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DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC WRITING FOR BUSINESS STUDIES

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Abstract

This study explores the application of a formative assessment approach known as Dynamic Assessment (DA), as developed within the Vygotskian sociocultural theory of learning. DA blends instruction with assessment by targeting and further developing students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The study investigates whether, and if so, how DA enhances students' academic writing and conceptual development in business studies over time.

DA and Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) informed the methodological design of this study, which employed a mixed methods approach in order to track learners' ZPDs regarding academic writing development. The use of SFL to provide linguistic evidence for student writing development (ZPD) is new in DA and thus an innovative feature of this study. The data consists of six undergraduate business studies students' three to four drafts of three assessments, which were analysed for textual and ideational meanings, as well as associated text-based interaction (mediation), complemented by student interviews and subject tutors' written comments.

This study extends previous DA studies such as Poehner and Lantolf (2005) in two key ways: i) its explicit focus on the construction of a macrogenre (whole text) as opposed to investigations of decontextualized language fragments, and ii) the range of mediational strategies identified and the consequent expansion of Poehner's (2005) framework of mediation typologies. The findings suggest that DA, combined with SFL, provides insights into the learners' maturing writing abilities, which the tutor can nurture further to help the learners internalise them. This study also shows that DA students made more

gains than their non-DA counterparts regarding their ability to write a case study analysis genre. Additionally, the findings suggest that students can transfer their academic writing and conceptual knowledge from one assessment task to another, albeit at a varying level.

The study, though small in scale, thus supports the view that targeted tutor support enhances students' academic writing development. Implications are drawn concerning formative writing assessment research and practice in higher education.

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List of Key Abbreviations

DA – Dynamic assessment

EAP – English for academic purposes

HE – Higher education

IM – Instant messaging

MASUS - Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students

NDA – Non-dynamic assessment

ODL – Open and distance learning

SCT – Socio-cultural theory

SFL – Systemic Functional Linguistics

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter provides the background and motivation for the current study. The rationale for the study is presented and the research context of the study is described briefly, followed by an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Motivation and rationale for the study

The present study is concerned with the relationship between writing instruction and writing assessment. In particular, this study investigates how academic writing assessment procedures may promote writing development including conceptual development (i.e., learners' ability to use conceptual frameworks in order to produce a successful case study analysis as construed in their assessment texts). By *academic writing* here I mean academic texts written by students in a particular discipline in higher education (HE), which entails having the epistemological, linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge required in order to become a part of that disciplinary community. I have used the term *writing* to mean academic or disciplinary writing throughout this thesis. In this study, *writing assessment*, drawing on Huot's work, is defined as the range of procedures used to 'describe the promise and limitations of a writer' (2002, p. 107) working in a particular rhetorical, linguistic and socio-cultural context.

The study explores the application of dynamic assessment (DA) to assessing the academic writing of business studies students in open and distance learning. DA is an assessment approach that blends instruction with assessment. The assumptions behind DA are that (1) traditional assessment may not be suitable for all learners, (2) assessment

should consider what a learner will be able to do in the *future* (i.e., their potential to develop) instead of focusing on their *past* (e.g., actual development), and (3) information from the assessment should be used to design teaching interventions adapting them as needed (Grigorenko, 2009, p. 113). DA is further elaborated in Chapter 3.

This study has been motivated by two factors. Firstly, the research literature on assessment and feedback in HE indicates that there is lower student satisfaction regarding assessment and feedback than for other aspects of HE academic support (HEFCE, 2010; Surridge, 2008). The 'lower' student satisfaction appears to be associated with the quality of the assessment feedback given (Weaver, 2006). It has been suggested that there are many reasons for student discontent such as an inability to understand academic discourse (Lea & Street, 1998), lack of sufficient or good quality feedback (Hounsell et al., 2008) and feedback not being 'usable' (Walker, 2009). Additionally, it is reported that students may be predominantly interested in grades rather than formative comments (e.g., Carless, 2006). Given the 'high stakes' nature of academic writing as the principal mode of assessment in HE (Lillis & Scott, 2007), there is a need for further investigation of how assessment could be made more responsive to student needs and their learning. This study examines the value of an alternative assessment approach and has the potential to have a positive impact on and to inform assessment practices in HE.

A further motivation behind this study is a personal interest in finding out how assessment can *support* learning because, as a tutor (see 1.4.2), I have encountered issues around students' academic writing when tutoring and marking assignments on academic writing modules. I wanted to address these issues through systematic research,

thereby enabling myself to formally investigate my own professional practice. I assume that such an investigation would be of use to tutors and teachers of academic writing more widely.

With these factors in mind, I embarked on this study with the aim of investigating the application of DA which has the potential to address students' academic writing development needs and to align writing assessment with learning.

1.2 Higher education and writing assessment

Learning in HE entails having an ability to adapt to new ways of learning in a particular discipline such as business studies. These new ways of acquiring disciplinary knowledge can be challenging, particularly to undergraduate students (Lea & Street, 1998). One reason for this is that much academic knowledge is constructed and available as written texts (Bazerman, 1988). Unless learners can understand and interpret this new knowledge from written texts, they may be considered incompetent. Most importantly, their (in)competence is generally assessed on the basis of their written assignments which are expected to draw on discipline-specific written texts. This can be particularly challenging to students who come from non-traditional (e.g., without A levels) and different socio-cultural backgrounds (see Ivanič & Lea, 2006). In addition, these learners are expected to demonstrate the socio-cultural practices of the associated disciplinary community through assignments and, more importantly, each discipline has its own practices such as differing criteria for academic excellence (e.g., see Becher, 1994). In order to succeed in becoming a member of this community, learners need to be aware of

such practices. Supporting learners for their success is, thus, a concern in UK HE institutions (Ivanič & Lea, 2006).

The learning environment for students in open and distance learning (ODL) institutions such as The Open University (OU) in the UK, the research site of this study, is quite different from that in traditional face-to-face universities. The main difference is the lack of face-to-face contact with tutors and fellow students, which can leave students isolated. Currently, the most common methods of communication include telephone, emails and online forums. This shows the key role played by the written mode of communication. In ODL, most assignment feedback is communicated to students in writing (Chetwynd & Dobbyn, 2011).

The writing assessment process also features differently, compared to other HE institutions, on the OU modules where the current study took place (see Chetwynd & Dobbyn, 2011). For example, each module has three to six assignments. These assignments are marked by local tutors who are provided with marking guides by the central module teams. Each assignment is marked and in-text comments and summary feedback are provided electronically to students. These assignments are used for both summative and formative purposes. The tutor feedback is intended to help students with writing their subsequent assignments. However, recent OU-based studies such as Walker (2009) and Chetwynd and Dobbyn (2011) showed that tutor feedback has not always been effective enough to meet students' needs.

The current study aimed to address the challenge of making tutor feedback more *learning-oriented* (see also Boud & Falchikov, 2006) by investigating my own

professional context. In particular, my intention was to explore alternative methods of assessment that are responsive to students' writing development needs. To this effect, I chose to explore the suitability of DA for undergraduate business studies students in the OU. As stated in 1.1, DA is concerned with the future academic development of a learner by considering what learning potential they have. This potential is assessed by examining how the learner performs in collaboration with a more capable peer or tutor who is known in DA as a *mediator* (hence 'tutor' and 'mediator' are used interchangeably in this thesis). This collaborative or social view of learning was pioneered by the Russian psychologist L.S. Vygotsky (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky and his colleagues developed a socio-cultural theory of learning which viewed human cognition and learning as a social and cultural rather than individual enterprise. In particular, Vygotsky's notion of the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* is central to DA. ZPD refers to 'the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In the current study, ZPD refers to the gap between the learner's independent original academic writing abilities and what they could achieve when assisted by a tutor with regard to an assessment task. Lantolf (2009, p. 359) argues that DA is 'the pedagogical instantiation of the ZPD'. Both the notions of the ZPD and collaboration (or mediation) are integral to DA and are, therefore, explained further in Chapter 3.

DA is an "approach to understanding individual differences and their implications for instruction … [that] embeds intervention within the assessment procedure" (Lidz &

Gindis, 2003, p. 99). It seeks to assess a learner's abilities by promoting them at the same time. In DA, learner abilities are transformed through dialogic collaboration between the learner and the tutor-assessor (Poehner, 2007). DA is, therefore, radically different from traditional forms of assessment in which any intervention or collaboration during assessment is not allowed.

In addition, I sought a compatible theory of language to assess various aspects of language in context (i.e., meaning making), which complements DA. DA embraces a social view of learning and assessment, and I found Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL, see, for example, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) a powerful and complementary theory. SFL views language as a social tool that humans use to make meaning and get things done. Since mediator-learner interaction (i.e., use of language) is at the heart of DA, SFL as a theory of language complements DA when it comes to considering learners' written assessment texts and the mediator-learner interactions around these texts (see also Wells, 1994 for the complementary contributions made by Vygotsky and Halliday). The application of SFL in this study will be further explained in Chapter 4.

1.3 Research questions

In order to conduct the current study, a number of research questions (RQs) were designed. These questions continuously evolved as my understanding of the research context and the participants gradually sharpened. The final RQs employed in this study are as follows:

The overarching research question

To what extent do dynamic assessment procedures enhance learners' academic writing development and conceptual development?

To explore this overarching question I pursued the following RQs within the context of applying DA procedures:

1. What insight into learners' writing development does the analysis of tutor-learner interaction provide?

2. What do the analyses of student assessment texts (including drafts) demonstrate regarding students' academic writing and conceptual development?

3. Do learners following less dynamic assessment procedures perform differently?

4. To what extent can learners transfer the academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge learned in one writing assessment task to another?

1.4 Research Context

1.4.1 LB160 Professional communication skills for business studies

The research site for this study was an academic writing module called *LB160 Professional communication skills for business studies* (hereafter, LB160) at the OU, UK (see Chapter 5 for details of data collection). This module is recommended for first year (Level 1) students who are studying or plan to study business studies at the OU. The module is designed to enhance academic reading and writing skills that students will need for undergraduate business studies.

LB160 was designed following an approach which sees academic reading and writing as situated social practices in particular contexts and communities (e.g., Hyland, 2003). As such, this module aimed to enable students to participate more effectively in business studies contexts. In particular, students on this module are familiarised with a number of common text types encountered in business studies. Broadly speaking, these text types include case studies, essays and reports, which students are required to produce in response to business studies assessment tasks. Students learn how to analyse texts in these genres as well as create them by using appropriate content knowledge and language resources in the context of business studies.

Generally, students on this module come from both traditional and non-traditional educational backgrounds. Almost all students on the particular module I studied were in employment and the majority of them used English as their mother tongue.

As in other OU modules, a tutor is allocated to a group of around 20 students and is responsible for supporting these students and marking their assignments. Tutor support is mainly provided via an online tutor group forum and emails although students can also contact their tutor by phone if they prefer.

1.4.2 My role: module team member and tutor

I would like to explain my role regarding this module in the context of this research because this study investigated my own practice. I was one of the academic team members who designed and wrote the learning materials for this module in 2006 - 2008. In particular, I was responsible for designing assignment tasks that reflected practices in the OU Business School and what the module aimed to teach through the learning

materials. Additionally, I became one of the tutors on this module between 2008 and

2010 when the data for this study was collected. Whilst the data for the pilot study came

from two of my own students, the rest of the data was collected from four students

taught by other tutors on the module. This means while two of the students were familiar

with me before the study, the other four were not. However, consistent with the level

and nature of communication expected on the module, there was no face-to-face contact

with any participants in this study.

1.4.3 Assignment tasks in LB160

Given that LB160 is designed to support students' writing in business studies, the

assignment tasks aim to reflect the genres that appeared in business studies assignments.

There are four Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs), targeting different text types: case

study analysis (TMA1 and 2), essay (TMA3) and report (TMA4). For these assignments,

students are provided with real case studies of an organisation (e.g., Nike) or they are

asked to consider their own workplace. A common feature of all these texts is the

application of business (studies) concepts (e.g., business environment) to an

organisation's business situation. Each assignment task is accompanied by guidance

notes. Here is an example of an assignment task from the module (see Appendix 1A for

the guidance notes):

Figure 1.1: An LB160 assignment task

> **Task**
>
> *Use the stakeholder model of business environments to critically examine the external environment of Asda Wal-Mart as outlined in the case study.*
>
> Please complete the task by reading the case study that follows. You should submit your answer by the given deadline. Your assignment should not exceed 800 words.

(TMA2 OU, 2009, p. 14)

The guidance notes for the TMA ask students to apply the business framework known as 'stakeholder model' to Asda-Wal-Mart, by focusing on the concepts of *power, interest, influence* and *impact*. Such an application needs an understanding of the stakeholder framework and its associated concepts as well as the linguistic resources and the target genre knowledge needed to produce an effective case study analysis (also commonly known as 'case studies'). A business case study analysis may be defined as the study of an organisation by applying a business model or framework (see also Forman & Rymer, 1999).

Additionally, students are provided with detailed assessment criteria, adapted from Bonanno and Jones (2007), focusing on five areas: use of source materials, text structure and development, academic style, grammatical correctness, and presentation (see Appendix 1B).

Particularly relevant to my project is the case study analysis genre as the participants were assessed on how effectively they could write this kind of text. This study focuses

on this genre because it was at the beginning of the module and it is a common genre in business studies assignments. For example, a recent study mapping writing assignment task genres in UK HE found that case studies were common assignment tasks in several professional disciplines including business studies (Nesi et al., 2008, p. 23). Zhu (2004) also found case studies to be the most common type of genre elsewhere in business studies. In the context of this study, a case study analysis requires students to apply business frameworks and concepts to a practical situation in a business organisation or their own workplace in order to examine business problems or issues.

1.4.4 Writing to learn in business studies

LB160 was created assuming that reading and writing make an important contribution to learning, particularly writing on the basis that it requires a more conscious effort. This approach is known as 'writing to learn' in writing research, which is supported in academic writing research (Bazerman, 2005; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Woodward-Kron, 2005) although contested by some researchers (e.g., Ackerman, 1993). Since writing often requires a more conscious effort than speech to organise one's thoughts, it is argued that writing helps to shape our thinking and consequently our learning, a view supported in Vygotskian socio-cultural theory as well (e.g., Wells, 1999). This notion of writing to learn is particularly relevant to the study of conceptual development investigated in this project.

1.5 Organisation of the thesis

Following the introduction, this thesis is organised in eight further chapters, each described below.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature relevant to this study, with a focus on research studies concerning writing assessment that have been conducted in HE. Since this study is concerned with formative writing assessment which is intended to promote learning, the chapter does not review summative writing assessment research in detail. However, research into formative writing assessment is contrasted with summative writing assessment to set the context of this study.

The focus of Chapters 3 and 4 is on the theoretical frameworks used in this study. Chapter 3 describes the Vygotskian socio-cultural theory (SCT) of learning which underpins DA. The key concepts from SCT that are central to DA are explained, showing their relevance to DA. In Chapter 4, Hallidayan SFL theory is briefly explained in the context of the present study. In particular, I focus on a number of key concepts and tools drawing on the genre theory that has been developed within SFL and its application to academic writing and assessment.

Chapter 5 explains the research design and methodology. After providing further information about the research context, I elaborate on the data collection and data analysis methods and tools employed in this study.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 address the overarching research question stated in 1.3 above. Chapter 6 addresses RQ1 by considering the contribution made by the study of the tutor-learner interaction to the understanding of the learner's academic writing development by examining the tutor-student interaction in the context of DA. In particular, the ZPD of the learners in this study is examined in the light of the amount and the type of support they appeared to need during the DA procedures.

Chapter 7 explores RQ 2 and 3, and focuses in detail on the learners' academic writing and conceptual development over time by comparing their performance in two assessment tasks. In particular, this chapter examines the learners' grasp of the genre they need to produce in response to the assessment tasks and their conceptual development in terms of the business framework linked with each assessment task.

Chapter 8 investigates RQ4 in detail and discusses RQ3 where relevant. It considers the extent to which the learners were able to transfer the academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge to a new and challenging assessment context.

Finally, Chapter 9 draws conclusions based on the previous chapters, and suggests implications of this study for professional practice within the institution I am working in as well as for related professional practice more broadly. Another key purpose of this final chapter is to show the contributions this study has made to academic writing research and to make suggestions regarding how it can be further expanded.

Chapter 2: Formative writing assessment in higher education

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I set the context of this study. This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature on formative writing assessment in the HE context, focusing on various aspects of writing assessment that are generally associated with promoting learning. Research in this area of HE is relatively new and it is an emerging field of research in the UK HE context (Ivanič & Lea, 2006).

While selecting the studies for the present review, I used two criteria: (1) studies on writing assessment (in various disciplines) in HE; and (2) studies focusing on academic writing development or formative aspects of assessment. *Academic writing development* is defined, in this study, as improvement of students' writing in terms of the use of linguistic resources, text development (i.e., genre knowledge) and disciplinary knowledge, often through an intervention resulting from assessment over a period of time.

In this chapter, I begin by defining the *types* of writing assessment, with a focus on formative writing assessment. This will be followed by a review of *key studie*s that fall within formative writing assessment in HE. Finally, I will present a rationale for the current study in the light of the literature review.

2.2 Academic writing assessment

In the context of writing assessment, broadly speaking, there appear to be two types of assessment: *summative* and *formative*. Summative writing assessment is generally used

to *measure* learners' achievement in writing at the end of a study programme rather than supporting them during the course (Shohamy, 2001). Summative assessment is product-focussed and tends to assume that human cognitive abilities are stable. Interestingly, it is often used to predict an individual's future performance (Lidz & Elliot, 2000). Such assessment is, naturally, not concerned with learners' writing development. There are several large-scale quantitative studies in the field of summative writing assessment (see Weigle, 2002 for a review), often featured in the journals devoted to language assessment such as *Language Testing* and *Language Assessment Quarterly*, and the journal dedicated to writing assessment: *Assessing Writing* (e.g., Barkaoui, 2007; Eckes, 2008). However, these studies have tended to examine technical aspects such as task variables, inter-rater reliability and rating scales in standardised tests rather than the link between writing assessment and learners' writing development. In fact, writing assessment research has concentrated on these technical aspects over almost four decades (Huot, 2002). Likewise, although a substantial body of research on large-scale academic writing tests such as TOEFL[1] Test of Written English and IELTS Academic Module[2] exists, these tests are also summative in nature as they are used for administrative purposes such as international students' entry into colleges and universities in English-speaking countries, and therefore have no direct relevance to academic writing development as defined earlier. It should be, nonetheless, noted that a number of studies have explored the *washback* effect of these large-scale tests on teaching and learning academic writing (e.g., Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996).

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[1] TOEFL is an acronym for Test of English as a Foreign Language developed by Educational Testing Services in the US.

[2] IELTS refers to International English Language Testing System developed by University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia.

Washback refers to the effect of a test on teaching and learning regarding various stakeholders of the test (see Green, 2007 for an overview). It does not necessarily focus on writing development, however. Therefore, any studies on summative writing assessment are excluded from this literature review.

As a result of the dissatisfaction with summative assessment, an alternative form of assessment that predicts the individual's future performance and assists in designing subsequent pedagogical interventions has become an ongoing quest. Formative writing assessment has emerged as an option for this purpose because it is geared towards learning and improvement in writing, based on assessment at different times during a course of study (Huot, 2002). As such, its purpose is to help learners guide their subsequent phases of writing and help tutors 'modify their teaching methods and materials so as to make them more appropriate for their students' needs, interests and capabilities' (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 98). In other words, formative assessment is 'specifically intended to provide feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning' (Sadler, 1998, p. 77). Since formative assessment is linked to writing instruction and assessment, the rest of the chapter reviews the key studies that relate to formative writing assessment in HE.

2.3 Formative writing assessment

As suggested by its definition, formative writing assessment aims to contribute positively to enhancing learners' writing. In the context of HE, a number of studies have been conducted in this area. However, precisely how writing assessment can improve student learning is still under-researched (Walker, 2009). A number of studies have been

carried out in this area recently. I have classified these studies into: (1) formative feedback, (2) diagnostic writing assessment, and (3) dynamic assessment. Although each of these categories broadly subscribes to the principle of supporting learners with their writing through assessment, their underlying assumptions and theoretical orientations are different, resulting in their differing applications and impacts on learning or writing. Each category is defined and relevant studies within each are reviewed below.

2.3.1 Formative feedback

Feedback emerged as an important aspect of writing instruction in North America in the 1970s as learner-centred teaching approaches started gaining currency (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a). This term is particularly common in open and distance learning (ODL) and HE in general (see Weaver, 2006). Tutor feedback is seen as a major teaching tool and a medium of interaction with students, and a means to motivate and encourage them to continue (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004-05). If provided appropriately, feedback can help learners to control their learning by reflecting on their progress (i.e., strengths and weaknesses) and to take actions to further improve their learning (Weaver, 2006). In the context of academic writing assessment, *formative feedback* refers to a tutor's responses to students' drafts or final assignments which subsequently promote writing development.

The theoretical assumptions behind studies on formative feedback appear to be that (1) formative feedback is an essential part of the learning process in HE (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004-05); (2) formative feedback provides information about students regarding the gap between actual and desired levels of performance (Sadler, 1989); (3) the current practice

of feedback is generally monologic, that is, from a tutor to students (Yorke, 2003); and (4) tutor feedback can often exert power over students by using academic discourse that may be unfamiliar to students (Carless 2006; Lea & Street 1998).

Formative feedback is often considered central to student learning in HE in the UK and elsewhere (e.g., Keppell & Carless, 2006; Sadler, 1998; Yorke, 2003). It is also recognised in the literature that research in this area is relatively sparse (see, e.g., Walker, 2009; Weaver, 2006). Nevertheless, there are some studies that examine the impact of formative feedback on student writing in an assessment context. They use a number of different research frameworks and instruments. It should be noted that most of the studies reviewed below were conducted on feedback provided by disciplinary experts rather than academic writing experts in an academic writing programme.

Among these, the ones selected for the present review can be categorised in terms of their main research method and focus: (1) student perceptions, (2) tutor perceptions, (3) textual analysis and (4) formative feedback process.

Student perceptions

In this review, *student perception* refers to how students in HE perceive tutor feedback on their written assignments. Formative feedback studies on student perception have used different data collection and analysis tools of which the most common are: survey questionnaires, various types of interview and focus group discussions with students (e.g., Carless, 2006; Handley & Williams, 2011; Walker, 2009; Weaver, 2006). Some of these studies are reviewed in detail below.

Weaver's (2006) study embraced the theoretical assumptions 1, 2, and 4 mentioned above while investigating the perceptions of 44 Business and Arts and Design undergraduate students. In addition, this study employed the notions of 'deep' (i.e., making sense of what is to be learned) and 'surface' (i.e., memorising facts and reproducing them) approaches to learning (e.g., see Rust, 2002). In other words, students following a 'deep' approach may benefit most from the feedback given to them. Although this study focussed on the learner, it did not consider the dialogic nature of feedback (see Yorke, 2003). Additionally, despite the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods, the former (in this case, a survey) was the main method and thus might have missed individual learner perceptions. Yet, the findings confirmed previous and most recent research that students find assignment feedback too vague, mostly negative, lacking guidance and not necessarily relevant to the assessment criteria (Chanock, 2000; Ferguson, 2011). This paper, however, did not report on the timing of the study in relation to the feedback received by students. The participants' responses may have changed over time if they participated in the study following a long interval after receiving the assignment feedback.

Another study by Carless (2006) was a large-scale study, mainly framed by theoretical assumption 4 above (i.e., discourse, power and emotion). As in Weaver's study, the key instrument was a structured survey (1740 participants) although this was complemented by an open-ended survey question, 15 semi-structured student interviews in English and six in Cantonese. This study appears to be more robust than Weaver's, given the scale and the integration of individual interview data with the survey. In addition to confirming previous findings as in Weaver's, Carless' study explored additional aspects

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such as students' perceptions of tutor-student power relationships and their emotional reactions which are recognised as aspects of research in assessment but still under-researched. Student perceptions of the emotional support were also found to be an aspect of feedback in a later study by Poulos and Mohany (2008), thereby supporting the finding of Carless' study. Nonetheless, Carless' study did not examine student perceptions of feedback in light of the actual tutor feedback which Weaver's study did, which may be a weakness of the study. The key message of Carless' study, highly relevant to the current study, is that potentially valuable 'assessment dialogue' between the tutor and the student is still lacking in writing assessment in HE (e.g., see Bloxham & Campbell, 2010; Handley & Williams, 2011).

Walker's (2009) study was carried out with undergraduate Technology students at the OU. It aimed to explore how much assignment feedback is 'usable' (i.e., useful) for students by seeking students' views in addition to the analysis of their tutors' feedback comments. The analysis of tutor feedback comments is discussed under *Textual analysis* below. Instead of surveys, as in the previously discussed two studies, Walker employed open-ended interviews with 43 students which may have provided more in-depth insight into student perceptions. Additionally, these interviews took place immediately after the participants' final assignments regarding the feedback they received on previous assignments. This immediacy of the interview would have increased the validity of the interview data. In addition to confirming previous findings by Chanock (2000) and Weaver (2006), this study suggested that if the formative feedback is 'usable', students make use of it in their future assignments although this will rely on the student recognising the feedback as such.

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To sum up, one cannot disregard the value of student perceptions about formative feedback. In fact, knowing how students perceive formative feedback can help to improve feedback techniques (e.g., Orsmond et al., 2005). However, through such studies, it is often difficult to establish how exactly students apply the formative feedback to their subsequent assessment texts without analysing these texts.

Tutor perceptions

Tutor perception refers to how tutors perceive their feedback on students' assessment texts. Given the critical role tutors can play in developing learners' academic writing abilities, their views of feedback need to be considered. However, compared to learner perception studies, considerably fewer studies have explored this aspect of formative feedback in HE. These studies have mainly employed surveys and interviews as instruments to explore tutor views on formative feedback.

One such study is Carless (2006), mentioned earlier, which surveyed 460 tutors from eight universities and interviewed five tutors. The study found that tutors perceived formative feedback to be useful for students although they contradicted their students' views by stating that students were interested in marks or grades rather than in formative feedback. Despite the contradiction, this tutor perception supports some previous findings (e.g., see Mutch, 2003) although more empirical investigation is still needed.

Price et al. (2010) also investigated tutor perceptions. Although this study investigated aspects of assessment feedback practices through various instruments such as surveys and case study, this paper reported on the interview data only. The authors maintained that there was confusion among tutors regarding the purpose of formative feedback and

called for more 'dialogue' between the tutor and the student over feedback. Like Carless' study, this study did not appear to have examined the actual tutor feedback.

A few other studies conducted recently also reported that tutors see assignment feedback as a tool for learning (e.g., Orsmond & Merry, 2010). However, it was found that the actual feedback did not correlate with what tutors said. This mismatch may be linked with tutors' own view of assessment practices which might be geared towards the task in hand rather than future work. Furthermore, in spite of both tutors and students' positive perceptions about the value of formative feedback, research still shows that students are not able to act on the assignment feedback (e.g., see Burke, 2009). It may be possible to explain why students implement tutor formative feedback into their subsequent assignments only by examining the 'feedback dialogue' between the tutor and the student. Such studies are, however, extremely rare in the literature.

As with student perceptions of formative feedback, what has emerged from these studies is that it is difficult to understand how formative feedback is actually applied by students to their subsequent assessment texts. Therefore, a different methodological approach is required to study the link between formative feedback and student performance on assessment.

Textual analysis

In addition to perception studies, a number of studies have examined either tutor feedback and/or student assessment texts. Tutor feedback includes the written feedback comments made by tutors on student assignments either as annotations or summary feedback. I will, first, review studies analysing tutor feedback texts.

Researchers investigating tutor feedback texts have tended to consider the link between such feedback and student writing development. Earlier studies such as Lea and Street (1998) examined tutor feedback on assignments, following an 'ethnographic style', in addition to student and tutor interviews and sample student assignments, in terms of the clarity of tutor feedback and its effect on student learning. Lea and Street found that feedback was often vague and implied tutors' authoritative voice which may have done more harm than good to the student. Additionally, tutor feedback practices varied from one tutor to another and from one discipline to another.

Following a similar methodology to Lea and Street's, Walker (2009) examined tutor feedback on student assignments. Unlike Lea and Street's study which did not provide details of the analytical tool, Walker developed a coding system for the themes emerging from the tutor feedback data. She used the notion of 'usability' to classify the tutor comments following Brown and Glover (2006, cited in Walker, 2009, p. 69). Walker reported that tutor feedback broadly fell into two categories: content (subject knowledge) and skills development. However, Walker stated that the proportion of tutor feedback related to skills development, the most 'usable' tutor feedback, was much lower than that associated with subject knowledge. Thus, this study showed that tutors possibly did not employ a range of formative feedback that might have supported student learning.

Stern and Solomon (2006), building on a previous study by Connor and Lunsford (1993), also employed a coding system while examining 598 undergraduate student assignments with tutor comments on them. These assignments were from multiple disciplines. Stern and Solomon developed their own coding categories considering the

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function of the tutor comment such as 'Paper structure and organisation' and 'Support/ evidence for claims' (2006, p. 30). These codes were, however, based on the existing literature rather than driven by the data. This study found that tutor feedback focussed on micro-levels such as grammar and spelling, and there was virtually no comment on macro-level features such as text organisation. Again, this shows the limited 'usability' (to use Walker's term) of tutor feedback.

In addition to using a coding system, some studies have employed linguistic frameworks to examine tutor comments on assignments. For example, Hyatt (2005) conducted a study of tutor comments on 60 education student assignments, following corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 1995). Based on the corpus data, he developed seven functional categories of tutor comments (e.g., developmental, structural, content-related, etc.), each with their own sub-categories. This study made the assumption that academic discourse such as tutor comments implies a form of power relationship between the tutor and students. Therefore, how much students act on these comments may be affected by the nature of the discourse. Hyatt found that the most frequent comments (60%) were content-related followed by stylistics comments (i.e., use and presentation of academic language) whereas a quarter of the comments were developmental (i.e., focusing on future assignments). This study supported the previous findings that tutors exert power over students through their academic discourse such as the use of modality (e.g., 'should', 'must', etc.) and imperatives (e.g., see Lea and Street, 1998). A limitation of this study lies in its being purely textual, a corpus of tutor comments, which could have been enriched by tutor and student interview data.

Using an SFL framework in an exploratory study, Gardner (2004) investigated tutor feedback by comparing the same tutors' written and spoken comments on student assignments. Although the comments were by the same tutor, they were not on the same assignments. Gardner reported that shifting tutor comments from written to spoken changed the comments into being more engaging, personal and formative (focussed on both product and process). This study additionally suggested that spoken comments were more dialogic and hence more developmental than written comments. Nonetheless, further empirical investigation is needed as it was an exploratory study.

Woodward-Kron (2004) also employed SFL to examine tutor comments on 44 Education students' assignments in the first and the third year each. Additionally tutor and student interview data complemented the study, something that Hyatt's (2005) study lacked. She used Halliday's (e.g., 1994) three metafunctions as her framework of analysis: experiential (i.e., topic), interpersonal (i.e., reader-writer interaction) and textual (i.e., organisation of meanings). This study followed a socio-cultural perspective on academic writing, which assumed that students are apprentices who may be inducted into their respective disciplinary communities by their tutors. However, Woodward-Kron reported that tutor comments played little role in socialising students into disciplinary communities because the majority of the comments fell under experiential and textual categories, with very few relating to the interpersonal, which can promote dialogue between the tutor and the student.

Likewise, using an SFL framework, Hyland and Hyland (2006b) examined aspects of interpersonal meaning in two tutors' comments on six students' written assignments in a pre-sessional EAP course. The data was complemented by retrospective participant

interviews. The researchers found that the teachers' comments fell into three main categories: Praise (44%), Criticism (31%) and Suggestion (25%). They argue that tutor comments carry interpersonal meanings which may make or break the relationship between tutors and their students. Thus, this can have a negative or positive effect on students' writing. As noted earlier, the interpersonal dimension of assessment feedback is rarely investigated and this study further demonstrates the value of such studies.

A few other studies analysed students' assessment texts in order to track students' writing development over time. For example, using SFL as the framework, Woodward-Kron (2008) reported a longitudinal study that analysed six undergraduate students' assignments in relation to formative feedback. In particular, she tracked the use of specialist language in their assignments through the concepts of technicality and abstraction. Woodward-Kron reported that students who were capable of employing more specialist language in their assignments were more successful than those who were not. She argued that the use of specialist language in student writing is integral to their learning of disciplinary knowledge. Nonetheless, it can also be contended that a higher frequency of technicality in student writing may not necessarily equate with their increased disciplinary knowledge or ability to write. It may rather indicate novice writers, often less successfully, trying to demonstrate their familiarity with the concerned discipline.

In summary, the above studies showed that while some types of tutor comments are 'usable' or useful for future assignments, others may be either limited to the task at hand or focus on mechanical issues in writing (e.g., spelling). A few studies also demonstrated that tutor comments implied interpersonal relationships including an unequal power

relationship between the tutor and the student, leading to a limited amount of dialogue between them. Studies that examined student assessment texts indicated writing development over time to some extent. However, these studies indicate that there is still a lack of dialogue between the tutor and the student in the formative feedback process as argued by Nicol (2010).

Formative feedback process

A number of studies have investigated the formative feedback process. Here, formative feedback process refers to the feedback-revision cycle in which the tutor comments on a student's written drafts and the student revises the text before the student submits the final text (i.e., product) for assessment. In fact, such studies are more closely aligned with students' writing development than those studies reviewed in the previous sections because these consider the impact of feedback on writing over time, although such studies are rare.

Duncan (2007) investigated how tutor feedback on assignments and associated teaching interventions (e.g., one-on-one tutorial and reading students' written drafts and commenting on them) might impact on student writing development vis-à-vis formative feedback. In this small-scale study, the researcher analysed tutor feedback and scores on assignments, and interviewed the participants. Despite the interventions targeting students' needs (e.g., referencing, analytical skills), as the researcher reported, there was 'a small gain' in achievement and the participants were not convinced that the tutor feedback was valuable to them (cf. Carless 2006).

Likewise, Ellery (2008) examined the formative feedback process. Ellery's study appears to have been based on the Vygotskian concept of 'capable peer's guidance' for assessment although it is not clear how the guidance process was carried out from the Vygotskian perspective. She analysed the two drafts of the same essay and examined the feedback process through student interviews. Her findings suggested that students could learn from formative feedback given on the first draft, although each student did so to a different degree.

Recently, a study following an SFL framework was carried out focusing on formative feedback process by Mahboob et al. (2010). They expanded the *writing assessment scheme* for assessing academic writing developed by Rose et al. (2008). The scheme has an explicit focus on genre as suggested by the criteria labels such as 'Genre', 'Register' and 'Discourse'. The criteria are further sub-divided into sub-categories (e.g., Register: Field, Tenor, Mode). Mahboob et al. adapted the writing assessment schedule in the SLATE (Scaffolding Literacy in Adult and Tertiary Environments) project designed for students studying academic writing online. The key contribution of this project is its greater focus on the assessment feedback process which had received little attention in the SFL research previously. The students were offered opportunities to learn when they were writing their assignments. One of the underpinning theories of pedagogy in the SLATE project was the Vygotskian notion of scaffolding as theorised by Bruner (1966). Following this notion, a feedback cycle was designed for the assignment. The students wrote two drafts for which tutors provided annotations and comments for improving their writing. Then students incorporated the feedback into their second draft and the final version before submitting the assignment for marking. Additionally, the SLATE

team developed a 3x3 matrix extending and simplifying the *writing assessment schedule* (see Humphrey et al., 2010 for details). The tutors were trained to follow the 3x3 matrix and a particular feedback genre having three mandatory stages: Orientation (greetings and preview)^3 Feedback (explanation of problem and solution)^ Encouragement (positive note). Mahboob et al. (2010) report that the participating students achieved some writing development. However, they have not yet tracked the students' writing development over time. In many ways, this project is similar to the current study. Nevertheless, the tutor-student interaction followed in the current study is different not only due to the mode of communication (i.e., emails and instant messaging) but also the flexibility allowed for the individualised feedback dialogue.

Despite the fact that these studies investigated the impact of formative feedback on student writing development, there was a lack of a clear feedback framework regarding the feedback process except in Mahboob et al.'s (2010) study. Also, studies such as Ellery's (2008) still appeared to have concentrated on the products and grades rather than focusing on which type of feedback resulted in which type of positive change or otherwise in students' writing.

To sum up, the studies reviewed here suggest that formative tutor feedback on students' assignments does not appear to have the expected extent of positive impact on writing development. One of the main reasons for the lack of positive impact could be the predominance of a monologic approach to tutor feedback in HE (see Yorke, 2003). Such an approach, as Lillis (2003) and Nicol (2010) propose, needs to be replaced with a more dialogic approach that considers students' construction of meaning in a written text in

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[3] The symbol ^ refers to the sequence.

context. Most importantly, most feedback studies fail to demonstrate whether writing assessment supports writing and conceptual development. Thus, a study that investigates these areas seems timely.

2.3.2 Diagnostic writing assessment

Diagnostic assessment can be defined as a process that helps to identify strengths and weaknesses in a student's writing (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 98). Based on this diagnosis, learning activities are designed to address the weaknesses. For this reason, in this review, diagnostic assessment is considered a type of formative assessment and thus relevant to the current study. While the other studies reviewed in the previous section did not have an explicit diagnostic purpose, the studies reviewed in this section have such a purpose.

Studies on diagnostic writing assessment have concentrated on specific diagnostic assessment instruments used for diagnostic purposes. Only a few studies have been reported in this area regarding writing assessment in HE. Furthermore, these studies are related to two diagnostic instruments that integrate writing support: Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students (MASUS) and Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA).

SFL-based MASUS (Bonanno & Jones, 2007) was developed for teaching and assessing academic writing in the University of Sydney. It has been applied in various HE contexts including the academic writing module where this study took place.

Some studies have been conducted to measure the effectiveness of MASUS. Studies that used the MASUS tool to investigate academic writing have sought to identify students' needs in academic writing and subsequently designed programmes to support students (see Bonanno, 2002; Scouller et al., 2008). The MASUS tool as a diagnostic instrument has shown that it can help tutors to identify the areas that students need support in (Bonanno, 2002; Donohue, 2002). However, researchers have not yet investigated the developmental process of student writing or learning opportunities during the assessment process nor during the intervention after the test as they have almost always focussed on 'end products' (see Taylor & Drury, 2007). Although an analysis of the 'end product' may indicate a degree of any improvement in student writing, without examining the diagnostic process, it is hard to establish a clear link between their eventual writing and the diagnostic intervention. Furthermore, diagnostic assessment in studies using MASUS such as Scouller et al. (2008) was carried out as in a psychometric test (i.e., measurement of static human abilities represented by scores and grades) in which students responded to a writing task in a 'controlled' environment and they received grades or scores on their performance. However, the designers of MASUS suggest variations and flexibility in relation to the use of the instrument (Bonanno & Jones, 2007, pp. 4-5). These may include, inter alia, the timing and nature of the feedback and the genre type. Yet, there seems to be no learning opportunity during the assessment. As noted by Johns (2008), the focus on texts or products and the lack of attention to cognitive learning strategies in a relevant socio-cultural context make it difficult to establish a clear link between the diagnostic test and the subsequent instruction programme.

Read (2008) investigated the use of another diagnostic writing assessment tool, namely DELNA, for identifying academic literacy needs of undergraduate students in the University of Auckland. Read analysed the test purpose and built his argument on the validity of the instrument (i.e., test). He reported that, despite it being a useful tool, many students tended not to participate as it was optional. This instrument also incorporates a support programme for students diagnosed as needing academic language support. However, research does not appear to have focussed on whether the programme had any impact on students' writing development but rather on refining DELNA (e.g., Knoch, 2009).

To sum up, despite diagnostic assessment being promising, studies on it, to date, have not effectively shown how it improves students' writing. Furthermore, these studies have treated assessment and instruction as separate entities. Most importantly, these diagnostic approaches appear to concentrate on assessment rather than integrating assessment with learning in the context of writing instruction.

2.3.3 Dynamic assessment (DA)

DA is concerned with students' learning in the assessment process as noted in Chapter 1. Therefore, it is considered as a form of formative assessment (e.g., see Black & Wiliam, 2009).

Although DA has been employed in education and clinical psychology for several decades (e.g., see Haywood & Lidz, 2007 for a comprehensive review), it is new to language and literacy education. DA is mainly used in face-to-face contexts. However, studies such as Tzuriel and Shamir's (2002) have used computers for mediation. This

study was conducted with kindergarten children to examine the effects of computer-assisted DA on cognitive performance and reported that this method brought about significant cognitive changes to the participants. Similar findings are reported in Oskoz's (2005) study, which investigated DA of Spanish learners' language skills in a US university. Unlike the current study, however, it was carried out in a synchronous computer-mediated communication environment. Besides this study, there are a few other studies in HE reported in the literature (see Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). Among them, only one (i.e., Antón, 2009) was on writing assessment from a DA perspective.

Among the published studies, Kozulin and Garb's (2002) study is linked with a less flexible DA approach (see Chapter 3 for types of DA). This study focussed on the English language reading comprehension skills of adult migrants. These researchers devised a formula to calculate a 'learning potential score' for each learner based on their pre-test and post-test performance. Interestingly, they do not offer any examples of student-teacher interaction during the assessment process. This may be a weakness of this study.

A few other DA studies associated with a more flexible DA approach in the context of foreign language learning have been reported in the literature. Although the current study is not about foreign language learning, given their methodological relevance, they have been reviewed here. To date, the most detailed DA study in this area is by Poehner (2005) who explored the speaking skills of six advanced French learners following an open and flexible DA approach pioneered by Feuerstein and his colleagues (see Feuerstein et al., 2002). In Poehner's study, students were asked to construct an oral narrative in French after viewing a short video clip, which included two types of

sessions: one with mediation and another without mediation. These two types of sessions were designed for comparison. There was also an individualised instructional programme for each student to support them with their problem areas, which were verbal tense and aspect as identified in the DA sessions. Poehner reported that DA is an effective means of understanding learners' abilities and helping them resolve their linguistic problems.

A further study by Antón (2009) investigated DA procedures for the speaking and writing skills of five students in a Spanish diagnostic test for an advanced level. The DA procedures for writing were conducted following Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) model in which the mediator offers assistance that ranges from implicit prompts to explicit corrections. Although Antón reported that, through the DA procedures, the mediator was able to obtain a richer and deeper description of the learners' existing and potential language abilities, the DA procedures for writing were carried out only once after the timed test and the interaction between the students and the assessor seemed very limited (i.e., asking questions). In addition, Antón does not provide the details of the DA procedures followed during the mediation.

Each DA study reviewed above reported that DA enhanced students' linguistic skills (e.g., past tenses in French) by responding appropriately to the potential of learners' ZPD through tutor mediation as indicated by the improvement in the students' independent performance and the decreasing amount of assistance needed by them. However, all of these studies were conducted on learning certain formal features of a language and there has been no study on academic writing from a DA perspective. Also, none of the researchers appear to have used a comprehensive theory of language use

such as SFL, a need highlighted only very recently by Gardner (2010) in an English as an Additional Language context in primary schools.

2.4 Summary

To summarise, as shown in my critical review of formative assessment, many formative writing assessment studies in HE suggest that assessment practices in HE may still have a heavy focus on 'end products' and ignore the interdependence between the pedagogical approach and assessment. These studies reported student writing development in the assessment context only to a limited extent. The studies reviewed in this chapter explored students' writing through student and tutor perceptions, and textual analyses of tutor comments and student writing assessment texts. It should be noted that academic writing and conceptual development are not examined as interrelated components of disciplinary writing in these studies. The DA studies reviewed here had a strong theory of learning (i.e., Vygotskian SCT), something that other studies often lacked. However, their weakness appears to be a lack of a clear linguistic framework for the analysis of the data and tracking language development. Therefore, there is a need for developing a sound theoretical framework to examine academic writing assessment and conceptual development over time using a combination of a robust theory of learning and development (such as Vygotskian SCT of learning) and a theory of language use (e.g., SFL). Theories such as SCT and SFL are compatible with the widely accepted view of academic writing as a social practice.

The next two chapters explain the theoretical frameworks adopted in this study. They will also demonstrate the methodological contribution the study has made.

Chapter 3: Underpinning theories of learning and assessment

3.1 Introduction

The main purposes of my study were to investigate the impact of DA on learners'
academic writing and conceptual development. The previous chapter showed that,
despite a number of studies conducted on academic writing assessment, only a few
studies combined a learning theory with a linguistic theory to examine the link between
writing assessment and students' academic writing. The present study aimed to
contribute to narrowing this gap. To this effect, this study employed two theoretical
frameworks for designing research and analysing the data. They are: (1) Socio-cultural
theory (SCT) and (2) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This chapter provides an
overview of SCT, and thus DA, as the key framework employed to design the research
methodology of this study. Various aspects of DA relevant to this study are discussed.
SCT and DA provide the theory of assessment and learning for the study. Chapter 4
explains SFL as relevant to this study.

3.2 Vygotskian socio-cultural theory

DA is based on Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (SCT) of learning (1978) whereby
human cognition and learning are seen as a social and cultural enterprise rather than
individual. This view of learning is based on the notion that socio-cultural artifacts,
known as psychological tools, such as signs, symbols, and texts help individuals learn to
use their own 'psychological functions of perception, memory, attention and so on'

when they are internalised. Among psychological tools, literacy is considered one of the most powerful tools (Kozulin, 2003, p. 16).

Vygotsky argued that a child's development cannot be understood by only examining the individual. It is equally necessary to understand the social environment she lives in because '[a]ny function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane' (Vygotsky 1981, cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 210). As such, the social interaction, also known as a *mediated process*, provides the individual with an opportunity for development. In particular, the development of higher mental functions is influenced by the social and cultural activity around the individual over a period of time. In educational settings, instruction and any other associated cultural artifacts represent such an activity. However, there is always a dialectical relationship between the individual's psychological process and the social interaction (Lantolf & Thorne 2006, p. 27). Therefore, Vygotsky argued that it is necessary to study the *process* of higher mental development and not the product, which does not provide an explanation for development (Vygotsky 1978, pp. 61-62). In order to study such a process, Vygotsky developed a method called *genetic* or *developmental method.* In this method, a researcher investigates how development occurs in an individual over a span of time as a result of the goal-directed social interactions which may serve as interventions (Wertsch, 1985, pp. 17-18).

Vygotsky's theory has been widely recognised in educational psychology and education. However, the mainstream educational assessment literature still appears to focus on products, rather than the process of an individual's higher mental development as

proposed by Vygotsky. Nonetheless, there has been a growing interest from educational assessment scholars in Vygotsky's SCT. In particular, scholars looking for an alternative to traditional IQ tests have developed an assessment approach that considers the process of cognitive development because IQ tests provide only a partial picture of an individual's development (Allal & Pelgrims Ducrey, 2000). This search led to the development of dynamic assessment (DA) in special education and clinical psychology (e.g., see Haywood & Lidz, 2007).

As explained in Chapter 1, DA is an assessment approach in which the assessor or tutor actively intervenes during the assessment procedure and the learner's response to such interventions is assessed (Haywood & Lidz, 2007, p. 1). DA seeks to assess a learner's abilities by promoting them at the same time. In DA, learner abilities are transformed through dialogic collaboration between the learner and the tutor-assessor (Poehner, 2007). Thus, teaching and assessment becomes a single activity in DA in contrast to the separation of these activities in other forms of assessment.

Given that DA is underpinned by Vygotskian SCT, it is important to explain relevant key concepts before elaborating on DA further. These key concepts include: *zone of proximal development (ZPD)*, *mediation*, *imitation* and *internalisation*. Each concept is explained below.

