or paper 78
sub-theme 78
sub-topic 78
themes of knowledge
as the structuring mechanism 78
heading 78
theoretical context 13
theoretical framework
culture of entrepreneurship 103
discourse of 109
language of 109
theoretical pillar 109
thesis 117, 119
central point 8
deduce 9
definable 9
define 9
functions 9
inferred 9
novice writers 9
preliminary 30
thesis statement 18, 101, 110, 114
airing your opinion 6
argue logically 8
central to an argumentative research paper 8
develop as you read 80
explaining 8
explore 8
goalposts 8
preliminary trial 10
tentative 6
thinking in print xiii
title
key concepts 120
thesis statement 8, 120
top down 119
topic
broader framework 77
clarity about 4
demarcating 18
describe broadly 59
identify problem 18
problematise 4
questions about 4
read about 4
research 101
topic sentence 79
nerve centre 78
title of the paragraph 78
transitional mechanism
link sentence 78
transitional words and phrases to sentences
cognitive function 74
path of reasoning 74
type of design
reasoning behind it 102

U

understanding
conveying explicitly 120
formulate 47
unit of analysis
activity theory 20
research 101
sociocultural theory 20

V

verb
cornerstones of language 69

precise 69
verbal connector
structural bridge 74
viewpoint
disagree 93
know the literature 93
vignette 113
word ilustration 111
vocabulary shift
a more conceptual one 89
colloquialisms 89
contractions 89
logic 89
more persuasive 89
relevant knowledge 89
specialist audience 89
terminology of a discipline 89
typical terms in the field 89

W

ways of writing
authors in your discourse community 89
reading them 89
website 30
word processing
continuous revision 119
wordiness 122
work-plan 110
deliverable output 104
manage 104
specific dates 104
specific research activities 104
time line 104
writer
in dialogue with the reader 124
writing
about your design 104
academic 121
act of 117
and thinking 7
argumentative 57, 58
clarity of expression 8
clearly 8
co-creating knowedge 48
coherence 8
cohesion 8
conditional 48
conditions of application 48
convention 47
creates understanding 48
data section 110
dependent on knowing 47
descriptive 56
destination 58
evidence of the logic 106
expository 56, 58
feasible method 104
fieldwork 110
for audience of readers 56
form of thinking 65
generating new ideas 7
grow and cook a message 117
integrated 48
iterative 85
logically 8
meta-cognitive 48
meta-writing 48
narrative 56
new connection 117
not only representation of knowledge 48
note-taking 76
organise knowledge 49, 84
own scholarly style 47
performance 1
personal 121
persuasive 104
practise-write 49
process of data analysis 106
process of knowledge construction and performance 56
reflective 48
repeatedly develops and extends an argument 85
scholarly 121
searching for the right language 48
sequencing logic 110
shapes thinking 117
skilful research 76
stages 3
style 47
suitable type of design 104
thinking in print 7, 117
tone of 120
writing act
organisation of thoughts and ideas 65
writing and knowing
know 87
perform 87
two sides of a coin 87
writing skill
integrated writing assistance 49
knowledge-making skill 49
other types of knowledge 49
writing tools 78