3.2.1 Key concepts

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is defined by Vygotsky (1978) as 'the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving

and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (p.86). From a Vygotskian perspective, it is more important to know what a learner may be able to do in the future rather than what they can do at present. By working in the learner's ZPD, it is, thus, possible to find out both their actual and potential abilities. DA is grounded in this notion of assessment as a process rather than a product. In other words, DA is a development-oriented process which reveals learner performance problems and helps learners overcome them.

However, Vygotsky did not develop a comprehensive method of assessing an individual's ZPD (Chaiklin, 2003). Nor did he carry out any substantial empirical study to validate the concept of the ZPD (Grigorenko & Sternberg, 1998, p. 78). This situation has often caused difficulty for researchers working in the Vygotskian line of research and, therefore, they have developed new concepts and procedures (e.g., del RÍo & Álvarez, 2007; Haywood & Lidz, 2007; Mercer, 2000). Yet, it is accepted as a common feature of the ZPD that a more capable person working jointly with another individual on a given task to achieve the set goal can gain an indication of the individual's future cognitive development. Particularly, two related attributes of the ZPD have made it appealing to Vygotsky-oriented researchers: (1) assisted performance provided by the 'expert' to the learner and (2) the possibility of indicating both the actual and the potential cognitive ability through the process of providing varying qualities of assistance to the learner (Lantolf & Thorne 2006, p. 263). Both of these attributes of the ZPD have been instrumental in developing assessment approaches for examining the individual's higher mental functions. Depending on the interpretation(s) of the ZPD, a

range of DA approaches have been developed which are explained in 3.2.2 (see Lidz & Elliott, 2000 for a comprehensive review of the prevalent DA methods).

The ZPD is highly relevant to academic writing as the latter is widely accepted as a socially situated activity in a discursive community (e.g., Coffin, 2006a; Hyland, 2007; Prior, 2008). It is, thus, natural to consider the joint activity of the tutor and the student to produce a written assignment in addition to the student's independent performance if the goal is learning and development (also see van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991, pp. 341-43). This creates *an opportunity for assessing the student's responsiveness to the tutor's support*, a key principle of DA, because a joint activity is a better predictor of a student's future cognitive functioning than their independent performance (Lidz & Gindis, 2003, p. 101).

Mediation

Like the ZPD, *mediation* is integral to DA. While the ZPD is about the individual's potential development, mediation provides an opportunity for such development. Mediation is a process that humans employ in order to regulate the material world, others' or their own social and mental activity by using 'culturally constructed artifacts, concepts and activities' (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 79). In other words, any human activity (i.e., higher mental functions) is mediated by objects (e.g., computers), psychological tools (e.g., text) or another human being (Kozulin, 2003; Wertsch, 2007). In the context of this study, mediation refers to the intentional and reciprocal interaction between a tutor (and/or written texts) and the learner in relation to the problems experienced by the learner and the developmental support given by the tutor, taking into

account their ZPD. Thus, mediation allows the tutor to collaborate on an assessment task more closely with the learner, thereby enabling the tutor to move them to the next level of their ZPD.

In particular, psychological tools, also known as *semiotic tools* (see Hasan, 2005b), such as language are considered crucial for higher order mental functioning (Kozulin, 2003). Individuals' cognitive development relies on their mastery of these tools. However, these semiotic tools may not work effectively without a human mediator. Therefore, in a learning context, students may not learn by just being exposed to learning materials if the material is not appropriated by a tutor (i.e., human mediator). In distance learning, it can be even more challenging given the absence of face-to-face interaction (e.g., see Chetwynd & Dobbyn, 2011).

In the context of DA, and particularly this project, semiotic mediation plays a pivotal role. Such mediation involves the meaningful use of semiotic tools such as disciplinary concepts and linguistic resources. Semiotic mediation may be manifested in various modes of writing such as text annotations and emails during the mediating process (i.e., the interaction between the tutor and the student). The mediating process does not mean only the tutor influencing the student. As a dialectical process, both the tutor and the student are affected by each other's activity, behaviour and the semiotic tools used which move the mediating process forward. In this process, the control of the shared activity is dynamic (i.e., shifting control gradually from the tutor to the student and vice versa). Such control is called *regulation.*

Regulation is a form of mediation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 203). Of particular

relevance to DA are the two stages of regulation: other-regulation and self-regulation.

Other-regulation involves explicit or implicit mediation (i.e., varying levels of

assistance) by a capable peer or tutor. In the context of academic writing assessment,

other-regulation means the tutor providing hints, asking questions, etc. regarding the

student text or writing the correct word/sentence/paragraph as required while working in

the students' ZPD. As stated earlier, this process is *dynamic*, not linear. While other-

regulation involves controlling by others, self-regulation means the learner's ability to

perform an activity without or with only minimal support from the teacher or a capable

peer. Self-regulation (i.e., independent performance) is one of the goals of DA. In

writing assessment, it can be observed by considering the independently written student

text in response to a given assessment task. Self-regulation can only be achieved through

internalisation, which is described after *Imitation* below.

Imitation

Although imitation is an everyday term, it has acquired a special meaning in Vygotskian

SCT and is relevant to DA. Imitation is *not* mindless copying of an activity. Rather, it is

an intentional and selective higher mental activity which may transform the original

model (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, pp. 207-08). Imitation is linked with the ZPD and

internalisation (see below). There is a limit as to how much an individual can imitate

and thus it is connected with the ZPD (see Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 87-88). For example,

someone who has never studied business studies may not be able to imitate how to write

an analysis of a company's external environment as such a task will be beyond their

ZPD. Imitation is the foundation step towards internalisation (Newman & Holzman,

1993, pp. 151-53). In fact, Vygotsky contended that imitation is 'the source of instruction's influence on development' (Vygotsky, 1987 cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 208).

Imitation plays a vital role in both DA and academic writing assessment due to its link with the ZPD and internalisation. DA targets the learner's ZPD, which the tutor can observe by considering how much the learner imitates the tutor and how much she does the task herself. What the learner imitates may be gradually internalised in the process, thus needing less assistance from the tutor to accomplish the same task. Likewise, writing in a particular discipline is often challenging for students as pointed out in Chapter 1. Therefore, they often tend to imitate[4] what experienced members of that disciplinary community write until the former become confident and internalise the new skill and knowledge. The notion of imitation as a form of academic writing development allows the tutor to see the process of student writing development. In the context of academic writing assessment, imitation may take the form of using quotations, for example, from the source text instead of paraphrasing them. Learners may also imitate what the tutor has written or suggested regarding their assessment text. However, such imitative writing needs to be done through a conscious understanding of the goal of the activity and the means by which to accomplish it (Feryok, 2009).

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[4] Such imitation may result in 'plagiarism' as well, which may not be the learner's intention. For example, see Elander et al. (2009).

Internalisation

Internalisation is closely related to Vygotsky's argument that an individual's development occurs twice: between the individual and other people (interpsychological) and within the individual (intrapsychological) (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Internalisation is associated with the latter. Through the process of other-regulation, the individual starts taking control of the psychological/semiotic tools such as language and concepts and appropriating them for their own use. This 'process of making what was once external assistance a resource that is internally available to the individual (though still very much social in origin, quality, and function)' is called internalisation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 204; also see Wertsch, 1985). Internalisation enables an individual to make something (e.g., semiotic tools) their own. In other words, the individual transforms the semiotic tool (i.e., historically determined and culturally organised artifacts) and vice versa as the process is bi-directional (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Wells, 1999). In DA, through (semiotic) mediation, learners are supported to internalise semiotic tools needed to accomplish similar future tasks to the one at hand.

In academic writing, the internalisation of discipline-related concepts and frameworks and the genre knowledge (including the linguistic resources) required to write in the discipline is an important aspect of successful learning. Unless students are able to do this, they are likely to face problems in their study.

To sum up, these socio-cultural concepts have influenced the development of DA approaches in different ways. The degree of such influence is often dependent on how

these constructs are interpreted. In the next section, I will review various DA approaches.

3.2.2 Types of DA

Drawing on the key concepts explained above, various DA approaches have been developed. Given the limit of this thesis, it is not possible to review all current DA approaches (for a comprehensive review, please see Haywood and Lidz (2007), Lantolf and Poehner (2004) and Lidz and Elliott (2000)).

According to Lantolf and Poehner (2004), there are two types of DA: *interventionist* and *interactionist*. The difference between the two is indicated by how mediation occurs during the DA process. *Interventionist DA* employs standardised assistance. The end-point for the learner to reach is pre-specified and the support is offered and assessed on the basis of the learner's 'speed' to reach the end-point. For example, the Leipzig Learning Test (LLT) developed by Guthke and his colleagues (e.g., Guthke & Beckmann, 2000) uses a set of five standardised prompts from implicit to explicit for all learners. The learner performance is reported in terms of scores (i.e., number of prompts and amount of time needed) and profiles (i.e., analysis of error types and responsiveness to prompts). This example shows that interventionist DA retains the psychometric properties (i.e., standardisation and scores) of traditional tests. In this respect, such assessment may not be sensitive enough to an individual's ZPD. However, the advantage of interventionist DA is its relatively easy application to a large number of learners and thus it can be cost effective. Furthermore, due to its focus on

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standardisation, interventionist DA has high reliability as in traditional forms of assessment.

Pioneered by Feuerstein and his colleagues (e.g., Feuerstein, et al., 2002), *interactionist DA*, in contrast, is interpretative and abandons the examinee-examiner relationship in favour of a tutor-student relationship in assessment. In fact, it is more aligned with Vygotsky's preference for cooperative dialoguing in assessment (Poehner, 2005, p. 23). Rather than employing a set of predetermined assistance as in interventionist DA, the assistance in interactionist DA emerges from the dialogic interaction between the learner and the tutor-assessor, thus responding to the learner's ZPD. Both the tutor and the student work together to reach the ultimate goal of success. This goal may keep changing in the assessment procedure.

As interactionist DA, also known as open or flexible DA, was adopted for this study, it deserves further explanation. In particular, Feuerstein's (Feuerstein, et al., 2002) DA approach is directly relevant to this study. Like Vygotsky, Feuerstein considers the key role played by mediation through symbolic and human mediators. Feuerstein et al developed the *Mediated Learning Experience* (MLE) theory, which seems to be more radical than Vygotskian SCT as MLE strongly favours cognitive modifiability of an individual through MLE. MLE refers to the intentional, reciprocal, affective, and motivational learning experience provided to a learner. The human mediator plays a significant role by making learning highly systematic and focussed through the process of selection and transformation of the activity. MLE has three universal parameters: *intentionality-reciprocity, transcendence* and *mediation of meaning*. Intentionality-reciprocity means that the mediator intends to modify the learner through interaction and

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the learner responds to the mediator's intentionality. Transcendence refers to the learning experience gained by the learner that is applicable to new situations. Mediation of meaning is defined as the emotional and affective aspect of the interaction, the lack of which may mean no internalisation of learning (Feuerstein, et al., 2002, p. 76).

Additionally, Feuerstein et al.'s (2002) instrumental enrichment (IE) programme is pertinent to this study. Its purpose is to provide a rich MLE to learners by remediating their 'deficient' cognitive functions. It contains 'instruments' that focus on basic cognitive functions of categorisation, analysis, comparison and so on (Kozulin, 2002). Given that these instruments are domain independent (i.e., basic cognitive functions such as categorising figures), they were not considered useful for the learners in this study. Therefore, new enrichment materials related to business studies (i.e., domain specific, e.g., explaining business concepts) were designed instead albeit with similar principles (see Chapter 5).

3.3 DA and Assessment for Learning (AfL)

DA, as a formative assessment approach, has some similarities with other formative assessment approaches. In particular, it is close to the increasingly accepted form of formative assessment, known as Assessment *for* Learning (AfL), expounded by Black and Wiliam (2006) and others (e.g., Leung & Scott, 2009) regarding the school assessment system in the UK. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between DA and AfL.

A*f*L is defined as "the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where the learners are in their learning, where they need to

go and how best to get there" (ARG, 2002, p. 2). The two prominent advocates of AfL, Black and Wiliam (2006), have recently proposed a data-driven (i.e., based on classroom observations and interviews) theoretical framework for AfL. They used Activity Theory (e.g., Engeström, 1999) in order to theorise their praxis, which made an attempt to draw on Vygotskian developmental theory. Activity Theory, originally formulated by Leontiev (see Lantolf and Thorne, 2006), views human actions as an activity system in which the activity is mediated by tools to achieve a certain goal. In this process, the responsibility is shared among participants and the 'community' of participants may create rules or codes imposed on the participants to reach the goal (Engeström, 1999). On the basis of this recent alignment with Activity Theory, AfL appears to be committed to enhancing student learning through assessment. In this respect, there are some commonalities between DA and AfL. For example, both the approaches are committed to improving student learning through assessment; they take the student's current knowledge as the starting point for assessment; and they both favour interactive feedback during assessment (Leung, 2007, p. 267). Therefore, both AfL and DA are different from the other studies reviewed in Chapter 2, particularly, due to their explicit focus on learning.

Nonetheless, proponents of AfL such as Black and Wiliam (2009) and Leung (2007) have accepted that DA is distinct from AfL as discussed below. Most importantly, Black and Wiliam admit that their AfL theory needs to be further systematised in the light of available theories of learning (2009, p. 6).

Given the current state of AfL, according to Poehner and Lantolf (2005, pp. 260-61), DA is different from AfL for these reasons: (1) DA is carried out systematically

responding to learner needs (ZPDs) unlike AfL which is often offered in a haphazard or 'hit-or-miss fashion'; (2) DA is concerned with learners' long-term development whereas AfL may be limited to the task(s) at hand and the support may often be incidental; (3) there is no barrier between assessment and learning and thus they become a single activity in DA which does not appear to be the case in AfL; (4) DA has a strong theoretical underpinning (i.e., Vygotskian socio-cultural theory of learning and development) and follows a coherent theory of mind whereas AfL seems to be based on 'good' classroom practices (e.g., see Balck and Wiliam, 2009) without a clear theoretical framework guiding such practices (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). Additionally, research on AfL to date is almost exclusively focussed on school assessment unlike DA and, therefore, a comprehensive theoretical framework of AfL for HE is yet to emerge (Black & McCormick, 2010). However, some of these claims are contested by AfL proponents and they even propose that the two may benefit from each other (e.g., Leung 2007).

3.4 A critical review of DA

It has, so far, been shown that DA, inspired by Vygotsky's theory, may be a comprehensive learning-oriented assessment approach which not only identifies the individual's actual cognitive abilities but also targets their maturing abilities and helps them to develop such ripening abilities. Most importantly, DA's major contribution to formative assessment is its emphasis on the integration of teaching and assessment into a single activity, which makes it a radically different assessment approach from others. Thus, learning and development are at its heart. However, DA has been criticised by scholars working in the mainstream assessment approaches in terms of its purpose of assessment, methodology, validity and reliability. These issues are relevant to the

interactionist approach of DA rather than interventionist one since the interventionist DA closely follows the traditional form of assessment procedures such as standardisation and scoring.

DA's assessment purpose is sometimes questioned given its changing goal of assessment. Traditionally, the purpose of assessment is to measure an individual's ability at a given time. However, if abilities are modifiable and dynamic, it may be argued that it is not possible to measure them accurately (Glutting & McDermott, 1990). Such a criticism, nevertheless, does not appear to be valid due to DA's strong alignment with Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD and dynamic human mental abilities. In this sense, the purpose of assessment is not to *measure* per se but to *interpret* the cognitive abilities and consider how they can be further developed.

Another issue is the methodology used in DA during the assessment. Rather than the teacher controlling the variables during the assessment process, the learner is assisted. It has been argued that this poses a threat to the procedure's reliability (Glutting & McDermott, 1990) since the assistance helps to change the ability. In DA, however, it is a success of the method because DA's purpose is to bring about changes in the learner through collaboration. The psychometric lens should not be used to examine DA due to its theoretical orientation (i.e., SCT). Related to the assistance given to the learner are the teacher's mediation skills which can affect learning depending on other variables such as learner-teacher relationship (Haywood and Lidz 2007).

Changing the ability of learners is an issue for validity as well. If what is targeted in the assessment (i.e., ability) keeps moving, the validity of the assessment procedure/results

is questionable from the psychometric paradigm. However, if we consider Messick's (1989) reconceptualisation of construct validity, *development* would be the construct DA researchers need to justify in their assessment procedures, not *stability* of abilities.

In addition to these criticisms, Vygotskian SCT and DA have a number of gaps and limitations. Firstly, DA is still an emerging field in applied linguistics although SCT has been used in writing research for over three decades (e.g., see Prior, 2008). Most importantly, DA's efficacy has not been investigated in the context of academic writing to date. Secondly, there are only a handful of DA studies that have systematically and extensively reported on the tutor-learner mediation data in the literature (Poehner, 2005). Therefore, further research in this area is needed. Thirdly and *more significantly*, SCT (and, hence, DA) lacks engagement with discourse or 'concept in context' (Hasan, 2005a). Hasan rightly argues that SCT (and thus, DA) does not have a systematic theory of language use despite Vygotsky's preference for semiotic tools, particularly language, over physical artifacts. For this reason, DA studies investigating language learning hitherto may have focussed on micro aspects of language such as verb tenses (e.g., Poehner, 2005) rather than meaning making in context. It is surprising that even the most recent second language DA studies (e.g., Ableeva, 2010) have not tackled the use of a linguistic theory as an analytical tool to examine language development, although the use of language (spoken or written) as a mediator of social activity plays a pivotal role in learning and development (e.g., see Wells, 1999). Therefore, it is timely for DA researchers to make use of a linguistic framework for the analysis of the DA data. In order to narrow this gap, the current study draws on Halliday's (e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) for its linguistic analysis tool

as mentioned in Chapter 1. SFL offers a comprehensive theory of language. This is particularly relevant to my study which is directly concerned with students' ability to use language to make meanings in a particular disciplinary context.

3.5 Summary

This chapter explained the key concepts in Vygotskian SCT such as the ZPD and mediation to show their centrality in understanding DA. Given the various interpretations of these key concepts, this chapter demonstrated how such interpretations led to different DA approaches, namely, interventionist and interactionist DA. In particular, interactionist DA was elaborated further as it was the DA approach employed in this study. Despite the contributions made by DA, it was highlighted that there are still some lacunae and limitations. This study aimed to address some of these gaps.

The next chapter discusses the linguistic framework used in this study.

Chapter 4: Underpinning theory of language

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the potential contribution made by DA to learners' academic writing development. This naturally requires examining language resources used by students in their meaning making. As such, a systematic theory of language compatible with DA is needed. However, the previous chapter has shown that the DA studies discussed did not explain explicitly which linguistic framework was employed to track the learner's (language) development even when such studies investigated language development. As an attempt to fill this gap, the current study has used a linguistic theory known as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday and colleagues (e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). SFL provides the main linguistic tools of textual data analysis to track students' ZPD in the context of this study. The rest of this chapter explains why SFL was chosen as the underpinning theory of language, provides a description of the key SFL principles relevant to this study and presents how SFL is used as an analytical tool in the current study.

4.2 Systemic Functional Linguistics: a theory of language

SFL theory is concerned with the way people use language to get things done in a social context. The key assumptions about language in SFL are that language is (1) used for functional purposes; (2) context-specific; (3) used for making meaning; and (4) a semiotic process which involves making choices (Eggins, 2004, p. 3). Thus, SFL provides a systematic framework for studying language use (i.e., function) in context. Rather than focusing on formal structures and grammar rules of a language, SFL enables us to view

language as a meaning making resource in human social interactions. In particular, the focus is on how people use language in a variety of contexts and how they structure language for use in such contexts (Eggins, 2004). In short, SFL is a 'comprehensive theory of language and social context …' (Martin, 2011, p. 101).

4.3 Rationale for using SFL in DA

As stated earlier, DA lacks a systematic theory of language use although language plays a vital role in the mediation process. In order to address this problem, the current study attempted to find a language theory compatible with DA. Since DA considers assessment as a social activity (both processes and products), SFL was chosen as a complementary language theory due to its focus on language as a semiotic resource and language use in social context. In fact, the complementarity between Vygotskian SCT (and thus DA) and SFL has been acknowledged in the literature (e.g., see Gibbons, 2006; Hasan, 2005a; Wells, 1994). Furthermore, a traditional structural theory of language would not have provided insights into the meaning-making process that students go through in their academic writing, which SFL does. Additionally, the underlying language theory behind the design of the academic writing module, the research site of this study, was SFL. In this study, SFL served primarily as a method for analysing students' assessment texts in order to track their ZPDs although it was employed as a pedagogic tool in carrying out DA too (see 4.5 and 4.6).

4.4 Key principles

From an SFL perspective, language is viewed as a *resource for making meaning* in a particular social context. It considers *'texts',* rather than sentences, as the basic unit through

which meaning is made and hence the basic unit of analysis for research. It also views language as serving particular purposes or goals in a particular situation (either in speaking or writing). Over time, groups of people develop common types of spoken or written texts in similar situations to achieve the goals of their group or culture. These texts are influenced by the situations they are used for. In particular, three contextual register variables are viewed as fundamentally affecting the linguistic choices made by users: *field* (subject matter), *tenor* (reader-writer relationship) and *mode* (medium of communication). Therefore, the language structure in each text is different due to its functionality. It is this functional view of language which helps to explain why and how students produce specifically structured texts for particular social purposes in a particular discourse/disciplinary community (see Martin, 1997). SFL also provides a means for systematically examining and assessing students' texts.

Given that the three register variables, also known as *metafunctions* in SFL, informed both the pedagogical innovation and student assessment text analysis in this study, they need further explanations. They provided a framework for understanding the context of situation within an academic culture in which assessment texts were written by students. Halliday (1994) has argued that these three variables are realised through three metafunctions in a text simultaneously: ideational (field), interpersonal (tenor) and textual (mode).

The *ideational metafunction* refers to what language is used to construe our experience of the world. In an academic context, ideational meaning is represented by disciplinary knowledge such as business studies. How the ideational meaning is realised can be illustrated through an example:

This report is based on a SWOT analysis of Google's new operating system called Chrome.

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In this sentence, the experience of the world, the ideational meaning, is construed as a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of Google's new product. The ideational meaning is indicated by the special terms used in the sentence (e.g., report, SWOT analysis, etc.). These terms also suggest that the activity is related to an academic discipline rather than everyday commonsense.

The *interpersonal metafunction* is defined as the use of language to represent the social relationship between participants. The relationship may be formal/informal, equal/unequal, close/distant and so on. Academic writing is often considered formal and distant. Considering the language choices in the example above, the writer-reader relationship seems to be formal and distant given the use of the passive voice and the absence of human Participants.

The *textual* metafunction refers to the way language is used to organise ideational and interpersonal meanings in a text. Textual meaning is influenced by factors such as the mode of communication (e.g., spoken versus written) and the distance between the language use and the associated social process (Martin 1984 cited in Eggins, 2004, p. 91). In the previous example, the sentence organises the ideational and the interpersonal meanings into a meaningful coherent whole. All three metafunctions are further elaborated in 4.5.

To sum up, all three dimensions of meaning are realised through the use of language in context simultaneously. This SFL perspective enables a DA researcher to not only analyse student assessment texts but also support students with overcoming any problem linked with any of these meanings.

The SFL theory has evolved significantly over the last three decades. It has been influential

in language and literacy education (Martin, 2009). As such, a particular theory of **genre**,

also known as 'Sydney School', was developed by Martin and his colleagues (e.g., Martin

& Rose, 2007) in Australia by extending Halliday's notion of register mentioned above and

shown in Figure 4.1 below. This expanded model included *culture* through genre which

provided a means to consider the social purpose of a text more holistically. In this theory,

genres are defined as 'staged, goal-oriented social processes' (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 8).

It is social because genres are used to communicate with others; it is staged because it takes

Figure 4.1: Metafunctions regarding language register and genre (Martin 2009, p.12)
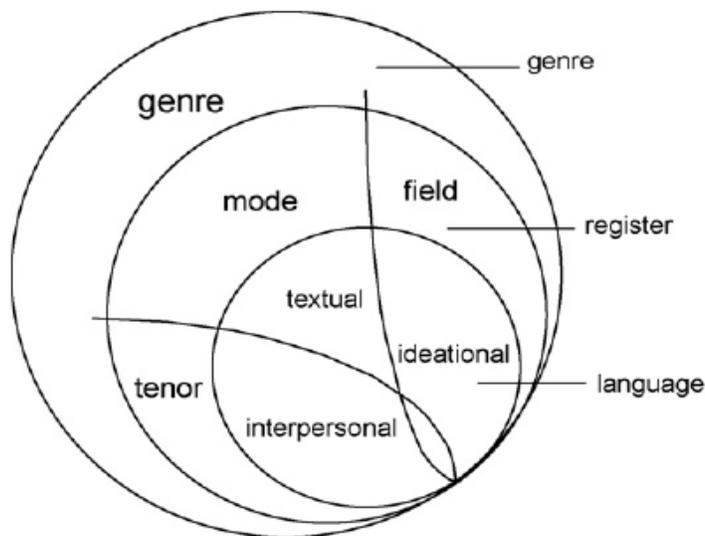
a few steps to reach a goal; and it is goal-oriented because genres are used for achieving

something. In the context of HE, students have to produce various types of genres such as

reports and arguments for their assignments. According to some research studies,

understanding how to construct genres can contribute to students' learning and

development (e.g., Coffin, 2006b).

4.5 Critique of SFL

SFL-based genre theory has been successfully applied to teaching and researching academic writing in HE. As reviewed in Chapter 2 (2.3.2), this theory has also been shown to be a useful tool in designing assessment criteria for academic writing assessment (e.g., see Coffin, 2006a; Rose, et al., 2008). In particular, it is found to be an effective instrument to examine student assessment texts to see the textual features of a genre in a discipline. However, there does not appear to be a strong focus on systematic procedures in formative assessment in HE except Mahboob et al.'s study (2010) reviewed in Chapter 2. It could be argued that the focus of SFL is on its use as a diagnostic instrument (e.g., MASUS reviewed in Chapter 2) rather than on its use as a tool for formative assessment. As such, SFL may benefit from drawing on a systematic approach to assessment such as DA for both pedagogical and research purposes.

In addition to a lack of a systematic formative assessment approach, SFL and its genre pedagogy are sometimes criticised for product-orientedness (Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Prosser & Webb, 1994). For example, in most SFL research, researchers typically analyse student texts as 'finished' static products, potentially ignoring the process behind the production of those texts and detaching students from texts in context. SFL as a social theory of language needs to take into account language users such as students as active agents in the text production which is a dynamic process. By considering the process, it is possible to examine learners' cognitive and linguistic development better, which greatly contributes to their academic writing development. In fact, some SFL studies like Prosser and Webb (1994) incorporated the process into textual analyses. A process-oriented theory of learning such as Vygotskian SCT can enhance the contribution made by SFL text

analysis. In the context of formative academic writing assessment, SFL and DA can be combined to make a robust research methodology as the former has proved to be an effective text analysis tool and the latter is a comprehensive theory of formative assessment (see Chapter 3). The current study is, thus, an attempt to bring SFL and DA together in the context of academic writing assessment.

4.6 SFL as an analytical tool

SFL was employed for the analysis of students' ZPDs in this study. Their ZPDs were examined through an SFL analysis of their assessment texts. In particular, two metafunctions provided the framework for analysis: ideational and textual. These two metafunctions in student assessment texts were analysed because they appeared to be the difficult areas for the participants while writing a case study analysis. For this reason, they were targeted during mediation in each DA session. Therefore, an analysis of these two metafunctions enabled me to track any changes that occurred on the students' assessment texts during this study, thereby assessing their actual level and dynamic ZPDs regarding the realisation of ideational and textual meanings in their assessment texts. The way these metafunctions were operationalised in the study is explained below at a more general level because they are further elaborated in Chapters 5, 7 and 8.

4.6.1 Ideational metafunction

As described in 4.4, the ideational metafunction is concerned with the representation of our experience of the world. In order to analyse ideational meanings in the students' assessment texts, the notion of technicality (i.e., the specialised use of a term in a particular discipline) was applied.

Regarding the current study, tutor mediation targeted technicality which was mainly related to business studies concepts and frameworks (e.g., SWOT), as the participants found them challenging. Also included in tutor mediation were conceptual knowledge of the case study analysis genre and the application of business studies frameworks and concepts to analyzing business situations (see 5.6.1 for more details).

4.6.2 Textual metafunction

Another main challenge faced by the participants as revealed by DA was how to organise the information into a coherent text, that is, textual meaning. Textual meaning is related to managing information flow in a text, also known as periodicity (see Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 187). As the writer is normally absent when the text is read, it is essential that the intended meaning of the text is understood. For this to happen, the writer has to scaffold the reader by using textual devices such as introductions, reference and conjunctions in a text. An effective organisation of the message through such devices enables the writer to make the social purpose and the context clear. Such messages tend to have recognised textual features (e.g., Orientation in a story) accepted in the associated discourse community. As such, a case study analysis is organised in a certain way in business studies. Students capable of using those features in their analysis are likely to produce better texts than those who are not.

As textual meaning was targeted during the tutor mediation, it was necessary to track any changes that occurred during this study. The focus of the tutor mediation was on (1) generic structure of the text, (2) macro-Themes (i.e., introduction), and (3) hyper-Themes (i.e, paragraph theme) and hence, these needed tracking in the students' assessment texts. The

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analysis of these aspects of textual meaning was informed by Martin (1993a) and Martin and Rose (2007).

More specific details about how these SFL analytical tools were employed and which Research Questions were addressed in the current study are provided in Chapter 5. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss the key findings for ideational and textual meanings in student assessment texts, exploring students' ZPDs in this study.

4.7 SFL as a pedagogical tool

It has already been mentioned that SFL has been widely recognised as a useful tool for teaching academic writing (also see Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, Chapter 3). In this section, I will focus on the use of SFL as a pedagogical tool in the current study.

In Chapter 1, it was explained that the academic writing module (LB160) which was the research site of this study followed an SFL genre pedagogy. For this reason, SFL as a pedagogical tool was a given. In particular, Bonnano and Jones' (2007) set of assessment criteria (known as MASUS) adapted for LB160 were broadly used for any pedagogical intervention during the two DA sessions (see Chapter 5). These criteria included (1) use of source materials, (2) text structure and development, (3) academic style, (4) grammatical correctness and (5) quality of presentation (see Appendix 1B). Additionally, the pedagogical intervention was informed by Humphrey et al.'s (2010) 3x3 framework (see Appendix 4A). This framework was much more developed and detailed than the MASUS framework. For example, this framework included all three metafunctions (i.e., ideational, interpersonal and textual) and specified how they can be realised at the genre and register level (social activity), the paragraph level (discourse semantic) and the clause and sentence

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level (grammar and expression) in the context of academic writing. Given DA's lack of a theory of language use, these frameworks became instrumental for targeting the students' dynamic ZPDs regarding their academic writing.

Although these SFL frameworks for language use in academic writing were used, as a tutor, I did not use SFL and genre-related technical terms during the tutor intervention in any DA sessions in order to avoid any cognitive overload to the participants. Instead, I used the terms that were familiar to them (e.g., *introduction* instead of *macro-Theme*).

4.8 Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical framework for language use in context, namely, SFL. The main reasons for adopting this framework were its usefulness in assessing/gaining insight into a learner's changing ZPDs, and the learner's tendency towards imitation and internalisation while tracking academic writing development over time. As stated previously, despite DA being an attractive alternative to the traditional assessment approach to academic writing assessment, DA research hitherto has not included any systematic framework of language use in context. The use of SFL as a theory of language, thus, fills this gap. In spite of the invaluable contributions each theory has made to educational research (SCT and DA to learning and development and SFL to language-based learning) and their compatibility as argued by both SCT and SFL scholars (e.g., Hasan, 2005a; Wells, 1994), there appears to have been hitherto a limited application of both theories to academic writing assessment research in HE. In particular, the combination of DA with SFL to research academic writing assessment is innovative.

The next chapter explains the design of this study and the research methodologies employed by combining the two theoretical frameworks expounded in this chapter and the previous one.

Chapter 5: Research design and methodology

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore the extent to which DA procedures enhance students' academic writing and conceptual development. Specifically, it examined the following four Research Questions (RQs):

1. What insight into learners' writing development does the analysis of tutor-learner interaction provide?

2. What do the analyses of student assessment texts (including drafts) demonstrate regarding students' academic writing and conceptual development?

3. Do learners following less dynamic assessment procedures perform differently?

4. To what extent can learners transfer the academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge learned in one writing assessment task to another?

In order to investigate these RQs, the study was informed by the two theoretical frameworks described in Chapters 3 and 4. In particular, the research design was shaped by previous studies, as reviewed in Chapter 2, and the gaps highlighted in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. This chapter focuses on describing the research design and methodology employed in this study, including the data collection and the analytical methods used. Finally, some ethical issues are considered.

5.2 Research design

This study followed a 'mixed methods' research design. In this study, mixed methods research is defined as 'the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17; also see Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). Mixed methods maybe regarded as a pragmatic approach in which the researcher does not have to subscribe to either a qualitative or a quantitative paradigm of research (e.g., see Morgan, 2007). In this study, both were combined in order to capture the writing trajectory of the participants because either one alone would provide only a partial picture of their writing development. However, the study is substantially qualitative in nature due to DA's inherent alignment with a 'genetic' or developmental method which examines the qualitative development of individuals' higher mental functions over time (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Complementing the developmental method, this study has also followed a variant of an action research method which allows a practitioner-researcher to study the impact of a small-scale intervention to improve practice in the real world (Cohen et al., 2000). Action research is often used in applied linguistics and professional practices, allowing a practitioner-researcher to investigate a social situation in which they bring about positive changes to the participants' situation through collaboration with them. Often, the practitioner-researcher reflects on the research situation and adjusts his/her research process in response to participants' emerging needs (Burns, 2010). Throughout this study, the students' academic writing problems have been explored in collaboration with them in the assessment process and appropriate solutions to those problems have been found. During

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the process, the research activities have been adjusted to suit individual participants'

dynamic needs and circumstances, which has enabled the researcher to gather richer data to

understand the nature of the participants' academic writing development.

Action research has been criticised for its lack of rigour, reliability and validity (Mackey &

Gass, 2005, p. 219). However, this criticism stems from a quantitative paradigm of research

that focuses on measurement which is *not* the goal of qualitative research including action

research (Feldman, 2007). Validity in this approach is dynamic and varies in response to

the emerging needs of participants (Burns, 2010, p. 85). Additionally, the concept of

validity in action research is related to the quality of research (i.e., how well the research

describes, explains and theorises the phenomena in question) instead of any 'absolute truth'

(e.g., Feldman, 2007). Therefore, the question of validity needs to concentrate on the

evidence for such changes and the evidence may be drawn from multiple methods and

sources for triangulation (see 5.5).

Furthermore, action research is compatible with SCT (and thus DA) as both advocate co-

construction of knowledge and intervention for positive change in participants (Chaiklin,

2011; Somekh, 2010). Thus, action research is suitable and valid for DA research to study

changing academic writing needs (ZPDs) of the participants in the current project.

5.2.1 Key concepts underpinning the research design

This study was mainly driven by the Vygotskian concept of the *genetic* method mentioned

earlier. Vygotsky argued that human mental development can be understood better by

examining how and where it occurs in growth (i.e., process) as the product of development

alone is not sufficient for this purpose (Wertsch, 1985). Wertsch (Chapter 2, 1985) divides

Vygotsky's genetic research method into four domains: *phylogenetic* (i.e., evolution of humans)*, socio-cultural history* (i.e., history of general human culture and particular human cultures), *ontogenetic* (i.e., development of an individual) and *microgenetic* (i.e., development of a specific process during ontogenesis). Among these, the fourth domain, microgenesis, is central to this study. It allows the researcher to observe learner development (changing ZPDs) in a specific domain over a short span of time (Lantolf, 2000; Wertsch, 1985). Wertsch calls this type of study 'a very short-term longitudinal study' (1985, p. 55).

In Vygotskian SCT, an individual's microgenesis/development is generally evidenced through the analysis of semiotic mediation. The analysis is conducted to identify instances of the individual's changing ZPDs. For demonstrating changing ZPDs, as argued by Hasan (2005b), Vygotskian-inspired studies have, however, tended to focus on concepts and logic (ideational meaning) without giving much importance to the discourse in context and this applies to DA research as well. Hasan (2005b) further argues that Vygotskian SCT lacks a theory of language use and proposes SFL as a complementary theory. Following Hasan's view, in order to address the problem, this study employed the SFL notion of *logogenesis* for identifying students' changing ZPDs and the impact of tutor mediation. Logogenesis is one of the three levels of semiotic development (i.e., semogenesis) in a time frame. It refers to 'the instantial construction of meaning in the form of a text' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 18). Logogenesis is the manifestation of text development over a short time. It is, thus, compatible with microgenesis because both relate to development in a short span of time. The microgenesis of individual students' academic writing (ZPDs), potentially resulting from tutor mediation, can be evidenced through an SFL analysis of their assessment texts (logogenesis).

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5.2.2 Pilot study

Before embarking on the main study, a pilot study was conducted from August 2008 to January 2009, following a mixed methods approach described earlier, in order to explore the application of DA in an ODL context. For this purpose, students doing *LB160 Professional communication skills* module were approached because I was tutoring on this module. Following the university's research ethics procedures (see 5.7) the students in my tutor group were invited to express their interest. Two students, Michelle and Natasha[5], agreed to participate in the study. They underwent DA procedures for each of the two assignments they wrote (see Table 5.2 for DA procedures). I mediated the assessment process for both the students. Emails, instant messaging and wiki comments were the means of interaction with them during the assessment.

The data from the pilot study has been integrated into the main project as the same kind of data was collected in both and no substantial changes made. This data is further elaborated in 5.4 in this chapter.

5.3 Participants

5.3.1 Participant recruitment

The participants for the main study (August 2009 – June 2010) were also recruited from *LB160 Professional communication skills*, after I received approval of my research plan from the relevant institutional (OU) Ethics committee, the Student Research Project Panel (SRPP) and the LB160 Module team. SRPP provided a list of 39 students from three tutor groups that I could contact for my research. Based on this list, the potential participants

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[5] All participant names are pseudonyms.

were sent an initial invitation via their online tutor group forum and anyone who expressed an interest in the study was sent an introductory letter with the details of the project and a consent form by email (Appendix 5A). The participants were clearly informed that 1) participation in the study was optional, 2) their participation could positively benefit their educational experience and writing skills, and 3) there was no direct link between their participation and their assessment score on the LB160 module. Initially, ten students expressed interest in the project. Ultimately, for personal reasons, only four of them were able to participate from the start to finish of the project. Of the four students, two participated in non-DA sessions and two were in DA sessions by self-selecting the sessions. The main reason for choosing non-DA sessions over DA sessions was the demand on the participants' time. Whilst the DA sessions required more interaction with the tutor (i.e., more time), the non-DA sessions needed limited interaction (i.e., considerably less time). This was explained to the participants at the beginning. Those students with less free time due to other commitments opted for the non-DA sessions and those with more time went for the DA sessions. However, it is important to remember that the DA sessions were distinct from non-DA because of the dialogic process followed rather than the amount of time spent/required.

In total, when combining data from the pilot study, there were four DA students and two non-DA students. These students were studying towards a qualification in business studies. The profile for each participant is given below.

5.3.2 Participant profiles

There were two participants (female) in the pilot study and four (female) in the main study as follows.

The first of the six participants, Michelle, was a native speaker of English and originally came from Trinidad. She had achieved nine GCSEs. She worked as an administrator at a children's centre in a metropolitan city where she had to communicate with clients very frequently via emails (e.g., to update services). Michelle participated in the pilot study (DA).

The second participant, Natasha, used Hungarian as her mother tongue and English and German as additional languages. She had obtained a first degree in horticultural engineering. She worked as a garden designer in a garden centre in a cosmopolitan city. Like Michelle, Natasha took part in the pilot study (DA).

Amina, one of the DA participants in the main study, spoke Urdu as her first language and English, Hindi, and Punjabi as additional languages. She had studied English and Urdu formally. Regarding her academic qualifications, she had obtained qualifications equivalent to A levels in Pakistan, and a Diploma in IT. At the beginning of the main study, she was working full-time and studying. Later she had a baby and had quite limited time for the project.

The fourth participant was Lou who participated in the main study (DA). She was a native speaker of English and had learned French and German at school. Lou had begun her career as a fashion designer but had left it 10 years previously in order to work as an administrator in prison services. Her job required writing workplace documents.

Kristie, a non-DA participant in the main study, spoke French as her first language and English as a second language. Although she was originally from France, she had been living in the UK for over 30 years. Kristie had BEPC (a French qualification equivalent to

GCSE) and Baccalaureate G1 as academic qualifications. She worked as a strategy and planning manager for one of the National Health Services trusts in a cosmopolitan city. At work, she had to write work-related documents.

The sixth participant in the main study (non-DA), Lena, was originally from former Czechoslovakia. She was a bilingual Czech and Slovak speaker and spoke English as an additional language. She also spoke basic German. At the time of the project, she was working full-time in an IT company.

Both Kristie and Lena stated that they had very little time and therefore would participate in NDA which required less time than DA. In fact, their decision helped me with the allocation of the participants to DA and non-DA.

The information about the participants is summarised in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Summary of participant details

Participants (pseudonyms)	Age	Country of school education	Languages spoken	Qualifications	Employment	DA/ NDA
Michelle	31	Trinidad	English	GCSEs	Full-time	DA
Natasha	30	Hungary	Hungarian, German, English	First degree in horticultural engineering	Full-time	DA
Amina	26	Pakistan	Urdu, Punjabi, English	A levels, Diploma in IT	Full-time Later a full-time mother	DA
Lou	42	UK	English	Higher National Diploma	Full-time	DA
Kristie	50	France	French, English	BPEC, Baccalaureate G1	Full-time	NDA
Lena	28	Former Czechoslovakia	Czech, Slovak, English	Secondary school certificate, Certificate in Business Studies	Full-time	NDA

5.4 Data collection methods

In order to investigate the application of DA to academic writing assessment, as explained in Chapters 3 and 4, DA was integrated with SFL, the former providing a comprehensive theory of assessment and learning and the latter a comprehensive theory of language use. The data collection methods were shaped by these two theories in order to explore the RQs mentioned earlier. As such, the data was collected from two DA sessions, and two non-

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DAs. In this study, a DA session refers to the assessment period from the first draft to the final draft produced by the student and the formative feedback on these drafts over several weeks/months. Additionally, the data was collected from one transfer session. The transfer session involved writing an assignment without tutor support. Learner interviews and subject tutors' views were additional complementary data sets. Each is explained below.

5.4.1 DA sessions and the intervention

Two DA sessions (DA1 and DA2) were conducted as the main data collection instrument, which provided the data for investigating RQs 1, 2 and 3. For these sessions, assignment tasks were designed independently of the academic writing module (LB160) the participants were studying at the time. The task design and the assessment procedures are described below.

Assessment task design

In order to reflect the common assessment task type both in business studies and LB160, as explained in Chapter 1, case study-based assignment tasks were designed for both the DA sessions. The case studies were selected on the basis of their topicality and potential to be interesting to read so as to motivate the participants to complete the tasks. Additionally, they were about familiar companies to the participants. For example, one case study was about Google's launch of a new operating system for computers (see Table 5.2), with which all participants were familiar.

Likewise, a common business framework was selected for its application to the case studies, which is widely practised in business studies assessments (e.g., see Zhu, 2004). For instance, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is a common

framework applied to assess the competitive position of a product/service in its external environment (Preston et al., 2007, p. 28). The assessment tasks in this study required the participants to apply this framework to their analysis of the product (e.g., Vodafone broadband). Figure 5.1 exemplifies the assignment tasks used in this study (see Appendix 5B for the associated case study texts). While the SWOT framework was used in the main study, the students were asked to apply the STEP (Social or Sociological, Technological, Economic and Political factors) framework to their case study analyses in the Pilot Study. The STEP framework allows businesses to examine the external factors affecting them.

Figure 5.1: DA1 task

Instructions

You are going to read two articles: *Google parks its tanks right outside Microsoft's gates* by John Naughton and *Google plans Chrome operating system* by Jefferson Graham. These two articles form a case study of the new operating system for computers being developed by Google. The new operating system is going to compete with Microsoft's Windows operating system. Both the articles examine the business environment of Google's Chrome operating system.

Task

Read the two articles about Google's Chrome operating system for computers mentioned above and write a SWOT analysis of this product based on the articles. Your SWOT analysis should be of about 500 words.

A summary of all the assessment tasks designed for this study is given below (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Summary of assessment tasks

DA sessions	Business frameworks	Companies/ products analysed	Number of source texts	Length of assignment
Pilot study DA1	STEP	Heineken's non-alcoholic beer	1	500 words
Pilot study DA2	STEP	Safer Syringe market	1	500 words
DA1	SWOT	Google's Chrome operating system for computers	2	500 words
DA2	SWOT	Vodafone's broadband	3	500 words

Assessment procedures

As explained in Chapter 3, the current study followed the interactionist model of DA as described by Lantolf and Poehner (2004, pp. 58-60). However, the standard DA procedures had to be adjusted for conducting DA in this project. Additionally, as I noted in Chapter 4, an adapted version of Bonnano and Jones' (2007) academic writing assessment criteria called Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students (MASUS) and Humphrey et al.'s (2010) framework were used to assess and comment on student assessment texts.

The current study, following Feuerstein et al. (2002), incorporated flexible mediation into the DA procedures. As such, my role as a tutor was to jointly engage with the learner in the task at hand and reformulate the task as needed until the learner 'mastered' it. Of particular relevance was the notion of mediation ranging from implicit (e.g., hints and prompts) to

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explicit (e.g., correct solutions) as proposed by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) for targeting learner ZPDs. In this study, mediation was by email, instant messaging (chat) or wiki comments, a novel form of mediation in DA. No assessment mark was given to any student.

A summary of the procedures followed in each DA session is shown in Table 5.3:

Table 5.3: DA procedures

Participants in the project	Steps in DA interventions
Tutor (myself)	1. Design DA assessment tasks and send them to the participants by email or post them on a password-protected wiki. The initial plan was to use a wiki. But the participants preferred emails to the wiki. *Only DA1 task was posted on the wiki. Other assessment tasks were sent by email.* 2. Provide formative feedback on the text by using the SFL-based criteria (Appendices 1B and 4A) and targeting the participants' ZPD by following flexible mediation. 3. Offer further mediation based on the participants' subsequent response to previous formative feedback. 4. Negotiate with the participants on the final text.

Learners	1. Write the response to the DA assessment task.
	2. Send the text to the tutor by email. Participate in the instant messaging 'conversation' for the formative feedback if preferred.
	3. Ask questions when necessary.
	4. Revise subsequent drafts in response to the tutor's formative feedback.
	5. Negotiate with the tutor on the final text.

Michelle, Natasha, Amina and Lou completed two DA sessions. Each DA session consisted of the procedures listed in Table 5.3 above and was spread over several months, depending on the participants' availability. For example, DA1 ran for four months as each participant's personal circumstances had to be considered, given that they were all in full-time employment and were studying part-time as well.

Based on their performance in DA1, I devised an intervention for each learner and worked with them individually in order to support their writing development. This intervention was inspired by Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment (see Feuerstein, 1980; Poehner, 2005). The intervention was designed to address each of the participants' needs identified through DA1. DA1 showed that all four DA participants had difficulties with designing the structure of the target text (i.e., a STEP analysis of an organisation in the pilot study and a SWOT analysis of an organisation in the main study), information management, and the conceptual understanding of STEP or SWOT (see Appendices 5C & 5D for materials used

in the main study). The intervention included study activities targeting these areas, including explicit theoretical explanations and visuals where necessary, which were emailed to each participant. The participants were asked to go through the materials over three weeks and contact me for any further support. Then, the second DA session (DA2) was conducted following the same procedures as shown in Table 5.3.

From these DA sessions, the participants' assessment texts and tutor mediation texts were collected to explore the RQs. Each participant's journey of writing and conceptual development with regard to their ZPDs was tracked in depth (see Chapters 6 and 7).

5.4.2 Non-dynamic assessment (NDA)

The participants in the non-DA (NDA) followed the normal assessment procedure as in *LB160* (see 1.4). In other words, there was no intervention from the tutor when they were writing their assignments. Additionally, they produced only one assessment text for each assessment task. The non-DA participants were asked to complete two assessment tasks (NDA1 and NDA2) to coincide with the DA sessions. These tasks were the same as those used in DA sessions to allow comparability between DA and NDA. The students received standard tutor feedback from me on their assignments but were offered no assessment scores. However, one of the two NDA participants, Kristie, asked me for a telephone 'dialogue' after NDA2. This was allowed because of the ethical issue of fairness (see 5.7). This adjustment in the NDA procedures made these procedures more dynamic for this particular learner. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the telephone 'dialogue' took place after NDA2 and therefore this could not have benefited her NDA2 although her transfer assessment might have been affected (see Chapter 8). Both Lena and Kristie's texts and tutor feedback were collected and analysed to compare with those who went through DA.

For ethical reasons, the NDA students also had access to the intervention materials (see Appendix 5C and 5D). It appeared that Kristie did use them as she confirmed during the interview. It was not known if Lena used them as she was not available for the interview (see 5.5.4).

5.4.3 Transfer tasks

The success of DA lies in the learner's ability to transfer the skills and knowledge learned in one assessment task/context to another. In interactionist DA, such transfer is called *transcendence* (e.g., see Feuerstein, et al., 2002), one of the universal parameters of Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience stated in Chapter 3. In order to see if the learners were able to transfer their academic writing skills (e.g., designing a SWOT analysis) from the first two assessment tasks, all the participants were asked to complete a transfer task. While only one NDA learner completed the transfer task that I designed, all the DA learners were asked to submit their assignment including their tutor's comments from a business studies module they went on to study. These assignments were similar to DA tasks but more challenging. Ideally, all learners would have submitted an assignment from a business studies module. However, Michelle left the UK in early 2009 and did not complete the transfer task. Likewise, the NDA learners were not continuing their study when they were supposed to do the transfer task and therefore, they were asked to respond to the transfer task that I designed. Lena decided to leave the project after NDA2, but still allowed me to use the data collected from her two NDA sessions. Therefore, only Kristie wrote the assignment in response to the transfer task.

5.4.4 Learner interviews

In order to triangulate the data collected from the DA sessions, the DA participants were interviewed to explore their experience of writing the assignments. The purpose of triangulation in this study is *not* to capture the 'objective reality' of academic writing but to 'add rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth' to the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5).

Given the focus of this study on the process of assessment, learner perceptions can provide additional insights into their development because performance alone cannot provide explanations for what they do (van Compernolle & Williams, 2011). To this effect, the participants were interviewed once at the end of the second DA session during the pilot study and twice during the main study: once after DA1 and next after DA2 to gain deeper insights into what they experienced as they went through the DA procedures. Their perceptions of the DA procedures were explored through semi-structured telephone interviews which were recorded and transcribed. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible than structured interviews as the researcher can ask additional questions according to the response without being limited to fixed questions. It also allows the researcher to easily manage the data, unlike the data from open interviews (see Cohen, et al., 2000).

Additionally, as with the DA participants, a semi-structured interview was conducted with Kristie after she completed all three assignments to explore her experience (see Table 5.4). As previously mentioned, Lena was not available for the interview. The interview questions were slightly different from those asked to the DA participants to reflect the different assessment procedures they went through (see the interview questions for both in Appendix 5E).

Table 5.4: Learner interviews

Participants	Number of interviews
Michelle	1
Natasha	1
Amina	2
Lou	2
Kristie	1

5.4.5 Subject specialists' views

Further triangulation of the data was conducted by seeking views of business studies tutors on the DA students' first drafts of DA1 and DA2 texts and the NDA students' first and second assignments. For this, three business studies tutors, with at least three years' experience of teaching business studies, were asked to assess the quality of these texts from a business studies perspective and produce a brief report. A guideline was prepared for them as reference while marking the assignments (see Appendix 5F). The tutors used two broad criteria for marking, following the guidelines of The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, 2007) for *General business and management*: cognitive skills and key skills.

The business studies tutors' judgment of the student assessment texts was expected to show the students' conceptual and writing development or otherwise as perceived in business studies. The use of subject specialists was successfully employed in my previous research investigating the validity of two parallel reading tests of English language (Shrestha, 2003).

This method complemented the other methods used in the current study (e.g., textual analysis). Most importantly, in this study, this method has been used to enhance their credibility.

To summarise, I present Figure 5.2 below, which shows all aspects of the data collection.

Figure 5.2: Data collection methods

Dynamic assessment of academic writing: Research design

Dynamic Assessment	Non-Dynamic Assessment
DA 1	Non-DA 1 (task as in DA1)
Intervention	Access to DA intervention materials
DA 2	Non-DA 2 (task as in DA2)
Transfer task	Transfer task

DATA:
Assessment texts,
Tutor-learner
mediation texts,
Student interviews,
Subject experts' view
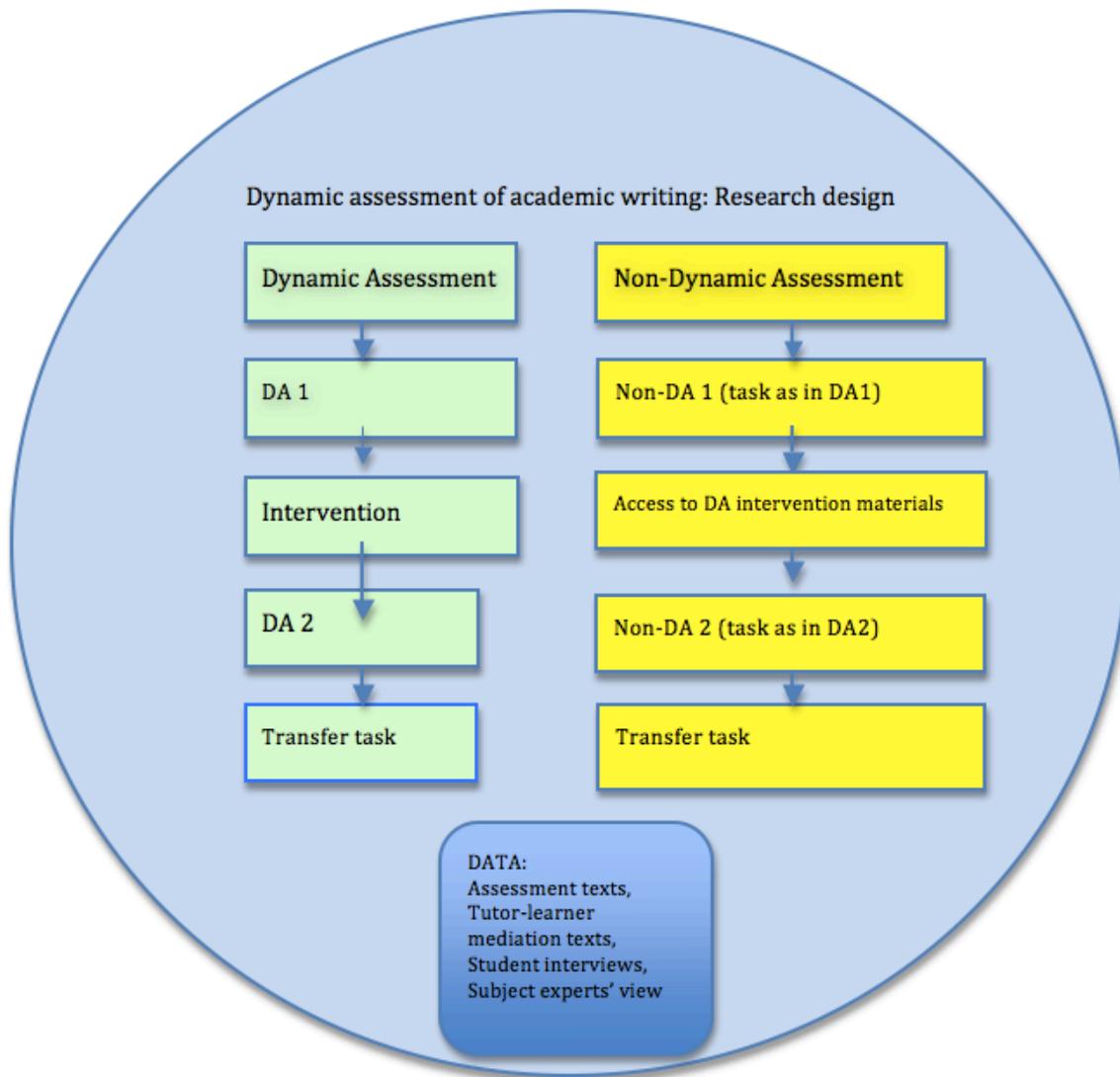
5.5 Data analysis

The data in this study consisted of DA and NDA texts from students, mediation texts, student interviews and business studies tutors' report on students' assessment texts. Each data set was analysed using the analytical methods as stated below.

5.5.1 Mediation data

The mediation data (i.e., tutor-student interaction during the DA process) was analysed to explore RQ1 (see 5.1). The analysis considered the amount and type of tutor mediation provided during the DA sessions which targeted the learner ZPDs. Given the 'open and flexible' nature of the mediation in interactionist DA, unlike the 'fixed' mediation in interventionist DAs (e.g., the Leipzig Learning Test developed by Guthke and his colleagues (see Guthke & Beckmann, 2000)), it was necessary to examine the type and the amount of such mediation in detail. In order to analyse the tutor-student interaction, it was essential to develop a lens that allowed the researcher to examine it systematically, which is still lacking in the DA literature (Poehner, 2005, p. 160). As such, the tutor-student moves during the mediation were examined by adapting Poehner's (2005) typologies of mediator and learner moves. These were in turn based on Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994, p. 471) 13-point 'regulatory scale' which lists the level of mediation provided by the tutor, ranging from broad and implicit leading questions to explicit corrections (see Appendix 5G).

Given that Poehner had already developed two typologies (i.e., for both mediator and student moves) which had proved useful during the pilot study, the same typologies were employed for the analysis of the mediation data rather than reinventing the wheel. Nevertheless, these typologies were renamed and expanded, as shown in Table 5.5, in order

to suit this study and reflect the context and the subject (i.e., academic writing in business studies). Any renamed and new moves are shown in bold.

Table 5.5: Poehner's (2005, p.160) mediational moves compared with those in this study

Poehner's study	Current study
Helping Move Narration Along	***Clarifying the task***
Accepting Response	*Accepting a response*
Request for Repetition	
Request for Verification	
Reminder of Directions	
Request for Renarration	
Identifying Specific Site of Error	*Locating part of the text needing improvement*
Specifying Error	*Identifying the problem in the text*
Metalinguistic Clues	*Providing metalinguistic clues*
Translation	
Providing Example or Illustration	*Exemplifying or illustrating*
Offering a Choice	*Providing a choice of possible solution(s)*
Providing Correct Response	*Providing the correct solution*
Providing Explanation	*Explaining the problem*
Asking for Explanation	***Asking learner to clarify meaning***
	Showing affect
	Asking learner to identify the problem
	Providing content clues
	Rejecting the response with explanation(s)
	Asking to consider a possible solution
	Checking conceptual understanding

Among these moves, while eight moves (in italics) were retained from Poehner's mediation categories with slight adaptations, the rest of the categories (in bold) are new. These eight new categories emerged from the tutor-learner interactions in this study which did not appear in Poehner's list of categories. His list included categories such as *translation* and *request for renarration* that were irrelevant to this study. As in Poehner's study, the moves were identified as they emerged from the mediation data.

In addition to tutor moves, learner moves were analysed to consider the learner's responsiveness to tutor mediation. The student moves are called *learner reciprocity*, following Lidz (1991). Learner reciprocity is rarely investigated in the context of DA and ZPD (Poehner, 2005). Since the interaction between the mediator and the learner is dialogic, it is essential to study the learner response to the mediation, which indicates learners' control (or otherwise) over their academic writing. In order to analyse the reciprocal moves, again, Poehner's typologies were adapted and expanded because the assessment context and the medium of interaction in my project were different as explained earlier. A comparison is made between Poehner's list of moves and those found in this study in Table 5.6. Any renamed and new moves are shown in bold.

Table 5.6: Poehner's (2005, p.183) learner reciprocal moves compared with those in this study

Poehner's study	Current study
Unresponsive	*Unresponsive*
Repeats Mediator	***Imitating*** *the mediator*
Responds Incorrectly	*Responding incorrectly*
Requests Additional Assistance	
Incorporates Feedback	*Incorporating feedback*

Overcomes Problem	*Overcoming problems*
Offers Explanation	
Uses Mediator as a Resource	*Using the mediator as a resource*
Rejects Mediator's Assistance	*Rejecting the mediator's feedback*
	Asking for task clarification
	Checking conceptual understanding with mediator
	Asking for content clues
	Identifying the problem
	Explaining the problem
	Evaluating mediator feedback
	Self-assessing
	Suggesting a possible solution
	Verbalising conceptual understanding

As can be seen in the table, while six reciprocal moves (in italics) were retained from Poehner's typologies, ***Imitating*** *the mediator* was renamed by using 'imitating' rather than 'repeating' as the former is commonly employed in Vygotskian sociocultural theory of learning as mentioned in Chapter 3 (see van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991, pp. 343-45; Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 87-88). The rest of the moves (in bold) were specific to this study. Like the mediational moves, these reciprocal moves were identified in the interaction data. The detailed analysis of this data is reported in Chapter 6.

For both mediational and reciprocal moves, I coded the tutor-student interaction using the qualitative data analysis software called NVivo 8 (QSR, 2008).

5.5.2 Textual analysis of DA and non-DA texts

While the analysis of the mediation data provided information about the level of support given to the learners and their subsequent response, it did not give sufficient insight into learners' changing ZPDs potentially resulting from mediation. Therefore, DA and NDA students' assessment texts were analysed in order to complement the mediation data analysis and to address RQs 2 and 3 (see 5.1). For this analysis, SFL was used as the main analytical tool. In particular, two areas appeared to be challenging to the participants as revealed by DA1: information flow in the text (textual meaning) and application and understanding of business concepts/frameworks (ideational meaning). These areas were, therefore, targeted during the DA sessions and hence were examined for any academic writing development in relation to the students' ZPDs in their texts.

Textual meanings

For textual meanings (i.e., organisation of the message in a text), the SFL-based genre theory was used to examine both macro (e.g., macro-Themes) and micro levels (e.g., hyper-Themes and their development) of the texts. The analysis focussed on these aspects of the text because they featured as problematic areas during DA1 and thus were targeted in the DA process. A functional view of genre allowed the researcher to examine how well a student text was written to achieve its purpose. The specific aspects of textual meaning examined in this study are further elaborated on in Chapter 7.

Ideational meanings

The development of ideational meanings in student assessment texts was related to writing a case study analysis in business studies. Producing such a text necessarily involves

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knowing certain business frameworks and concepts and applying them to business situations, which is a form of conceptual development. Conceptual development, which formed a part of students' ZPDs in this study, refers to changes in the learner's ability to use concepts in a domain such as business studies to frame phenomena in a specific context over a period of time. From a sociocultural perspective, conceptual development occurs in a situation where the learner interacts with others in a cultural group or community (e.g., see Mason, 2007; Mercer, 2008). Writing is the predominant mode in academic disciplines/communities through which students demonstrate to their tutors their conceptual development and learn disciplinary knowledge by applying such knowledge (Woodward-Kron, 2009). In the current study, as stated in 5.4.1, the participants had to apply one of the two business frameworks (STEP or SWOT) and associated business concepts to their case study analysis. However, DA1 showed that the application of these frameworks and concepts proved to be challenging to all the participants at varying levels, depending on their ZPDs. Therefore, the DA sessions focussed on them.

In order to measure the impact of those sessions on the participants' conceptual development, a systematic language-based framework had to be developed to analyse their assessment texts because DA lacked one as noted earlier. Therefore, the SFL notion of *technicality* was employed to track conceptual development (i.e., ideational meaning) in the student assessment texts, which has been used to analyse the development of disciplinary knowledge in writing assessment research (e.g., Woodward-Kron, 2008) . Technicality refers to the specialised use of a term in a particular discipline such as business studies (e.g., marketing strategy, product image). Generally technicality is represented by definitions and taxonomies (Martin, 1993b). In addition to technicality, abstraction is considered characteristic of academic writing (e.g., Halliday & Martin, 1993; Hyland &

Tse, 2007). It refers to abstract entities such as concepts and it is often a result of nominalisation (i.e., turning processes (verbs) into things (nouns)). Nominalisations are also called *grammatical metaphors* (Halliday, 1994). Abstractions are employed in academic writing to distil meanings. In this thesis, however, abstractions are not treated separately from technicality because (1) abstractions were not an explicit focus of the DA sessions and (2) some of the abstractions were examined under the heading of technicality, particularly those that belonged to technical abstractions, following Woodward-Kron (2002). The specific details on technicality analysed in this thesis are explained in Chapter 7.

5.5.3 Learner interviews

The learner interview data was scrutinised to triangulate the rest of the data and to gain an insight into the participants' experience of undergoing the DA procedures. The interviews also assisted in exploring the value of the intervention, thus, responding to RQ1. In addition, the student's perception of conceptual development was investigated in the data, thereby partially responding to RQ2. This data was examined by looking at the features of the students' response such as thematic patterns in relation to the research questions.

5.5.4 Subject specialists' views on DA and NDA texts

A content analysis of the subject experts' views on students' DA and NDA texts was conducted to investigate the latter's conceptual and writing development as perceived in the discipline. Given the experience of these subject tutors in the field, I expected them to have a reasonably good understanding of what is valued in business studies. The purpose of this analysis was to compare subject tutors' judgment against the results from other data sets

(see 5.5 above). Most importantly, the subject tutors' comments on the student assessment texts were used in order to minimise any potential researcher bias in action research (see Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; van Heugten, 2004). In particular, this data set was used in relation to RQ2. This enhanced the validity of the results.

5.6 Ethical issues

As this research involved human participation, I followed the OU's policy of ethical practice and the guidelines of the British Association of Applied Linguists for research in applied linguistics. I obtained permission from the OU *LB160* module team, the Student Research Project Panel, the Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee and an informed consent from the participants to conduct the study. Also, I made every effort to maintain confidentiality and followed the university data protection regulations. There were no ethical problems during the study. However, there was a dilemma when one of the participants had a baby during this study. I was uncertain whether I should request her to continue her participation. I resolved the dilemma by talking with the concerned participant over the phone. She decided to continue her participation as long as she did not have to interact with me via instant messaging. Following the DA principles and the ethos of action research, I asked if she would be willing to participate in the interaction via emails, a more flexible option which she agreed with.

There was also an issue of access to the intervention materials (see Appendix 5C and 5D) by the NDA students as raised by the University's Ethics committee. In response, the NDA participants were also sent the materials designed for the DA group by emails. However, the NDA participants were *not required* to study these materials and of course, there was no individualised dialogue around their texts.

5.7 Summary

This chapter explained the research methodology used in this study which followed a mixed methods approach. It was, however, mostly qualitative. The main reason for this was the nature of the current DA study, which is an analysis of tutor-learner interaction and its impact on learners' academic writing rather than a set of assessment scores on their academic writing. This allowed the researcher to examine both the tutor-student interaction and the learners' academic writing development in depth. Additionally, the other two instruments (i.e., learner interviews and subject tutors' judgment) helped to triangulate the findings from the tutor-learner interaction and the assessment texts.

More significantly, this study followed an innovative methodological approach which brought together a theory of assessment for learning (DA) and a comprehensive theory of language use (SFL) for evidencing learning. Furthermore, the typologies developed by Poehner were extended in this study given the nature of the subject (i.e., business studies writing) assessed and the mode of interaction (i.e., instant messaging, wiki comments and emails) employed. Since no systematic framework for examining tutor-student interactions around DA-based academic writing assessment has been reported in the literature, the typologies developed in this study provide an analytical framework for future research of this kind.

The next chapter considers the value of tutor mediation and the subsequent learner response in relation to their assessment texts.

Chapter 6: Supporting learners in the ZPD

6.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 2, research on academic writing assessment has tended to focus on 'end products' rather than the process of assessment. This study aimed to examine both. This chapter presents the analyses of the assessment process realised through the student-tutor interaction (mediation) and key findings regarding academic writing assessment as described in Chapter 5. The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to the body of research in DA regarding the value of mediation, particularly, in academic writing assessment in HE which is under-researched. Specifically, this chapter explores RQ1:

1. *What insight into learners' writing development does the analysis of tutor-learner interaction provide?*

First, I will briefly explain the purpose of mediation in this study, followed by a description of the data sample chosen for discussion in this chapter. Next, I will further describe the analytical tools used in the study. After this, I will present and discuss the key findings based on the mediation data.

6.2 Mediation and its purpose in dynamic assessment

Vygotskian SCT contends that ontogenetic (i.e., individual) and microgenetic development cannot be fully understood through an individual's independent task performance (actual ability). One needs to assess their potential ability (ZPD) when assisted by a capable peer in order to design a learning intervention (Vygotsky, 1978). If assessment is to serve a developmental purpose, it is essential to consider the learner response during the process of

the assessment activity to which mediation is central. Mediation, as described in Chapter 5, served this purpose in this study. Such mediation created the tutor-learner interaction which helped to identify the learners' maturing abilities (i.e., ZPDs) alongside their draft assignments.

As described in Chapter 3, according to Vygotskian SCT (Wertsch, 2007), all human activities are mediated through physical tools (e.g., computers) or signs (e.g., language). In the context of assessing learning to write in a particular discipline, the topic of the current study, symbolic tools, particularly language, play a central role although the physical tools such as computers and other forms of information communication technology (ICT) cannot be ignored. In fact, the interaction between the tutor and the learner was enabled predominantly by emails followed by instant messaging and wiki comments. Although it is likely that the affordances of different ICT tools (e.g., synchronous versus asynchronous) influenced the nature of the interaction between the tutor and the student, this study does not specifically focus on the technological aspect. It would, however, be important to follow this up in future research. I should point out, however, that in particular the use of instant messaging had an impact on the amount and frequency of tutor moves. For a comprehensive review of research on the impact of ICT tools on student learning, readers are referred to Coffin and Hewings (2005), Crossourd and Pryor (2009), Warschauer and Ware (2008) and Wertsch (2003).

The learning-assessment activities in the current study were mediated by myself, and both the students and I used written English language (a symbolic tool) for all the interactions around the student assessment texts. As stated by Lund (2008), these interactions, called *semiotic mediation* in this study, were goal-directed and intentional. The semiotic

mediation followed a flexible approach (Haywood & Lidz, 2007) as described in Chapter 5 (Table 5.3), in which the focus was mainly on textual and ideational meanings as construed in student assignments. The nature of the technological tools used was decided through the dialogue between the tutor and the student during the assessment. The mediation ranged from implicit hints to explicit corrections depending on the response from the student.

It is worth noting that working in the learner's ZPD through flexible mediation is a challenging task. In particular, such mediation heavily relies on the mediation skill of the tutor/mediator (Haywood & Lidz, 2007). Any inappropriate mediation may lead to negative effects on learner development (see Section 6.5.3).

6.3 Data selection

The *text-based interaction* between four students and me over their assignments was selected as the data for the thesis. The text-based interaction, a form of semiotic mediation, refers to the tutor's formative feedback or comments made through computer-mediated communication (e.g., emails, wikis) on the student assignment text, which were offered to these students by following the interactionist form of DA, as described by Lantolf and Poehner (2004, pp. 54-60) and defined in Chapter 3 (3.2.2).

The tutor-student interactions based on 26 student assignment texts (both pilot and main studies) were collected and analysed as shown in Table 6.1:

Table 6.1: Tutor-student interaction data

Students	Mediating tools (all written text)	DA1	DA2	Total assessment texts
Michelle	Wiki comments (DA1), emails, instant messaging (DA2), comments using Microsoft® word	4 drafts	3 drafts	7
Natasha	Emails and comments using Microsoft® word	4 drafts	3 drafts	7
Amina	Instant messaging (DA1), Emails and comments Microsoft® word	3 drafts	2 drafts*	5
Lou	Emails and comments using Microsoft® word	4 drafts	3 drafts	7
Total no. of texts		15	11	26

* Whilst all other students wrote their assignments in response to the assignment tasks I designed, Amina submitted the assignment for DA2 from the module she was studying: B201, Level 2 business studies module. This was done due to her personal circumstances and the assignment required her to produce similar output texts to those written by other participants.

6.4 Data analysis

6.4.1 Analytical tools

This study is concerned with academic writing development of undergraduate business studies learners. In Chapter 5, I stated that this study follows Vygotsky's genetic method to study higher mental functioning by considering the learners' history of academic writing over a period of time, also in response to a call made by academic writing researchers (e.g., Lillis & Scott, 2007). Given the context of this study, the focus is on the learners' *microgenetic* development of writing, the fourth domain of the four in Vygotsky's genetic development research (see 5.2.1). In microgenetic research, the researcher is interested in 'the reorganisation and development of mediation over a relatively short span of time …' (Lantolf, 2000, p. 3). Following this method, the mediation data was examined to track the learners' control of academic writing development in a relatively short period of time (see Chapter 5). In particular, the mediational strategies employed by the tutor and the learners' responsiveness to such mediation in relation to the writing assessment tasks described in 5.5.1 were examined.

The selected data was analysed to consider the recurring patterns of the moves made by both the tutor and the students during the mediation over a period of time. The focus of the analysis was on considering the amount and the type of the mediation provided during the DA sessions which followed 'open and flexible' interactionist DA procedures. Given the nature of the mediation in interactionist DA, it was necessary to examine the amount and the type of such mediation in detail. Such examination helped to develop a systematic approach to analysing the mediational data, which is still lacking in the DA literature (Poehner, 2005, p. 160). As explained in Chapter 5 (5.6.2, Table 5.5), this study adapted

and expanded the list of tutor mediational moves developed by Poehner (2005) in order to suit this study and reflect the context and the subject (i.e., academic writing in business studies).

Like tutor mediational moves, learner reciprocity is rarely investigated in the context of DA and ZPD (Poehner, 2005; Ableeva, 2010), let alone academic writing assessment. Since the interaction between the tutor and the learner is dialogic, it is essential to study the learner response to the mediation which indicates learners' control (or otherwise) over their academic writing. In order to analyse the reciprocal moves, again, Poehner's typologies were adapted and expanded (see 5.6.2, Table 5.6).

6.4.2 Analytical issues

The tutor-student interactions were analysed by concentrating on two areas as described above: (1) mediational moves, and (2) learner reciprocity. Although it was generally clear that a tutor or learner move belonged in a particular move such as *clarifying the task* (see Figure 6.1 below), there were occasions when the same move functioned additionally as one of the other moves, resulting in the need for 'double coding'. For example, the tutor move *locating part of the text needing improvement* appeared to function as *asking to identify the problem* as well. When this happened, the same interaction was coded more than once (i.e., belonging to more than one move), which was rare.

The difficulty in identifying the nature of a particular mediational move, as illustrated above, has been recognised in Vygotskian research on mediation (e.g., see Kozulin, 2003). One way of overcoming this difficulty is, as Kozulin (2003, pp. 21-22) proposes, to analyse the quality of mediation by considering its *type* or *purpose* and the *techniques* used to

achieve the purpose. He proposed that, while analysing mediation data, it is not enough to consider what specific techniques (i.e., moves) a tutor used but also what purpose(s) they were for. When the mediational moves in Figure 6.1 are examined in this light, they fall into five broad pedagogical purposes, supporting Poehner's (2005) findings: managing the interaction (moves 1-3), reconsidering performance (moves 5, 6 & 8), identifying a problem (moves 4, 7, 12 & 13), probing for understanding (moves 9-11) and overcoming the problem (moves 14-16).

Likewise, it was possible that the purpose of a specific tutor move might have been misinterpreted by the learner as something else. In such a case, which was rare, the mediational move was coded as intended by the tutor.

6.5 Findings and discussion

In this section, I present the key findings of the mediation and the learner reciprocity analysis and discuss them in relation to exploring RQ1 by drawing examples from the tutor-student interaction where appropriate.

6.5.1 Mediational moves

In this study, the mediational moves were offered for two pedagogical purposes. First, they helped to diagnose the problem areas in academic writing faced by the learner and helped identify their ZPDs. Second, mediation, as part of a dynamic process of assessment for learning, gave the learner an opportunity to improve their academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge in business studies, thereby contributing to their academic writing development. Figure 6.1 (below) represents the mediational moves that I, as tutor, made in

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this study and which were first introduced in Chapter 5 (see Appendix 6A for descriptions

of each move and illustrative examples).

As shown by Figure 6.1, each category indicates the type of support given that ranged from

implicit hints to explicit corrections, thus, following Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994)

regulatory scale in principle. The order of these moves was not linear, but dynamic, unlike

Figure 6.1: Mediational moves

Implicit (i.e. hints, prompts, etc.)	Explicit (i.e. examples, corrections etc.)
1. *Clarifying the task* 2. *Accepting a response* 3. *Showing affect* 4. *Asking learner to identify the problem* 5. *Locating part of the text needing improvement* 6. *Asking to clarify meaning* 7. *Identifying the problem in the text* 8. *Asking to consider a possible solution*	9. *Checking conceptual understanding* 10. *Providing metalinguistic clues* 11. *Providing content clues* 12. *Rejecting the response with explanation(s)* 13. *Explaining the problem* 14. *Exemplifying or illustrating* 15. *Providing a choice of possible solution(s)* 16. *Providing the correct solution*

in the interventionist DA in which the tutor uses the same move for each learner in the

same order (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). Rather, in line with Vygotsky's discussion of

learning and development (1978, pp. 79-91), dialogic mediation was offered to each DA

learner in each DA. This resulted in providing different forms of mediation to each learner although their independent performance may have indicated the same level regarding certain aspects of academic writing (e.g., text structure). This means I did not offer the same type and amount of mediation in the same order in each DA. Instead, I was free to use any mediational move that I considered appropriate for the learner response. For example, once I (T) identified the problem in the text (mediational move 7), Michelle incorporated the feedback (learner move 12) and overcame the problem (learner move 16) in her DA1 drafts 1 and 2 as shown by the tutor-learner interaction below (see Figure 6.6 for learner moves):

Excerpt 6.1

Michelle's DA1 draft 1

The STEP framework analyses current and continuing influences on an organisation's external environment and from the case study, it is evident that a number of different **influences impact on** Heineken as an International Organisation.

T: The words in blue [bold in this thesis] in this sentence make the sentence difficult to follow. Can you try rephrasing them?

Michelle incorporated the feedback and responded:

The STEP framework analyses current and continuing influences on an organisation's external environment and from the case study, it is evident that a number of external factors **have influenced** Heineken's marketing approach as an International Organisation. [draft 2, changed text in bold]

Moving from more implicit to increasingly explicit assistance allowed me to identify the learner's ZPD, which does not necessarily happen in other forms of formative assessment. Following this principle, those moves that are more implicit are presented before those that are more explicit in the analysis of these mediational moves (see Figure 6.1). A mediational move is considered *implicit* when the tutor simply offers hints or asks a question. In other words, the learner is more independent. For example, in Excerpt 6.2 below, I used a highlighter to indicate minor problems without stating the problem (*move 4: Asking learner to identify problem*) in Lou's DA1 first draft and asked her to improve the Theme of the paragraph by locating the text (*move 5*):

Excerpt 6.2

> P1[6] Google hopes to ==capure== new clients with their ideas for developing ==a== operating system, which they plan to be faster for the future…
>
> *Tutor: This beginning sentence does not tell the reader what this paragraph is about. How can you do this?*]

An *explicit* move, on the other hand, occurs when the tutor provides concrete solutions to problems or gives examples. In this case the learner is less independent for their learning. For instance, I had commented on Natasha's DA1 drafts 1 and 2 regarding the problem with the Theme sentence of paragraph 5 in her assessment text. Although she tried to make changes, they were not effective. Therefore, I had to make an explicit move, exemplifying

---

[6] P1, P2, etc. refers to the paragraph number in the student's text.

how to write the Theme sentence in her third draft (*move 14: Exemplifying or illustrating*) as shown in Excerpt 6.3 below:

Excerpt 6.3

> P5 There were obvious benefit of political regulations which helped the company introducing Buckler…
>
> *Tutor: You need to introduce the political factors like other factors above. You could begin like this: Finally, political factors also influenced Heineken's marketing of Buckler. The most obvious factor was the government regulations in various countries. For example, ….*

Thus, my mediational strategies of moving from implicit to explicit assistance allowed me to identify the students' ZPDs as illustrated by the excerpts above. Through such a strategy, not only could I identify the students' ZPDs but also could diagnose problems and provide support accordingly. It should also be noted that some moves such as *clarifying the task,* and *showing affect* were included in the list as they contributed to my pedagogical moves and the learner's response.

Now I would like to turn to the frequency and the type of the mediation during the DA procedures in DA1 and DA2 for the four participants to investigate RQ1 further.

6.5.2 Writing support in the ZPD

The analysis of tutor-learner interactions allows educators to identify changing ZPDs over time. Such development is manifested in the type and the amount of mediation required for the learner to complete an assessment task in addition to their improved independent performance (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Poehner, 2005). Based on the typologies

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presented in the previous section, a summary of the actual mediational moves is given in Table 6.2 below. The number for each move indicates the instances of each move I made for each learner during DA1 and DA2.

Table 6.2 shows that the tutor employed varied levels of mediational strategies for each learner in each DA session. However, it should be noted that the use of instant messaging (IM) with Amina during DA1 increased the number of mediational moves in DA1. These moves indicate different ZPDs of each learner. For example, while I did not apply moves 12, 13 and 16 for Michelle in DA1, I did so for the other three learners. Likewise, some moves such as 5 and 8 were more frequent than others. The large number of these two mediational moves (i.e., 5 and 8) suggests that I employed less explicit mediation strategies where possible (see Figure 6.1). For example, *Asking to consider a possible solution* (move 8) involved directing the student to a suitable solution through questions. I did not offer the actual solution but posed questions relating to the problem indicated. The following example (Excerpt 6.4) illustrates how I deployed this move. My comments focus on the introductory paragraph in Natasha's DA1 draft 1.

> **Excerpt 6.4**
>
> P1 The analysis will outline how the external factors of the global beer company influenced the start of a new non- alcoholic product. Although, Heineken was producing non -alcohol beers before, there was a desirable opportunity for launching a new brand. The STEEP analysis lists the circumstances of the Buckler's born.
>
> *Tutor: This [last] sentence is not linked well with the previous sentence. Could you try again? This is your introduction to the analysis, do you need to say what STEEP is?*
>
> [Natasha's DA1 draft 1]

Table 6.2: Type and frequency of mediational moves

Mediational moves	Amina	Amina	Lou	Lou	Michelle	Michelle	Natasha	Natasha
	DA1	DA2	DA1	DA2	DA1	DA2	DA1	DA2
1. Clarifying the task	3	2	2	0	1	3	0	5
2. Accepting a response	24	0	7	6	5	4	3	0
3. Showing affect	8	3	11	10	10	7	3	7
4. Asking learner to identify the problem	13	8	8	5	8	0	4	11
5. Locating part of the text needing improvement	9	9	14	8	19	5	10	15
6. Asking to clarify meaning	11	2	6	14	0	1	0	3
7. Identifying the problem in the text	12	1	6	2	2	8	8	3
8. Asking to consider a possible solution	27	12	26	21	18	8	29	11
9. Checking conceptual understanding	14	11	5	4	2	2	2	0
10. Providing metalinguistic clues	24	9	20	13	6	8	17	2
11. Providing content clues	27	7	11	9	2	13	3	2
12. Rejecting the response with explanation(s)	4	2	2	4	0	2	3	2
13. Explaining the problem	14	3	3	2	0	3	3	1
14. Exemplifying or illustrating	6	4	3	3	1	0	6	0
15. Providing a choice of possible solution(s)	11	5	2	6	1	4	5	1
16. Providing the correct solution	20	5	12	12	0	10	9	7
Total	**227**	**83**	**138**	**119**	**75**	**78**	**105**	**70**

The figures in Table 6.2 indicate that I had made more mediational moves in DA1 than in DA2. One explanation, as explained earlier, was the use of IM with Amina during DA1 for the interaction although it was used partially with Michelle too in DA2. The total number of mediational moves fell in DA2 for Amina (from 227 to 83) because she opted for email communication instead of IM for the interaction. Particularly influenced by IM was move 2 (*Accepting a response*) which was significantly higher in my interaction with Amina in DA1 than with others. IM involved an immediate response from participants (i.e., sense of immediacy), almost resembling face-to-face spoken interactions (e.g., see Sweeny, 2010). Such interactions allowed limited reflection and thinking time compared to email interactions. Therefore, there would be more turn-taking and thus an increase in instances of the moves. Again, although not a focus of this study, it would be important to pursue the influence of ICT tools such as IM in future research.

However, from Table 6.2, it can also be seen that the mediational moves for both Lou and Natasha who did not use IM decreased significantly in Natasha's case and slightly in Lou's in DA2. Despite the use of IM with Michelle in DA2, the mediational moves increased very slightly (i.e., from 75 to 78). Therefore, it can be argued that, except for Amina whose final version of DA2 still needed some work (see Chapter 7), the other three learners may have increased their control of academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge because they appeared to need less support to accomplish the second assignment (DA2) which was similar to the first assignment (DA1). Thus, the analysis points to the likely appropriateness of the intervention.

Figure 6.2 (below) demonstrates the distribution of the mediational strategies I used across DA1 and DA2. Moves 5 (*Locating part of the text needing improvement*), 8 (*Asking to*

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consider a possible solution) and 10 (*Providing metalinguistic clues*) featured the most (i.e., 38% of the total). Among these three, move 10, a more explicit move, had the second

Figure 6.2: Distribution of mediational moves across DA1 and DA2[7]
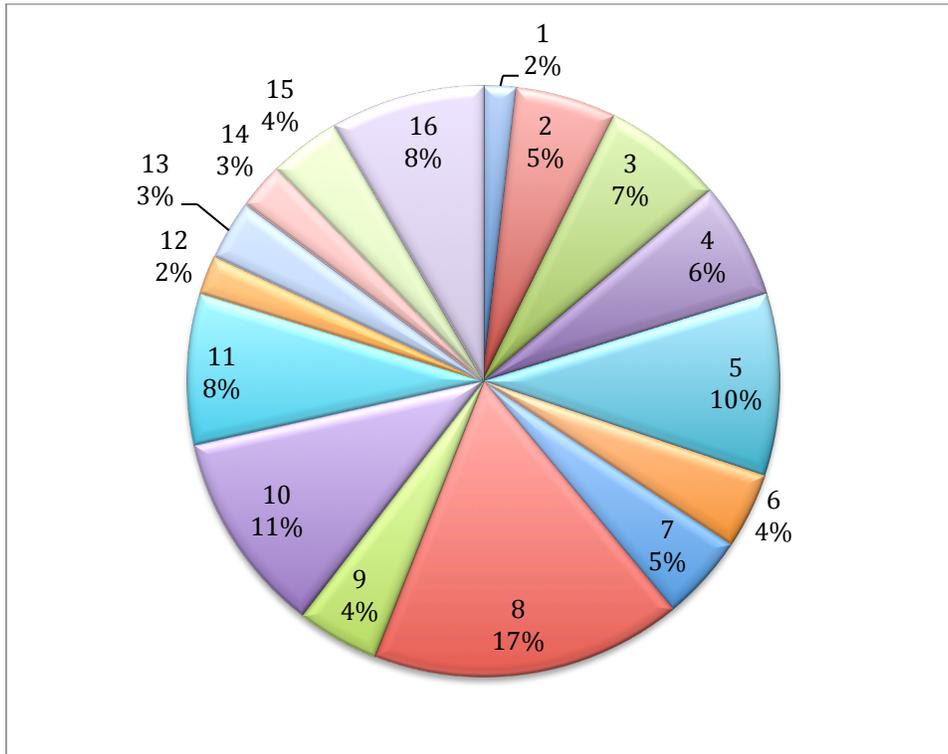
highest frequency. The reason for this was that it not only included tutor comments on metalinguistic clues such as 'pronouns' and 'punctuation marks' to identify problems but also those that related to conceptual frameworks and text development. Regarding the latter, as revealed by the learners' performance, I had to concentrate on the application of the STEP/SWOT frameworks in business studies and text development features such as paragraph Themes. This technique (i.e., move 10) was used in order to enhance the students' conceptual knowledge (both language and content) when more implicit moves did

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[7] 1, 2, 3 ... refer to mediational moves in Table 6.2. Please note that moves 1-8 are *implicit* while moves 9-16 are *explicit* as mentioned in Figure 6.1.

not work. For instance, from Amina's DA1 first draft it was clear that she had not fully grasped the concept of hyper-Themes. Almost all her paragraphs had no hyper-Theme or had no link with the SWOT framework in the case study analysis. Therefore, I focussed mediation on this aspect (underlined) through IM as illustrated in the example below. Amina (A) and I (T) were discussing her paragraph on Google's Strengths.

Excerpt 6.5

A: strengths

T: but you have not mentioned it in the text.

in paragraph 1.

A: how can I mention

put a heading

T: <u>yes, one way is to give it a sub-heading but there's one more thing that you need to do - the beginning sentence.</u>

<u>how can the beginning sentence help the reader that this paragraph is about strengths?</u>

[IM on DA1 draft 1, paragraph 2]

Additionally, Figure 6.2 demonstrates that the least used strategies were *Clarifying the task (*move 1, 2%), *Rejecting the response with explanation(s)* (move 12, 2%), *Explaining the problem* (move 13, 3%), *Exemplifying or illustrating* (move 14, 3%) and *Providing a choice of possible solution(s)* (move 15, 4%)*. Whilst clarifying the task was mainly for managing the interaction (i.e., implicit), the other four strategies were more explicit and concrete. The low number of these moves reflects the principle followed in this study: moving from implicit to explicit mediation. However, the extent of these strategies was not the same for each learner as demonstrated by Table 6.2. These differences suggest varying

sizes of each learner's ZPD. Additionally, such differences may have been a result of the time and length of interactions between the student and me, or possibly that I was not identifying the ZPDs sufficiently.

In order to observe any microgenetic development of the four learners, it is necessary to compare the mediational moves that I used in DA1 with those in DA2, assuming that I was accurately identifying and working with their changing ZPDs. Figures 6.3 and 6.4 summarise the mediational moves across DA1 and DA2.

These two figures show that while *Providing metalinguistic clues* (move 10) had the second highest frequency in DA1 (12%), *Locating part of the text needing improvement* (move 5) came second in DA2 (11%). As stated before, the former is a more explicit move than the latter. This indicates the probability that the learners' ZPD level has moved to a higher level.

Figure 6.3: Distribution of all mediational moves in DA1
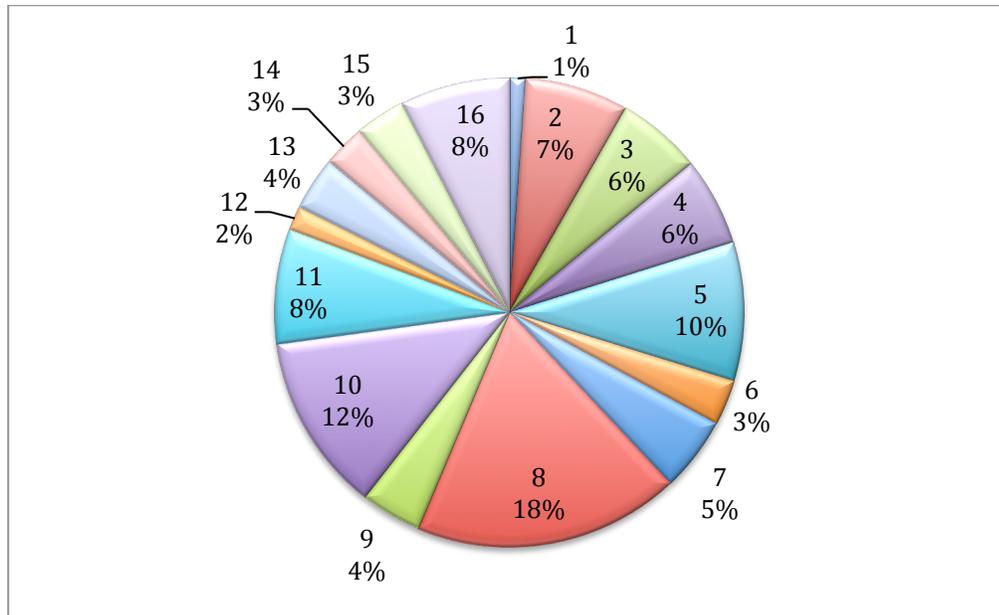
Figure 6.4: Distribution of all mediational moves in DA2
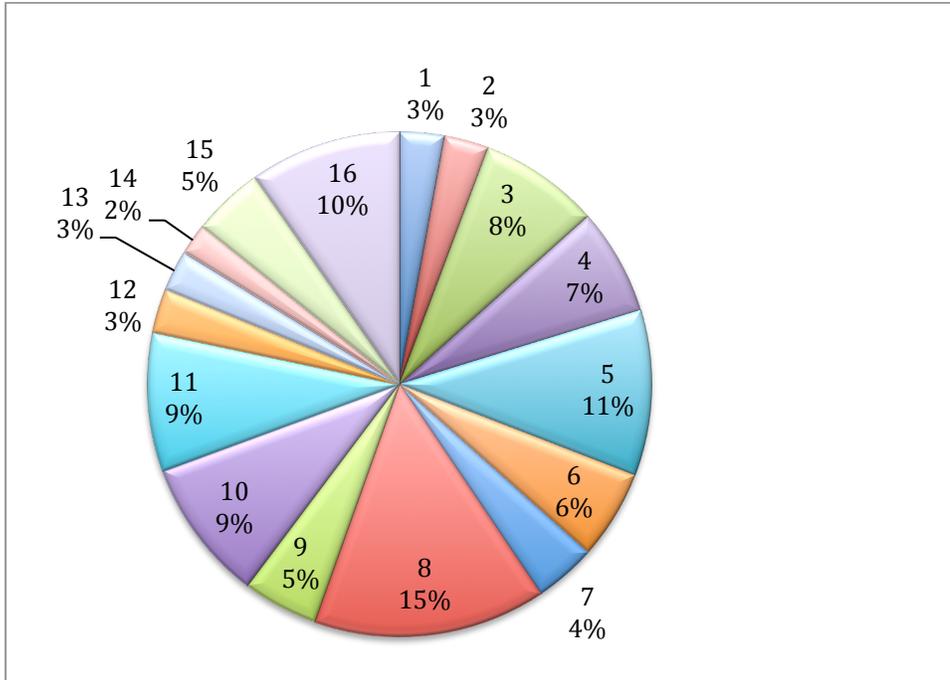
The difference of all the mediational moves across DA1 and DA2 can clearly be observed in Figure 6.5 below. It shows that all the moves had higher frequencies in DA1 than those in DA2 except moves 1 (*Clarifying the task*) and 6 (*Asking to clarify meaning*). This difference implies (again based on the assumption that I was correctly identifying and working with learners' ZPDs) that the learners were increasingly taking control of their academic writing. The fewer explicit moves in DA2 also indicate that the dynamic procedures used in DA1 may have been sensitive to the learners' ZPDs, with the aim of enhancing their writing development.

Figure 6.5: Comparison of mediational moves: DA1 and DA2
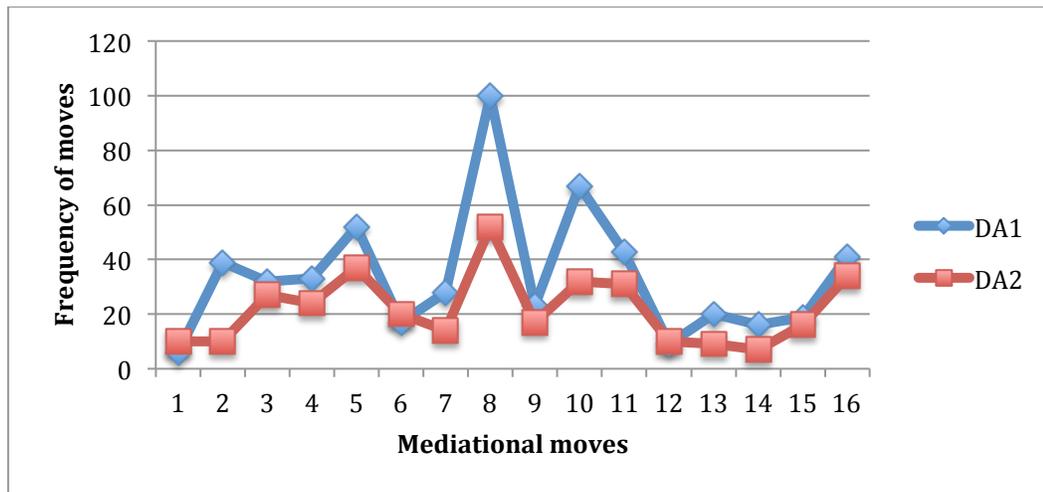
To sum up, the frequency of mediation with the four DA learners at two different times (i.e., DA1 and DA2) suggests positive changes in their writing development although these changes may not be significant in quantity. However, the qualitative changes observed at these two points in time were generally positively different as shown by the type of mediation needed over time.

6.5.3 Improper mediation

Working in the learner's ZPD, as noted earlier, is a challenging task. In particular, DA following a flexible approach heavily relies on the mediation skill of the tutor/ mediator (Haywood & Lidz, 2007). This means making a wrong judgment by the tutor can have a negative impact on the learner's development. Some previous DA studies have noted instances of improper mediation, leading to undermining learners' opportunities to develop (e.g., Ableeva, 2010; Poehner, 2005). In the current study, the analysis of the tutor mediation data shows that I may have focussed on aspects of academic writing that were

potentially not significant for the learner's academic writing development. On a few occasions, this appears to have been the case with Michelle in DA1.

The tutor mediation concentrated on words and sentences rather than the textual level. For example, some comments were about surface features such as punctuation in Michelle's introductory paragraph (DA1). Although these aspects do contribute to achieving the intended meaning of the analysis, the bigger problem this introduction has is its lack of focus/orientation and length. The student text was supposed to be of about 500 words. This introduction alone has 130 words which is over-length. As a result, the introduction lacks focus which I have not indicated. In fact, this problem was not addressed at all in DA1. This may be the reason why Michelle needed more mediation in DA2 than in DA1. Therefore, mediating in the ZPD requires constant attention to how the learner is responding to mediation or a sensitivity to where learners' ZPDs need most work in order to grow.

Next, learners' responsiveness to mediation is discussed in the light of the results from this study.

6.5.4 Learner reciprocity: insights into writing development

Learner reciprocity, as mentioned earlier, is under-researched in DA although learner responsiveness to mediation plays a pivotal role in identifying learners' ZPDs and learner development. In response to this paucity in research, this study analysed learner responses in the context of academic writing assessment. These responses included not only the direct responses to mediation but also those that the learners themselves initiated (e.g., reflection on their progress).

In order to analyse learner reciprocal moves, Poehner's (2005) *learner reciprocity typology* discussed in Chapter 5 (see 5.6.2, Figure 5.6) was used as a starting point. Poehner's list of learner reciprocal moves were adapted and expanded for this study. The list of reciprocal moves which emerged from the data for this study (first introduced in Chapter 5) are re-presented here in Figure 6.6 below (with examples of each move in Appendix 6B).

Figure 6.6: Learner reciprocity moves

More dependent	More independent
1. *Asking for task clarification*	9. *Explaining the problem*
2. *Unresponsive*	10. *Evaluating tutor feedback*
3. *Imitating the tutor*	11. *Self-assessing*
4. *Using the tutor as a resource*	12. *Incorporating feedback*
5. *Checking conceptual understanding with tutor*	13. *Suggesting a possible solution*
6. *Responding incorrectly*	14. *Verbalising conceptual understanding*
7. *Asking for content clues*	15. *Rejecting the tutor's feedback*
8. *Identifying the problem*	16. *Overcoming problems*

While the mediational moves were dependent on the degree of their implicitness or explicitness, learner reciprocity moves were analysed by how much the learners took responsibility for handling the assignment tasks. From this perspective, moves 9-16 can be considered more independent than moves 1-8.

The order of these learner moves as shown in Figure 6.6 reflects the degree of assistance required by the learner. For instance, *Imitating the tutor* (move 3) comes before *Using the*

tutor as a resource (move 4) because the latter requires more learner responsibility than the former.

As explained earlier, one possible reason for the learner variation (i.e., number of responses) is the medium of communication used by Amina in DA1 and Michelle in DA2 although there may be other contextual factors responsible for such variation. While Natasha and Lou communicated by email only, Michelle and Amina used wiki comments, email and instant messaging and their communication with me was more frequent.

As with the tutor mediation typologies, the same learner response appeared to function at times as more than one learner move. Therefore, sometimes there were overlaps regarding a particular learner response and so such responses were double-coded as explained in 6.4.2. Table 6.3 presents the summary of the actual reciprocal moves made by the four DA learners at two different times (i.e., DA1 and DA2) in this study.

The table shows the frequency of the reciprocal moves and the type of moves made by the learners. As with the tutor mediation moves, the reciprocal moves varied for each learner, indicating their different levels of academic writing abilities (i.e., their ZPDs). Furthermore in the case of Amina the choice of IM seems to have had an effect on the frequency of moves. It is interesting to note that some of the moves were non-existent in some learners' responses. For example, while move13 (*Suggesting a possible solution*) was exclusively made by Amina, move 10 (*Evaluating tutor feedback*) was mainly found in Michelle's

Table 6.3: Type and frequency of learner reciprocal moves

Reciprocal moves	Amina DA1	Amina DA2	Lou DA1	Lou DA2	Michelle DA1	Michelle DA2	Natasha DA1	Natasha DA2
1. Asking for task clarification	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
2. Unresponsive	4	11	0	2	2	0	10	1
3. Imitating the tutor	13	0	10	12	0	15	15	7
4. Using the tutor as a resource	10	0	0	1	2	7	0	0
5. Checking conceptual understanding with tutor	5	0	0	1	1	4	0	0
6. Responding incorrectly	15	2	14	8	4	6	9	5
7. Asking for content clues	4	0	0	1	1	4	0	0
8. Identifying the problem	7	0	0	0	2	4	0	0
9. Explaining the problem	2	0	0	0	0	6	1	0
10. Evaluating tutor feedback	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	1
11. Self-assessing	1	0	0	0	5	11	0	0
12. Incorporating feedback	9	6	21	39	22	17	24	25
13. Suggesting a possible solution	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. Verbalising conceptual understanding	19	0	0	1	1	6	0	0
15. Rejecting the tutor's feedback	0	1	3	2	0	3	1	0
16. Overcoming problems	13	4	18	26	20	14	20	23
Total	**121**	**24**	**66**	**94**	**62**	**103**	**80**	**62**

responses. As illustrated in Excerpt 6.6, when Amina (A) and I (T) were interacting

Amina's missing introductory paragraph, Amina made two suggestions as underline

Excerpt 6.6

T: yes, but what about introducing the reader to your analysis?

A: like a report introduction

T: yes, exactly. it is a report.

so where does the SWOT table fit in your text?

A: introduction is missing

T: yes.

A: so it should be

in the first paragraph

[IM, Amina's DA1 first draft]

However, it is worth noting that this move completely disappeared in DA2.

During the interaction in DA2, Michelle quite frequently evaluated my feedback wl

almost non-existent in other students' moves. Excerpt 6.7 elucidates how Michelle

this move. Michelle was working on her DA2 draft 2. She stated by IM that she wa

regarding the social factors of the STEP analysis and needed some support. Toward

end of the interaction, she (M) wrote:

Excerpt 6.7

M: yes what i needed was the guide and that is what u* did

T: i am glad.

:) [smiley]

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> *M: u clarified the different factors and gave eg's that usually works well with me*

[* Any non-standard use of English is retained in IM so as not to lose the context]

In this excerpt, not only did Michelle evaluate my support, but she also indicated her learning style (underlined). In addition to moves 10 and 13, Table 6.3 also shows that move 14 (*Verbalising conceptual understanding)* featured in Amina's DA1 (n = 19) only and Michelle's DA2 (n =6) mainly but not in other learners' responses except once in Lou's. Given that conceptual understanding is central to the application of business frameworks and concepts to the case study analysis, verbalising such understanding may have served the purpose of the internalisation of the concepts in question. In fact, verbalisation is a form of externalisation (i.e., interaction with others) that complements internalisation (e.g., see Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, pp. 202-03). Externalisation occurs in social interaction such as the IM context in this study. The tutor presence may have provided a 'sounding board' for both Amina and Michelle.

As I expected, the most frequent move across DA1 and DA2 shown in Figure 6.7 (below) was *Incorporating feedback* (move 12, 27%). Indeed this move occurred as the most frequent one for all the learners except Amina's DA1. Such heavy use of this move indicates that learners do value formative feedback as long as the feedback is 'usable' (e.g., see Walker, 2009) as previously discussed in Chapter 2. This finding challenges the previous finding that students are interested in grades rather than formative comments (e.g., Carless, 2006; Mutch, 2003). The reason why students often ignore tutor feedback is due to it not being developmental or usable in future assignments. Therefore, tutor comments that

Figure 6.7: Distribution of reciprocal moves across DA1 and DA2[8]
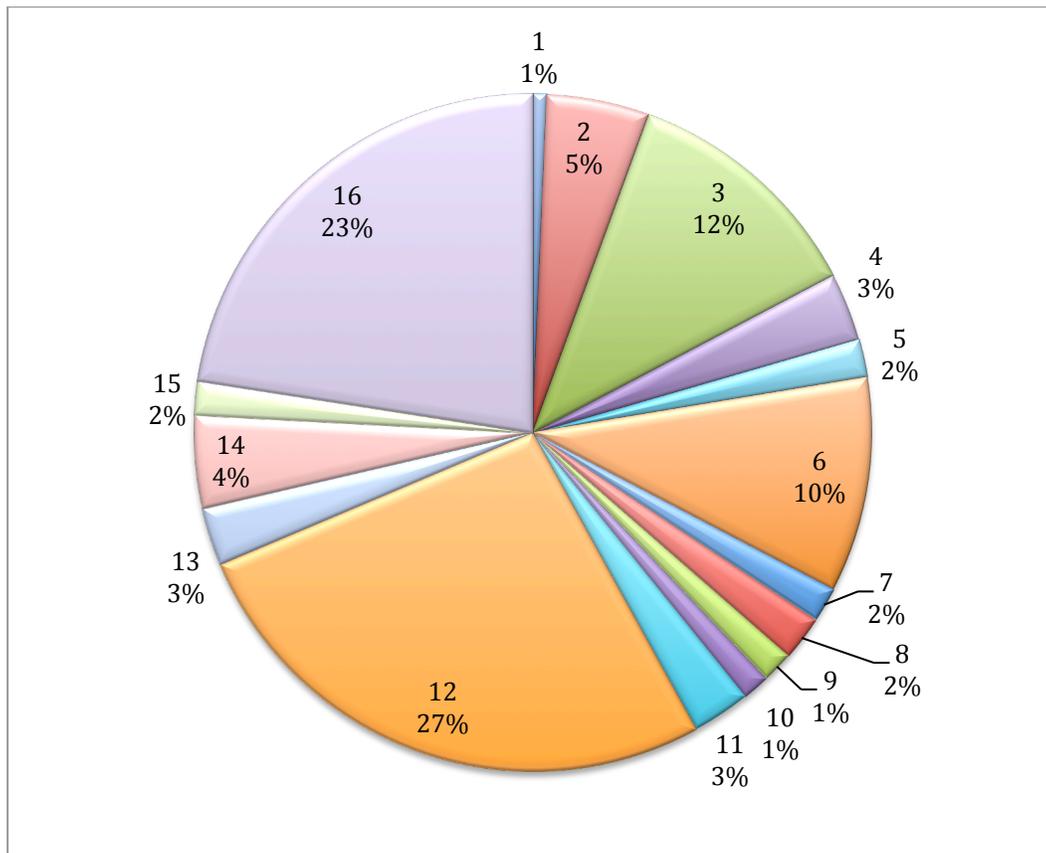
target students' maturing abilities (i.e., ZPDs) are likely to be taken on board by students as shown by this study. However, Figure 6.7 also indicates that the students made moves 2 (*Unresponsive*, 5%) and 15 (*Rejecting the mediator's feedback*, 2%), which suggests that some of the tutor feedback was not incorporated. The reason for this is not clear but may be worth investigating in future studies.

The distribution of the other reciprocal moves across DA1 and DA2, as shown in Figure 6.7, indicates that *Overcoming problems* (move 16) and *Imitating the tutor* (move 3) were the next two most frequent moves employed by the learners over the period of the study. While moves 12 and 16 are more independent moves, move 3 is a less independent one.

---

[8] 1, 2, 3 ... refer to reciprocal moves. Moves 1-8 are more dependent than moves 9-16.

The third position of move 3 among the reciprocal moves suggests that the students'

maturing writing abilities and conceptual development needed more explicit support. The

students often imitated the tutor for key concepts or paragraph Theme sentences in the case

study analysis text they wrote. As explained in Chapter 3, such imitation is an initial step

towards internalisation and hence developmental.

Furthermore, as demonstrated by Figure 6.7 above, moves 1, 10, 9, 5 and 15 were

respectively the five least used responses by the learners. While move 1 is mainly

concerned with the clarity of the assessment task, moves 10 (*Evaluating tutor feedback*)

and 15 (*Rejecting the tutor's feedback*) may be associated with the power relationship

between the tutor (expert and more powerful) and the learner (novice and less powerful)

and hence their frequency may have been low. As discussed in Chapter 2 (e.g., Carless,

2006; Hyatt, 2005), tutor-student power relationships often have negative effects on

learning and therefore unequal power relationships may hinder identifying learners' ZPDs.

The low uptake of move 5 (*Checking conceptual understanding with tutor*) could have

resulted from the interpersonal relationship between the tutor and the student and the

students' available time for the task.

When the reciprocal moves in DA1 and DA2 are compared, several things can be observed

as demonstrated by Figures 6.8 and 6.9 below: (1) the more dependent reciprocal moves (1-

8) decreased in DA2 and more independent moves increased; (2) there were fewer

Figure 6.8: Distribution of reciprocal moves across learners in DA1
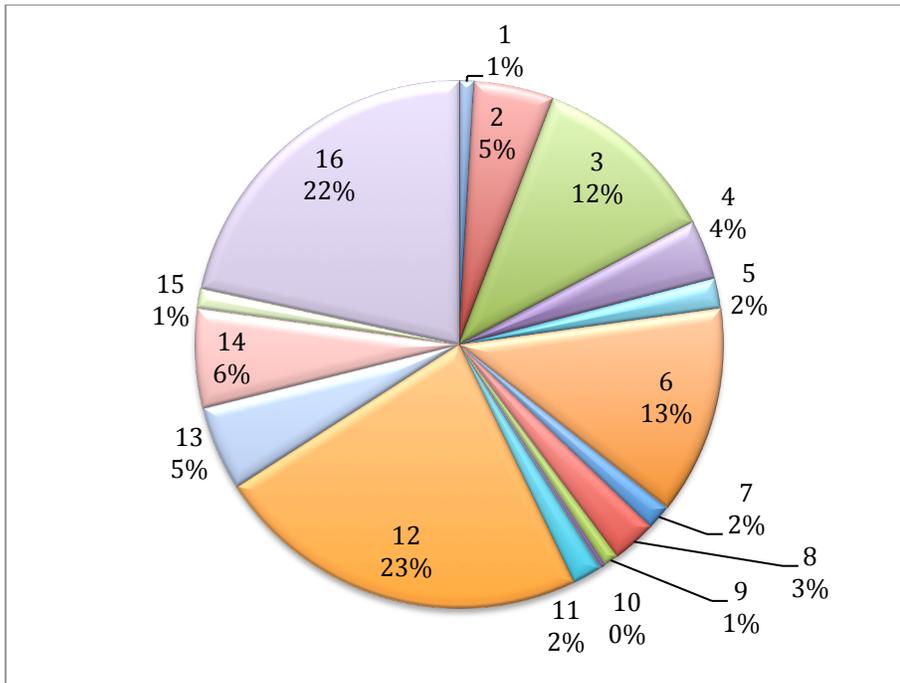
Figure 6.9: Distribution of reciprocal moves across learners in DA2
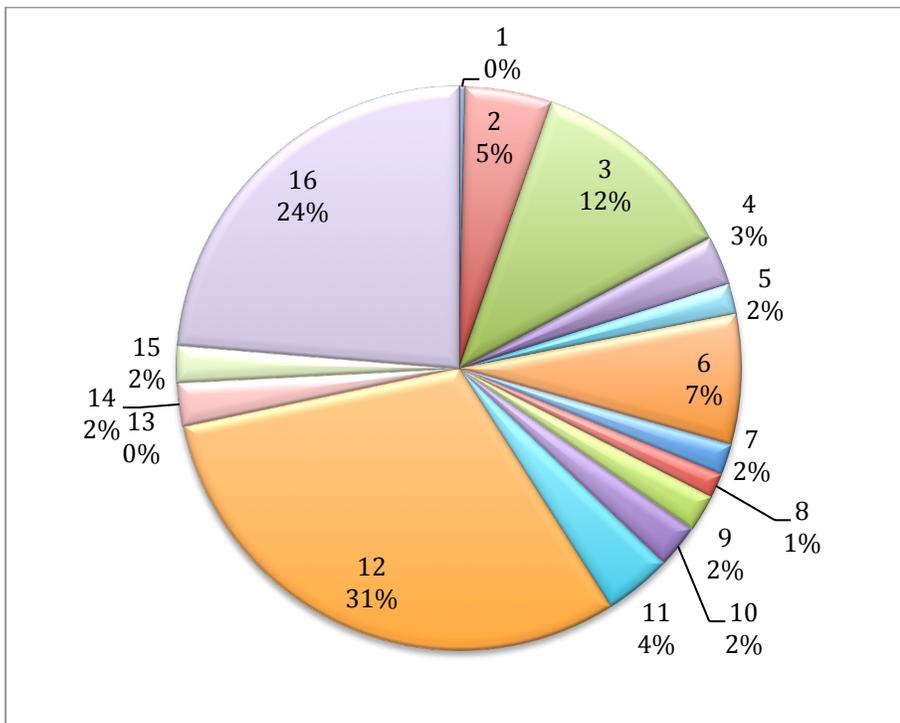
instances of incorrect responses in DA2 (7%) than in DA1 (13%); and (3) move 13 (*Suggesting a possible solution*) did not occur at all in DA2.

The increase in more independent moves and the decrease in more dependent moves indicate the learners' maturing abilities regarding their control of the case study analysis genre and associated conceptual knowledge. In traditional forms of assessment, the researcher considers the present mental functioning of the learner to predict his/her future, which is already present. Valsiner (2001) calls this model *past-to-present*. On the other hand, semiotic mediation, which this study employed during the DA sessions, allows the researcher to study the *future-in-the-making*. By examining the responses made by the learners to mediation, it is, thus, possible to explore *'the immediate future* of the present psychological processes' (Valsiner, 2001, p.86; emphasis in original).

Most importantly, the significantly low frequency of *Responding incorrectly* (move 6) in DA2 (from 13% to 7%) is an indication that the learners' writing abilities may have developed further from DA1. Nevertheless, Michelle made more incorrect responses in DA2 than she did in DA1. For example, when she was asked to include the social reason for the growing syringe market in the US, she added an economic factor instead to the case study analysis. This may have been due to her openness to risk-taking in learning. Additionally, given that development can be not only evolutionary but also revolutionary in the Vygotskian theory of development and it involves both progression and regression (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 73), Michelle's writing development can possibly be explained from this perspective which is further explored in the next two chapters.

6.6 Summary

This chapter presented results from the analysis of the mediation data in relation to four students' business studies assignments and addressed RQ1. The main focus was on the students' changing ZPDs in the context of the tutor support provided. This chapter also provided a list of mediational strategies that may be applicable to other formative writing assessment contexts in HE.

The results showed that an analysis of the tutor-student interaction enables us to observe the students' dynamic writing abilities (ZPDs) in the process of writing assessment. It was also noted that identifying such ZPDs requires great skill and attention including sustained motivation, particularly from the tutor. As shown by this study, if the tutor is able to identify the learner's ZPDs accurately and support them accordingly, the learner is likely to benefit from such support and develop their academic writing skills. Therefore, it may be argued that tutor comments on assignments that target students' maturing writing abilities (i.e., ZPDs) are likely to be taken on board by students. However, as noted in this chapter, providing appropriate mediation is challenging and mediation does not automatically lead to writing development.

The analysis of both the mediational and the learner reciprocal moves provided insight into how much control the learners gained over their academic writing in a short span of time. Without such an analysis, it is often difficult to understand the trajectory of learners' writing development by solely considering end products (i.e., final student assessment texts).

In order to further complement the examination of the learners' academic writing and

conceptual development (ZPDs), the next chapter considers their actual written

assignments.

Chapter 7: Academic writing and conceptual development in learners' assessment texts

7.1. Introduction

In Chapter 6, it was argued that the tutor-student interaction assisted the learners in this study increasingly to control their ability regarding their academic writing and associated conceptual knowledge (ZPDs). In order to complement this argument, this chapter presents linguistic evidence for the impact of tutor mediation on the learners' microgenetic development (i.e., development over a short span of time) by examining their assessment texts to observe their academic writing and conceptual development (ZPDs) during this study. In particular, this chapter aims to explore RQs 2 and 3:

2. *What do the analyses of student assessment texts (including drafts) demonstrate regarding students' academic writing and conceptual development?*

3. *Do learners following less dynamic assessment procedures perform differently?*

As explained previously, the purpose of DA is to identify learners' ZPDs and support them to develop their ZPDs further during the assessment process. In the context of this study, through the first assignment task, DA allowed me to identify the problem areas of the learners who were studying an academic writing module for business studies (see Chapter 5). A focus of this study is on the text structure of a case study analysis and the application within it of two business frameworks (i.e., STEP and SWOT; see 5.4). These were the main problems identified through the DA procedures and were specifically targeted during this study.

First, I will briefly describe the data sample chosen to explore RQs 2 and 3 in this study, followed by a further explanation of the analytical tools used. Then, I will present the analyses and results. Next, I will briefly discuss the results and draw a conclusion in relation to the two RQs.

7.2 Data selection

This study aimed to investigate the academic writing trajectory of six students over a period of time (see Chapter 5). For this, the assignments from six students were selected in order to track their academic writing development (i.e., ZPDs) as evidenced by the linguistic features in their texts. For this purpose, texts from two students were collected over a period of six months in 2008-09 (pilot study) and texts from four further students over 10 months in 2009-10 (main study). For the purpose of this thesis, only the first and the final assignment drafts from DA students were selected for text analysis although they produced several drafts. Altogether there were 20 assignment texts, of which 16 were from the four DA students. The other four assignments were from the two NDA students. Table 7.1 summarises this data set.

Table 7.1: Student assignments

Students	DA1	DA2	NDA1	NDA2	Total
Michelle	2 (draft 1 and final)	2 (draft 1 and final)	-	-	4
Natasha	2 (draft 1 and final)	2 (draft 1 and final)	-	-	4
Amina	2 (draft 1 and final)	2 (draft 1 and final)	-	-	4
Lou	2 (draft 1 and final)	2 (draft 1 and final)	-	-	4
Kristie	-	-	1	1	2
Lena	-	-	1	1	2
Total no. of texts	8	8	2	2	20

Whilst all other students wrote their assignments in response to the assignment tasks I designed, Amina submitted the assignment for DA2 and Lena for NDA2 from the modules they were studying: B201, Level 2 business studies module and B203, Level 2 business studies module respectively. This was done due to their personal circumstances, and the assignments required them to produce similar texts.

In addition, other supplementary data was also analysed in order to add depth and rigour to the main data (see 5.4.4 and 5.4.5). These included business studies tutors' judgment of the student assessment texts and the learner interviews. These data sets are summarised in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 below.

Table 7.2: Business studies tutors' judgment data

Tutors (Pseudonyms)	Type of data		
	Assessment marks	Summary feedback	In-text annotation
Annie	6 students x 2 texts	6 students x 2 texts	6 students x 2 texts
Lydia	6 students x 2 texts	6 students x 2 texts	6 students x 2 texts
Mark	4 students x 2 texts (Amina, Lou, Kristie & Lena)	4 students x 2 texts (Amina, Lou, Kristie & Lena)	0

As shown in Table 7.2 above, three business studies tutors assessed the students' assessment texts as explained in Chapter 5. While Annie and Lydia assessed two assessment texts each for six students, Mark was only available for assessing two texts each for four students (main study). Furthermore, unlike Annie and Lydia, Mark did not provide any in-text annotation.

Table 7.3 shows that Amina, Lou and Kristie were interviewed twice while Michelle and Natasha had one interview each. Lena was not available for the interview. Reflecting on the pilot study, I realised that interviewing the students additionally in the middle of the study might provide better insights into the students' experience of the DA procedures and therefore, Amina and Lou were interviewed twice.

Table 7.3: Student interview data

Students	Number of interviews
Amina	2
Lou	2
Michelle	1
Natasha	1
Kristie	2
Lena	0
Total	8

While the business studies tutors' judgment provided information regarding the learners' assessment scores and improvement in their conceptual development, the interview data showed the students' expressed perception of the DA and the NDA procedures in this study.

7.3. Analytical tools

For the analysis of the selected student assessment texts, as explained in Chapters 4 and 5, the analytical tools were drawn from Hallidayan SFL which considers language as a meaning-making resource to achieve a social purpose (e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). As a tutor, I had identified aspects of textual (i.e., organisation of text) and ideational (i.e., representation of experience) meanings as an area for development in the students' first assignment both in DA and NDA procedures. Therefore, the focus of the textual analysis is on textual and ideational meanings as explained in 5.5.2. In relation to textual meaning, I analysed *macro-Themes*, also known as Introductions, and *hyper-Themes* defined as 'a clause (or combination of clauses) predicting a pattern of clause Themes constituting a

text's method of development' (Martin, 1993a, p. 245) in order to examine if they contributed sufficiently to text development. However, I did not conduct a detailed sentence-level analysis of the text due to limitations of time and space although such an analysis would need to happen in future research. Macro-Themes and hyper-Themes are considered for their contribution to how students construe textual meanings.

Regarding ideational meaning, the use of business concepts and frameworks, drawing on the notion of *technicality* (Martin, 1993b) was examined. As explained in 5.5.2, technicality also includes technical abstractions (see Woodward-Kron, 2008). For example, the term 'fermentation process' in Excerpt 7.1 is used in the beer industry and thus constitutes a technical abstraction, given its use as a concept rather than an action (i.e., 'fermentation' instead of 'ferment'):

Excerpt 7.1

P4 Technological factors affect Heineken's marketing strategy in one main way. Heineken used a specially developed fermentation process where non alcoholic beer had the taste and quality expected of a premium beer without liquor... [Final draft, DA1, Michelle]

In order to identify technicality in the students' assessment texts, the following criteria were adopted:

1. Terms with a field-specific meaning (processes, things and qualities)

2. Terms defined or in taxonomic relations to other technical terms

Technicality was quantified by considering the frequency of the technical terms. If the same term was used more than once, it was counted more than once given the short length of most student texts (about 500 words) and differing contexts of use.

In addition, the students' conceptual understanding of the case study analysis as a genre was analysed for ideational meanings as construed in their assignments in response to the assignment tasks.

7.4 Case study analysis as a genre

In Chapter 1, I reported on the type of assignment texts business studies students are expected to write. The case study analysis which students wrote as part of this study draws on business concepts or framework(s) to analyse business situations (i.e., various business scenarios of an organisation). Business studies students are required to demonstrate their understanding of business concepts and frameworks by applying them to business situations (also see QAA, 2007). Therefore, the emphasis in such assignments is not on theoretical explanations but on the application of a theory/framework such as SWOT to a new real world situation. These texts may not only describe and classify business phenomena but also simultaneously explain them. Nesi et al. (2008) have suggested the term 'case study' for such a genre. However, since 'case study' refers to the source/reading material in business studies, 'case study analysis' is proposed as a preferable label. It also highlights the social purpose of the genre.

As highlighted above, students need to know a set of business concepts/ frameworks and their purposes in business studies so that they can produce an effective case study analysis. In order for this to happen, they are provided with various common frameworks or models as tools which they can apply to analysing an organisation's external environment (e.g., see Preston, et al., 2007). In this study, students were given assessment tasks that required them to apply either the STEP or the SWOT framework which are widely used to analyse the

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external environment of an organisation (see Chapter 5). An example is given below (for a sample of a full assignment task, see Appendix 5B):

> Read the following case study carefully. Then, use the STEP framework to critically analyse the external environment of Heineken in terms of its marketing strategy. Your analysis should not exceed 500 words. (Assignment 1, Pilot Study)

Typically, a case study analysis uses a conceptual framework (such as SWOT) to explain the (hypothetical) effects of phenomena in the external environment on the business. Figures 7.1 and 7.2 below show the genre staging of a STEP and a SWOT analysis.

The figures show how STEP/SWOT serves as the overall superordinate (taxonomising) conceptual framework. In the opening stage of the genre, writers typically provide some kind of orientation to the conceptual framework and to the business case and then work through the four explanatory components of the framework. In other words, the genre follows certain stages to achieve its purpose (see Chapter 3). If a stage is left out, the analysis may be incomplete and the text unsuccessful. There are two types of generic stages shown in these figures: obligatory and optional. While Orientation and Components 1-4 are obligatory, Recommendation and/or Conclusion is optional. The Orientation introduces the relevant conceptual framework(s) and the business scenario. The Component introduces one of the four Components in SWOT or STEP and frames the analysis.

Figure 7.1: The genre staging of a typical STEP analysis (pilot study)
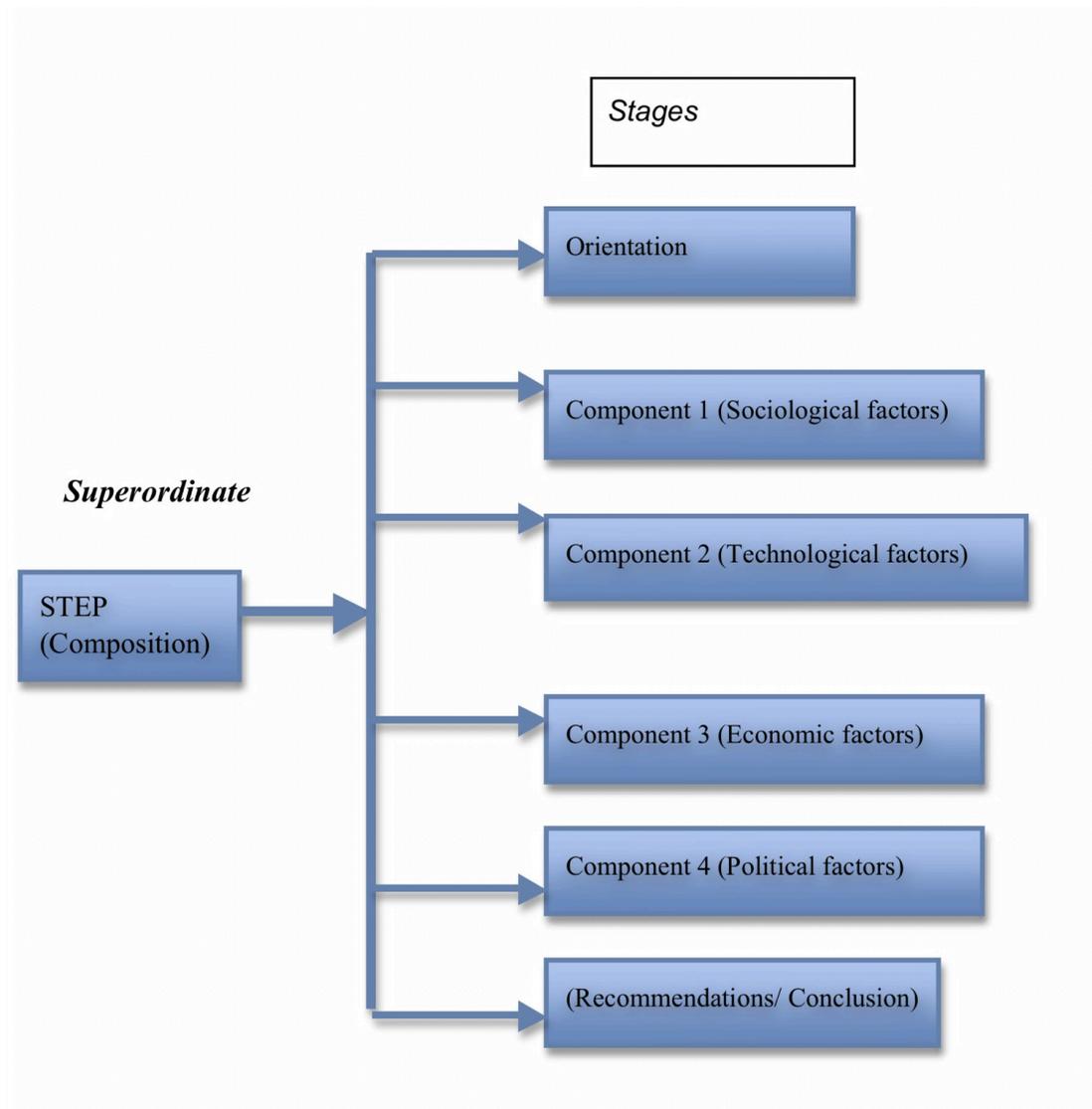
Figure 7.2: The genre staging of a typical SWOT analysis (main study)
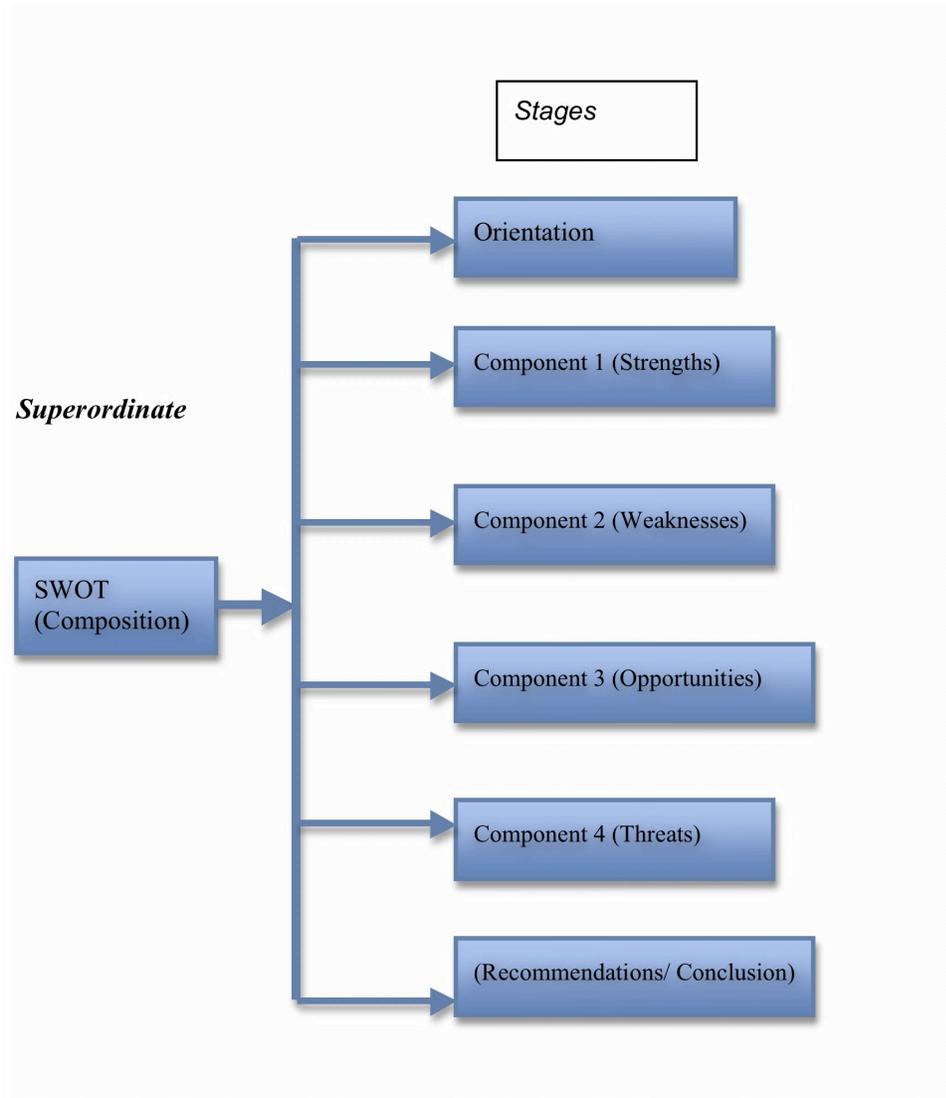
The final stage is presented as optional here because business academics seem to have

different views regarding the inclusion of this stage in the analysis as indicated by these

quotes:

> I think different academics will answer you differently but I would include the
>
> recommendations as well. SWOT or STEP frameworks are rather like tools, and if you are

looking for evaluations you should consider the recommendations they make out of their analyses and application of these tools in a given context. (Lecturer 1, personal communication, 29 September 2010)

My view is that a SWOT or STEP would not necessarily include recommendations – unless the question asked for them.

If you wanted the students to include recommendations for the organisation concerned, you should say to them, clearly and specifically, that you want them to go beyond a list of factors, and ask them to spell out the implications and recommendations for the organisation … (Lecturer 2, personal communication, 29 September 2010).

Given this situation, the Recommendation stage is presented as optional although it was encouraged during mediation (DA) and in the feedback (NDA). Additionally, each component includes two distinct phases: Classification and Explanation. Once a business phenomenon is classified, its effect on the organisation is explained in the analysis.

For the purpose of this thesis, the generic stages for a STEP/ SWOT case study analysis presented in Figures 7.1 and 7.2 were followed while analysing the student assessment texts. The main reason for this was that texts closely following these generic stages were highly valued by business studies tutors.

7.5 Key findings

In this section, I will report on the analysis of student assignments and the supplementary data and their key findings and discuss these findings regarding RQs 2 and 3. Specifically, key findings are presented regarding students' production of case study analysis genres, focusing on their control of textual and ideational meanings.

7.5.1 Genre in students' assignment texts

In this section, I will consider the genre and its stages as produced by both the DA and NDA students in their assignments. Each student's assignment was analysed by examining the generic stages the text followed. These were analysed because they posed different levels of challenges to the learners as identified through their first assignments.

As stated in the previous section, the students' texts written in response to the assignment tasks in this study were expected to be a case study analysis genre that successfully applied one of the business frameworks (i.e., STEP or SWOT) to an organisation's business environment. Table 7.4 and 7.5 summarise the results of the genres used in the student response texts. As shown by the tables, most students wrote the expected genre. However, there was variation among the learners. For example, it was only Natasha's texts that were in the expected genre across DA1 and DA2. Although her response texts were written as a case study analysis at the higher level, they lacked lower level essential features which I discuss in the next section. Likewise, Lou and Michelle produced case study analyses across DA1 and DA2 but they wrote one incomplete analysis each (see Table 7.4). In contrast, Amina was not able to produce the expected genre during her independent performance (i.e., DA1 draft 1 and DA2 draft 1) although she did so when assisted (i.e., DA1 and DA2 final drafts).

Table 7.4: Results for genres written by the DA students

Students	Genres			
	DA1 draft 1	DA1 final	DA2 draft 1	DA2 final
Amina	Description [no link with SWOT]	Case study analysis	Description [no link with STEP]	Case study analysis [less effective than expected]
Lou	Case study analysis [incomplete]	Case study analysis	Case study analysis	Case study analysis
Michelle	Case study analysis	Case study analysis	Case study analysis [incomplete]	Case study analysis
Natasha	Case study analysis	Case study analysis	Case study analysis	Case study analysis

There was also a distinction between the two NDA students as shown by Table 7.5 below. While Lena wrote an effective case study analysis (as represented by the generic stages) for her NDA1, she did not achieve the same level of success with her second NDA text. Kristie, however, seemed to have made some progress in her NDA2 because, unlike her NDA1 text, the NDA2 text contains some features of a SWOT case study analysis in addition to Description.

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Table 7.5: Results for genres written by NDA students

Students	Genre	
	NDA1	NDA2
Kristie	Description	Description [mainly] and Case study analysis [very limited]
Lena	Case study analysis	Case study analysis [partial] and Description/ Evaluation [partial]

As mentioned before, all six students' texts were also analysed for the generic stages. As noted in Chapter 4, the SFL genre theory proposes that each genre follows distinct stages to achieve its social purpose. Appendix 7A provides a summary of the generic stages in each student's texts. The results showed that three of the six students (Michelle, Natasha and Lena) included all the obligatory generic stages in their first assignment:

Orientation^ Component 1^ Component 2^ Component 3^ Component 4^

Michelle, Lena and Amina wrote optional stage(s) too:

[Summary/ Conclusion/ Recommendations]

It appears that these optional stages were valued by the business studies tutors (i.e., subject experts as described in Chapter 5). For example, Annie commented on Lena's Conclusion in the NDA1 text:

> *Here you had opportunity to comment on possible solutions to the immense challenge of going up against a company the size of Microsoft and claiming a larger segment of the market.*

Lydia commented on Michelle's DA1 first draft:

> *Your conclusion is very general with no mention of Buckler or the points you raised*
>
> *in your analysis.*

These comments suggest that the Conclusion that Michelle and Lena wrote was not

effective enough although they included it. On the other hand, when there was no

Conclusion/ Recommendation, Annie wrote the following regarding Lou's DA1 first draft:

> *It might also be useful to add a concluding paragraph where you comment on the*
>
> *business implications of your analysis above. This is your opportunity to consider*
>
> *elements of your analysis holistically...*

From these comments, it is clear that there is an expectation to conclude the case study

analysis with some implications of the analysis or recommendations based on the analysis.

This may suggest that, after all, students need to include this stage to be successful.

The other three students (Amina, Lou and Kristie) had either (1) no Orientation stage or (2)

mainly Description or (3) only a few mandatory stages in their first assignment text. The

dissimilarities of the stages in the assessment texts indicate different levels of writing and

conceptual development among the six students. Therefore, DA sessions focussed on this.

However, when the DA students' DA1 final, DA2 draft 1 and DA2 final are examined,

there is some evidence of progress regarding generic stages (see Appendix 7A). For

example, unlike DA1 draft 1, all these texts contain the mandatory Orientation stage.

Furthermore, all four DA students (except Michelle's DA2 draft 1) incorporated optional

stages into their texts: Summary/ Recommendations and References (Amina and Lou).

These student texts additionally showed that the students' conceptual knowledge increased

as indicated by the use of the four Components from the business frameworks to frame their analysis.

In contrast, the two NDA students did not appear to make as much progress as their DA counterparts regarding generic stages. For instance, Kristie did not really grasp how to make effective use of a SWOT framework in her case study analysis despite my feedback on these aspects on her NDA1: '…you should have used the four categories from the SWOT framework to select it and then frame your analysis using those categories…' (comment on NDA1).

Lena's case was, however, different. Her NDA1 contained the generic stages of a typical SWOT case study analysis and hence a relatively successful text. Therefore, her text achieved its purpose as shown by the marks awarded by business studies tutors (see Table 7.6 below). Nevertheless, the subject tutors, as noted earlier, pointed out that her Conclusion did not achieve its purpose. This text indicated that she could apply a SWOT framework to analyse a company such as Google. Nonetheless, she did not appear to have the same level of conceptual understanding of the frameworks she used in NDA2. NDA2 also required the student to produce a case study analysis where she had to apply the concepts of macro and micro environments and their sub-categories to the analysis of a company. After introducing these concepts, however, she drifts from the framework and describes the processes and procedures the company followed for marketing its products. In this respect, her NDA2 is not as successful as NDA1. This raises the question how much Lena internalised the concepts of *macro* and *micro environment* and their application.

The results for the generic stages of student assessment texts were complemented by the business studies tutors' marking as explained in 5.5.4. The tutors marked two assessment

texts from each student as shown in Table 7.6. For comparability of the DA and the NDA

students' performance, DA1 and DA2 first drafts (independent performance) from the DA

students and NDA1 and NDA2 from NDA students were marked. The marks for each

student from each tutor and the average marks are summarised in Table 7.6 below[9].

Table 7.6: Summary of marks awarded by business studies tutors

Students	Average marks First assignment	Average marks Second assignment	Annie First assignment	Lydia First assignment	Mark First assignment	Annie Second assignment	Lydia Second assignment	Mark Second assignment
Amina	49	46	60	35	52	38	55	45
Lou	67	65	73	55	72	78	50	68
Michelle	70	67	70	70	-	59	75	-
Natasha	65	63	55	75	-	70	55	-
Kristie	60	68	68	50	62	65	80	60
Lena	77	74	75	80	75	62	75	85

The table shows individual marks from each tutor for each student. As can be seen in the

table, there was a considerable discrepancy between the tutors' marks for the same student.

For example, out of 100 marks, Annie awarded 60, Lydia 35 and Mark 52 to Amina's DA1

respectively. It appears that Lydia's marking was less consistent than that of the other two.

Interestingly, Lena's NDA2 was awarded 44% by her own subject tutor (i.e., B203 tutor,

NOT the subject tutors who participated in this study). In order to resolve this problem,

following Weigle (2002), the marks were averaged for both the assignments. The average

marks (columns 2 & 3) indicate that Amina's texts were the least successful and Lena's the

most effective. Regarding progression between the two assignments, all students' marks are

slightly lower for the second assignment than the first one except for Kristie (see Chapter

8). However, this result is not conclusive given the inter-rater inconsistency on the same

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[9] Here it may be worth noting the OU's marking scale for undergraduates as reference: 85-100 = Pass 1; 70-84 = Pass 2; 55-69 = Pass 3; 40-54 = Pass 4; 30-39 = Bare fail; 15-29 = Fail; and 0-14 = Bad fail.

assignment mentioned earlier. Furthermore, this inconsistency may have occurred due to two different assessment tasks. Therefore, a more detailed qualitative analysis of these texts was required, which the next section does.

7.5.2 Macro-Themes and hyper-Themes

The selected data was analysed for macro-Themes and hyper-Themes because they posed challenges to the learners as identified through their first assignments. Although one NDA student (Lena) performed well in this area in her first assignment, she still had difficulties.

In this study, following Ravelli (2004), the first paragraph of each assignment text is treated as the macro-Theme. Martin and Rose (2007, p. 197) propose that the function of a macro-Theme is to predict what the text is about by orientating the reader to its hyper-Themes. However, some SFL researchers have argued that this function of macro-Theme may not always be necessary for cohesion (e.g., Donohue, 2002). In this study, a macro-Theme is considered effective when it (1) introduces the product/service to be examined, (2) states the framework used in the analysis and (3) describes how the analysis will be conducted. For example, a SWOT analysis would introduce the product/service being analysed and state the four Components of SWOT in the macro-Theme.

For hyper-Themes, the opening sentence of each subsequent paragraph is considered as hyper-Theme. The functions of a hyper-Theme are to predict what the paragraph is about and often to mark a shift in the conceptual development of the text. Martin and Rose (2007, p. 194) suggest that the hyper-Theme establishes the reader's expectation as to how the text will unfold. Thus, hyper-Themes help the text flow smoothly. As with macro-Themes, some researchers have proposed that it is not always necessary to have the hyper-Theme in

the beginning sentence of a paragraph (e.g., Donohue 2002). In this study, a hyper-Theme is considered effective when it (1) predicts the Theme of the paragraph, and (2) uses one of the four Components of SWOT/STEP to frame the paragraph.

One issue regarding what constitutes a hyper-Theme in these case study analyses is the use of sub-headings such as Social in a STEP case study analysis. The three business studies tutors in this study did seem to suggest that sub-headings are useful to structure the analysis. However, the bare use of the sub-heading without contextualising it in the paragraph (see Excerpt 7.4) was not considered appropriate by at least one tutor: 'it is always good to indicate what the theory says about this [Social] – then go on and illustrate with application' (Annie commenting on Michelle's DA1 first draft). Her reference to 'theory' of the Social component within STEP was related to a high-level generalisation (hyper-Theme) in the paragraph which was lacking.

A summary of the results for macro-Themes and hyper-Themes is presented in Table 7.7 (DA) and 7.8 (NDA) below.

Table 7.7: Summary of results for macro-Themes and hyper-Themes in DA students' texts

Students	Number of appropriate macro-Themes				Number of appropriate hyper-Themes			
	DA1		DA2		DA1		DA2	
	Draft 1	Final	Draft 1	Final	Draft 1	Final	Draft 1	Final
Amina	0	1	1	1	0	4	0	4 out of 5 (not always linked with macro-Theme)
Lou	0	1	1	1	4 (indicated by sub-headings)	4	4 (not very effective)	4
Michelle	1	1	1	1	3 (also indicated by sub-headings)	4	4 (one not fully developed)	4
Natasha	1	1	1	1	2 out of 4	4	4	4

Table 7.8: Summary of results for macro-Themes and hyper-Themes in NDA students' texts

Students	Number of appropriate macro-Themes		Number of appropriate hyper-Themes	
			NDA1	NDA2
	NDA1	NDA2		
Kristie	0	1	1 out of 4	1 out of 4
Lena	1	0	4	2 out of 9

These two tables show that while two of the four DA students had a macro-Theme in their first assignment (DA1 draft 1), one of the two NDA students had it in NDA1. It is also clear from Table 7.7 that all DA students wrote macro-Themes in their subsequent assessment texts (see Excerpts 7.3 and 7.6). The change in the DA students' second assessment texts is an indication of their writing development. In fact, macro-Themes are valued by business studies tutors as demonstrated by Annie's comment on Lou's DA1 first draft: 'You had scope to add a short introduction. This is useful as it places your answer in context.'

However, the result for the NDA students' second assessment texts (NDA2) was just the opposite to that of NDA1: while Lena left out the macro-Theme in her NDA2, Kristie incorporated it into hers. It is interesting that Lena, despite her successful use of the macro-Theme in her NDA1, did not use it in NDA2. It is likely that her ability to use macro-Themes was maturing but not yet internalised or consciously recognised as important. Therefore, it may be argued that more dynamic assessment procedures could have helped her to fully internalise this maturing writing ability.

Tables 7.7 and 7.8 additionally show the results for the hyper-Themes in the student assessment texts (see Excerpts 7.4 and 7.7). The results show that the appropriate hyper-Themes either did not exist or only a few did in the DA students' first unassisted performance (DA1 draft 1). However, except for Amina's, the hyper-Themes are realised better in their second unassisted performance (DA2 draft 1). This change shows their writing development. Likewise, all DA students were able to produce effective hyper-Themes when assisted (DA1 and DA2 finals). This indicates these students' maturing writing abilities and their changing ZPDs which are at various levels of development. For

example, while Amina needed continuous assistance with producing effective hyper-Themes, Lou, Michelle and Natasha were almost capable of doing so independently.

The result for NDA students' hyper-Theme was not positive, compared to their DA counterparts. For instance, despite Lena being able to write effective hyper-Themes in NDA1, she produced only 2 appropriate ones out of 9 in her NDA2 (see Excerpts 7.11 & 7.12). In contrast, Kristie made no progress as she produced only one relatively suitable hyper-Theme in each assignment although the formative feedback focussed on hyper-Themes in NDA1. This result suggests that Kristie would have needed more assistance and dialogue in order to fully internalise the ability to produce effective hyper-Themes in the case study analysis or she may have required other kinds of pedagogic intervention, extra time and so on. Likewise, Lena would probably have benefited from more interaction, which could have stabilised the ability that she showed in NDA1.

In order to investigate writing development in more detail, I would like to present three case studies below as they fairly represent the trend of writing development among DA and NDA students: two from DA students and one from an NDA student. The DA case studies include one successful and one less successful assessment text. For this, I have chosen Natasha (successful), and Amina (less successful). As for NDA, Lena's texts are selected because her writing trajectory seems to have taken a regressive direction, unlike Kristie's whose text will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Case study 1: Natasha

The first case to consider is Natasha's assessment texts which were STEP case study analyses. By looking at the use of macro-Themes and hyper-Themes across her texts it was

possible to track her writing development. The analysis indicated that she may have gained significantly from both the DA procedures and the enrichment materials. Her texts are given in Appendix 7B.

The use of macro-Themes and hyper-Themes is far more effective in her DA2 texts compared to the DA1 ones. The difference is evident between DA1 draft 1 and DA2 draft 1 (both unassisted performance) in particular. For example, she clearly shows what the analysis will do and which aspects will be analysed in DA2. Compare DA1 and DA2 in Excerpts 7.2 and 7.3 below:

Excerpt 7.2

DA1 draft 1

P1 The analysis will outline how the external factors of the global beer company influenced the start of a new non- alcoholic product. Although, Heineken was producing non -alcohol beers before, there was a desirable opportunity for launching a new brand. The STEP analysis lists the circumstances of the Buckler's born[10].

Excerpt 7.3

DA2 draft 1

P1 The purpose of this STEP analysis is to examine the external macro – environment of the usage of the safer syringes. This framework analyses the social, technological, economic and political factors, which have an impact on the presence of safety syringes.

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[10] Any grammatical inaccuracies or infelicities in student texts are retained.

DA2 macro-Theme is more focussed on the case study analysis and previews the different components of the STEP framework unlike the DA1 one. In the DA2 text, sentences are connected better through the reference pronoun 'this'. It appears that, possibly because of DA-based feedback and intervention, Natasha internalised the concept of macro-Theme during this study.

Natasha did not seem to know hyper-Themes as shown by her DA1 draft 1 (Excerpt 7.4). She, however, used them in her DA1 final version. She seems to have internalised their use as can be seen in DA2 texts (see Appendix 7B). In DA2, she consistently employs hyper-Themes. Most importantly, there is a difference between DA1 draft 1 and DA2 draft 1. Excerpts 7.4 and 7.5 provide an example of this.

Excerpt 7.4

DA1 draft 1 paragraph 4 (Factor 3 - Economic)

Economic factors: Despite of Heineken has been producing non -alcohol beers mostly for non European market before., there was no good quality non alcohol beer in the market. Therefore the company did not have to face big competitors…

Excerpt 7.5

DA2 draft 1 paragraph 4 (Factor 3 - Economic)

Several economic factors have an affect on introduction of safer syringes. One of the key factors is applying traditional syringes have high cost from economic aspects and from the aspect of personal health cost. For example, the cost of infection caused by the bloodborne pathogen can cost …

As seen in these two examples, whereas DA1 draft 1 uses the sub-heading (economic factors) to indicate the new phase with no explicit hyper-Theme, DA2 draft 1 has a hyper-Theme which indicates the method of development of the paragraph. It should also be noted that section headings and sub-headings are often used by students to foreground ideational and textual meanings in their assignments (Gardner & Holmes, 2010). In this respect, Natasha's DA1 hyper-Theme may fulfil the function of ideational meaning. However, its textual meaning (i.e., establishing predictive connections with the conceptual framework used in the text) is not fully achieved. When seen in this light, Natasha's DA2 example shows an effective employment of hyper-Themes in her text, demonstrating her better understanding of their application. After introducing Component 3 (Economic factor), she tells the reader what this paragraph is about. Then each of the economic factors is identified from the case study and exemplified. Thus, the information moves from more general to particular, thereby guiding the reader. This change in Natasha's DA2 suggests the positive impact of tutor mediation on her writing development.

An interview with Natasha revealed further how much DA procedures enhanced her academic writing. The main reason for Natasha's participation in the project was to improve her paragraphing skills in her text and practise the application of business frameworks. When asked whether she achieved any of these skills, she responded that she felt more comfortable with writing case study analyses after the project. She also stated that she was clearer about the introductory stage (i.e., macro-Theme) of the case study analysis which was demonstrated through her performance as discussed earlier.

Furthermore, Natasha mentioned that the new method of assessment was "more relaxed" and helped to build her confidence in academic writing, unlike traditional methods which

often caused stress and did not explain why she obtained a particular score on her performance. Concepts related to 'affect' were frequently mentioned by Natasha as an important aspect to her learning, which DA, through mediation, possessed. As reviewed in Chapter 2, some previous studies also found affect as an important but under-researched area of assessment (e.g., Carless, 2006), which is supported by this study. 'Patience' and 'encouragement' as attributes of DA were very frequently mentioned throughout the interview, also confirmed by the mediational data in Chapter 6. It is crucial to recognise this affective aspect in order to obtain a better picture of any pedagogic practices (Daniels, 2007).

Overall, Natasha made good progress during the project by producing effective case study analyses. She also reported that the study materials she received in this project were useful for another module that she started towards the end of this project.

Case study 2: Amina

Amina, who had major commitments to her family and thus was always busy, was struggling with her academic writing in business studies. Her trajectory of writing in this study turned out to be different from Natasha's. Despite my well-intended efforts, her independent performance did not improve. As mentioned in 7.2, Amina wrote SWOT case study analyses in DA1 and a STEP one from her business studies module for DA2. Her microgenetic development can be tracked through her DA1 and DA2 texts.

When examining Amina's macro-Themes and hyper-Themes, DA1 draft 1 and its final version look different as do their generic stages although her DA2 texts have only slight differences (see Appendix 7C). For example, DA1 final version has a clear macro-Theme

which is missing in DA1 draft 1. On the other hand, the macro-Theme is almost the same in both the texts of DA2 (Appendix 7C). When Amina's independent performance in DA1 and DA2 is compared, the result is drastically different because there was no macro-Theme in DA1 draft 1 whereas it was present in DA2 draft 1 as shown in Excerpt 7.6 below. The macro-Theme in DA2 is successfully employed although her hyper-Themes are less successful. The effectiveness of the macro-Theme in DA2 has been acknowledged by Annie: 'Noticeable improvement on assignment one evident in the clear introduction'.

Excerpt 7.6

DA2 draft 1

P2 There are various ways of thinking about business environment. Each theory helps to understand how business interacts with each other and with environment. Some theories explain the changes in external environment and others focus on how businesses can become successful. One of the theories is a STEP Model, which describes the business environment by focussing on four factors as follows,

- Social
- Technological
- Economic
- Political

I am using one of the factors, social, to describe my organisation.

Amina's hyper-Themes are effectively written in response to the assignment task in DA1 final version, unlike DA1 draft 1 which contains no hyper-Themes that relate to the required conceptual framework although the hyper-Theme exists as shown in Excerpt 7.7:

Excerpt 7.7

DA1 draft 1

P2 In July 2009, Google has announced the launch of new operating system, chrome, which will compete against today's most famous and trustable software company's Microsoft…

DA1 final version

Strengths

P2 As a reputable company, Google has certain advantages over its competitors. It is the most visited search engine in the world which can help market this new product effectively…

Clearly, the latter is directly related to one of the SWOT components (Strength) whilst the former simply reports a particular event without connecting it with the SWOT framework. As a result, the purpose of the analysis is not fulfilled. In spite of the mediation focusing on hyper-Themes provided to her, Amina was not able to link her analysis with the given conceptual framework. It appears that her DA1 first draft is operating using 'everyday' or 'commonsense' rather than 'scientific' concepts to use Vygotsky's terms (Karpov, 2003).

In DA2 texts, the differences are minimal in terms of the macro-Theme. Nevertheless, the hyper-Themes are evidently different in paragraphs 8 to 11 in DA2 final version from those in DA2 draft 1 (see Appendix 7C). These are, however, not connected with the macro-Theme:

Excerpt 7.8

DA2 draft 1

P8 At Lego land there are variety of rides and attractions for children and adults including some over 50's attractions.

DA2 final version

P8 Lego land is most popular in children and young generation for entertainment and socializing.

The main challenge for Amina in this assignment (DA2) was using the course concepts to guide her hyper-Themes. Although her macro-Theme is better in DA2 than in DA1 draft 1, essentially, the rest of her DA2 text is not any different from DA1 draft 1: in both she fails to apply a given framework to conceptualise the business phenomena. This lack of a clear framework guiding DA2 first draft is also evident in Annie's comment:

> Thus far comments have not been related to the 'social' factor. There is no evidence of a logical flow to the line of reasoning here. Proper structure [i.e., hyper-Themes] may have assisted this considerably. [Paragraph 4, DA2]

It was not clear why this happened and I could not explore this issue any further due to Amina's lack of availability. However, the final interview with her did indicate that she preferred DA to traditional assessment because DA included more 'personal communication and interaction' which made her 'feel comfortable'. From the information that I gathered through email exchanges and telephone conversations with her during the study, the lack of her progress may be explained. It appeared that while she was writing these texts, various personal factors seemed to have affected her work. For example, she

had a newborn baby and an ill mother, both of whom needed her continuous attention as Amina had no one else to support her. Given the pressure she had, it is not surprising that she was unable to benefit from the mediational support in DA2.

However, this problem can additionally be linked with the way mediation worked for this assignment. Instead of using instant messaging as for DA1, Amina decided to have annotations and comments on her DA2 texts through emails although her preferred method of communication (i.e., a better mediating tool) was synchronous communication such as instant messaging as mentioned by her during the interview: 'It is better to use chat [than email if] I have time.'

To sum up, Amina benefitted from mediation during DA1 to some extent as discussed above. However, she was unable to sustain her ability to write effective hyper-Themes by using a particular business framework in similar contexts. Thus, it can be said that her writing development did not progress, unlike Natasha's. From a Vygotskian perspective, however, this may be natural since development does not follow a linear process. Rather it is a dialectical process entailing progression and regression rather than 'gradual accumulation of separate change' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 73). Amina's regression may still contribute to her writing development.

Case study 3: Lena

The third case study relates to Lena's writing journey in this study. Since she produced only two assessment texts for this study, inevitably, there is limited information regarding how much academic writing development she gained. Yet, her writing journey was different from both Natasha and Amina's.

An analysis of Lena's macro-Themes and hyper-Themes demonstrates that they are handled better in NDA1 than in NDA2 despite both being awarded high marks by the three subject tutors (see Table 7.6). Whilst the macro-Theme in NDA1 clearly states what the analysis will do (i.e., a SWOT analysis of Google Chrome), the NDA2 macro-Theme does not state what models or concepts the analysis uses although the second paragraph appears to serve as the macro-Theme (see Appendix 7D). Excerpts 7.9 and 7.10 clearly illustrate the difference between her NDA1 and NDA2 macro-Themes:

Excerpt 7.9

NDA1

Introduction

P1 Google has recently made an announcement of developing a new operating system for computer users. This will certainly compete with other giants such as Microsoft and Apple who are already dominating the computing world. In this short report I will examine the internal and external business environment of Google Chrome operating system using SWOT model.

Excerpt 7.10

NDA2

Introduction

P1 In order to answer the question given for this assignment I have chosen an organisation I am the most familiar with. On Line Computing is a company that I have been working for almost two years. The company specialises in IT and communication solutions to small to medium enterprises.

Currently the company focuses on proactive and flexible one-stop IT support services within IT, telephony and copier/printer technologies to over 100 clients.

It is evident from Excerpt 7.9 that the macro-Theme orientates the reader to the case study analysis effectively by stating how the analysis will be conducted by using SWOT. In contrast, she concentrates on the description of what her company does in NDA2 (Excerpt 7.10), thereby making it a less effective macro-Theme. Among the three subject tutors, Annie also pointed out the lack of focus regarding the conceptual framework in the macro-Theme: 'Good start at an introduction here – *would however have liked to see mention of the relevant marketing concepts'* (emphasis added, Annie's comment on paragraph 1, NDA2).

The same is reflected in the management of the hyper-Themes in Lena's NDA1 and NDA2. The hyper-Themes in NDA1 are more effective as they directly link with the concepts (SWOT) introduced in the macro-Theme and operate at a general level, supported by particular examples for each hyper-Theme. This has been reflected in all three subject tutors' summary comments:

Clear points fitted within SWOT framework. (Mark)

Overall, your structure was excellent. (Lydia)

A well structured and confident piece of writing here. (Annie)

In contrast, most of the hyper-Themes in NDA2 are not directly associated with the concepts (i.e., macro and micro market environment) that Lena intends to apply to the

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analysis of her company. Compare the hyper-Themes in the two paragraphs below

(Excerpts 7.11 and 7.12):

Excerpt 7.11

NDA1 (SWOT Component 1 – Strengths)

P2 Google Chrome OS has number of strengths but one of the important ones is that this software is

a browser based OS. It seems to be "a natural extension" of already existing Google Chrome internet

browser ….

Excerpt 7.12

NDA2 (marketing strategies)

P6 On Line Computing positively market to its suppliers to gain leads and favourable discounts. The

company has opened accounts with its suppliers with a certain budget….

It is evident that NDA1 uses the concept (i.e., Strengths) from the macro-Theme to predict

what happens next in the paragraph and is, therefore, a successful hyper-Theme. In

contrast, NDA2 is not linked with the business concept (i.e., macro marketing environment)

to be applied to the analysis although it predicts what the paragraph will do. The paragraph

simply describes the company's marketing strategies. However, the three business studies

tutors did not seem to have the same view regarding the use of the course concepts to frame

the analysis, which would normally indicate a coherent development of the 'argument' in

the analysis. While Lydia and Mark appeared to be satisfied with the application of the

concepts, Annie's view of the overall coherence of Lena's text was different as indicated by

her summary comment: 'Generally fragmented discussion. Lacks coherence.' In my own view, Lena appeared to be struggling while applying the course concepts to analyse her company's macro and micro environment, which resulted in less effective hyper-Themes in NDA2 than in NDA1.

To summarise, Lena showed a good grasp of managing macro-Themes and hyper-Themes in NDA1 but she appeared to have failed to do so with her NDA2. The reason may be the latter being conceptually more challenging than the former. A more interactive approach to assessment such as DA may have enabled me to explore to what extent Lena grasped the concepts she tried to apply to her analysis.

7.5.3 Conceptual development

Conceptual development is an aspect of ideational meaning. In this study, it is concerned with both the genre-related aspects (i.e., stages, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes) and two business frameworks (i.e., STEP and SWOT) in a case study analysis.

Consistent with this framework, a learner who produced an assessment text that employed generic stages, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes drawing on the concepts of STEP or SWOT better in the second assignment than in the first one was considered to have achieved a degree of conceptual development in this study. Most importantly, social interaction realised through semiotic mediation played an important role in promoting conceptual development, which is central in Vygotskian sociocultural theory of learning. Of particular importance is the view that concept/ knowledge is co-constructed (e.g., see Mercer, 2007).

Conceptual development occurred differently for each learner in this study with some learners developing more than others. For example, most DA learners made progress in this area over time while the NDA learners showed a limited amount of positive change. It was particularly evident in the application of hyper-Themes (see Table 7.7 and 7.8) and the concepts from the two business frameworks. While three of the four DA students used hyper-Themes to operationalise the STEP/SWOT framework in the second assignment, one NDA student (Kristie) made no progress and another one (Lena) seemed to have regressed. On this basis, it can be argued that the NDA students did not achieve as much conceptual development as their DA counterparts did.

Conceptual development was also tracked by looking at increasing/decreasing *technicality* in the assignments in this study as it was one of the aspects diagnosed as problematic. Technicality, as defined in Chapter 5, refers to the specialised use of terms in a particular field such as business studies in which commonsense words acquire new meanings (e.g., see Martin, 1993b; Woodward-Kron, 2008). Following this notion of technicality, terms that had taxonomic relationships (e.g., Technological in STEP) and business concepts (e.g., external environment) in the student assignments were analysed. The analysis was carried out following the two criteria mentioned in 7.3. For comparability, only unassisted performance (first draft) was analysed. For the analysis of technicality, I used NVivo 2008. A summary of results for technicality is presented in Table 7.9 (see Appendix 7E for technical categories and related examples).

Table 7.9: Categories and their frequency of technicality in DA and NDA texts

Technical categories	Amina		Lou		Michelle		Natasha		Kristie		Lena	
	DA1	DA2	DA1	DA2	DA1	DA2	DA1	DA2	NDA 1	NDA 2	NDA1	NDA2
Business environment	1	8	3	12	25	15	4	8	8	9	4	10
STEP - sociological	-	3	-	-	6	12	5	14	-	-	-	-
STEP - technological	-	1	-	-	2	5	5	10	-	-	-	-
STEP - economic	-	1	-	-	4	9	6	14	-	-	-	-
STEP - political	-	1	-	-	3	5	5	16	-	-	-	-
SWOT - strengths	1	-	2	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-
SWOT - weaknesses	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
SWOT - opportunities	1	-	2	8	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-
SWOT - threats	1	-	4	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Other business concepts	14	8	15	8	21	2	11	8	22	44	11	31
Macro environment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Micro environment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Marketing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
Total	**19**	**22**	**27**	**48**	**61**	**48**	**36**	**70**	**31**	**43**	**29**	**103**

The table shows that all students' technicality increased in their second assignment except for Michelle's. However, the realisation of relevant technicality in DA students' assignments is remarkably different from that of the NDA students. For example, although the number of specialised terms increased considerably in both Lena and Kristie's second assignment they were mainly 'other business concepts' rather than those directly related to the frameworks they had used in their case study analysis. Furthermore, Lena's second assignment was considerably longer than the first one. In contrast, almost all the DA students employed more technical terms associated with the framework used in their case study analysis than those in their first assignment. These results indicate that the DA students deployed key concepts in a more relevant way than their NDA counterparts did.

These results are confirmed by business studies tutors' comments too. For example, Annie commented on Kristie's NDA2 thus:

> Student in all likelihood has (and relies on) a good common sense understanding of the business world. SWOT not used as a tool for analysis – nor are the concepts explained. No clear evidence of cognitive skill development since previous assignment.

And on Natasha's second assignment: 'STEP factors generally well understood… Clear evidence of writing skills progress since first attempt [assignment]. Student has benefited from guidance.'

To sum up, the analysis of macro-Themes, hyper-Themes and technicality in student assignments suggests that DA students showed more conceptual development than their NDA counterparts. This may be attributed to the semiotic mediation received by the DA students. Additionally, the results showed that higher frequency of business terms did not

necessarily mean writing a successful case study analysis if they did not relate to the associated business framework (cf. Woodward-Kron, 2008).

7.6 Discussion

The analyses of the generic stages in the six students' assignments above showed that they were at different stages of development concerning the understanding and internalisation of the generic stages used in a case study analysis. It became evident in the first assignment that all the students had difficulty in managing the typical generic stages found in a case study analysis except for Lena (who, however, struggled in her second assignment). Therefore, the mediation (both dynamic and non-dynamic) focussed on these stages. As shown by the subsequent drafts and the second assignment (both DA and NDA), Lou, Michelle and Natasha handled the generic stages more successfully whilst Amina, despite the significant improvement in her DA1 final version, did not manage these stages effectively in DA2. However, her less effective performance may be linked with the medium of tutor mediation as mentioned earlier, since she was unable to continue using instant messaging for the mediation. It is also possible that she could have retained her progress regarding writing a SWOT analysis if she had done a similar task as in DA1 instead of a STEP analysis.

On the other hand, Kristie essentially demonstrated no change in her management of the generic stages in the second assignment and Lena handled them less effectively in the second one. In particular, it is intriguing why Lena failed to apply the theoretical concepts chosen by her to guide the generic stages which she applied so successfully to her NDA1. One reason may be that the chosen theoretical concepts are still not fully internalised or are beyond her ZPD.

Like the generic stages, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes were found more effective in all students' second assignments (DA2 or NDA2) than in their first assignment (DA1 or NDA1) except Lena's presumably because tutor mediation (DA) or normal feedback (non-DA) concentrated on them to help the students improve them. The analysis revealed that Lou, Michelle and Natasha developed their skills in writing effective macro-Themes and hyper-Themes in the later assignment texts, indicating that dynamic assessment procedures possibly helped them to achieve the effectiveness. Nevertheless, Amina, did not show the same level of her control of the macro-Theme and the hyper-Themes in DA2 as seen in her DA1 final draft. Again, this could have resulted from the medium of interaction she chose or the nature of the assignment task in DA2 (i.e., STEP instead of a SWOT analysis). While Kristie's handling of the macro-Themes and the hyper-Themes in her NDA1 and NDA2 texts remained the same, Lena did not appear to manage the macro-Theme and the hyper-Themes in NDA2 as well as she did in NDA1. Although it is not clear why Kristie made little progress and Lena performed worse in NDA2 regarding these two aspects of academic writing, it could be argued that Kristie might have improved her skills and Lena may have retained her skills from NDA1 through a more dynamic assessment process, a view that Kristie also acknowledged in an interview with her. The lack of progress by Amina and Kristie and the lack of consistency in Lena's writing could be because, despite the symbolic mediator (written tutor feedback) having a rich learning potential, it may have remained ineffective due to the lack of an immediate human mediator who could have facilitated its appropriation by these students (Kozulin, 2003, p. 35).

7.7 Summary

This chapter reported on the analysis of six students' business studies assignments and the supplementary data in relation to RQs 2 and 3. The findings suggest that dynamic assessment procedures have the potential to enhance learners' academic writing development, albeit at varying levels. It was also found that while three out of four students that underwent these procedures showed progress regarding their ability to manage generic stages, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes in case study analyses, one of them reverted to her old ways of structuring her writing. On the other hand, NDA students showed either no progress or did not maintain consistency in handling these skills in their writing.

Overall, in this study, it appeared that DA procedures may have helped the DA students improve their academic writing and conceptual development when their potential ability (ZPD) was targeted. To explore the sustainability of the positive changes in these students' academic writing, it is necessary to consider their performance in a new assessment context and this is carried out in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8: Sustainability of academic writing development

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report on the transfer of academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge from one assessment task to another and beyond. Many of the higher order skills and knowledge such as structuring a case study analysis and the application of business frameworks are not limited to one assessment task but they are required for all business studies modules (e.g., see QAA, 2007). Therefore, sustaining these skills and knowledge is central to learning and writing development. In order to investigate the transfer of academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge, this chapter addresses the final RQ:

4. *To what extent, can learners transfer the academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge learned in one writing assessment task to another?*

In this chapter, first, I will briefly describe the place of 'transfer' in DA. Then, the set of data selected for this chapter will be elaborated on. Following the description of the data, key findings will be reported and discussed using the concept of 'transfer' in DA in relation to generic stages, macro-Themes, hyper-Themes and conceptual development.

8.2 Transfer in DA

There are two terms used in DA that refer to learners' ability to recontextualise their learning in a new context: *transfer* and *transcendence*. While *transfer* was used by Brown and her colleagues (e.g., Brown and Ferrara 1985 cited in Poehner, 2007, p. 338) to describe more complex tasks than those used in DA tasks, *transcendence,* one of the three

universal parameters of Mediated Learning Experience mentioned in 3.2.2, is associated with Feuerstein's interactionist DA approach (e.g., Feuerstein, et al., 2002). The DA scholars appear to use these two terms in a similar way. However, it has been argued that the concept of transcendence has been more robustly developed in the DA literature and is in line with Vygotskian theory (Poehner, 2007). Given that there was no DA-oriented mediation during the transfer assessment tasks in this study, an essential feature of transcendence as proposed by Feuerstein, I am using the term transfer. Nevertheless, Feuerstein's concept of *transformability* was employed while examining the students' assessment texts. It refers to the change in an individual's cognitive knowledge that is applicable to other situations (Feuerstein, et al., 2002, p. 113). This is further explained in 8.4 below.

The notion of transfer has been explored in the context of academic writing too. However, this area is still under-researched (Cheng, 2007) and results of previous studies have tended to be mixed regarding transfer in general academic writing (e.g., see James, 2010). Particularly, there seem to be only a few 'transfer' studies conducted in discipline-specific writing contexts (see Cheng, 2007). Given that the purpose of academic writing instruction is to help learners write effective texts in their chosen disciplines, the role of transfer is crucial.

8.3 Data selection

For the examination of transfer in this study, a third assessment text was collected from the students as the data. Except for Kristie, these assessment texts were written as part of a different business studies module that the students went on to study after LB160: *B201 Business organisations and their environments*, *B301 Making sense of strategy* or *B322*

Investigating entrepreneurial opportunities. Table 8.1 summarises the data. It should be noted that each assessment required the students to produce a case study analysis. There were, however, slight variations in the nature of the genre: Classification, Description and Explanation (B201) and Taxonomic Explanation (B301 and B322).

Table 8.1: Summary of the data set for transfer

Students	Transfer task
Amina (DA)	1 x B201* assignment (2010)
Lou (DA)	1 x B301* assignment (2010)
Natasha (DA)	1 x B322* assignment (2009)
Kristie (NDA)	1 x Task designed by the tutor-researcher
* These were business studies assignments written for the students' tutors in 2009 and 2010.	

As the table shows, out of six students, four students' assessment texts were collected because the other two students were not available for this part of the study as described in Chapter 5. Additionally, where appropriate and available, business studies tutors' assignment comments were employed to complement the data.

Among these four participants, Kristie completed the transfer task that I designed as she was not studying with the OU at that time. The other three were asked to submit their business studies assignments for authenticity and they were willing to do so. While Natasha submitted her assignment from a Level 3 accounting module, Amina's was from a Level 2 work-based practice in business module and Lou's from a Level 3 business strategy module.

8.4 Analytical tools

As in the previous two chapters, the selected data was analysed by drawing on SFL genre theory (e.g., Martin & Rose, 2008) and Vygotskian sociocultural theory (SCT) of learning and development (e.g., Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In particular, textual analysis of the student assignments was conducted by following SFL genre theory in order to consider generic stages, macro-Themes, hyper-Themes and conceptual development. These features in the first two assignments were analysed as reported in Chapter 7. Therefore, it was necessary to consider the same features in order to track development and sustainability of these features in the transfer tasks.

The notion of transfer is derived from the Feuersteinian concept of transformability, which is in line with Vygotsky's 'scientific concepts' (e.g., see Karpov, 2003). Vygotskian SCT (and hence DA) lays emphasis on theoretical learning or the acquisition of scientific concepts[11] over empirical learning. Empirical learning is based on students' everyday experience of the world whilst theoretical learning is based on their "acquisition of methods for scientific analysis of objects or events in different subject domains" (Karpov, 2003, p. 71). Acquiring these methods provides them with cognitive tools for mediating their future problem-solving. As transformability is realised through the application of newly acquired conceptual knowledge to new contexts and tasks, theoretical learning becomes one of its essential aspects.

Transfer can be of two types: 'near transfer' and 'far transfer' (Feuerstein, et al., 2002, p. 113). 'Near transfer' refers to the transfer of skills and knowledge to a specific assessment

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[11] It should be noted that Halliday also draws the distinction between scientific and everyday concepts in a similar way (Wells, 1994).

context similar to the ones accomplished in the immediate past. 'Far transfer' is the application of such skills and knowledge to a more complex and challenging context and therefore, entails more sophisticated mental functioning.

In this study, while the transfer of skills and knowledge from the first two assessment tasks to a similar assessment task (i.e., a SWOT or STEP analysis) is considered 'near transfer', the transfer from these two assessment tasks to the assignments written for business studies modules are 'far transfer'. This means Amina, Lou and Natasha's business studies assignments were considered for 'far transfer' and Kristie's for 'near transfer'. All these assessment texts were written independently by both the DA and the NDA students. The key findings regarding these two types of transfer are reported and discussed in the next section.

8.5 Findings and discussion

8.5.1 'Near transfer'

Only one student's (Kristie) assessment text was analysed for 'near transfer' as she was the only participant who wrote the third SWOT case study analysis in response to the assessment task that I designed. The assessment task required the application of the SWOT framework to the analysis of the market for Google's new smartphone called Nexus One as shown in Appendix 8A.

As indicated by Appendix 8A, the nature of the transfer task is identical to the previous two assessment tasks Kristie completed for this study (e.g., see Appendix 5B). For example, this task requires the student (1) to show an understanding of the SWOT framework by applying it to real business situations; (2) to demonstrate an understanding of the business

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environment within the communications industry (i.e., the computer operating system [Task 1], broadband market [Task 2] and smartphone market [Transfer task]); and (3) to produce a case study analysis of a similar length (i.e., approximately 500 words). However, there was one difference between Task 1 and this transfer task. While Task 1 had only two case study texts for the student to process for the case study analysis, the transfer task had three as in Task 2. This difference is an indication of the increasing complexity of the later tasks.

Kristie's case study analysis was examined by focusing on her use of generic stages, macro-Theme, hyper-Themes and conceptual development for 'near transfer' (also see Chapter 7, Section 7.5).

Genre and generic stages

When Kristie's response to the transfer task was examined regarding its genre and the generic stages, it appeared that she made some progress (see Appendix 8B for her assessment text). Her text contained most of the mandatory stages of a typical SWOT case study analysis as shown below:

Orientation^ Component 1^ Component 2^ Component 3^

Although this text still lacks one mandatory stage (i.e., Component 4 – Threats) and an optional stage (i.e., Recommendations), it is a more successful case study analysis than her previous two texts (NDA1 and NDA2) discussed in Chapter 7 (see Appendix 7A). Her previous texts contained only two mandatory stages: Orientation and either Component 3 (NDA1) or Component 4 (NDA2). Additionally, except the Orientation stage, the other stages of the (SWOT) case study analysis genre were not obvious in the analysis in the

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previous two assessment texts whereas her response text to the transfer task included more explicit stages. These changes indicate that Kristie performed better in the transfer task than the previous two tasks. In this respect, she did not actually transfer the genre knowledge demonstrated in the previous assessment tasks to this one. Instead, she appeared to have developed the case study analysis genre knowledge and its application in the transfer task. In other words, her ability to handle the generic stages of a case study analysis employing the SWOT framework was ripening and needed further mediation.

macro-Themes and hyper-Themes

Kristie seemed to have internalised the ability to produce a relatively successful macro-Theme for the case study analysis. She consistently wrote the macro-Theme required for the case study analysis as illustrated in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 8.1

NDA1 macro-Theme

The new technology developed in the form of the PC Operating Systems (OS) by Google has had a strong impact on its major competitor Microsoft and on the users at large. This essay will concentrate on a SWAT analysis of the effects of the Operating Systems is having on Google, Microsoft and the worldwide users.

Excerpt 8.2

NDA2 macro-Theme

Vodafone announcement of its move into providing fixed-line broadband signals its interest and recognition of an already sizeable and profitable market shared by many competitors. How will

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Vodafone products compete and how can it succeed in this volatile market? I will use the SWOT analysis model in this paper to analyse this product.

Excerpt 8.3

Transfer task macro-Theme

The launch of Google's Nexus One mobile phone was hotly pursued by mobile techno fans after attempts to keep it a secret failed. Would the promise of even more advanced technology at a finger tip ensure its success and overtake its competitors? Using the SWOT analysis framework we will look at the various aspects of this new product in details.

These excerpts indicate her sustained ability to produce a relatively effective macro-Theme although she does not explicitly explain what SWOT is. Presumably, she had the assumption that it was a given framework and so did not need any explanation. Nevertheless, one can argue that Kristie's ability to write such a macro-Theme is a 'near transfer'.

On the other hand, Kristie demonstrated through her transfer task that she could produce most of the appropriate hyper-Themes for a SWOT analysis, which were lacking in her previous two assessment texts (see Chapter 7). Whereas the DA students were able to use suitable hyper-Themes in their DA2, Kristie failed to do so in NDA2. However, her performance as illustrated in Excerpt 8.4 below suggests that her ability to produce successful hyper-Themes was maturing but, possibly due to the lack of interactivity with a mediator in her first two assignments, she was unable to fully materialise it unlike her DA

counterparts. In fact, she asked me for a telephone 'dialogue' to discuss her problems after NDA2. During the dialogue, she said: '… But <u>a conversation</u> really helps because sometimes things around a particular part that's the conversation we had earlier that I didn't get because I thought I didn't need to do it because people would understand what I meant…' The reference to 'conversation' indicates the value of a dialogic relationship between the tutor and the student that she missed.

Excerpt 8.4

NDA2 hyper-Themes

P2 Vodafone already has experience of free broadband and has been able to learn significantly from it…

P6 Problems arise when there is a demand surge, which inevitably slows down customers' connection…

Transfer task

hyper-Theme (Component 1)

P2 The Nexus One strength is not just in its popularity but its high tech touch screen and other updated features, some of them promising to set it apart from the rest…

hyper-Theme (Component 2)

P4 One of Nexus One's weakest point is probably its uninteresting appearance in the high-tech world and many will be disappointed by its "nerdy" appearance…

As can be seen in the above excerpt, Kristie's NDA2, despite my comments on her NDA1 regarding the macro-Theme, has no explicit link with the SWOT framework which, however, is obvious in her response to the transfer task. This significant change appears to be further development of her writing ability rather than a transfer of such an ability.

Conceptual development

As explained in Chapter 7, conceptual development was analysed in relation to the students' abilities to use appropriate generic schemata and an effective application of the SWOT framework to understand an organisation's business environment. When examined from this perspective, noticeable conceptual development was found in Kristie's transfer assessment text. For example, she structured her case study analysis by using most of the appropriate generic stages in the text, which were absent in her previous assessment texts. Likewise, her use of hyper-Themes was more successfully employed in her transfer task as explained above. It should, however, be noted that her conceptual knowledge of the macro-Theme from the previous assignments was sustained in the transfer task.

Following the same method as described in Chapter 7, *technicality* (i.e., specialised use of terms in business studies) was examined in Kristie's transfer assessment text. A summary of the results from the analysis is presented in Figure 8.1 below. The figure shows the percentage and the frequency count for each category of technicality. These categories are the same as those applied to Kristie's previous two assignments. For each category represented in the figure, Table 8.2 provides illustrative examples of technicality found in Kristie's transfer text.

Figure 8. 1: Technicality in Kristie's transfer assignment (% of the total technical terms)

Technicality - Kristie's transfer task

SWOT - Threats, 0, 0%

SWOT - Weaknesses, 4, 13%

Business environment 4, 13%

External environment, 1, 3%

Other business concepts, 5, 17%

SWOT Strengths, 8, 27%

SWOT-Opportunities, 8, 27%
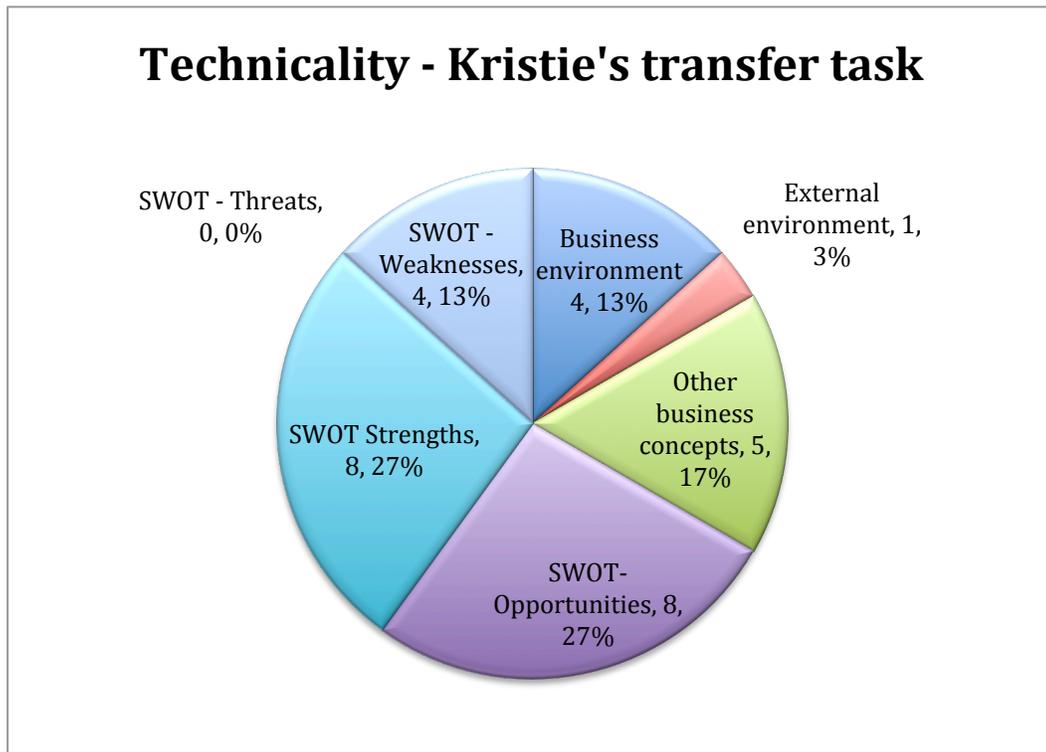
Table 8.2: Examples of technicality under various categories

Categories	Examples from Kristie's transfer text
External environment	its [Google's] competitors
Business environment	the price versus technology world of competition between manufacturers, the SWOT analysis framework
SWOT Strengths	firmly established, reduced price
SWOT Weaknesses	uninteresting appearance, a much less interesting proposition
SWOT Opportunities	a definite opportunity, great design improvements on existing phones on the market
Other business concepts	the extra expense, new product

As shown by Figure 8.1, unlike her previous two assessment texts, the technical terms were more widely distributed although 'other business concepts' still covered 17% of the total technical terms. The most remarkable achievement she made was on the three SWOT categories which were scarcely represented in her previous assignments: Strengths (27%), Opportunities (27%) and Weaknesses (13%). Like her hyper-Themes, technicality seemed to be an area that further developed in the transfer assessment text. Therefore, it can be argued that Kristie's ability to write a technically appropriate SWOT analysis was still maturing in her previous two assignments.

8.5.2 'Far transfer'

The second type of transfer in this study was 'far transfer'. This concept was applied to the analysis of three DA students' business studies assignments. There were three main reasons for this: (1) each assignment was significantly longer than their DA1 and DA2 (2000 words vs. 500 words); (2) unlike the assessment tasks for DA1 and DA2, there were no case study sources provided but the students were asked to choose their own organisation for the analysis and find sources of information to support their analysis as shown in Appendices 8C-8E; and (3) the transfer tasks required the students to apply a range of business concepts and frameworks taught in their modules rather than just one framework such as SWOT. Given these reasons, the case study analysis they were required to write would be more challenging and sophisticated than those that they wrote for DA1 and DA2. As each student was studying a different module, their assignments were also distinctive. They are reproduced in Appendices 8C – 8E.

The extent of 'far transfer' of generic stages, macro-Themes, hyper-Themes and conceptual development was examined in each of the students' assignments. The key findings are reported and discussed below.

Genre and generic stages

All three business studies assignments required students to produce a case study analysis of an organisation by applying the business concepts and models they studied in the module as indicated in the assignment tasks in Appendices 8C-8E. However, they were also expected to reflect on their own personal experience and use that experience to show their understanding of business concepts and frameworks. For this reason, their assessment texts also included some personal Recounts as micro genres within the case study analysis. For example, in paragraph 7 of her text, in which she applied Criterion 1 to her own situation, Amina wrote:

Excerpt 8.5

P7 The environment of the organisation is valuable for me because I would feel comfortable and confident to meet my targets together with my team.

Unlike Amina, both Lou and Natasha had shown steady progress in DA2 regarding generic stages of case study analyses. The transfer assessment texts by all three students showed that they had used appropriate generic stages for their assignments. For example, Amina's text has the following generic stages:

Orientation^ Criterion 1^ Criterion 2^ Criterion 3^ Criterion 4^ Criterion 5^ Criterion 6^ Summary

It is worth mentioning that Amina had regressed in DA2 so far as the generic stages in her text were concerned. The use of these stages in her business studies assignment is a significant achievement and her ability to do so may have been more developed in the transfer task. The other two students sustained their ability to employ effective generic stages for their assignments. The stages were often marked with sub-headings, particularly in Lou's text. Therefore, the particular ability demonstrated by these students can be identified as 'far transfer'.

It should also be noted that all three students passed their respective assignments although their performance varied. For example, Natasha's performance was highly appreciated by her tutor and awarded 65 marks out of 80 (i.e., 81%). The other two students scored between 40 – 50% on their assignments.

macro-Themes and hyper-Themes

An analysis of macro-Themes and hyper-Themes in the three students' transfer assessment texts was carried out to examine both their frequency and quality. The results for the macro-Theme showed that all three students were able to write a successful macro-Theme as demonstrated in their DA2 but not in DA1. Nevertheless, their macro-Themes in the transfer assessment task were qualitatively different from one another. For instance, Natasha wrote her macro-Theme at a very general level as shown in Excerpt 8.6 below:

Excerpt 8.6

> P1 Marketing strategy is central question in every business. In this strategy the goal is to launch
>
> the company with a minimal marketing budget.

As shown in the assignment task in Appendix 8E, her text was a 'report' on the analysis of

the market for the new gardening products and services to be provided by her company.

Although it is called a 'report', it is essentially a case study analysis. This assignment had

two parts and only Part 2 was analysed for this study because Part 1 required a different

genre even though it provided the background information for Part 2. Despite the macro-

Theme being general, Natasha's tutor rated her text highly. It can, however, be argued that

Part 1 of her assignment had already set the context and boundary of the analysis.

Therefore, the second sentence in the excerpt above specifies what the analysis does but it

does not include the aspects regarding her marketing strategies considered later in her

analysis (see Appendix 8F). On the other hand, both Amina and Lou wrote relatively better

macro-Themes (i.e., orientating the reader by predicting hyper-Themes in the analysis) as

exemplified in Excerpt 8.7. Nevertheless, Amina failed to explain how the six criteria she

selected for her analysis would be applied (see Appendix 8G).

Excerpt 8.7

> *Lou's macro-Theme*
>
> P1 The following report is based on M&S retail business and using different concepts and tools from
>
> units1-4 of block 3 and evidence from (M&S Annual report). An introduction of key success factors,
>
> listing the knowledge and management techniques has been mentioned with the view that they help
>
> the firm. The use of Political, Economic, Social, Technology, Legal and Environment analysis from
>
> part 1 focuses on addressing the developments and challenges that faces M&S and meeting its

corporate business capabilities or competencies that are required to deal with a very competitive

world.

A summary of the results for hyper-Themes is presented in Table 8.3. As each student

wrote their assignment in response to a different assignment task, the number of hyper-

Themes inevitably varied. The table shows that the majority (over 60%) of the hyper-

Themes were appropriate in each student's assignment. It should be noted that none of

these students had all the hyper-Themes that were appropriate in their unassisted

performance (first draft) on DA1 but apart from Amina, the other two students had all

appropriate hyper-Themes in their DA2 (see Chapter 7).

Table 8.3: Summary of results for hyper-Themes (transfer tasks)

Students	Number of appropriate hyper-Themes
Amina	15 out of 25
Lou	13 out of 18
Natasha	5 out of 7

In relation to the quality of the hyper-Themes, as explained in 7.5.2, when they were

connected with the macro-Theme in addition to focusing on the Theme of the paragraph,

they were considered successful. While some were very effective, some others were less so.

For instance, Natasha's hyper-Theme given in Excerpt 8.8 does not explicitly link back to

the macro-Theme (i.e., market strategy) and, thus, may not be considered as effective as it

should have been. Nonetheless, there is an assumption that *market segmentation* is an

aspect of *market strategy* already made known to the tutor in Part 1. Therefore, she may not

have made the explicit link between the macro-Theme and this hyper-Theme.

Excerpt 8.8

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;">

Natasha's hyper-Theme

P2 Segmentation is the identification of the customers within a market who demonstrate similar buyer behaviour.

Lou's hyper-Theme

P3 In this section it is important to understand the meaning of external analysis and what it means for the organisation.

</div>

On the other hand, Lou (Excerpt 8.8 above) linked the hyper-Theme explicitly with the macro-Theme (i.e., challenges faced by an organisation – M&S) thereby making it a successful hyper-Theme. In fact, her business studies tutor's feedback comment confirms that her structuring of the analysis was effective: 'You structure your report coherently'. It is her application of the business concepts which needed further development which is discussed in the next section.

On the basis of these results, it can be contended that these students transferred their ability to write an appropriate macro-Theme to a new and more challenging assessment context. Likewise, although these students did not write all the hyper-Themes appropriately, their texts did indicate that they carried over their skills from the previous assessment contexts, which may have been internalised.

Conceptual development

The students' genre knowledge and business studies conceptual knowledge in their assessment texts were examined. As discussed above, all three students demonstrated that they could use an appropriate conceptual framework for the case study analysis genre they wrote. In particular, they followed suitable generic stages and the macro-Theme for their transfer assessment text. Despite some less successful hyper-Themes, these students' knowledge of hyper-Themes was also realised in their assessment texts. In this respect, all three students seemed to have sustained their conceptual knowledge of the case study analysis in the transfer task.

However, their business studies conceptual knowledge was varied. To elucidate, Natasha appeared to have applied such knowledge effectively to her analysis as confirmed by her tutor's comments:

> *Lots of evidence that you've based your thinking on course concepts – good.* You've made extensive use of the course activities.
>
> [...]
>
> *Overall, your style and content are coming on very well – very business-like and well reasoned.* (italics mine, Natasha's B322 tutor feedback comments)

On the other hand, both Lou and Amina did not demonstrate sufficient ability to apply the business concepts and theories to their analysis. This may have been the reason why they did not score high marks on their assignments. Lou's tutor's comments below clearly suggest this:

> *Your use of concepts in units 3 and 4 could have been more expansive*, e.g.
> maybe Grieners theory or the Craig and Douglas reader on globalisation in Unit 4
> […]
>
> *Your report did these important conceptual parts of the course to some degree*.
> (italics mine, Lou's B301 tutor)

Like the two DA tasks, this assignment required Lou to apply business concepts and frameworks to the analysis. However, it needed a wide range of these, including STEP and SWOT. Most importantly, not only did the student have to apply them to the analysis but also evaluate them. Conceptually, such a task would be more sophisticated and challenging than those that Lou accomplished for DA1 and DA2. However, one may also argue that B301 module materials should have provided her with the required conceptual knowledge for this assignment. Yet, module materials themselves as symbolic mediators may not have been sufficient without a human mediator to fully activate her maturing ability vis-à-vis the application and evaluation of the conceptual knowledge in question (Kozulin, 2003). It is also intriguing that Lou did not explicate SWOT sufficiently in paragraph 5 (see Appendix 8H) while applying this framework to the analysis of M&S' business environment although she accomplished her DA2 using this framework successfully. In this regard, her ability to apply this framework had not fully matured and, consequently, she may not have been able to transfer it to a new assessment context.

In addition to the conceptual knowledge of writing a case study analysis genre, the technicality in the writing of the three students was investigated, as explained in 7.3. A summary of results for technicality is shown in Figures 8.2.1, 8.2.2 and 8.2.3.

Figure 8.2. 1: Technicality in Amina's transfer task (% of total technical terms)
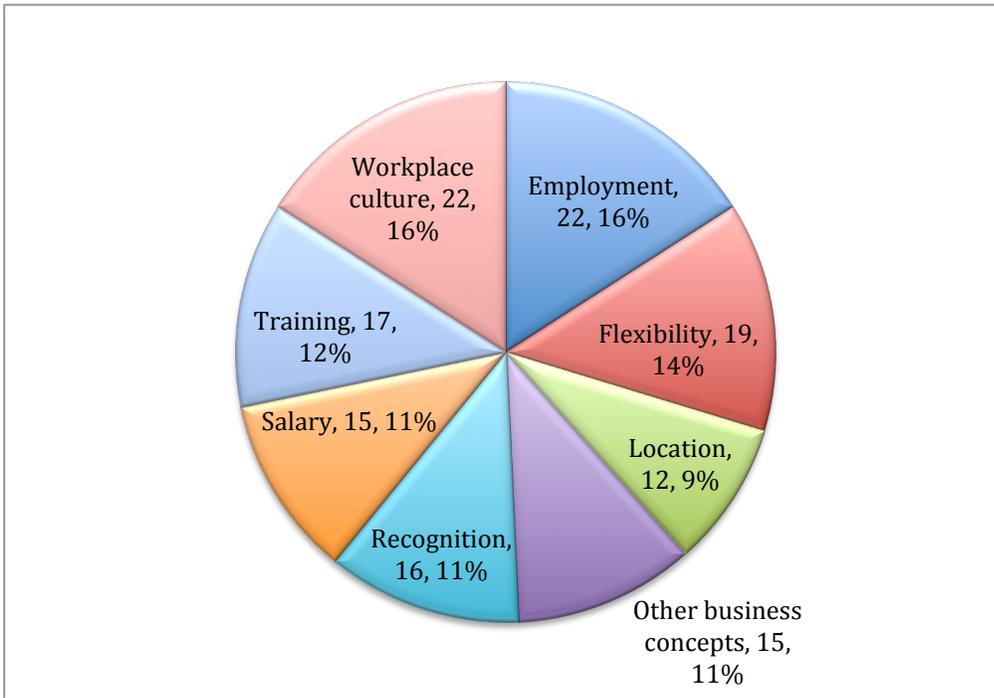
Figure 8.2. 2: Technicality in Lou's transfer task (% of total technical terms)
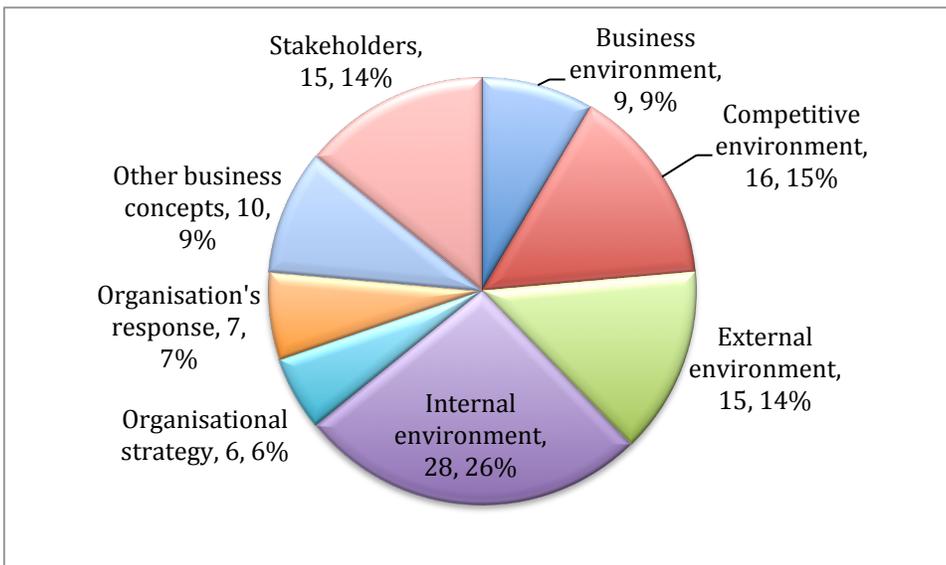
Figure 8.2. 3: Technicality in Natasha's transfer task (% of total technical terms)
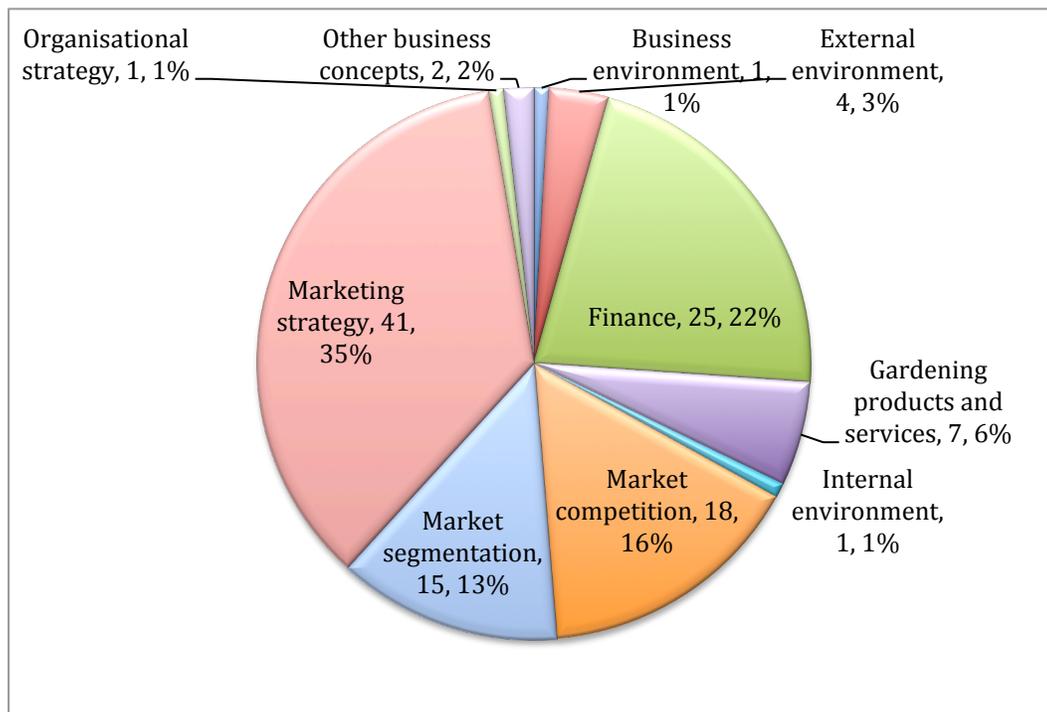
The figures show that there are a considerable number of technical terms used in all three students' assessment texts. Most of the categories used here are different from those in DA1 and DA2 given the nature of the specific assignments and field (e.g., business environment, accounting). As can be seen in these charts, the majority (i.e., at least 89%) of the terms were relevant to each case study analysis when 'other business concepts' were counted as not being directly relevant to the analysis. This result may indicate that the students were able to transfer their ability to apply appropriate technical terms to their analysis. However, the level of transfer varied for each student. For instance, Natasha appeared to be the most successful by employing almost only relevant terms in her analysis. The majority (89%) of her terms are represented by four core aspects of her analysis: *marketing strategy, finance, market competition and market segmentation*. Although Lou and Amina's texts contain a significant number of technical terms, they did not appear to

have been used effectively as their tutors commented. The lack of effective application of the appropriate technical terms in these two students' transfer assessment texts may have been caused by various factors including lack of time and not being able to understand these terms adequately. Furthermore, their tutors pointed out that their assignment texts lacked *criticality* and *reflection* which are more demanding to demonstrate in their texts than just applying them to business situations. However, in this study for the purpose of comparisons I focussed on meaning making resources which I had examined and tracked in the students' previous writing.

8.6 Summary

The goal of this chapter was to explore how much learners can transfer their academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge from one assessment task to another in the context of undergraduate business studies. For this purpose, the SFL genre theory was applied to consider the independent learner performance regarding the case study analysis genre schema, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes which were identified as problematic in the first assignment. Additionally, the students' capacity to make ideational meaning was also tracked through their transfer assessment texts. Feuerstein's notions of 'near transfer' and 'far transfer' were applied to examine the aforementioned aspects in the student assessment texts. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted and the key findings were reported.

The findings suggested that the transfer of learning (i.e., using generic stages, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes, and conceptual knowledge of these and business studies concepts) took place in the transfer assessment texts albeit differently for each of the four students. Whereas the NDA student (Kristie) demonstrated further development of her

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academic writing and conceptual knowledge, the DA students (Amina, Lou and Natasha) were able to transfer both academic writing and conceptual knowledge to their transfer assessment although Natasha appeared to be the most successful. Given the conceptually demanding nature of these assignments, these students' (except Natasha) reconstrual of their conceptual knowledge was not as successful as their academic writing skills (i.e., genre, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes). This suggests that writing and conceptual development is a lengthy process that may benefit from a greater amount of mediation (as indicated by Kristie's performance), learner motivation and commitment. The results in this chapter, furthermore, support Feuerstein's (Feuerstein, et al., 2002) claim that only through structural cognitive change can one's higher mental functions (e.g., academic writing) be applicable to other different/complex situations as shown by Natasha's work.

Chapter 9: Conclusion: implications for practice and further research

9.1 Introduction

My motivation for the current study, as stated in Chapter 1, came from my longstanding interest in supporting university learners through assessment and my dissatisfaction with the current practice of limited support for learners with their writing through assignment feedback. As a tutor of academic writing modules, I have had an opportunity to understand the challenges faced by undergraduate and postgraduate students in their academic writing. In order to explore these challenges more systematically and contribute to knowledge and understanding of how university students can overcome their writing difficulties, I embarked on this research project. The study was concerned with academic writing instruction and assessment in HE. In particular, it explored challenges faced by undergraduate business studies students while writing their assignments, an area which is still under-researched from a sociocultural perspective (Englert et al., 2008). The study was underpinned by the Vygotskian socio-cultural theory (SCT) of learning and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Following a mixed methods approach, the study explored the process of dynamic assessment (DA) by examining the students' trajectory of academic writing and conceptual development.

In this concluding chapter, first, I will present a summary of the key findings. Then, I will describe the implications of this study for practitioners, especially those teaching academic writing. After setting out the limitations of the current study, I will conclude the thesis by suggesting areas that would benefit from further research.

9.2 Summary of key findings

This study focussed on six undergraduate business studies students at the Open University UK over a period of six to ten months, exploring the application of interactionist DA to academic writing assessment. The focus of the study was the Vygotskian notion of microgenesis (i.e., development over a short span of time) in relation to the students' academic writing. To examine their development, I considered their changing ZPDs in both their independent and mediated performance. The students' academic writing was examined in relation to their textual meanings and conceptual development (ideational meaning) as evidenced through their written assessment texts. The overarching research question (RQ) that guided this study was:

> To what extent do dynamic assessment procedures enhance learners' academic writing development and conceptual development?

Specifically, the study sought to explore these RQs:

1. What insight into learners' writing development does the analysis of tutor-learner interaction provide?
2. What do the analyses of student assessment texts (including drafts) demonstrate regarding students' academic writing and conceptual development?
3. Do learners following less dynamic assessment procedures perform differently?
4. To what extent, can learners transfer the academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge learned in one writing assessment task to another?

As explained in Chapter 5, four of the six students participated in DA and the other two students took part in non-dynamic assessment (NDA). This study had three main stages:

DA1 or NDA1, intervention (enrichment study materials) and DA2 or NDA2. Additionally, four of the six students (3 DA and 1 NDA) completed a transfer assessment task (i.e., a third assessment task that was similar to but more challenging than the first two). While the DA students received semiotic mediation via emails and instant messaging during the assessment, the NDA students were provided with one-off traditional tutor feedback on each of their assignments without much interaction. One NDA student (Kristie), however, had a telephone conversation with me about her NDA2 at her request after she completed it.

All the assignment tasks required the students to produce a case study analysis as described in 5.5.1. Following the interactionist DA approach combined with SFL genre theory, I, as a tutor, analysed all six students' first assignments to inform my DA intervention. The initial analysis showed that certain aspects of the text development of, and the conceptual knowledge required for, a case study analysis genre needed further development, albeit at different levels. For both the DA and the NDA students, these aspects included text organisation and development through macro-Themes and hyper-Themes (i.e., textual meanings) and the application of business concepts (i.e., technicality) and frameworks (including generic structure) in relation to conceptual development (i.e., ideational meanings). As a tutor, I used semiotic mediation to target these areas with DA students according to the ZPDs. With the NDA students, I gave traditional tutor feedback pointing out their strengths and weaknesses, but they did not have the kind of interaction around the assessment text that their DA counterparts did.

For both the DA and the NDA students, this study tracked their writing and conceptual development in the aforementioned areas. In order to examine both academic writing and conceptual development, qualitative and quantitative analysis methods were used. The

qualitative methods involved (1) investigating the quality of semiotic mediation and learner reciprocal moves during DA1 and DA2 and (2) analysing DA and NDA students' assessment texts, the business studies tutors' comments on these students' independent performance and the student interviews. The quantitative method included examining (1) the amount of mediation and learner reciprocal moves, (2) the extent of successful use of features of the case study analysis genre, and (3) the frequency of technicality in the student assessment texts. The findings from both the qualitative and the quantitative analyses provide insights into the academic writing and conceptual development of six students over time as summarised below.

First and foremost, the analysis of student-tutor interactions around assessment texts provides insights into the DA students' ZPDs (i.e., their potential writing abilities) as reported in Chapter 6, thus addressing RQ1. The qualitative analysis of the mediational strategies suggests that the students benefited from support ranging from implicit mediation such as *Showing affect* and *Asking learner to identify the problem* to explicit mediation such as *Providing a choice of possible solution(s)* and *Providing the correct solution*, hence, supporting the findings of previous DA studies such as Poehner (2005) and Ableeva (2010). The qualitative results for the learner reciprocal moves indicate that the learners became more independent in their second assessment (DA2) than the first one (DA1). This may have been a result of the semiotic mediation they received in DA1. The quantitative analysis shows that there was a lower frequency of the more explicit mediational moves in DA2 than in DA1, thereby suggesting the learners' increasing control of academic writing during this study. Likewise, the results for the learner reciprocal moves show that the learners made more independent moves such as *Verbalising conceptual understanding* and

Overcoming problems in the second assessment than in the first one, an indication of the learner taking more responsibility for their learning.

The analysis also shows, however, that there is not only progression but also regression or no progress during learners' writing development. From the Vygotskian perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) on development, such 'twists and turns' in writing development are not surprising as development can be both evolutionary and revolutionary. In sum, the results show that through semiotic mediation following DA principles, it is possible to gain insights into learners' maturing writing abilities and nurture them further to help the learners internalise them. It also indicates that this process takes a long time and requires sustained motivation from both tutor and learner to take advantage of semiotic mediation offered during the DA procedures.

Secondly, a textual/linguistic analysis of the students' assessment texts serves as a tool for tracking their academic writing and conceptual development (RQ2 and 3). This is necessary to provide further evidence of the students' changing ZPDs and the impact of tutor mediation on their writing because the tutor mediation data provides only a partial picture of writing development. In other words, this study used SFL as an analytical tool for analysing the students' assessment texts and by so doing provided linguistic evidence for the students' changing ZPDs and the impact of tutor mediation on writing development.

The findings of the textual analysis, as reported in Chapter 7, suggest that the DA students made gains both in their control of a case study analysis genre and in their control of business studies concepts. These gains were related to those features of the case study analysis genre which were not successfully realised in the first student assessment text as identified in their unassisted performance (first draft). The students' academic writing

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development was tracked by examining the development of textual and ideational meanings in their assessment texts during this study. The foci of the textual meaning were on generic structure, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes in the assessment texts. The analysis of ideational meaning was mainly concerned with the application of business concepts and frameworks (e.g., STEP and SWOT) as required by the assessment tasks. Additionally, conceptual understanding of the case study analysis genre as revealed in the assignments was also considered as evidence of conceptual development. As reported in Chapter 7, three of the four DA students made steady progress regarding generic stages, macro-Themes, hyper-Themes and the application of the relevant business concepts and frameworks to their case study analysis texts. The NDA students' progress over the two assignments, however, was either inconsistent or minimal. Therefore, it can possibly be argued that the DA procedures enhanced the DA students' maturing academic writing abilities as such procedures may have been sensitive enough to help the learners internalise them. In contrast, the NDA students' academic writing abilities remained either the same or regressed which may be due to the lack of semiotic mediation that could target their ZPDs. It is, of course, difficult to draw any firm conclusions given the scale of the study.

Finally, this study investigated the extent of transfer of academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge from one writing assessment task to another (RQ4). As reported in Chapter 8, the twin transfer of academic writing skills and conceptual knowledge gained in the first and the second assignments were examined by using the notions of 'near transfer' and 'far transfer' (Feuerstein, et al., 2002). Only four transfer assessment texts were available for this study from three DA students and one NDA student. Additionally, their assignment scores and the tutor comments provided supplementary data. The analysis focussed on the same features of a case study analysis genre and aspects of conceptual

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development as for RQ2 and 3 to consider their transfer to the transfer assessment text. The findings indicate that the transfer of learning (i.e., the use of generic stages, macro-Themes, hyper-Themes and the application of business concepts and frameworks) from the previous assessment tasks to the new ones occurred, though differently for each of the four learners. However, there was a contrast between the DA and the NDA learners. For example, the NDA student (Kristie) not only transferred her ability to write an effective macro-Theme but also developed her ability to produce successful hyper-Themes and application of business frameworks in her transfer assessment text. This, nevertheless, might have been an effect of the telephone dialogue she had with me after she completed NDA2 (see 8.5.1). The DA students sustained their ability to write effective macro-Themes and hyper-Themes in their transfer assessment texts although, except for Natasha, they did not show the same level of transfer regarding their conceptual knowledge. The reason for not being able to transfer conceptual knowledge might have been due to the more complicated application of multiple business concepts and frameworks within one case study analysis when compared with the previous two assessments (i.e., DA1 and DA2).

Although these findings cannot be generalised, given the specific context in which the DA procedures were implemented, the study, nevertheless, has several implications for writing assessment in HE. The next section explains the implications of this study for practitioners.

9.3 Implications for practice

This study has a number of implications for academic writing practitioners in HE. As mentioned throughout this thesis, this study employed an innovative approach to assessing academic writing in business studies. Therefore, the findings from this study may provide

academic writing practitioners with insights into how such an approach could be used to support their own learners' writing and conceptual development.

The study identified a set of mediational moves which appear to have worked effectively in enhancing participants' academic writing. Although these moves were identified in the context of this particular study, they could be trialled in other learning contexts. For example, there were three mediational moves that were frequently used in this study: *Locating part of the text needing improvement, Asking to consider a possible solution* and *Providing metalinguistic clues.* Alongside other effective teaching techniques, an academic writing tutor could employ these moves in their writing instruction/ assessment. Additionally, rather than focusing only on students' sentence grammar, the tutor could concentrate on higher level features of a text including conceptual frameworks and so support students in developing their disciplinary writing (such as business studies as exemplified here).

Another finding that has a pedagogical implication is the importance of the interpersonal relationship (i.e., affect) between the learner and the tutor as identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, thus corroborating previous studies (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). All DA participants stated that the interaction with the tutor was comfortable and relaxing. For example, during the interview, Michelle said, '… It was a lot more comforting for me to do the assignment [i.e., DA]. Before [i.e., traditional assessment] it was a bit stressful…' Likewise, the mediation data included *Showing affect* as one of the tutor moves. These may have a positive effect on learning and learner motivation (cf. Carless, 2006). In fact, affect has long been recognised in Vygotskian SCT of learning (e.g., Daniels, 2007) and in Feuerstein's MLE (Feuerstein, et al., 2002).

Finally, another important implication of this study is the power of the DA procedures to diagnose difficulties faced by students and help them overcome such difficulties through a dialogic process. Due to the nature of flexible semiotic mediation followed in this study, it was possible to diagnose different levels of the same problem. For example, Amina and Lou had similar problems regarding the use of hyper-Themes in their DA1 draft 1. However, through semiotic mediation it became clear that Amina needed more support in her ability to handle hyper-Themes than Lou did as shown by their second unassisted performance.

Although the findings indicate the potential power of DA, there are, nevertheless, a number of considerations to bear in mind. For example, an inexperienced DA practitioner may find it challenging to diagnose, identify and work with students' ZPDs regarding their academic writing (e.g., see Haywood & Lidz, 2007). Furthermore, despite being valuable, implementing a DA approach on a large scale has practical constraints due to the time needed and the intensive nature of the one-on-one dialogue.

9.4 Implications for educational researchers

This study has importance for educational researchers as well. In particular, it has implications for academic writing assessment research, SCT-based writing research, and DA-based writing research.

This study contributes to the growing body of SCT-oriented writing research and, by the same token, genre studies in relation to student learning. In SCT, writing is seen as a social activity. This means writing is always situated in a cultural context and often collaboratively constructed through direct or indirect semiotic mediation (see, for example,

Prior, 2008, p. 58). This study explored academic writing situated in a discipline (i.e., business studies) 'housed' in an institutional context (i.e., The OU). As SCT-oriented writing research, this study supports previous studies that writing development benefits from semiotic mediation (e.g., Mahboob, et al., 2010; Wegner, 2004).

The most significant contribution of this study is the use of SFL as a theory of language which provided evidence of students' ZPDs and the impact of tutor mediation on writing development over time. This is new to ZPD research and DA-based research, a response to Gardner's (2010) call (see 2.3.3).

As stated in Chapter 3, DA-based research on (academic) writing has not, to date, been reported in the literature apart from Antón (2009) which, however, lacks details of the DA procedures for writing assessment. This study has shown that it is possible to apply DA principles to academic writing assessment. Additionally, it has demonstrated that DA procedures can be implemented in an ODL context. In particular, this study has extended previous DA studies such as Poehner (2005) by identifying mediational strategies for academic writing which do not seem to exist in the DA literature, and using independent subject tutors' comments as complementary data.

The research methodology used in this study can be of direct relevance to those who are involved in academic writing assessment research. Of particular importance is the combination of the two theoretical frameworks, namely, DA and SFL which allowed the researcher to examine not only the product but also the process. Given the predominance of product-oriented research on academic writing assessment, this study provides an alternative way of investigating the process of writing assessment.

9.5 Limitations

This study has had a number of limitations given the research context. These relate to time constraints and data collection procedures. It was reported in Chapter 5 that this study had two phases: the pilot phase and main study. While the pilot phase lasted approximately six months, the main study was completed between nine and ten months. The participants in this study were part-time students working full-time. This meant only a limited amount of time being available for voluntary participation in the study. This had major implications for data collection. For example, Lena dropped out after submitting her second assignment and therefore, it was not possible to consider her transfer assessment text. Likewise, instead of spending a few weeks for each DA task, two to three months had to be spent on each, thus increasing the time and possibly affecting the impact of the semiotic mediation on subsequent drafts of the assessment text. This may also have had a negative impact on the participants' motivation for their continuation in the study. Additionally, it was a labour-intensive activity for the researcher/ tutor. DA that is sensitive to group ZPDs may have made it less labour-intensive (see below).

Related to time constraints are problems associated with data collection. Given the demand on students' time required by this study, it was sometimes difficult to receive a revised version of the assessment text from students. This may have had an effect on the findings. For example, Amina could not revise her DA2 text more than once. Similarly, she could not continue using instant messaging for mediation which had worked well during her DA1. Another limitation of the data collection is linked with the business studies tutors' views on student performance. Although they provided written comments on the assignments, some

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of them were limited. A brief interview with each of them could have provided further explanation for their written comments.

Given the small scale of this study, the specific disciplinary area of business studies and the institutional context of distance learning, findings must obviously be generalised with caution. However, other researchers may be able to apply the insights from this study to their contexts.

9.6 Future directions for possible research

There are a number of directions that future studies in this area can take. First and foremost, more DA studies need to be conducted in academic writing and ODL. There are some specific directions that future studies could pursue, which are briefly outlined below.

9.6.1 Group DA

DA studies hitherto have focussed on individual learners (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011; Poehner, 2009). Only recently has there been some interest in group DA (GDA). This situation may not be surprising given the individualised nature of mediation offered in DA approaches by targeting a particular learner's ZPD. Conducting GDA requires much more carefully planned procedures for making semiotic mediation sensitive to group ZPDs, which may be much more complicated and challenging than working in one individual learner's ZPD. Therefore, there has been no GDA research reported in the literature although Haywood and Lidz (2007, pp. 224-25) mention an example from their work with the US Army. They also propose a number of GDA principles to be followed while conducting GDA. These principles include things like homogenous groups (i.e., people

with the same level of ability), and standardised mediation. However, these principles have not yet been applied to educational contexts.

Due to the large number of students enrolled in most university courses, GDA is of relevance. Given that individual tutors or lecturers have at least 20 students in their group, they may be able to identify their group ZPD in order to conduct GDAs. However, this area is complex and needs further investigation.

9.6.2 Computer-based DA

The current study was conducted in a computer-mediated environment whereby almost all interactions (e.g., emails) took place through computers. However, the potential of using computers as a mediating tool was not a focus of the investigation. This area of DA research, known as computer-based DA (C-BDA), is quite new (e.g., Guthke & Beckmann, 2000; Tzuriel & Shamir, 2002). Tzuriel and his colleagues have, for instance, explored the potential application of computers for assisting mediation in DA (e.g., Shamir et al., 2007; Tzuriel & Shamir, 2002). Mostly they have worked with primary school children, investigating changes in their cognitive ability. In their C-BDA approach, both computers (programmed with DA procedures) and a human mediator work together so as to maximally attune mediation to individual needs.

Guthke and Beckmann (2000) report that they adapted their *Leipzig Lerntest* for a computerised version. It provides standardised five-level assistance (i.e., mediation) to the learner. Questions are sequenced in the order of difficulty and they are provided according to the learner response. Unlike Tzuriel and Shamir's, this C-BDA does not include a human mediator. The programme generates both the score and the learner profile for each learner

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regarding the number of attempts a learner makes at responding to a task and the amount of assistance they need to complete it.

The most recent work in this area is an ongoing project called *Computerised Dynamic Assessment of Language Proficiency in French, Russian and Chinese* at the Pennsylvania State University, US. The project is led by Lantolf and Poehner, the two leading DA researchers in applied linguistics. The project is developing a computerised version of interventionist DA for those learning Chinese, French and Russian languages, and it focuses on assessing listening and reading comprehension skills (see CLA, n.d.). As the project is work in progress, there is no research report available yet.

Given the potential contribution of DA to academic writing development, C-BDA may be a useful direction for future research. However, assessing disciplinary writing and learning is much more complex and different than other contexts such as foreign language learning because the former is conceptually very challenging, and therefore, C-BDA, without a human mediator, may not be able to respond to learners' ZPDs effectively. For this reason, a considerable amount of planning and piloting may be needed initially.

9.6.3 Synchronous communication

As explained above, computers have the potential for DA. More importantly, technological tools mediated by computers seem to play an important role in different ways for different learners as observed in this study although the focus was not on the investigation of the affordances of technological tools. For example, one of the participants (Amina) was offered mediation through synchronous communication (i.e., instant messaging) which she really liked. However, due to her personal circumstances, she could not participate in the

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same way in DA2 as she did in DA1. This was possibly the reason why she did not do as well on DA2 as she did on DA1. As only one participant interacted through a synchronous communication tool which was in DA1 only, this study had very limited data as to how mediation could be provided via synchronous communication such as instant messaging. A useful future direction for this research could be investigating how DA principles work via synchronous communication compared to the asynchronous medium such as emails. There is only one study in this area reported in the literature (i.e., Oskoz, 2005) described in Chapter 2. Oskoz's study was on adult Spanish learners' language development in a synchronous computer-mediated environment. To date, there has been no study of academic writing in such a context and thus investigation is needed to add to our understanding regarding the application of semiotic mediation via synchronous computer-mediated communication.

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Appendices

Chapter 1 Appendices

Appendix 1A Guidance notes for LB160 TMA2

Guidance notes

You should use the stakeholder model introduced and discussed in Sessions 2 and 3 of Book 1. In both the sessions, the model focussed on the power and interest of the stakeholders and their influence and impact in the organisation. The cause–effect relationship between power, interest, impact and influence will be useful in analysing this case study.

Note that the text you read for eTMA 01 is an extract from the complete case study presented here.

Using the feedback you received from your tutor for eTMA 01, identify the main stakeholders in Asda Wal-Mart and the nature of their 'stakes' in the company. You should then go on to examine the relative influence of these stakeholders on the shaping of the company's external environment and the events outlined in the case.

Try to use the appropriate referencing conventions if you refer to other sources in your text. However, you will not be assessed on this in this eTMA.

Appendix 1B: Marking criteria for LB160 eTMA 02

Marks (90)	Marking criteria
20	A. Use of source material – is information from case study and other sources correct and appropriate for the task?
	uses data from the case study as evidence information from case study and business studies texts is interpreted and transferred correctly
25	B. Structure and development of the text – is the structure and development of the case study analysis clear and appropriate to the title and its context?
	text structure is appropriate to the task (stakeholder categories frame the analysis, there are levels in the text, cause-effect analysis is used) evidence is used that supports the analysis explanations link the evidence to the analysis the information in the text is well linked
20	C. Control of academic writing style – does the writing style conform to appropriate patterns of written academic English?
	appropriate choice of vocabulary and sentence structure for a stakeholder analysis appropriate use of business concept words appropriate combinations of words

	appropriate relationship with reader appropriate evaluation language
15	D. Grammatical correctness
	sentence structure follows recognisable and appropriate patterns of English noun groups formed correctly verbs formed correctly
10	E. Qualities of presentation
	spelling generally correct word processing appropriate paragraphing reflects analysis structure capitals, italics etc are appropriate

Chapter 4 Appendix

Appendix 4A: The 3x3 framework

The 3x3: a framework for describing linguistic resources of student writing in the academic domain (Humphrey et al, 2010, p.188)

Metafunction	1. Social activity: Genre & Register (whole text)	2. Discourse Semantic (phases)	3. Grammar and Expression (clauses and sentences)
A. **Ideational Meanings** *(parts)*	i. Do beginning, middle and end stages of texts build knowledge relevant to discipline specific topics and purposes? ii. Does the language construct the technical, specialised and formal knowledge of the	i. Are topics defined and classified according to discipline specific criteria? ii. Is information related in logical relationships (eg. time, cause, consequence, comparison)? iii. Are tables, diagrams, lists, formulae, examples and quotes logically integrated with verbal text (eg. to extend, report, specify or qualify points)?	i. Do elements within noun groups effectively describe and classify specialised terms (eg. classifying adjectives, defining clauses)? ii. Do verb groups express processes relevant to the genre (eg defining, classifying; cause and effect, reporting)? iii. Are circumstances (eg. prepositional phrases) used to specify location of time, place, etc where necessary? iv. Is tense consistent with genre and expressed

	discipline area (**field**)?	iv. Is information extended across phases (eg. in terms of general/specific; point/elaboration; evidence/ interpretation; claim/evaluation)?	through logically structured verbal elements? v. Are nouns typically generalised and determined correctly in terms of mass/count; single/plural; generic/specific? vi. Is vocabulary discipline specific and formal (eg. no contractions or phrasal verbs)?
B. **Interpersonal** **Meanings** *(prosodies)*	i. Do texts convince the reader by moving points or positions forward across the stages (eg, by amplifying, justifying, reinforcing and acknowledging experts in the field)? ii. Does the language present points and arguments in authoritative, impersonal	i. Does the interaction with the reader focus on giving information (ie. no questions or commands)? ii. Is the subject matter evaluated according to institutional values (eg. relevance, validity, significance)? iii. Are grading resources used to imply evaluation? iv. Do patterns of evaluation develop the writers' stance within and across phases?	i. Do Mood choices realise information giving function (ie. subject ^finite)? ii. Do Subjects and verbs agree in number? iii. Are evaluations often achieved through infusing lexical items with degrees of intensity and attitude? iv. Are interpersonal objective metaphors used to negotiate opinions and recommendations (eg. 'It is clear that' or 'There is a need for..' rather than 'I think' or 'you should')? v. Is source material incorporated into text through

	and objective ways (**tenor**)?	v. Are authoritative sources used to support points? vi. Does the writer include and control the voices of external sources to develop points and guide the reader towards a preferred position?	correctly formed quotes, paraphrasing and summarising? vi. Are conjunctions and continuatives used to monitor and adjust reader expectations? vii. Are sources cited correctly (eg. using projection) and referenced according to discipline specifications (eg. MLA)?
C. **Textual Meanings** *(waves)*	i. Is the content previewed in the beginning stage (introduction) and reviewed in the end stage (ie. conclusion)? ii. Are global headings and abstracts used to signal layout of longer texts? iii. Does the language construct coherent,	i. Are ideas developed within phases (eg. paragraphs) with topic and summary sentences used to predict and summarise? ii. Does information flow logically from sentence to sentence across phases? iii. Are entities and parts of text tracked through cohesive resources (eg. reference, substitution and repetition)? iv. Are internal conjunctions used to	i. Do choices of unmarked Theme sustain orientation to the topic; selections for marked Theme mark shifts in orientation? ii. Is grammatical metaphor used to rework processes, qualities and logical relations as abstract entities and relationships (e.g. using nominalisation to express processes as nouns rather than verbs)? iii. Is active and passive voice used to adjust information focus and Theme?

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| | signposted and abstract texts (**mode**)? | organise text?

v. Does information flow from more dense abstract terms in topic sentences to expanded concrete terms in subsequent sentences? | iv. Are articles and pronouns used to keep track of participants?

v. Do spelling, punctuation, bullets, paragraphing and layout assist information structure?

vi. Are abstract nouns used to generalise and track ideas? |

Chapter 5 Appendices

Appendix 5A: Invitation letter and consent form for participants

Date: 14 July 2009

Re: Dynamic assessment of academic writing in open and distance education

Dear LB160 Student,

I would like to ask you to participate in a research project which will explore the application of a new assessment method to students learning academic writing in English for business studies in the Open University. It is hoped that this assessment approach will enhance teaching and learning academic writing.

Your participation in this study has no link with your assessment scores on LB160. However, you may learn a great deal about strengths and weaknesses in your academic writing skills and receive support to enhance your writing skills.

Participation in this study will involve six assessment sessions. Among these six, two will be from your normal LB160 TMAs but will bear no link with your LB160 assessment scores. During each of these sessions, you will be asked to write a short academic text in English. Any interaction between you and me (the principal investigator) in each session will be recorded. The recording will include the exchange of email messages, chats or any other written online exchange on assessment tasks as well as screen capture if applicable. Please note that by participating in this study you are agreeing to let the principal investigator use the aforementioned written exchanges and your written academic texts for the study. They are strictly for research purposes because they will enable the principal investigator to document the assessment sessions. You may also be invited to participate in one-on-one tutoring sessions with the principal investigator.

Each assessment session may last from one to two hours in total due to the nature of writing and an individual's varied writing speed and ability. For those students who will participate in follow-up one-on-one tutoring sessions, these sessions may take up to one hour a week for approximately six weeks. These tutoring sessions can be scheduled with the principal investigator according to an individual student's circumstances and availability.

After the second and the final assessment session, you will be interviewed over the phone in which you will be asked to share your experience and thoughts on the assessment sessions with the

principal investigator. This interview may last up to 30 minutes and will be recorded for accurate documentation.

There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

It is hoped that your participation in this project will have two major benefits:

- Firstly, by participating in this study, you may gain insights into the areas of your English academic writing proficiency that are particular strengths as well as those areas where more work is needed. Since you receive immediate feedback on your writing and further support in addressing certain needs from the tutor-researcher, you may directly benefit from this project.

- Secondly, it is hoped that the results of this study will enhance our understanding of the relationship between assessment and teaching and assessment and learning. In particular, my intention is that a greater connection will be made between student performance on writing assessments and subsequent teaching strategies for future OU students.

Here are some of the selected comments made by the participants of this project at its pilot phase:

"... New method is more relaxed whilst the traditional one is more stressful, more personal... The method was very encouraging – prompted to think about the problem. Gave an opportunity to try again with some prompts. If required explicit help was given. Very 'dynamic' approach..." (Michelle – not a real name).

"... The new method of assessment helped a lot because there were more specific details that guided in the process of writing. When I see more details, I remember next time while writing... I would like to have a similar experience in other courses... I wish I could do the project longer... Can we start the research again?..." (Natasha – not a real name).

Only the researcher (myself) and my research supervisor will have access to the information (data) collected from you. I will use this information anonymously in my study. Any recorded information (your written texts, interactions and the interview) will be securely locked in my personal computer. The information will be destroyed by Summer 2012. If this research is published, no personal information will be included that will identify you.

You can ask questions about this study at any time during the project. Please direct your questions to the principal investigator, Prithvi Shrestha, by sending an email at p.n.shrestha@open.ac.uk or give a call on 01908 654265 (office) or 07932708094 (mobile) between 9am - 6pm any day. If you wish to talk with someone else about any aspect of this project, you can contact: Dr Caroline

Coffin, CLAC, Faculty of Education and Language Studies. Phone: 01908 858495. Email: c.coffin@open.ac.uk

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you will not receive any compensation.

You do not have to take part in this study. Any time during this research, you can withdraw from it by notifying the principal investigator. If you decide to withdraw from the study, any previously collected information about you will be destroyed. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to.

You must be 18 years or over to participate in this project.

If you are happy with the terms above and willing to participate in this study, please indicate so by signing the Consent Form sent to you and returning it to Prithvi Shrestha (p.n.shrestha@open.ac.uk).

Thank you and best wishes for your studies,

Prithvi Shrestha – Principal Investigator

Dr Caroline Coffin – Research Supervisor

Consent form

Dynamic assessment of academic writing in open and distance education

Prithvi Shrestha, OpenELT, Faculty of Education and Language Studies
Phone: 01908 654265, Email: p.n.shrestha@open.ac.uk
Please tick one of the boxes below:
   ❏ I would not like to participate in this project.
   ❏ I am willing to take part in this research.

If you are willing to take part in this project, please sign and complete the details below. Note that at any time during the research you will be free to withdraw, and your participation or non participation will not affect your access to tutorial support or your assessment scores on LB160.

The results of any research project involving Open University students constitute personal data under the Data Protection Act. They will be kept secure and not released to any third party.

I am willing to take part in this research, and by signing below I give my permission for the data collected to be used anonymously in any written reports, presentations and published papers relating to this study.

I understand that if I have any concerns or difficulties I can contact: Prithvi Shrestha, OpenELT, Faculty of Education and Language Studies. Phone: 01908 654265, Email: p.n.shrestha@open.ac.uk

If I wish to talk with someone else about any aspect of this project, I can contact: Dr Caroline Coffin, CLAC, Faculty of Education and Language Studies. Phone: 01908 858495. Email: c.coffin@open.ac.uk

My written consent will be sought separately if I am to be identified in any of the above.

Name: (please print)…………………………………………………………..

Student PI:...

Address ....
 ....

Signed:...
Date: ....

Appendix 5B: Sample DA session (DA1, main study)

Session 1: Google SWOT analysis
Instructions

You are going to read two articles: *Google parks its tanks right outside Microsoft's gates* by John Naughton and *Google plans Chrome operating system* by Jefferson Graham. These two articles form a case study of the new operating system for computers being developed by Google. The new operating system is going to compete with Microsoft's Windows operating system. Both the articles examine the business environment of Google's Chrome operating system.

Task

Read the two articles about Google's Chrome operating system for computers mentioned above and write a SWOT analysis of this product based on the articles. Your SWOT analysis should be of about 500 words.

Guidance notes

Using the SWOT framework, analyse the internal and external environment of this new operating system by drawing on the two articles. If you wish, you can also refer to Google's blog posting by clicking here. As you are using the SWOT framework to analyse Google's business environment based on this case study, look for examples that illustrate the four categories (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) in the SWOT framework in order to produce an effective SWOT analysis while you are making notes. If you are not sure about what SWOT means, please read the documents attached to the wiki home page for this task. You can also ask me for clarification or more information.

Please note that you can ask me (the researcher) any questions related to the assessment task during any time of the writing process by email or chat or any appropriate method that allows me to record your queries and my response. For this we are very likely to use a wiki to produce the text and MSN, Yahoo or Skype chat for our interaction according to your convenience. Nearer the time, I will let you know which tool we will be using. Before I make a decision on this, I would like to know your preference.

For writing your text, I would prefer a wiki because it allows me to see all the process you follow and the changes you make to your text which are crucial to my study. You will receive information regarding the wiki shortly.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Prithvi Shrestha

Two articles for the SWOT analysis

Article 1

Google plans Chrome operating system

By Jefferson Graham**, USA TODAY**

Until now, most consumer PCs have run on software from one of two companies: Microsoft or Apple.

But on Wednesday, search giant Google shook up the computing world by formally announcing plans to compete head-to-head against those companies on their home turf: PC operating systems.

Google gave notice that it's developing its own PC operating system initially targeted at netbooks, those pint-size, inexpensive PCs currently selling like hot cakes. Google is meeting with hardware manufacturers and hopes to have it on computers by the second half of 2010.

Google's goal is to be the opposite of today's operating systems — especially Windows, which commands 90% of the market. The ubiquitous software has a reputation as virus-prone and complicated. Google says its Google Chrome Operating System will be faster, smoother and lightweight.

An outgrowth of Google's Chrome Internet browser, the OS is designed "to start up and get you onto the Web in a few seconds," Google said in its official blog post announcing the product. Google says it can achieve that by building a system from the ground up, one that isn't constrained by working with a legacy system initially built in the 1980s.

Now, all it must is to execute.

Unlike Windows, Chrome is an open-source project like the Linux operating system that's popular with techies, which means outside software developers are welcome to work on it. And Google

believes developers who have a stake in the project will find a way to bring Chrome to a wide variety of PCs quickly, says a person with direct knowledge of Google's intentions, who isn't authorized to speak on behalf of the company.

Love it or hate it, Microsoft sells some 400 million copies of Windows annually. PC manufacturers —Dell, Hewlett-Packard, Lenovo, Acer, Toshiba and more — offer Windows on most PCs. When Microsoft comes out with a new operating system — as it will in the fall with Windows 7 — that's what most consumers get when they purchase a new PC. Microsoft declined to comment on Google's announcement.

But Google's operating system will be free, compared with the average $45 per machine manufacturers pay for Windows.

"Microsoft has a real problem," says Charles Wolf, an analyst at Needham & Co. "HP can now say to Microsoft, 'We've got a great operating system (Google) that doesn't cost us anything — what are you going to do about it?' " Linux, too, is sometimes free, but it can be hard to use.

Still, for consumers, "The learning process of any change is so substantial, most people will resist it, unless Google can really show a compelling reason," says Phil Leigh, an analyst for Inside Digital Media. "Most will stick with what they know."

The battle is on

Google has been locked in a battle with Microsoft for years.

Microsoft urges consumers to use its MSN.com as a home page on the Web, to make its new Bing (formerly Live) their search engine of choice, and to use its Internet Explorer browser, effectively bypassing Google.

Google — the most visited website worldwide — countered last year with Chrome, its own browser. It says some 30 million people are using it now.

Don't like Microsoft's Office software? Google offers online word processing, spreadsheet and presentation programs that are free.

Microsoft, which has been trying to catch up to Google's dominance of search advertising (5.5% vs. 72% market share in April, according to Hitwise), recently launched Bing, a well-received search overhaul that's been advertised heavily.

In reaching for Microsoft's cash cow, the operating system, analysts say, Google is in for a tough haul.

"Google will find that it's much harder than it looks," says Roger Kay, president of Endpoint

Technologies Associates. "There're all those drivers and devices that have to be supported."

Microsoft has huge customer service departments. As anyone who's ever tried to contact Google knows, there are no customer service reps to call on the phone.

Microsoft is unaccustomed to having operating system competitors, but Kay says "it will do whatever it can to fight back."

Chrome isn't Google's first operating system. With more consumers conducting searches on mobile devices, Google launched Android, an operating system for phones.

The clash of tech titans has rekindled questions about whether either has what it takes to diversify beyond their respective core businesses. Microsoft, for instance, continues to derive some 80% of its revenue from selling the Windows operating system and Office suite; this despite pouring billions into search advertising, online services, video games and other businesses.

Similarly, Google gets 97% of its revenue from online advertising, despite multiple attempts to diversify with Google Apps, instant messaging, photo-editing software and Android.

Android could get to a netbook before Chrome does: Upstart PC maker Acer announced in June that it would begin selling Google netbooks in October based on Android. Acer declined to comment for this story.

Taking it online

Trip Chowdhry, an analyst at Global Equities Research, says Google will begin getting netbook customers by targeting the 60 million users of its Gmail e-mail service. "The influencing power will be on the company that can provide a branded and exceptional online experience."

Microsoft sells 400 million copies of Windows yearly. "Can that 400 million become 800 million?" asks Chowdhry. "Not likely. Can Google's 60 million grow to 1 billion? Yes."

Matt Rosoff, an analyst at research firm Directions on Microsoft, says Google will need to counter Microsoft's strong marketing and consumer support with efforts of its own.

"It will need to devote serious marketing resources to explain to average consumers, not just tech enthusiasts, why they'd want this new OS," he says.

Analysts see Apple getting hurt by Google's challenge, as well.

A Google netbook at $300 would be $700 less than Apple's current entry-level laptop, the $999 MacBook.

"The growth in the market is coming from netbooks, and Apple's been missing that," says Gene Munster, an analyst at Piper Jaffray. "We believe Apple will respond with a netbook in the first

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quarter of next year — but it will be more expensive than

Google's."

Meanwhile, Microsoft is going to be anything but quiet this year. It can fall back on deep relationships with software developers and retailers. And it will almost certainly tweak pricing and features of Windows 7 to compete, Rosoff says.

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/technology/2009-07-08-google-chrome-operating-system_N.htm (posted 9 July 2009; accessed 23 July 2009)

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Article 2

Now Google parks its tanks right outside Microsoft's gates

John Naughton

The Observer, Sunday 12 July 2009

What's the toughest question a venture capitalist can ask? Answer: "What will you do if Google enters your market?" The web has been buzzing with speculation that senior Microsoft executives are now asking that question. The truth is that they have been asking it for quite a while. In an intriguing interview he gave several years ago, Bill Gates observed that the only company out there that reminded him of Microsoft in its early days was Google. He didn't elaborate, but most of the audience knew what he meant: a company that was smart, agile and hell-bent on world domination.

The reason for the excitement last week was Google's announcement that it was developing an operating system - and dominance of the market for operating systems is the source of Microsoft's power. Until now, Google had studiously ignored this part of the market, which seemed like a smart strategy: after all, only a fool attacks on the enemy's strongest front. Instead Google concentrated on picking off other pieces of Microsoft territory, starting with

Hotmail (attacked with Gmail), MSN (Google Talk), Microsoft Office (Google Docs and Apps) and, latterly, Internet Explorer (the Google Chrome browser).

With the 20/20 vision of hindsight, this can seem like a purposeful route-march towards the ultimate goal - replacement of Microsoft as the dominant company in the computing universe. In that sense the announcement of an upcoming Google OS can indeed be seen as the opening salvo in the final battle.

But there's another way of looking at it. The intriguing thing about the Google announcement is not that it is developing an OS, but that it is switching tack. For nearly two years the company has been developing a Linux-based OS for mobile phones under the Android label. Most of us who have used Android assumed it was only a matter of time before a version tailored for Netbooks was released.

But that is not what Google announced. There wasn't much technical detail in the company's blog post, but the one thing that is clear is that the new OS will be - in its words - "a natural extension of Google Chrome". It is, they go on to say, "our attempt to rethink what operating systems should be".

If true, we have reached a significant milestone because what the Google guys propose amounts to turning the world upside down. Up to now, the operating system was at the heart of every computing device, transforming the machine from an expensive paperweight into something that could do useful things - running programs, managing displays, handling keyboard and mouse, etc. And because the OS had to be able to do all of this, it was the largest, most complex and most important piece of software of all.

In the old paradigm, the web browser was just another program the OS had to support. When the PC was the platform, that made perfect sense, but that paradigm has been steadily eroding. As broadband penetration increased, more and more people began to get their "computing" services not from their PC but from server farms over the net. Imperceptibly, we have been moving into a world in which, to repeat an old mantra, "the network is the computer".

If the network is indeed the computer, then the browser - our window on to the network - becomes the key piece of software. For many people today, the browser is the only program they really need. So it was only to be expected that somebody would eventually ask why

we needed vast, clunky, expensive operating systems (such as Windows Vista, say) when really all that is required is a life-support system for a browser. That's what the Google engineers have asked. Their answer is that only a minimalist OS is now needed, and that is what they are developing - and what millions will be running in the latter part of 2010.

We have been here before. In 1995 the founders of a firm called Netscape had the same idea. If the web was going to be the key application, they reasoned, surely the browser could effectively become the operating system. They were unwise enough to say this in the hearing of Bill Gates, who realised instantly it posed a serious threat to Microsoft's core product. At that moment, Netscape's fate was sealed: careless talk costs companies.

But that was then and this is now. And whatever else it may be, Google ain't Netscape.

Ask Mr Gates.

Available from:

http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/organgrinder/2009/jul/12/google-operating-system-microsoft (posted 12 July 2009; accessed 15 July 2009)

Appendix 5C: The intervention materials

Developing a paragraph/ argument

A good text has a structure which is easy to follow. Likewise, a paragraph should have the same feature. An 'easy-to-follow' paragraph contains a good flow of information. In order to manage the flow of the information effectively, you need to pay attention to some crucial elements of a paragraph. They are theme and point, link between ideas and the movement from general to particular. Each of them is explained briefly below.

Levels in a paragraph

Each paragraph moves from a general level of meaning to a particular one. The first sentence makes a general point of the paragraph which is developed further later through explanations and examples. This is one of the ways of maintaining the information flow in the text. Let us look at a paragraph from Bonnie's essay.

Activity 1

Spend about 20 minutes on this activity.

Purpose: To notice levels of meaning in a paragraph.

Task: Read Extract A carefully first to find out what this paragraph is about (sentences numbered). Then complete the step diagram below to show the movement of high and low level meanings in this extract.

Extract A (from Bonnie's essay)

(1) An important factor in economic well–being is investment. (2) '…most economists agree…that high levels of investment are associated with a healthy economy' (Lucas, 2000, p.24). (3) Nike does not invest directly in the developing countries where it operates, but it encourages others to invest by sub-contracting the production of its shoes. (4) Factories will be built and people will be employed, injecting money into the economy which will pass around and create more economic possibilities because of the 'multiplier effect'. (5) An initial income will pass from hand to hand, consuming goods and creating new income with each transaction. (6) This creates new demand for goods, which creates more demand for labour, and employs more people (Coates, 2000, p.60). (7) From the point of view of

investment, a large corporation such as Nike has a very beneficial influence on the economic health of the developing countries in which it operates.

Investment
(S1)

High levels
of
investment =
healthy
economy(S2)
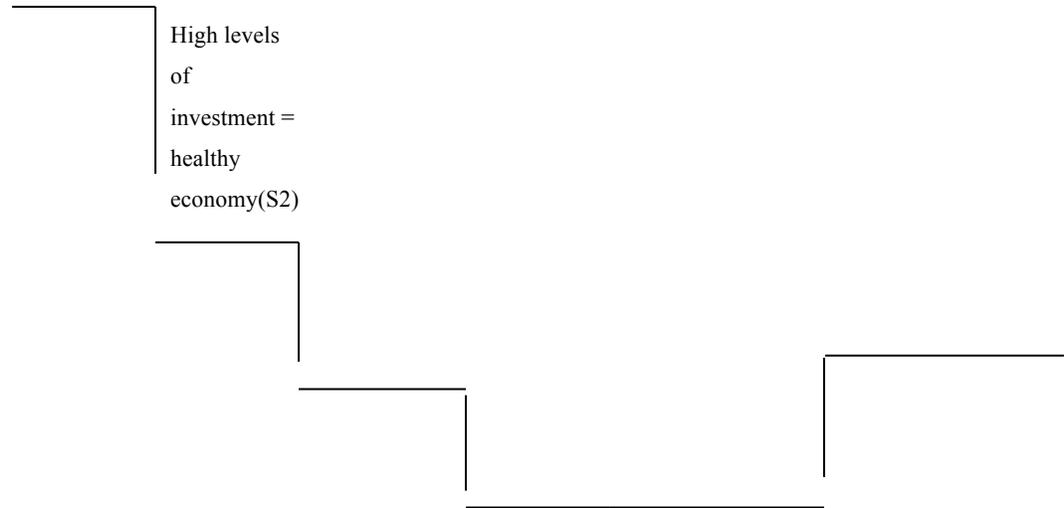
Figure 1 Level of meaning.

Compare your answer with those suggested in the Answer section.

Comment:

This paragraph has both high and low level meanings operating in it. The beginning sentence, also known as *topic sentence,* has the highest level of meaning, which is generally true to all paragraphs in a text. In this extract, the first sentence is about *investment*, which is the subject of this paragraph. The other sentences develop this concept in a specific or detailed way by applying it to Nike's investment in developing countries and its impact on their economy. Allocating a certain part of the text to a level may not always be so easy, but it is possible to notice which is more specific and which is not. For example, sentence 2 has more general information than sentence 3 because sentence 3 is not just about levels of investment but about Nike's investment in developing countries.

Theme and point

Like levels of meaning, writers use both **Theme** and **New** information in the argument to make the reading more accessible to their reader. The theme is what the writer is focusing on in the text/ sentence, which may also be the given information. The New information is which is unfamiliar to the reader and is explained in the text. Look at the two sentences below and write *theme* for the part which is the focus of the sentence and *Point* for the *New* information.

(1) The company	has recruited a new manager.
(2) The new manager	will bring about many changes.

In these two sentences, the writer has divided the information into two units: *theme* and *Point.* The writer assumes that the reader knows which *company* s/he is referring to in sentence 1. This is also the focus of the sentence and hence the *theme.* But the second part is new information which is going to be described or explained in the next sentence. Likewise, sentence 2 has the first part – *the new manager* – as *theme* since the sentence is about this, picked up from the previous sentence (*a new manager*). The second part contains the new information, which may be explained in the later part of the text. The way the information is managed in these two sentences guides the reader effectively through the text. This relationship between the two sentences can be shown in a flowchart as below. Supply the words missing from the box:
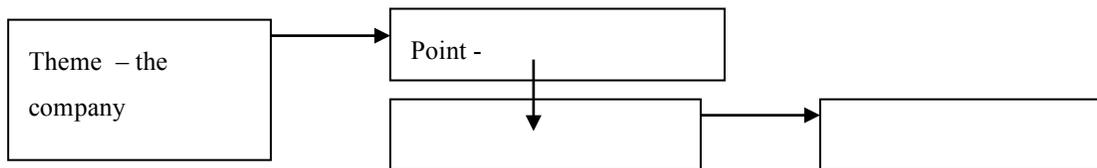
Figure 2 The information flow in sentences.

The table should have helped you to complete this flow chart. This flowchart shows how the sentences are logically connected as the units of information is managed effectively.

The second box would include *a new manager* as New information which becomes the theme in the third box. The fourth box introduces the New information: *many changes.* This information flow applies to the argument in a paragraph as well. Look at Extract B from Tara's essay. How does she manage the information flow in this extract?

Extract B (from Tara's essay)

(1) An economy can be defined as a complex system for the exchange of resources between economic agents. (2) The two main economic agents are households and firms and other important agents include banks and governments. (3) Any of these economic agents have two-way relationships. (4) The relationship can be described by using a model called circular flow of income.

Tara follows exactly the same process as you saw in the two sentences earlier: managing the theme and the point. The beginning sentence signals that this paragraph is about *economy.* Although *economy* is New information, this is presented first because the writer wants to focus on this concept, which is the **theme** of this extract. Each of the other three sentences picks up the information from the previous sentence. The information flow in this extract can be presented in a flowchart. The activity below helps you with this.

Activity 2

Spend about 10 minutes on this activity.

Purpose: To identify the theme and the New information in the argument.

Task: Read extract B again to see the information flow in it. Complete the flowchart below showing the flow (S1, S2 …= Sentence 1, Sentence 2 …; T= theme; P= Point):
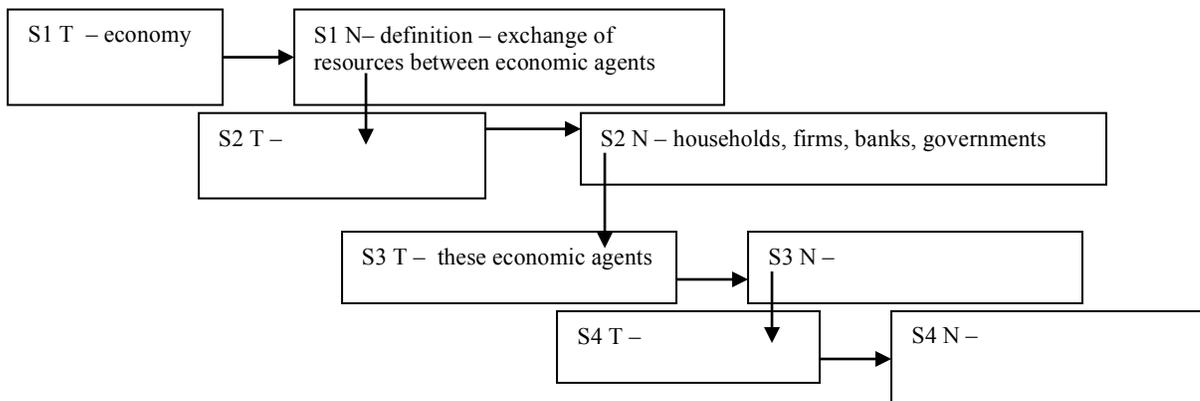
Compare your answers with those suggested in the Answer section.

Comment:

I hope that you were able to identify which unit of information was Point and what was the theme in the paragraph above by noticing which piece of information is repeated in the subsequent sentence. Each time the new information is presented, the theme is expanded and the meaning of the key concept is made clearer. The meaning of *economy* is explained in the whole paragraph. This kind of information management in the text helps to develop the argument in a paragraph and the essay.

When writers fail to manage the theme and the Point effectively in their text, it can be difficult to follow it. Look at the paragraph below. How easy is it to follow this?

Extract C (from Karen's essay)

(1) If this is the case, the workers should have more money to invest in savings in banks and other financial institutions. (2) Nike claim that they pay no less than the minimum wage and that the workers in their factories earn much more than teachers do, for example. (3) Furthermore, they will be able to spend more with local businesses, buying local goods, allowing their wages to be re-invested again.

In this extract, the information flow is not managed well because each sentence begins with new information. The reader has to process a lot of new information to understand this extract. It is very hard to understand the point the student is making. There is no connection between the sentences. Compare this extract with the one below with a few changes:

(1) Nike claim that they pay no less than the minimum wage and that the workers in their factories earn much more than teachers do, for example. (2) If this is the case, the workers should have more money to invest in savings in banks and other financial institutions. (3) Furthermore, they will be able to spend more with local businesses, buying local goods, allowing their wages to be re-invested again.

You may notice that the new version above is much easier to follow than the previous one. The noticeable difference is the way each sentence begins with the given information. Sentence 2 refers back to the meaning of sentence 1: *the case.* Sentence 3 continues with *what workers can do with their money*, which was introduced in sentence 2. Now it is your turn to try again.

Activity 3

Spend about 5 minutes on this activity.

Purpose: To notice the information flow in a paragraph.

Task: The following sentence is taken out of the extract below. Insert it in the correct place so that the paragraph becomes more sensible. This paragraph is about *how governments encourage investment.*

Their policies, taxation and regulation should encourage corporations to engage in high levels of investment which will result in a strong and resilient economy.

Extract D

> (1) It is now, however, accepted by many economists that "all governments can do is to create the conditions in which firms can expand" (Coates, D. 2000 p.66). (2) The health of which can be assessed by its levels of employment, living standards inflation rates and its balance of payments (Coates, D. 2000 p.58)

Comment:

When you read this extract, it is difficult to make sense of what *the health of which* is referring to unless the extracted sentence is inserted between sentence 1 and 2. This extracted sentence picks up the information (Given) from sentence 1: *governments = their*. Sentence 2 refers to *economy* (Given) in the extracted sentence by the word *which*. When all three sentences are put in place correctly, it is much easier to understand the flow of meaning in the paragraph.

Linking the Ideas

The information flow is also managed by using certain words to link ideas between the sentences in addition to managing the theme and the Point. Ideas in a text can be linked together in various ways. By using the linking devices, you can have he logical flow of your argument in the essay. There are generally three ways to achieve this: (i) reference words, (ii) conjunctions/ joining words, and (iii) words that go together. Only the first two of these are introduced below. The third one will be dealt with in later.

Reference Words

When we create a text, we need to refer to things or ideas presented before. We do not repeat the same words again and again. Instead we use **reference words** which help to trace the thread of ideas in the text. For example:

A company advertised for a post of a new manager. *The* company did not mention the salary for *the* new manager.

In this example, when the company is mentioned for the first time, *a* was used to refer to it but the second time it was referred to by *the* to ensure that this is not any other company. The same case applies to *new manager.* In addition to *the* (**definite article**)**,** other words are also used to refer to things or ideas mentioned earlier. Such words mostly refer to what has been said before in the text. Look at the extract below and see if you can identify them:

Extract E (from Bonnie's essay)

(1) If we take Nike as an example, when they decided to outsource the production of their training shoes, and later their other products to Indonesia, Nike had to invest into Indonesia's economy by setting up new manufacturing plants. (2) This would have needed an initial injection of funds to purchase all the necessary resources, raw materials and labour being the main ones. (3) This investment would have circulated around the economy, generating income for other local businesses. (4) Once the production plants were up and running the labour would have been supplied from the country's workforce. [Stephanie Firth]

Now look at the same extract below which shows the reference words referring to the objects or ideas in the text:

(1) If we take Nike as an example, when *they* decided to outsource the production of *their* training shoes, and later *their* other products to Indonesia, Nike had to invest into Indonesia's economy by setting up new manufacturing plants. (2) *This* would have needed an initial injection of funds to purchase all the necessary resources, raw materials and labour being the main *ones*. (3) *This* investment would have circulated around the economy, generating income for other local businesses. (4) Once the production plants were up and running *the* labour would have been supplied from the country's workforce.
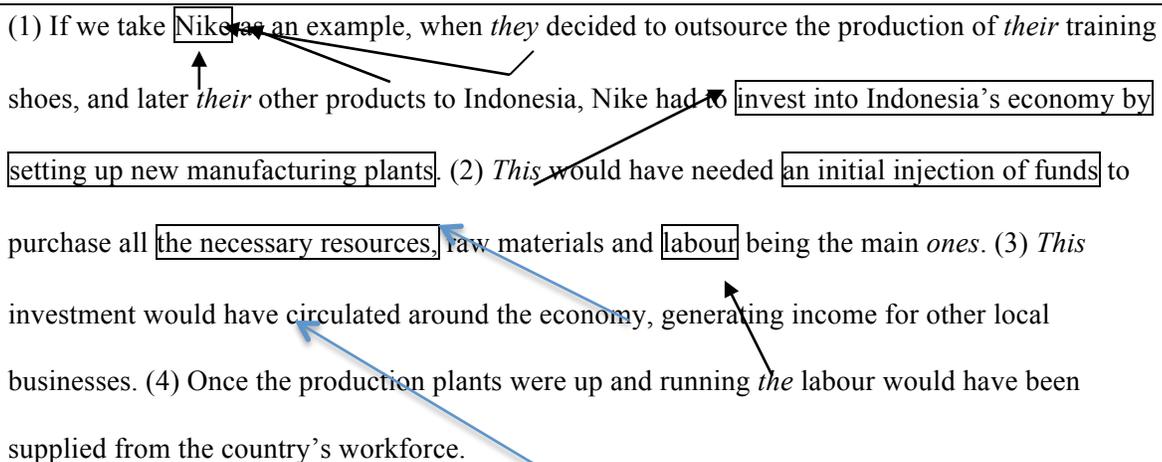
As you can see above, all the highlighted reference words refer to something mentioned earlier in the extract (some are not highlighted). What kind of words are they?

Words such as *they, their* (Nike) and *ones* are **pronouns** and refer to nouns. The other word is *this*. It refers to either a process (*to invest into …*) or a thing/ noun (*an initial injection of funds*). *This* is a **demonstrative**. Words like these and many others including *another, such* (comparative reference) *that, these, those* (demonstratives) and *it* (pronoun) are very useful to connect ideas together. They can be used both between sentences and paragraphs in the essay. Use of these reference words can help you to connect your ideas effectively while developing the argument.

Activity 4

Spend about 15 minutes on this activity.

Purpose: To identify and use the reference words.

Task: Read Extract J below by Tony. The reference words are missing. The blank spaces are numbered. Complete the extract by inserting the correct words (pronouns, demonstratives or comparative reference words):

Extract F (from Tony's essay)

However, (1) ……. isn't the full picture, Nike and many of (2) ……. competitors such as Reebok are not manufacturers. A Nike spokesperson was reported to say "(3) …. don't know the first thing about manufacturing. (4) ……. are marketers and designers" (Sturgess, J. 2000 p.21). (5) …….. is relevant as in reality Nike have undertaken very little capital investment in developing countries. (6) …… has not built factories or purchased expensive machinery, instead (7) …….. has outsourced manufacturing to businesses in (8) ……… countries. This is important because whilst the effect still produces the results mentioned earlier to the economic health of the country, the benefit to Nike is the flexibility (9) …….. approach provides (10) …….

Compare your answers with those suggested in the Answer section.

Comment:

In this activity you noticed that the reference words essentially link the ideas together. This linking allows you to make your argument much clearer. While using pronouns or demonstratives, you need to be aware of whether they are singular or plural and what they

refer to. For example, (6) refers to Nike and the pronoun *it* needs to be used. But (8) refers to *developing countries* and a plural demonstrative *these* needs to be used as a reference word.

Conjunctions/ Joining words

Another way of linking ideas is by using certain joining words or **conjunctions** which express a logical relationship between ideas. Such a relationship may be causal (cause and effect), temporal (sequence in time), contrastive (one thing as opposed to another or additive (one thing plus another). In English, these relationships are indicated by words such as *because, when, however* and *furthermore* respectively [an appendix of these words and their functions would greatly help the students]. Generally they link the **clauses** together. You may recall from session 1 that academic language is more complex and uses various conjunctions to produce complex sentences by linking clauses. Look at the sentence below (clauses numbered):

(1) Nike does not invest directly in the developing countries (2) where it operates, (3) but it encourages others to invest (4) by sub-contracting the production of its shoes.

This is a single complex sentence with four clauses. This can be broken into four simple sentences:

1) Nike does not invest directly in the developing countries.
2) Nike operates in the developing countries.
3) Nike encourages others to invest.
4) Nike sub-contracts the production of its shoes to others.

These 4 sentences were linked together by the conjunctions *where, but* and *by.* What kind of relationship do they show? The first two clauses are linked by *where*, which gives additional information about Nike. These two are contrasted by *but. By* connects clause 3 with clause 4 to show how something is achieved (here, how Nike invests). Using these words helps the reader to follow the information in the text. Such words are commonly used in essays to develop the argument effectively. The next activity explores this.

Activity 5

Spend about 30 minutes on this activity.

Purpose: To identify the joining word and its role.

Task: Read extract G below carefully. This is about the influence of MNCs on the stability of employment in a developing country. There are some joining words. Circle them and write down what relationship they express on the right hand column. An example is given.

Extract G (from Amina's Essay)

Extract	**Type of relationship**
(1) Stability of employment is not really a factor <u>that</u> companies like Nike are offering directly to the developing economies in <u>which</u> they operate. (2) When costs increased in South Korea and Taiwan, for example, training shoe manufacturing was moved to lower cost locations such as Indonesia, Thailand and China (Sturges, 2000, p.27). (3) The benefit to the economies of Taiwan and Korea was not entirely lost, however, because 'the trend has been to continue to use the same Korean and Taiwanese manufacturers, who have set up and managed production plants in the new geographic locations' (Sturges, 2000, p.27). (4) The money brought into the economy by these firms should create employment indirectly. (5) Therefore, although Nike does not offer stability of employment levels directly, its use of local companies as sub-contractors is helping to create profits, which, if re-invested, can help employment levels.	*That* describes *stability of employment.* *Which* describes where Nike operates.

Compare your answers with those suggested in the Answer section.

Comment:

This activity was about the kind of relationship that joining words can express in the argument. For example, in sentence 2 *when* expresses both *time* (the order of events; the

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time when costs increased) and *cause-effect* relationships (because costs increased, Nike moved its shoe manufacturing to low cost locations) by joining the two clauses: *costs increased in South Korea and Taiwan* and *training shoe manufacturing was moved to lower cost locations such as Indonesia, Thailand and China.* On the other hand, *however* expresses a contrastive relationship in sentence 3 with what is said in sentence 2. This joining word opposes what has been claimed in sentences 1 and 2, that is, Nike does not directly support the stability of employment. Sentence 3 counterclaims this claim by giving a *reason: because the same manufacturers have been used.* Although *however* does not link clauses, it connects ideas between sentences. You will come across many of the joining words in this book which will be useful for you while developing your argument logically.

Answers

Answer for Activity 1

Investment (S1)

High levels of investment = healthy economy(S2)

Nike's investment

Beneficial impact of MNCs' investment

How Nike invests

Impact of Nike's investment

Answer for Activity 2

S1 N – economy → S1 G – definition – exchange of resources between economic agents

S2 G – economic agents → S2 N – households, firms, banks, governments

S3 G – these economic agents → S3 N – two-way relationships

S4 G – the relationship → S4 N – 'circular flow of income' model

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Answer for Activity 4

(1) this; (2) its; (3) We; (4) We; (5) This; (6) It; (7) it; (8) these; (9) this; (10) it.

Answer for Activity 5

Extract	Type of relationship
(1) Stability of employment is not really a factor that companies like Nike are offering directly to the developing economies in which they operate. (2) When costs increased in South Korea and Taiwan, for example, training shoe manufacturing was moved to lower cost locations such as Indonesia, Thailand and China (Sturges, 2000, p.27). (3) The benefit to the economies of Taiwan and Korea was not entirely lost, however, because 'the trend has been to continue to use the same Korean and Taiwanese manufacturers, who have set up and managed production plants in the new geographic locations' (Sturges, 2000, p.27). (4) The money brought into the economy by these firms should create employment indirectly. (5) Therefore, although Nike does not offer stability of employment levels directly, its use of local companies as sub-contractors is helping to create profits, which, if re-invested, can help employment levels. [Jenny Frister]	*That* describes *stability of employment.* *Which* describes where Nike operates. *When* expresses time sequence as well as cause-effect relationship between the two clauses. *However* is used to express contrastive relationship to counterclaim the claims made in sentence 1 and 2. *Because* expresses a cause-effect relationship between the first half and the second half of the sentence. This supports the counterclaim expressed by *however*. *Who* describes *Korean and Taiwanese manufacturers* by giving additional information. This also supports the counterclaim. *Therefore* expresses a cause-effect relationship between

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	sentence 4 and 5. This sentence supports the claim in sentence 3. *Although* indicates contrastive relationship and links two clauses. This supports the counterclaim in sentence 3. *Which* (see above) describes *creating profits*.

Appendix 5D: SWOT framework

Introduction

In this document, you will find a general introduction to SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) framework and how to apply it to a business situation. The information below is taken from this website:

http://rapidbi.com/created/SWOTanalysis.html (accessed 15 July 2009)

In addition, you can also refer back to LB160 books (Session 4, Book 1 and Session 2, Book 3) for SWOT.

SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is a planning tool used to understand the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project or in a business. It involves specifying the objective of the business or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are supportive or unfavourable to achieving that objective. SWOT is often used as part of a strategic planning process.

SWOT is an acronym for **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats**.

There are several ways of graphically representing the this on an analysis matrix or grid. Several versions are shown on this page - use the one which is best suited to your application and preferred style.

Aim of a SWOT Analysis

Reveal your competitive advantages

Analyze your prospects for sales, profitability and product development

Prepare your company for problems

Allow for the development of contingency plans

A SWOT analysis is a process to identify where you are strong and vulnerable -- where you should defend and attack. The result of the process is a 'plan of action', or 'action plan'.

The analysis can be performed on a product, on a service, a company or even on an individual.

Done properly, SWOT will give you the BIG PICTURE of the MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS that influence SURVIVAL and PROSPERITY as well as a PLAN to ACT ON.

How to do a SWOT

Irrespective of whether you or your team are future planning for specific products, work, personal or any other area, the SWOT analysis process is the same.

Step 1 – Information collection - In the here and now… List all strengths that exist now. Then in turn, list all weaknesses that exist now. Be realistic but avoid modesty!

You can conduct one-on-one interviews. Or get a group together to brainstorm. A bit of both is frequently best.

You'll first want to prepare questions that relate to the specific company or product that you are analyzing. You'll find some questions and issues below to get you going.

When facilitating a SWOT - search for insight through intelligent questioning and probing

Step 2 – What might be… List all opportunities that exist in the future. Opportunities are potential future strengths. Then in turn, list all threats that exist in the future. Threats are potential future weaknesses.

Step 3 – Plan of action… Review your SWOT matrix with a view to creating an action plan to address each of the four areas.

In summary:

Strengths need to be maintained, built upon or leveraged.

Weaknesses need to be remedied, changed or stopped.

Opportunities need to be prioritized, captured, built on and optimized.

Threats need to be countered or minimized and managed.

A SWOT analysis can be very subjective, and two people rarely come-up with the same final version of SWOT. It is an excellent tool however, for looking at the negative factors first in order to turn them into positive factors. Use SWOT as guide and not a prescription.

What strengths and weaknesses are examined

The strengths and weaknesses analysis is an internal examination that focuses on your past performance, present strategy, resources and capabilities. It is based on an analysis of facts and assumptions about the company, including:

People (Human Resources)

People and skills (in particular marketing, export experience)

Staff development

Properties (Buildings, Equipments and other facilities)

Processes (Such as quality, finance, M.I.S. etc.)

Financial resources (debt to asset ratio and personal equity)

Governance

Management/ leadership

Staff development

Communication

Products (Publications etc.)

Sales

Products

Markets

Capabilities/ scaleability

Capital structure suppliers

Customers (market research)

Intellectual property

In other words -

Strengths

What do you do well? Is there anything you do better than most? Better than anyone else?

Weaknesses

What should be improved? What do you do poorly? What should you avoid, based on mistakes in the past?

What opportunities and threats are examined

The opportunity and threat analysis is carried out by examining external factors in your domestic and export markets. This is usually broken down into environmental factors and competitors.

In other words -

Opportunities

Where can you find, or create, a competitive advantage? What are some major trends in your business? - Consolidation / Diversification? - Specialization / Generalization? - Changes in technology. Such as computer software that lets you perform services that others can not. - Changes in the types of businesses in your potential market, such as the demand for healthcare or telecommunications expertise. - Changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle. - Changes in creative trends. - Changes in demand for certain types of services, perhaps related to interactive / Internet.

Threats

What obstacles do you face?

What are your competitors doing that may result in a loss of clients, customers, market share? Are the required specifications for your job, products or services changing?

Is changing technology threatening your position? Do you have cash-flow problems?

Structure of a SWOT analysis

Text structure/ organisation of a SWOT analysis

Introduction

(SWOT TABLE)

S
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Strengths

Strength 1 – support example
Strength 2 – support example
Strength 3 etc.

Weaknesses

Weakness 1 – support example
Weakness 2 – support example
Weakness 3 etc.

Opportunities

Opportunity 1 – support example
Opportunity 2 – support example
Opportunity 3 etc.

Threats

Threat 1 – support example
Threat 2 – support example
Threat 3. etc

(SWOT TABLE AS SUMMARY)

Conclusion/ recommendation

Appendix 5E: Semi-structured interview questions

DA participants

Interim (Telephone) Interview questions (subject to change)

Dynamic assessment of academic writing in open and distance education

I would very much appreciate it if you could spend some time with me over the phone to talk about your experience and thoughts on the assessment (and tutoring) sessions you recently participated in. Your contributions will greatly benefit my EdD (Doctorate in education) research. Any information you will provide me will be anonymously used in the study. This has no connection with your assessment results on LB160. Thank you very much in advance for your time and cooperation.

The following questions will be asked over the phone and are sent to you for your convenience. Please note that some additional questions may emerge from your response which will be for clarification purposes.

Personal details

Name:

Age:

Experience of open and distance education: months   years

Questions

1. What differences did you find between the new method of assessment and the current method? Which one would you prefer? Why?

2. To what extent did the tutor interaction/ mediation during the assessment help you enhance your academic writing skills? Which area(s) benefitted from the interaction? Which areas did not?

3. Which method of interaction do you like to work on your writing (e.g., emails, chats, etc.)?

4. What is your overall view on the new assessment technique?

5. Do you think anything else has contributed to your academic writing development in addition to dynamic assessment sessions? If yes, what were they? How did they help you?

6. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Thank you very much for your time and effort.

Prithvi Shrestha

Final (Telephone) Interview questions (subject to change)

Dynamic assessment of academic writing in open and distance education

I would very much appreciate it if you could spend some time with me over the phone to talk about your experience and thoughts on the assessment (and tutoring) sessions you recently participated in. Your contributions will greatly benefit my EdD (Doctorate in education) research. Any information you will provide me will be anonymously used in the study. This has no connection with your assessment results on any OU course. Thank you very much in advance for your time and cooperation.

The following questions will be asked over the phone and are sent to you for your convenience. Please note that some additional questions may emerge from your response which will be for clarification purposes.

I expect that this interview may take up to one hour and will be recorded.

Personal details

Name:

Questions

Background

1. Can you please tell me about your background in terms of your education and work? This will help with the case I build in my research.

Assessment procedures

2. What differences did you find between the new method of assessment and the current method? Which one would you prefer? Why?

3. To what extent did the tutor interaction/ mediation during the assessment help you enhance your academic writing skills? Which area(s) benefitted from the interaction? Which areas did not?

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4. Which method of interaction do you like to work on your writing (e.g., emails, chats, etc.)?

5. What is your overall view on the new assessment technique?

6. Do you think anything else has contributed to your academic writing development in addition to dynamic assessment sessions? If yes, what were they? How did they help you?

7. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Conceptual development

8. During the assessment process, we worked on both the content and writing. Do you think you learned more about the content, that is, SWOT or STEP framework?

9. Did you learn more about writing an effective case study analysis (e.g., using key concepts to frame your paragraphs)? If you did, what did you learn?

Study materials (Developing a paragraph)

10. Did the study materials benefit you in any way? In what way? Please be as specific as you can.

11. Do you think you would not have learned the same skills from the course if you had not received these study materials? Why do you think so?

12. What is your overall view on the study materials?

Thank you very much for your time and effort.

Prithvi Shrestha

Non-DA participants

(Telephone) Interview questions (subject to change)

Dynamic assessment of academic writing in open and distance education

I would very much appreciate it if you could spend some time with me over the phone to talk about your experience and thoughts on the assignments you recently wrote for me. Your contributions will greatly benefit my EdD (Doctorate in education) research. Any information you will provide me will be anonymously used in the study. This has no connection with your assessment results on any OU course. Thank you very much in advance for your time and cooperation.

The following questions will be asked over the phone and are sent to you for your convenience. Please note that some additional questions may emerge from your response which will be for clarification purposes.

I expect that this interview may take up to one hour and will be recorded.

Personal details

Name:

Age:…..?

Experience of open and distance education: ?   months ?   years

Questions

Background

1. Can you please tell me about your background in terms of your education and work? This will help with the case I build in my research.

Assessment procedures

2. To what extent did the tutor feedback on your assignment help you enhance your academic writing skills? Which area(s) benefitted from the interaction? Which areas did not?

3. Do you think anything else has contributed to your academic writing development in addition to the tutor feedback? If yes, what were they? How did they help you?

4. Would you have liked to have a dialogue with the tutor regarding your writing rather than just the written feedback? Why? Why not?

5. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Conceptual development

6. During the assessment process, we worked on both the content and writing. Do you think you learned more about the content, that is, SWOT or STEP framework?

7. Did you learn more about writing an effective case study analysis (e.g., using key concepts to frame your paragraphs)? If you did, what did you learn?

Study materials (Developing a paragraph)

8. Did the study materials benefit you in any way? In what way? Please be as specific as you can.

9. Do you think you would not have learned the same skills from the course if you had not received these study materials? Why do you think so?

10. What is your overall view on the study materials?

Thank you very much for your time and effort.

Prithvi Shrestha

Appendix 5F: Marking guidelines for the subject tutors

Assessment guidelines (to be seen as general guidance only)

(based on the *benchmark standards* for the undergraduate level, *General Business and Management Studies 2007*, QAA)

This guidance is not intended to be comprehensive, as your view as a subject tutor on the students' assignment text is more important than whether you are able to interpret these notes accurately or not. Therefore, please use your own judgment/ discretion to comment on the areas that you would normally do when you mark your students' assignments in business studies.

When assessing/ commenting on the students' assignment texts, please, consider the following skills:

- Cognitive skills
    - Describe business concepts (e.g., SWOT, STEP) clearly (i.e., to what extent the business studies concepts are described/ defined clearly?)
    - Analyse the business case studies effectively by applying the business concepts to them (i.e., to what extent the student uses the business studies concepts to frame the analysis and how successfully?)
    - Demonstrate the relevant knowledge and understanding of the external environment in which organisations operate (i.e., to what extent the student shows that they are aware of the external environment of the company they are analysing?)
    - Identify business problems and find solutions to them (i.e., to what extent the student identifies the problem of the company and finds solutions to that problem?)

- Key skills
    - Select data, information and ideas from different sources and present in an appropriate fashion to support an argument

When you write your comments as a business studies tutor, I would like you to compare the two drafts of each student using the criteria above as far as it is possible. Your comparison of the two drafts will form a crucial aspect of my study. If you like, a table like the below can be used for marks and comments. Additionally, if you would like to make some in-text comments on the student assignment electronically, please feel free to do so.

Assignments	Marks (out of 100)	Cognitive skills	Key skills	Other comments
Assignment 1_Amina				
Assignment 2_Amina				
Assignment 1_Kristie				
Assignment 2_Kristie				
Assignment 1_Lou				
Assignment 2_Lou				
Assignment 1_Lena				
Assignment 2_Lena				
Assignment 1_Michelle				
Assignment 2_Michelle				
Assignment 1_Natasha				
Assignment 2_Natasha				

Thank you very much for your help.

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Appendix 5G: Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994, p. 471) regulatory scale

0. Tutor asks the learner to read, find the errors, and correct them independently, prior to the tutorial.

1. Construction of a "collaborative frame" prompted by the presence of the tutor as a potential dialogic partner.

2. Prompted or focussed reading of the sentence that contains the error by the learner or the tutor.

3. Tutor indicates that something may be wrong in a segment (e.g., sentence, clause, line)-"Is there anything wrong in this sentence?"

4. Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at recognizing the error.

5. Tutor narrows down the location of the error (e.g., tutor repeats or points to the specific segment which contains the error).

6. Tutor indicates the nature of the error, but does not identify the error (e.g., "There is something wrong with the tense marking here").

7. Tutor identifies the error ("You can't use an auxiliary here").

8. Tutor rejects learner's unsuccessful attempts at correcting error.

9. Tutor provides clues to help the learner arrive at the correct form (e.g., "It is not really past but some thing that is still going on").

10. Tutor provides the correct form.

11. Tutor provides some explanation for use of the correct form.

12. Tutor provides examples of the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action.

Chapter 6 Appendices

Appendix 6A: Mediational moves and their descriptions

1 Clarifying the task

This move generally took place at the beginning of the session. It focussed on finding out what was expected in the assessment task. The guidance notes given to the students regarding each assessment task are considered as 'clarifying the task':

> … As you are using the SWOT framework to analyse Google's business environment based on this case study, look for examples that illustrate the four categories (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) in the SWOT framework in order to produce an effective SWOT analysis while you are making notes… [Guidance notes, Assessment 1, main study]

In addition, the mediator clarified what the student had to do regarding the subsequent draft as in Amina's DA1 draft 1 (IM):

> *Mediator*: are you happy to revise and post it on the wiki?
>
> Amina: yes
>
>> i will make changes

In this interaction, the mediator was trying to ensure that Amina understood what she had to do next.

2 Accepting a response

When the learner responded correctly to the mediator mediation, the mediator accepted the response. This move generally occurred when the learner made an appropriate response to the assessment task or the mediator's abstract hints and clues. Sometimes this move coincided with *showing affect* (mediator move 4). Consider the excerpts below in which the mediator asked to revise the theme sentence in paragraph 3 of Michelle's DA1 draft 1 to which she responded correctly:

> One social factor demonstrated in the case study that has had an impact on Heineken's marketing in European countries is the fact that the population started focusing on a healthier lifestyle and cutting down on alcohol consumption…

Mediator: Can you begin this paragraph differently, that is, by telling the reader what this paragraph is about?

[DA1 draft 1]

The case study revealed many social factors in Heineken's external environment…

Mediator: **It was a good try. The focus is correct: the words in blue.**

3 Showing affect

Affect plays a crucial role in our thinking process and motivation which has been recognised in Vygotskian sociocultural theory (see Daniels, 2007). The mediator has to consider affect in their pedagogical moves. Yet, this aspect of mediator mediation does not appear to be widely recognised in DA research. In this study, the mediator frequently took this move to encourage and keep motivating the student to complete the assessment task successfully. Additionally, it involved the mediator praising the learners for their appropriate responses. Regarding Michelle's DA1 draft 2, this is what the mediator wrote as a wiki comment:

Hi Amanda,

Don't worry about the delay - I can understand the pressure from all directions.

Thank you for applying my feedback as closely as it is possible. You have done quite well. Now the analysis is gradually coming together.

This excerpt indicates that the mediator was trying to encourage Michelle. In fact she highlighted the value of such affective aspect of mediator mediation during the interview with her, which will be discussed in the main dissertation.

4 Asking learner to identify the problem

Often the mediator asked the learner to identify the problem in the text as a starting point. This helped the mediator to check how much the learner could control their writing with very little support from him. This move occurred with all the participants. For example, the mediator asked Michelle to identify the problem in a sentence in her DA1 draft 1 (paragraph 1):

… It is important for businesses to be able to identify elements which may have an effect on them and recognise its environments in which it operates…

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[*Mediator*: What is wrong with this sentence? Can you identify this?]

The mediator's intention was to get Michelle to focus on the pronoun 'it' referring to 'businesses' but without indicating what the problem was.

5 Locating part of the text needing improvement

This move, which can be indirect (e.g., giving hints), alerted the student to the part of the text that needed improving. But the mediator did not indicate what was wrong. Often the mediator simply highlighted the words or sentences in the text and asked the student to pay attention to those words or sentences. Like the previous move, this one took place at the beginning. The problem areas ranged from spelling to grammar and paragraph themes. For instance, the mediator highlighted the words green in Natasha's DA1 draft 1 (paragraph 5), which had a grammatical inaccuracy (i.e., conjunction):

> <mark>Despite of Heineken</mark> has been producing non -alcohol beers mostly for non
>
> European market before., there was no good quality non alcohol beer in the market.

Instead of providing the correct solution (e.g., although), the mediator highlighted/ located the words to draw Natasha's attention to them.

6 Asking to clarify meaning

Whilst the previous move simply alerted the student to a potential problem, the mediator used this move when the meaning was not clear in the text or when the content was not appropriate. The mediator did not mention explicitly what the problem was. Instead, he asked the student to think about the problem and resolve it as in the IM interaction between the mediator and Amina below regarding a sentence in her DA1 draft 1 (paragraph 5):

> *Mediator*: and "Internet is main factor people use in their laptops."?
>
> i am not sure what this means?
>
> paragraph 5.
>
> Amina: yes
>
> what is the mistake
>
> *Mediator*: I don't understand this sentence: Internet is main factor people use in their laptops.
>
> Amina: i mean to say that, we use laptop os pc mostly to browse the net
>
> *Mediator*: ok. what is the connection with Chrome?

7 Identifying the problem in the text

Often this move overlapped with move 3 above and sometimes with move 9 below when the student failed to identify the specific problem in the text. To illustrate this move, Michelle wrote the sentence below in her DA2 draft 2 (paragraph 2) and the mediator had to identify the problem because she had an online chat with him that concentrated on the social factor prior to completing this draft:

> … The advantage that the USA has on most other countries, however, is **their ability to afford 'Safer Syringes'**…
>
> *Mediator*: This is not linked with the social factor but economic.

8 Asking to consider a possible solution

This move was used to direct the student to a suitable solution through questions. The mediator did not offer the actual solution but posed questions regarding the problem indicated. Here is an example when this move occurred:

> The analysis will outline how the external factors of the global beer company influenced the **start** of a new non- alcoholic product.
>
> *Mediator*: Can you use a different word here instead of 'start'?
>
> [Natasha's DA1 draft 1, paragraph 1]

9 Checking conceptual understanding

The assessment tasks in both DA1 and DA2 required the students to use a business framework (e.g., STEP[12]) for a case study analysis. Both the framework and the text organisation needed a good conceptual understanding of what is needed to complete the task. Therefore, the mediator often checked the students' conceptual understanding when needed during the assessment process as shown by the example below:

> Social factors, covering demographical and cultural aspects of the environment external to the Safer Syringe market are population awareness, **number of workers involved in the *industry*…**
>
> *Mediator:* Is the number of workers a social factor? Or something else?
>
> [DA2 draft 1]

---

[12] STEP refers to Sociological/ Social, Technological, Economic and Political. It is a framework used to examine an organisation's external business environment.

In this excerpt, the mediator was checking Michelle's understanding of the social factor in the assignment.

10 Providing metalinguistic clues

The mediator often supported the students by offering metalinguistic clues such as 'pronouns' and 'punctuation marks' to identify problems. In addition, this move also included providing conceptual knowledge in the field (i.e., business studies). This technique was used in order to enhance the students' conceptual knowledge (language and content both) when more implicit moves did not work. This move is illustrated in the two excerpts below where a more implicit move failed with Michelle:

> … According to Donohue et al. (2008 p.25) whilst organisations usually have control over the near environment, it is the wider environment which controls the **organisation…**
>
> *Mediator*: Can you use any other word instead of 'the organisation'?
>
> [DA1 draft 1, paragraph 2]

> … According to Donohue et al. (2008 p.25) whilst organisations usually have control over the near environment, it is the wider environment which can greatly influence **the business**…
>
> *Mediator:* Can you use **a pronoun** instead of 'the business'?
>
> [DA1 draft 2, paragraph 2]

11 Providing content clues

It was often necessary to offer support to the students regarding the content of the case study analysis. For this, the mediator posed questions directed at the relevant content in the case study. For instance, the mediator asked questions indicating the pertinent content when Natasha failed to include more social factors in DA1 draft 2:

> *Mediator:* I also asked you to think about the other sociological factors as indicated in the case study. **What do Italian bars do? Has this affected Buckler?**

12 Rejecting the response with explanation(s)

There were occasions when the response given by the student in the subsequent draft was rejected by the mediator if the student did not respond correctly to the feedback given previously. This move was geared towards more explicit support which often included the mediator's explanation for his response. The following shows the mediator rejecting the learner response with an explanation:

> The analysis will outline how the external factors of the global beer company influenced **the start** of a new non- alcoholic product…
>
> *Mediator:* You did not change the word 'start' as I advised. It is alright to use the word 'launch' from the case study. This word is more formal/ academic or related to business studies.
>
> [Natasha's DA1 draft 2 introduction]

13 Explaining the problem

There were times when the mediator had to explain the problem in the text explicitly. This move was necessary to make the learner understand the nature of the problem thereby enhancing their conceptual understanding as well. For instance, Natasha continued to use a comma after the word 'although' in DA1 drafts 1 and 2 when not needed. The mediator responded like this to her DA1 draft 2:

> *Mediator:* Commas are not used immediately after 'although'. A comma is used after 'however'. E.g., 'Although Heineken was producing non -alcohol beers before, there was a desirable opportunity for launching a new brand' and 'Heineken decided to launch a new beer into the market. However, the company had to spend a huge amount of money on advertising'.

14 Exemplifying or illustrating

If the student was unable to grasp the concept or understand a problem in the text, the mediator provided support through examples. For example, in DA1 draft 1, Natasha was advised to revise the opening sentence so as to link it with the analytical framework but she did not do this effectively and so the mediator responded with exemplification like this:

> *Mediator:* As I commented before this sentence needs to be revised because it is not properly connected to the framework of the analysis: STEP/ STEEP. You should

start with the main idea in the paragraph. **For example, you can say** 'Sociological factors impacted on the development of Buckler beer. One of them is …' Please try yourself once again."

[Natasha's DA1 draft 2, paragraph 2]

15 Providing a choice of possible solution(s)

This move was required when the students failed to solve the problem themselves or kept repeating the problem. In this move, the mediator offered choice(s) as to what they could write in the text, thereby providing more explicit assistance to the learner. For example, Natasha kept on using 'despite' where 'although' or 'even though' should have been used in her DA1 drafts. Therefore, the mediator responded as below:

> **Despite** Heineken has been producing non -alcohol beers mostly for non European market **before.,** there was no good quality non alcohol beer in the market.
>
> *Mediator:* The highlighted words in this sentence need your attention. 'despite' cannot be used here. You can use 'although' instead.

16 Providing the correct solution

This move provided the highest level of support (i.e., offering an actual answer) given to the students when no other techniques worked. For example, Natasha repeatedly used single count nouns without articles although these were pointed out to her and hence, the mediator had to offer the correct solution by actually correcting the sentences where required.

Appendix 6B: Learner reciprocal moves

1 Asking for task clarification

During the assessment some students asked the mediator to clarify further what the task needed although the guidance notes were provided. For example, Michelle wanted to get some clarification regarding the content of her DA1 draft 3:

> … I have edited the words in blue and **to clarify**, can I go ahead and fill in as much information as needed or stick to the 500 word limit. If I can fill in the the political and economical bits, I think it will give it a bit more as an analysis but as I said before I was trying to stick to the word limit. **Please let me know**…
> [wiki comment]

2 Unresponsive

The learners did not respond to some of the mediator mediation. However, it was not known why they did not respond. For instance, Natasha did not respond to the mediator's comment made in DA1 draft 1 regarding social factors when she wrote her draft 2 as shown below:

> … **The changes in social environment had provided a good base to the success of Buckle**. [last sentence in the paragraph]
> *Mediator*: Are there any other social factors?
> [DA1 draft 1]

> **The changes in social environment had provided a good base to the success of Buckler**. [last sentence in the paragraph]
> [DA1 draft 2]

3 Imitating the mediator

The learners generally followed this move when they were offered a solution to the problem they could not resolve themselves. This move indicated the learner's low level of

independence. However, imitating/ repeating a more capable peer is considered a step towards learning (e.g., see Chaiklin, 2003). For instance, Michelle repeated the suggestion (in bold) given by the mediator in this sentence:

> Those **who suffer these injuries are mainly** the health care workers who **are** exposed to … (DA2 final draft).

4 Using the mediator as a resource

Often this move occurred when the learners were not entirely sure about what they were doing. This move indicated that the learner was taking some responsibility for their learning but needed support. To exemplify this move, in Michelle's DA1 draft 1, the mediator asked her to change the 9th sentence in the text as it was not an effective opening sentence in the paragraph. In response, Michelle wrote draft 2 and left a comment in the wiki:

> "… Sentence 9 I tried to change the beginning but I am not sure if I was successful so you will let me know…" (DA1 draft 2)

5 Checking conceptual understanding with mediator

Except Natasha, all three DA students checked their conceptual understanding with the mediator regarding the conceptual framework to be used in the case study analysis when they needed. Here is an example from Michelle's response:

> Michelle: in using the first [social] factor
> *Mediator*: yes?
> Michelle: changes and attitudes of infected workers, **how do i link this to the effect**
> for eg
> becasue **i dont understand how to link it to the effect**
> [IM during DA2 draft 2]

6 Responding incorrectly

This type of move occurred when the learner tried to respond to the mediator mediation around a problem indicated in the text. Although the response was incorrect, the learner took more responsibility to resolve the problem. Consider the excerpt below in which Natasha changed from 'despite of' in DA1 draft 1 to 'despite' in DA1 draft 2 after the mediator asked her to think about the problem:

> **Despite** Heineken has been producing non -alcohol beers mostly for non European market before., there was no good quality non alcohol beer in the market. …
> [DA1 draft 2, paragraph 5]

7 Asking for content clues

The learners were sometimes not sure about the information to be retrieved from the case study for their analysis. Therefore, they often had to ask the mediator-mediator for clues or support. For example, Michelle was not so sure about the social factors in the DA2 task:

> "… **But I am a little stuck and it is only on the social factors** because the others are so clear cut to find but **the social so confuses me** …"
> [IM, DA2 draft 2].

8 Identifying the problem

A more independent learner move occurred when the learners were able to identify the problem in the text without the mediator's help. However, this did not mean that they could solve the problem. This kind of move tended to be a form of self-assessment as well:

> Michelle: … What I also found a bit difficult is the ability to fit the relevant information under the correct headings…
> [email with DA2 draft 1]

9 Explaining the problem

In addition to identifying the problem, some students were able to explain the nature of the problem. For instance, when the mediator asked Natasha to add the environmental factors to her DA1 draft 2, she explained why she had not done this:

> Environmental factors: I have not found relevant information to this category in the case study..

10 Evaluating mediator feedback

It was notable that two students evaluated the value of the mediator feedback for their writing. Such evaluation indicates what kind of feedback works for them and how the mediator can respond in future. Here is an excerpt from Michelle:

> … I am ready to finish the step analysis now and **I am confident that the guidelines u sent me will make all the difference. I forgot about cause and effect so that is really good that you reminded me**…
> [email during DA2 draft 2]

11 Self-assessing:

Self-assessment regarding her writing style was quite common in Michelle's response and once in Amina's but never appeared in the other two. Assessing one's progress is a form of reflective learning which contributes to learning and development (Wells, 1999, pp. 159-60). For example, Michelle reflected on her paragraph development thus:

> "… Beginners [topic sentence] is something I really have to work on when expressing myself in writing these essays. I am still adjusting to this style of writing so please bear with me…" [DA1 draft 2]

12 Incorporating feedback:

This is naturally the commonest move made by the students in response to the mediator mediation. This move generally led to writing a better text. The learner was able to handle the problem with some mediator support in this reciprocal move. Natasha, for example, was

having difficulty in writing an effective theme sentence of the paragraph. Once the mediator gave an example, she was able to write such sentences for the rest of her DA1 draft 3 text. Consider the excerpt below which had no theme sentence (bold) in her DA1 drafts 1 and 2:

> **Several technological factors influenced Buckler 's development.** For instance, it was important to create a tasty product for the regular beer consumers …
>
> [DA1 draft 3, paragraph 3]

13 Suggesting a possible solution

One learner (Amina) suggested possible solutions to the problems in question during the assessment. This move was considered a more independent one although some assistance was needed. This move is illustrated in the interaction below where Amina suggests a possible theme sentence:

> Amina: shall we say that, microsoft is a big threat for the chrome because of
>
> *Mediator:* not exactly, your focus is on Google not on Microsoft.
>
> [IM, DA1 draft 1]

14 Verbalising conceptual understanding

Asking learners to externalise their thoughts on linguistic concepts has recently been employed in language education research driven by sociocultural theory and this pedagogical technique has been found useful for learners towards solving a problem (e.g., Poehner, 2005; Swain & Lapkin, 2002). This technique was extended in the present study because the learners not only verbalised their thoughts on linguistic forms but also on their conceptual knowledge of a particular discipline (i.e., business studies) and text organisation. Although only three DA learners made use of this move, this move appeared to help them with their better understanding of the conceptual knowledge they needed to accomplish the given assessment task. The following excerpt from Michelle demonstrates her verbalisation of paragraph development:

> … I think after doing the exercises on learning how to develop paragraphs, I have become a little bit more conscious of how I am linking my sentences and this takes

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a bit of time when producing written assignments to ensure that the sentences within each paragraph are coordinated in the right way to gain the best results…

[email with DA2, draft 1]

15 Rejecting the mediator's feedback

Although it is not entirely clear why, there were times when the learners rejected the mediator's feedback which sometimes resulted in producing ineffective texts. However, this move was an independent one. For example, the mediator suggested (i.e., track changed) a theme sentence for the paragraph on *strengths* in DA1 draft 3 by Lou the sentence (DA2 draft 2, paragraph 5) below but she rejected the suggestion and wrote her own:

> ***Strengths***
>
> Google **has several strengths regarding its new operating system**…
>
> [bold words – mediator's track changes, DA1 draft 3]
>
> ***Strengths***
>
> One of the strengths that were facing Google was the ability of designing an operating system that has proven to be easy to work with compared to others…
>
> [DA1 final draft]

16 Overcoming problems:

This was the final move made by the learners in relation to a particular problem when they identified and solved it with only a little support from the mediator. For instance, the mediator asked Michelle to change her theme sentence of paragraph 3 in her DA1 draft 1 as it was too specific. She revised her theme sentence by making it more effective:

> One social factor demonstrated in the case study that has had an impact on Heineken's marketing in European countries is …
>
> [DA1, draft 1]
>
> **The case study revealed many social factors in Heineken's external environment**…
>
> [DA1 draft 2]

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Chapter 7 appendices

Appendix 7A: A summary of generic stages in student assignments

Generic stages in DA students' assignment texts – DA1

*Note: ^ is used to mean 'followed by' in SFL genre theory

Students	Generic stages	
	DA1 draft 1	DA1 final
Amina	Visual^* Description (Google)^ Description^ Definition? (Chrome)^ Comparison^ Explanation (usefulness of Chrome)^ Comparison (Microsoft and Chrome)^ [Review]	Orientation (SWOT)^ Visual (SWOT table) Component 1 (Strengths) Component 2 (Opportunities) Component 3 (Weaknesses) Component 4 (Threats) [Recommendations]
Lou	Component 1 (Strength)^ Component 2 (Weaknesses)^ Component 3 (Opportunities)^ Component 4 (Threats)	Orientation (SWOT)^ Visual (SWOT table)^ Component 1 (Strengths)^ Component 2 (Weaknesses)^ Component 3 (Opportunities)^ Component 4 (Threats)^ [Summary]^ [References]
Michelle	Background information/ Orientation^ Classification (STEP)^	Background information/ Orientation^ Classification (STEP)^ Component 1 (Factor 1 - Social)^

	Component 1 (Factor 1 - Social)^ Component 2 (Factor 2 – Technological)^ Component 3 (Factor 3 – Economic)^ Component 4 (Factor 4 – Political)^ [Summary]	Component 2 (Factor 2 – Technological)^ Component 3 (Factor 3 – Economic)^ Component 4 (Factor 4 – Political)^ [Summary]
Natasha	Orientation (STEP)^ Component 1 (Factor 1 - Social)^ Component 2 (Factor 2 – Technological)^ Component 3 (Factor 3 – Economic)^ Component 4 (Factor 4 – Political)^	Orientation (STEP)^ Component 1 (Factor 1 Social)^ Component 2 (Factor 2 – Technological)^ Component 3 (Factor 3 – Economic)^ Component 4 (Factor 4 – Political)^ [Summary]

Generic stages in DA students' assignment texts – DA2

Students	Generic stages	
	DA2 draft 1	DA2 final
Amina	Quotation^ Orientation (STEP)^ Description (abstract ideas)^ Description^ Recount^ Description^ Classification (type of services)^ Description 1^ Description 2^ Description 3^	Quotation^ Orientation (STEP)^ Description (abstract ideas)^ Description^ Recount^ Description^ Classification (type of services)^ Description 1^ Description 2^ Description 3^

	Description 4^ [Summary]	Description 4^ [Summary]^ [References]
Lou	Orientation (SWOT)^ Component 1 (Strengths)^ Component 2 (Weaknesses)^ Component 3 (Opportunities)^ Component 4 (Threats)^ [Recommendations]^ [References]	Orientation (SWOT)^ Component 1 (Strengths)^ Component 2 (Weaknesses)^ Component 3 (Opportunities)^ Component 4 (Threats)^ [Recommendations]^ [References]
Miche lle	Orientation (STEP)^ Component 1 (Factor 1 - Social)^ Component 2 (Factor 2 – Technological)^ Component 3 (Factor 3 – Economic)^ Component 4 (Factor 4 – Political) [incomplete]	Orientation (STEP)^ Component 1 (Factor 1 - Social)^ Component 2 (Factor 2 – Technological)^ Component 3 (Factor 3 – Economic)^ Component 4 (Factor 4 – Political)^ [Recommendations]
Natas ha	Orientation (STEP)^ Component 1 (Factor 1 - Social)^ Component 2 (Factor 2 – Technological)^ Component 3 (Factor 3 – Economic)^ Component 4 (Factor 4 – Political)^	Orientation (STEP)^ Component 1 (Factor 1 - Social)^ Component 2 (Factor 2 – Technological)^ Component 3 (Factor 3 – Economic)^ Component 4 (Factor 4 – Political)^

	[Recommendations]	[Recommendations]

Generic stages in NDA students' assignment texts

Students	Generic stages	
	NDA1	NDA2
Kristie	Orientation (SWOT)^ Background information^ Comparison (Google vs. Microsoft)^ Problem^ Component 3 (Opportunities)^ Description (market competition)	Orientation (SWOT)^ Description^ Description^ Description^ Description^ Problem – Solution^ Condition^ Component 4 (Threats)^ Conclusion/ Recommendations
Lena	Classification (SWOT)^ Component 1 (Strengths)^ Component 2 (Weaknesses)^ Component 3 (Opportunities)^ Component 4 (Threats)^ Conclusion	Orientation^ Classification (macro and micro environment)^ Classification 1 (macro)^ Classification 2 (micro)^ Evaluation (of marketing strategies)^ Procedure/ Process (how the company works with its customers)^ Evaluation (strength of the company)^ Visual (company's market environment)^ Evaluation (of a new product – ConnectWise)^ Visual (product life cycle) Procedure/ Process (of marketing the new product)^ Conclusion

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Appendix 7B: Analysis of Natasha's DA1 and DA2 texts (Generic stages, macro-Theme and hyper-Themes

DA1 Assignment task

Read the following case study carefully. Then, use the STEP framework to critically analyse the external environment of Heineken in terms of its marketing strategy. Your analysis should not exceed 500 words.

Analysis of Generic stages, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes

DA draft 1

Stages/ phases of genre [social activity]	Student text	Macro-Theme, hyper-Themes and comments
Orientation^	**STEEP analysis Of Heineken's Buckler beer** P1 The analysis <u>will outline</u> how the external factors of the global beer company influenced the start of a new non- alcoholic product. ==Although,== Heineken was producing non -alcohol beers before, there was a desirable opportunity for launching a new brand. ==The STEEP analysis lists== the circumstances of the Buckler's born.	Macro-Theme: Indicated by the title but not clear from the introduction; STEP not defined.
Description (Factor 1	P2 Social factors: People awareness of towards a healthier lifestyle has increased in recent years. The	Hyper-Theme: sub-heading

Social)^	demand for less harmful products, for example, non – alcohol beers has grown. In addition, there was already a request for a new enhanced brand in Spain. The changes in social environment had provided a good base to the success of Buckle.	used to mark the phase but no linguistic resource used to predict the Theme of the paragraph Last sentence seems to have served as hyper-Theme
Description (Factor 2 – Technological)^	P3 Technological factors: It was important to create a tasty product for the regular beer consumers. The production process required advanced technologie P4 An other technological advantages of Heineken is its developed distributions system, which provided opportunity to spread the beer in Europe and "To be the first in the market"	Hyper-Theme as above;
Description (Factor 3 – Economic)^	P5 Economic factors : Despite of Heineken has been producing non -alcohol beers mostly for non European market before., there was no good quality non alcohol beer in the market. Therefore the company did not have to face big competitors. As Buckler was designed for all nations, the advertising was created centrally and it covered whole Europe, which reduced the cost of expensis.The sponsorship of the Dutch cycling team, was an other positive marketing tactic as the team showed how beer can fit into the active healty	As above

	lifestyle.	
Description (Factor 4 – Political)^	P6 Political factors. The tendency of reducing the alcohol consumption was desirable by government as well. Government campaigns provided a good opportunity to launch the new line. The company had to deal with different regulations in countries. The legislation in Spain in terms of non – alcohol products was more favourable than in other countries.So it was good chance to introduce Buckler first in Spain.	As above

No full explanation given |
| | | Macro-New:

Recommendations

Not given |

DA1 final version (Natasha)

Stages/ phases of genre [social activity]	Student text	Macro-Theme, hyper-Themes and comments
Orientation/ Classification^	**STEEP analysis Of Heineken's Buckler beer**

P1 The analysis will outline how the external factors of <mark>the global beer company</mark> influenced | Macro-Theme: STEP analysis of Heineken's external business |

	the launch of a new non- alcoholic product. AlthoughHeineken was producing non -alcohol beers before, there was a desirable opportunity for launching a new brand. <u>To examine the external environment of this new brand</u> I will use the STEEP business model. This model helps in the assessment of the organisation. I will analyse the macro political, social, technological and economic environment where Buckler was born.	environment
Description (Factor 1 Social)^	P2 Social factors have had an effect on the development of Buckler beer. For example, the public awareness towards a healthier lifestyle has increased in recent years. The demand for less harmful products, <mark>for instant</mark>, non – alcohol beers has grown. In addition, there was already a request for a new enhanced brand in Spain. Furthermore, the company had to carefully consider the traditional customs of countries when it designed its advertisement. One such a specific element was the fact that bars in Italy offer meals as well. Also, Heineken's target audience were those beer drinkers, who wanted to enjoy the taste of beer without alcohol. Buckler, the premium product was suitable for the primary target. The changes in social environment had provided a good base to the success of Buckler.	Micro-Theme: clearly defined Move from general to particular Summarises the points made
Description	P3 Several technological factors influenced	Hyper-Theme:

(Factor 2 – Technological)^	Buckler 's development. One such a factor was that it was important to create a tasty product for the regular beer consumers. Heineken produced the special taste by its advanced technology. <mark>Another technological</mark> factor was Heineken's advanced distributions system-, through its network in Europe.	clearly defined Move from general to particular Could be elaborated/ explained further
Description (Factor 3 – Economic)^	P4 A number of economic factors have also had a direct impact on the process of the beer making. Firstly, there was no good quality non-alcohol beer in the market, as a result of this the company did not have to face big competitors. <mark>However, Heineken has been producing non - alcohol beers mostly for non European market before</mark>. <mark>It was still an ideal opportunity to introduce the new brand</mark>. Secondly, in order to reduce the cost of expenses the advertising was created centrally and it covered whole Europe. Moreover, the sponsorship of the Dutch cycling team was another positive marketing tactic as the team showed how beer can fit into the active healthy lifestyle.	Hyper-Theme: clearly defined Move from general to particular; Info structuring – foregrounding opportunity would have been more effective. Further elaboration needed
Description (Factor 4 – Political)^	P5 Finally, political factors also influenced Heineken's marketing of Buckler. The most obvious factor was the government regulations in various countries. The local legislation on alcohol in each country was different. Heineken had to deal with the countries separately. For example, non- alcohol products had to contain	Hyper-Theme: clearly defined

	less than 0.11% in the Netherlands whereas they could have contain up to 1% in Spain. The legislation in Spain in terms of non – alcohol products was more favourable than in other part of Europe. The positive effect of the strict legislation made the launch of Buckler prosperous.	[verb form] summary not congruent with the point made above
Summary	Conclusion P6 The STEP analysis highlighted the environmental factors which had a major effect on the success of Buckler. Furthermore, it represents how the business had to adjust to the external factors when Heineken launched the new production line.	Macro-New: summary Could include recommendations

DA2 Assessment task

Read the case study below and write up a STEP analysis of the safer syringe market critically examining its external environment. [Use the STEP table to remind yourself how STEP framework works if necessary.]

DA2 draft 1 (Natasha)

Stages/ phases of genre [social activity]	Student text	Macro-Theme, hyper-Themes and Comments
Classification^	**STEP- Safer syringes** P1 The purpose of this STEP analysis is to examine the external macro – environment of the usage of the safer syringes. This framework	Macro-Theme: quite clearly defined/ stated

	analyses the social, technological, economic and political factors, which have an impact on the presence of safety syringes.	Safer syringe market?
Description (Factor 1 – Social)^	P2 There is one major social factor, which influences the existence of safer syringes. This factor relates to demographic and cultural features such as safety consciousness in different countries. Take, for example, the article in The Economist, which reveals that America has differing viewpoint from other countries in safety issues. The American opinion is that the world is a dangerous place, therefore everything should be ruled and directed in order to make it safer. This attitude lead to that US have strict regulations on syringes. Although, in Europe and Japan there has been a growing concern by unions and workers there are no statutes on the practice of needlesticks. These social changes have direct effect on the location of the market and explain why USA is the potential market.	Hyper-Theme: not clearly defined but moves from general to particular Odd Process word s-v agreement
Description (Factor 2 – Technological)^	P3 Technology plays a central role in adoption of the safer syringes. In the past some of the safety syringes were made by manually, which lowered the effectiveness of the production. These days the UK healthcare company invited the cheapest automatically retract syringes, which made by automatic method. The automation of production contributes to increasing the level of production. Consequently, the improvement in technology	Hyper-Theme: not clearly stated but opening sentence indicates it; Moves from general to particular

	has an obvious benefit and a central role to go mainstream.	
Description (Factor 3 – Economic)^	P4 Several economic factors have an ==affect== on introduction of safer syringes. One of the key factors is applying traditional syringes have high ==cost from economic aspects== and ==from the aspect of personal health cost==. For example, the cost of infection caused by the bloodborne pathogen can cost more ==than $1 million== and the overall economic cost is even higher. These expenses could be reduced by the wider use of safer ==syringes,.== Another important issue is the question of the cost of manufacture. ==Although,== the Medisys company invented the cheapest safety syringes they are still more expensive than traditional needles. This has a negative effect on selling the safety syringes and the company has to focus on USA clients who are able to pay for the more pricy products. Besides, the existing syringe ==producers are worry== about their own market ==as results of== this they hinder the adoption of safer syringes.	Hyper-Theme: as above; moves from general to particular;

Not clear where and when (Circ) |
| Description (Factor 4 – (Political)^ | P5 A number of political factors influence ==the occurrence of the safety needles.== One ==such an element== is the government regulations on safer needles ==in 2001==. Due to this, The Needlestick Safety Prevention Act decree to use safer needles. It also orders that workers who are involved in direct patient care can decide on | Hyper-Theme: as above; |

	which syringe to use. Another USA bill is The Health Care Worker Needlestick Prevention Act, which has been implemented by Pete Stark and his ==colleague. emphasis== the protection of the health workers. These Acts uphold workers to practice their rights and take legal action against employers who do not observe the law. <u>Furthermore, it is fundamental</u> in order to spread the modern syringes.	Sentence fragments
Summary/ Recommendation	P6 Overall, the analysis represents that the macro environment of the safety syringe business ==have== its opportunities and obstacles. By taking advantage of positive changes in legalization, technology and social attitudes it is possible that safer syringes will attain more market in the future.	Macro-New: quite effective s-v agreement

DA2 final version (Natasha)

Stages/ phases of genre [social activity]	**Student text**	**Macro-Theme, hyper-Themes and Comments**
Classification^	**STEP- Safer syringes** P1 <u>The purpose</u> of this STEP analysis is to examine the external macro – environment of the safer syringe market. Although safer syringes are accessible, the number of	Macro-Theme: clearly defined/ stated

	needlestick injuries is still high. The modern syringes enable the prevention of these injuries and there are signs that the market of safety syringes can grow. This report analyses the safer syringe market from social, technological, economic and political aspects. These factors have a crucial impact on the presence of safety syringes.	
Description (Factor 1 – Social)^	P2 There is one major social factor, which influences the popularity of safer syringes. This factor relates to demographic and cultural features such as safety consciousness in recent years. The article in The Economist (The Economist, 2001) reveals that people's attitude have been changed in safety issues. For example, according to Americans the world has been a dangerous place, therefore everything should be regulated and directed in order to make it safer. This attitude led to the US implementing strict regulations on syringes. Although in Europe and Japan there has been a growing concern by unions and workers, there are still no statutes on the practice of needlesticks. These social changes above have a direct effect on the location of the market and explain why USA is the potential market for safer syringes.	Hyper-Theme: popularity of safer syringe; works ok Source used following a convention Move general to particular
Description (Factor 2 – Technological)^	P3 Technology also plays a central role in the adoption of safer syringes. For instance, in the past some of the safety syringes were	Hyper-Theme: quite effective

	made manually, which lowered the effectiveness of the production. These days as a result of development in technology, a UK healthcare company invented the automatically retractable syringes. These can be produced through an automatic system, which contributes to increasing the level of production. Furthermore, this type of automatic syringe became the cheapest among the safety syringes. Consequently, the improvement in technology has boosted production and decreased the cost of manufacturing. These advantages create the opportunity to increase the market share and enter the mainstream.	Move general to particular
Description (Factor 3 – Economic)^	P4 Several economic factors influenced the wider introduction of safer syringes. Firstly, the economic costs of traditional syringes such as the cost for drug therapies following the needlestick injuries and the increased personal health costs are relatively high. For example, the cost of infection caused by the bloodborne pathogen alone can cost more than $1 million. These expenses could be reduced by the wider use of safer syringes. Another important issue is the question of the cost of manufacturing. Although the Medisys company invented the cheapest safety syringes they are still more expensive than traditional needles. This has a negative effect on selling the safety syringes and the	Hyper-Theme: effective;

	company has to focus on USA clients who are able to pay for the more pricy products. Besides, the existing syringe producers hinder the adoption of safer ==syringes. in== order to protect their own market.	
Description (Factor 4 – (Political)^	P5 A number of political factors ==influence== the provision of the safety needles. One such an element is the government regulations on safer needles ==in 2001.== Due to this, The Needlestick Safety Prevention Act decrees the use of safer needles. It also orders that workers who are involved in direct patient care can decide on which syringe to use. Another USA bill is The Health Care Worker Needlestick Prevention Act, which has been implemented by Pete Stark and his colleague. This emphasises the protection of the health workers, upholds workers to practice their rights and takes legal actions against employers who do not observe the law.	Hyper-Theme: effective, move general to particular; Verb tense
Summary/ Recommend ation	P6 Overall, the analysis showed that the external environment of the safety syringe market has its opportunities and obstacles. By taking advantage of positive changes in politics, technology and social attitudes it is possible that safer syringes will receive more consideration and attain more market in the future.	Macro-New: effective

Appendix 7C: Analysis of Amina's DA1 and DA2 texts (Generic stages, macro-Theme and hyper-Themes

DA1 assignment task

You are going to read two articles: *Google parks its tanks right outside Microsoft's gates* by John Naughton and *Google plans Chrome operating system* by Jefferson Graham. These two articles form a case study of the new operating system for computers being developed by Google. The new operating system is going to compete with Microsoft's Windows operating system. Both the articles examine the business environment of Google's Chrome operating system.

Task

Read the two articles about Google's Chrome operating system for computers mentioned above and write a SWOT analysis of this product based on the articles. Your SWOT analysis should be of about 500 words.

Analysis of Generic stages, macro-Themes and hyper-Themes

DA1 draft 1

SWOT Analyses of Google's Chrome

Strengths	Weaknesses
The world's most visited and well known site. A very good Reputation. Successful in Gmail and G talk.	1. No Customer service. 2. Nothing special about new product.
Opportunities	**Threats**

• Launch of a full operating system (chrome). • Targeting a billion people in future.	• Avery strong competition with microsoft. • Risk of product failure.

Stages/ Phases of Genre	Student Text	Macro-Theme, hyper-Theme and Comments
Visual^ (SWOT table above) Description (Google)^	P1 Google is a very well known name for billions of people in the world who use the internet. It is the the most visited search engine in the world. Google has introduced some interesting software's like chrome browser and Gmail and G talk, to 600 million people. Google has made all the information available in seconds on the net. Now a days everyone uses Google for their searches on-line which had made Google the world's no. 1 search engine.	Macro-Theme: not clear Description of the company; no mention of the framework (i.e., SWOT) It looks like an introduction to Google
Description^	P2 In July 2009, Google has announced the launch of new operating system, chrome, which will compete against today's most famous and trustable software company's Microsoft. The operating system which is in competition with chrome will be window 7. Windows are used by 90% of people using the pc's. Some big companies have already installed windows 7 in new laptops and pc's.	Hyper-Theme: not clear Narrative style and the hyper-Theme does not appear to be working

Definition (Chrome)^	P3 Chrome is software, which will be free. This can be very usefull for some hardware comapnies to install and present this software. Google is offering free online office applications which can save a lot space on the hard drive and easy to use.	hyperTheme: focuses on Chrome; last sentence does not extend the meaning in the preceding sentences
Comparison^	P4 Competition with Microsoft is very tough for Google, as Microsoft's windows are a complete operating system with all the drives and support available all the time. Free updates and customer support have established very strong customer relationships. Office 7 is also doing very well in the market. Microsoft have such a strong reputation that people go for its products automaticlly without much effort.	hyperTheme: Microsoft's dominance no link with SWOT
Explanation (usefulness of Chrome)^	P5 The world is changing and technology have a great impact on our lives. In the modern world lifestyle everyone have a pc or laptop for their personal use. Internet is main factor people use in their laptops. To get the fast and efficient connection to the web, Chrome will be best solution and Google can start marketing by targeting millions of its Gmail and Gtalk users worldwide.	Hyper-Theme: not clear Focus on technology and changing lives; again no sign of SWOT
Comparison (Microsoft and	P6 The main market for Microsoft is official use pc's and Google can target the personal use and	hyperTheme – marketing

Chrome)^	home pc's with their product Chrome easily. Although google is not good at customer services which can lead to losing customers and failure of the new product. Google can overcome this problem by establishing a plan for customer services and support centre.	strategies; no element of SWOT
Summary	P7 Chrome is free and easy to use is the main quality of a product, which needs to be marketed right to people. Free instalation can get it on the laptops and personal use pc's by hardware comapnies and it can reduce the prices. Overall we can say that Chrome can be a successful product of IT's world.	Macro-New: no link with SWOT; summarises the description

DA1 final version (Amina)

Stages/ phases of genre: [social activity]	Student text	Macro-Theme, hyper-Theme and Comments
Classification (SWOT)^	**SWOT Analyses of Google's Chrome** **Introduction**: P1 Google is a world famous search engine, introducing the new software called chrome. I am writing the <mark>analyses</mark> of chrome's market environment using the SWOT model, which	Macro-Theme: Clearly indicates what the text is going to be about

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	describes the four main categories for any organization as follows Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Below is the SWOT table, summarizing my analysis.	
Visual (enhancement) – central	**SWOT table**	Visual enhances the text
Component 1 (Strengths)^	**Strengths** P2 As a reputable company, Google has certain advantages over its competitors. It is the most visited search engine in the world which can help market this new product effectively. While other operating systems such as Windows are not free, Chrome is freely available and computer manufacturers are likely to go for a free product. Also, another strength of Google is its successful experiment with Android which is being used for net books by PC maker Acer.	Hyper-Theme: clearly defines the theme of the paragraph: advantages over competitors (strengths); clearly linked with the macro-Theme
Component 2 (Opportunities)^	**Opportunities** P3 Google can take advantage of several opportunities for Chrome that is available to it. One such opportunity is Chrome being suitable for any PC. This means any PC manufacturer can easily use Chrome for free, which may make their PCs cheaper. Millions of Gmail users can be targeted as a good market for this new product,	Hyper-Theme: clearly defines the theme and linked with the macro-Theme

	which is another opportunity for Google.	
Component 3 (Weaknesses)^	**Weaknesses** P4 Google has a few weaknesses as well for marketing Chrome. One of them is that Google is not good at customer services which can lead to losing customers and failure of the new product. Another weakness is Chrome is mainly internet based software and might not be used without the internet connection. Office features are <mark>also</mark> available online and cannot be used in the areas without any internet facilities. Google also has a lack of experience compared to Microsoft in the marketing field.	Hyper-Theme: clearly defines the theme; linked with the macro-Theme Oddly separated sentence
Component 4 (Threats)^	**Threats** P5 In addition to weaknesses, Google also faces some threats to Chrome. One of the biggest threats comes from its competitor, Microsoft. The operating system which is in competition with chrome will be windows 7. Windows is used by 90% of people using the pcs. Some big companies have already installed windows 7 in new laptops and pcs. Competition with Microsoft is very tough for Google, as Microsoft's windows is a complete operating system with all the drives and support available all the time. Microsoft has such a strong reputation that people go for its products automatically without much effort. Also, there may be resistance from consumers to Chrome which is new to the market. Often people	Hyper-Theme: clearly defined and linked with previous para and macro-Theme

	tend to use what they already know rather than trying a new product.	
Summary/ Recommendation	**Conclusion** P6 The world is changing and technology has a great impact on our lives. In the modern world lifestyle everyone has a PC or laptop for their personal use. To get the fast and efficient connection to the web, Chrome can be a good solution. Since marketing is a big hurdle to Chrome, Google can overcome this problem by establishing a plan for customer services and support centres. Overall we can say that Chrome can be a successful product in the IT world.	Macro-New: clearly evaluates and makes a claim though the beginning two sentences may not be necessary

DA2 Assignment task

B201 eTMA01 by Amina

Assignment task

Question 1

Because this course relies heavily on you making sense of the academic ideas in light of your own experience, it is helpful to start thinking about your own experience of business organisations and their environments right away. Write a brief account (500 words) of your own experiences to date with business organisations and their environments, using one of the three course themes (theory and practice, ways of thinking, diversity and complexity) to help frame your answer. Remember that your experience need not be solely professional in nature, but you should begin to think

about how the ideas you're learning about have some resonance with your own experience.

DA2 draft 1 (Amina)

Stages/ phases of genre	Student text	Macro-Theme, hyper-Theme and Comments
Quotation^	P1 Nothing is as practical as a good theory (Kurt Lewin, social psychologist, 1945, p.129).	Macro-Theme:
Classification (STEP)^	P2 There are various ways of thinking about business environment. Each theory helps to understand how business interacts with each other and with environment. Some theories explain the changes in external environment and others focus on how businesses can become successful. One of the theories is a STEP Model, which describes the business environment by focussing on four factors as follows, • Social • Technological • Economic • Political I am using one of the factors, social, to describe my organisation.	This para appears to be the macro-Theme: using the STEP framework to analyse the business environment.
Description (abstract ideas)^ Description of abstract ideas	P3 Our experience in everyday life shapes our thinking, built our opinions and we make perspective about how we like doing things and things around us. People's perspectives can change	hyper-Theme: experience in everyday life? No clear

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(how experience is shaped up); exemplification - media	according to the environment they live in, for example media plays a big role in making people's mind about things. Especially news media can present a story in a positive or negative way which affects people views.	direction and link with the assignment title
Description^ Description/ explanation of how business theories develop	P4 Theories about business do not have many differences in them. They are based on collected data and observation of how business work. This data is observed by a human being, so there is great impact of the person who is collecting and presenting that information, which becomes the theory.	hyper-Theme: stated but still not linked with the assignment title/ macro-Theme
Recount^ Description/ Recount of joining the company; background info	P5 I am working in one of the UK's favourite children park, Lego land. When I joined the company I was introduced with the training course to help me settle down in the job role and perform my duty accurately. In the training course I learnt about food and hygiene and health and safety at work place.	No clear hyper-Theme but concentration on background to the job; no link with macro-Theme
Description^ Description of the company – Lego Land; background info continued	P6 Lego Land Windsor is one of the four Lego land parks in the world. First was opened in Denmark, other two are in Germany and USA. This theme park is built with 55million Lego bricks.	Hyper-Theme: Lego Land; not directly linked with macro-Theme
Classification (type of services)^	P7 There are four theories or purpose we are working on as follows, 1. To provide entertainment to children and family.	Hyper-Theme: purposes of the company; no clear link with

Description of purpose of the business/ company; looks like classification	2. Healthy eating 3. Education 4. Giving value for the money in services.	the macro-Theme
Description 1^ Description of entertainment facilities; exemplification	P8 At Lego land there are variety of rides and attractions for children and adults including some over 50's attractions. Activity area in the park includes the beginning, Imagination, Duplo Land, traffic, Land of Vikings, Lego City, adventure land, wild woods and knight kingdom. Average time spent in this area is 5-6 hr. Guest satisfaction 90.8% say they had excellent day.	Hyper-Theme: entertainment facilities at Lego Land
Description 2^ Description of eating facilities; exemplification	P9 We are promoting healthy eating for our customers, especially kids. There are 7 shops and 11 coffee shops and restaurants in Lego land Windsor. Signature dishes from best-seller children's food expert, Annabel Karmel, feature on the menu. All fizzy drinks have been removed and replaced with milk, fruit juices like caparison and still water. Adults can feature healthy salads, jacket potatoes and low fat, salt and sugar beans etc. There are new fish dishes introduce as well.	Hyper-Theme: healthy eating at Lego Land
Description 3^ Description of workshops at Lego Land;	P10 All workshops are national curriculum relevant, covering key stage 1- 4 and special needs. Workshops last for 45 min and they explore different aspects of design, technology and information. The children get help to build design, make robots and complete variety of tasks. School	Hyper-Theme: workshops at Lego Land; final sentence un-related to the paragraph.

exemplification	groups receive 15% discount in food and retail, and other extra offers as well. Lego land Windsor nominated charity is Ormond street hospital charity.	
Description 4^ Description of/ explanation for value for money at Lego Land	P11 Lego land aims to give value service for the money. The basic annual pass for child/ senior is £36 and adult £49. 87% of our customers rate the Lego land as good value for money. In 2007 Lego land sold 90000 annual passes.	Hyper-Theme: value for money; linked with the company's purposes
Summary? Explanation of why Lego Land has changed its services	P12 Over the last decade, people livings have been changed. Life have become busier than ever before and stressful, to come out of this stressful life people need breaks and fun out. Eating habits have been changed, people want to eat healthy and been informed of what they are eating. These changes had impacted the Lego land as well. They have changed the way they serve food and salt and sugar been reduced in dishes. Varieties of dishes are introduced to meet the different needs of people. All workshops are representing the national curriculum.	macro-New: people's changing life style. No link with the macro-Theme: social factor influencing the company's business environment.

DA2 final version (Amina)

Stages/ phases of genre:	Student text	Macro-Theme, hyper-Theme and Comments
Quotation^	P1 Nothing is as practical as a good theory (Kurt Lewin, social psychologist, 1945, p.129).	Macro-Theme: does not state Quote seems odd

Classification (STEP)^ Orientation – preamble to business theories Identification of a business theory (STEP model to 'describe' the organisation)	P2 There are various ways of thinking about the business environment. Each theory helps to understand how the businesses interact with each other and with the environment. Some theories explain the changes in external environment and others focus on how businesses can become successful. One of the theories is a STEP Model, which describes the business environment by focussing on four factors as follows, • Social • Technological • Economic • Political I am using one of the factors, social, to describe my organisation.	This para appears to be the macro-Theme: using the STEP framework to analyse the business environment.
Description (abstract ideas)^ Description of abstract ideas (how experience shapes up people); exemplification - media	P3 Our experience in daily life shapes our thinking, ==built== our opinions and we make perspectives about how we like doing things and things around us. People's perspectives can change according to the environment they live in, for example media plays a big role in making people's mind about activities. Especially news media can present a story in a positive or negative way which affects people views and thinking.	hyper-Theme: experience in everyday life? No clear direction and link with the assignment title could have been linked with the theme
Description^ Description/ explanation of	P4 Theories about the business do not have many differences in them. They are based on collected data and observation of how business work. This data is observed by a human being, so there is great	hyper-Theme: stated but still not linked with the assignment

how business theories develop	impact of the person who is collecting and presenting that information, which becomes the theory.	title/ macro-Theme seems irrelevant to the theme unless linked with what follows
Recount^ Description/ Recount of joining the company (record/ sequence of events); background info	P5 I am working in one of the UK's favourite children park named Lego land. When I joined the company I was introduced with the training course to help me settling down in the job role and perform my duty accurately. In the training course I learnt about food and hygiene and health and safety at work place.	No clear hyper-Theme but concentration on background to the job (events around the writer); no link with macro-Theme
Description^ Description of the company – Lego Land; background info continued	P6 Lego Land Windsor is one of the four Lego land parks in the world. The first park was opened in Denmark, others two are in Germany and USA. This theme park is built with 55million Lego bricks.	Hyper-Theme: Lego Land; not directly linked with macro-Theme

Classification (type of services)^	P7 There are four theories or purpose we are working on as follows,
	    5. To provide entertainment to children and family.
	    6. Healthy eating
	    7. Education
	    8. Giving value for the money in services.
		Hyper-Theme: purposes of the company; no clear link with the macro-Theme

Description 1^

Description of entertainment facilities; exemplification | P8 Lego land is most popular ==in== children and young generation for entertainment and socializing. At Lego land, there are variety of rides and attractions for children and adults including some over 50's attractions. Activity area in the park includes the beginning, Imagination, Duplo Land, traffic, Land of Vikings, Lego City, adventure land, wild woods and knight kingdom. Average time spent in this area is 5-6 hr. Guest satisfaction 90.8%, say they had excellent day. | Hyper-Theme: popularity of Lego Land; not linked with the macro-Theme |
| Description 2^

Description of eating facilities; exemplification | ==P9 To entertain children and their families with different activities Lego land also active in healthy food.== We are promoting healthy eating for our customers, especially kids. There are 7 shops and 11 coffee shops and restaurants in Lego land Windsor. Signature dishes from best-seller children's food expert, Annabel Karmel, feature on the menu. All fizzy drinks have been removed and replaced with milk, fruit juices like caparison and still water. Adults can feature healthy salads, jacket potatoes and low fat, salt and sugar beans etc. There are new fish dishes introduce as well. | Hyper-Theme: appears to be healthy eating at Lego Land but the Theme sentence looks odd; probably AB wanted link back |
| Description 3^

Description of workshops at Lego Land; exemplification | P10 All workshops are national curriculum relevant, covering key stage 1- 4 and special needs. Workshops last for 45 min and they explore different aspects of design, technology and information. The children get help to build design, make robots and complete variety of tasks. ==School== | Hyper-Theme: workshops at Lego Land; still not linked with macro-Theme; high level |

	<mark>groups receive 15% discount in food and retail, and other extra offers as well.</mark> Lego land Windsor nominated charity is Ormond street hospital charity.	generalisation; highlight – not clear about the purpose; final sentence un-related to the paragraph.
Description 4^ Description of/ explanation for value for money at Lego Land	P11 Lego land aims to give value service for the money. The basic annual pass for child/ senior is £36 and adult £49. 87% of our customers rate the Lego land as good value for money. In 2007 Lego land sold 90000 annual passes.	Hyper-Theme: value for money; linked with the company's purposes, not with the macro-Theme Source of info not stated
Summary	P12 Over the last decade, people livings have been changed. Life have become busier than ever before and stressful, to come out of this stressful life people need breaks and fun out. Eating habits have been changed, people want to eat healthy and been informed of what they are eating. These changes had impacted the Lego land as well. They have changed the way they serve food, salt and sugar been reduced in dishes. Varieties of dishes are introduced to meet the different needs of customers. All workshops are representing the national curriculum.	Hyper-Theme: people's changing life style. No link with the macro-Theme: social factor influencing the company's business environment. Repetition of ideas rather than a summary

		Hyper-New??
Citation of external sources	**References:** **Block 1, b201 Business Organisations and their environment, The Open University, Milton Keynes.** Ackoff, R. (1989) 'From data to wisdom' *Journal of Applied Systems Analysis*, vol. 16, pp. 3–9. Powell, W.W. (1990) 'Neither market nor hierarchy: network forms of organization' in Armson, R. and Paton, R. (eds) *Organizations: Cases, Issues, Concepts* (2nd edn), London, Paul Chapman www.legoland.com/06/03/2010.	

Appendix 7D: Analysis of Lena's DA1 and DA2 texts (Generic stages, macro-Theme and hyper-Themes

Assignment task

NDA1 Assignment task
Read the two articles about Google's Chrome operating system for computers mentioned above and write a SWOT analysis of this product based on the articles. Your SWOT analysis should be of about 500 words.

NDA1 (Lena)

Stages/ phases of genre:	Student text	Macro-Theme, hyper-Theme and Comments
Classification (SWOT)^	*Introduction* P1 Google has recently made an announcement of developing a new operating system for computer users.	Macro-Theme states what the text is doing: SWOT analysis

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	This will certainly compete with other giants such as Microsoft and Apple who are already dominating the computing world. In this short report I will examine the internal and external business environment of Google Chrome operating system using SWOT model.	of Chrome
Component 1 (Strengths)^	*Strengths* P2 Google Chrome OS has number of strengths but one of the important ones is that this software is a browser based OS. It seems to be "a natural extension" of already existing Google Chrome internet browser and is being made for portable netbooks which are currently in a great demand of consumer's usage. Being a browser based operating system it is enabling the software to be faster, smoother and lightweight. A further strength of Google Chrome operating system is that it is free to all its users. This software is an open-source project and therefore outside developers are welcome to work on it. This is a further strength that only creates a demand for such product.	clear hyper-Theme: strengths
Component 2 (Weaknesses)^	*Weaknesses* P3 There are several weaknesses that Google Chrome OS is facing. Roger Kay, president of Endpoint Technologies Associates says "There're all those drivers and devices that have to be supported." A further weakness is the nonexistent customer service department. If something goes wrong with the software, users seem to be helpless who to turn to for needed support.	Clear hyper-Theme: weaknesses
Component 3 (Opportunities)^	*Opportunities* P4 Google now currently have about 60 million users of its Gmail e-mail service. This is a great opportunity to	hyper-Theme though not entirely stated has a focus on

	target these users with advertisements of the new operating system. Relating to this, there will be more stuff happening in the internet browser, more web pages will be searched and more relevant the Google search engine becomes.	opportunities.
Component 4 (Threats)^	*Threats* P5 A typical threat for the Google Chrome OS will be Windows 7 operating system developed by Google`s rival Microsoft. Windows 7 will be offered to all consumers when they purchase a new computer or notebook. Even when Google Chrome OS will be out and for free, some consumers may still prefer what they know and therefore stick to Microsoft`s or Apple products.	No clear hyper-Theme but concentration on Threats to Google
Conclusion	*Conclusion* P6 Considering the strengths and opportunities and comparing them with weaknesses and threats of Google Chrome operating system it is possible to assume that the software will create a high demand for computer users and therefore a successful product on the market.	Clear conclusion (claim) with no recommendation

NDA2 assignment task

Using course concepts/frameworks from Block 3 analyse the marketing environment of an organisation of your choice.

### NDA2 (Lena)

Stages/ phases of genre: [social activity]	Student text	Macro-Theme and hyper-Themes; comments
Orientation^	*Marketing environment of On Line Computing Ltd.*	Macro-Theme:

	<u>Introduction</u> P1 In order to answer the question given for this assignment I have chosen an organisation I am the most familiar with. On Line Computing is a company that I have been working for almost two years. The company specialises in IT and communication solutions to small to medium enterprises. Currently the company focuses on proactive and flexible one-stop IT support services within IT, telephony and copier/printer technologies to over 100 clients.	links with the assignment question but does not state the macro-Theme.
Classification (macro and micro environment)^	<u>Marketing Environment</u> P2 Marketing environment is the internal and external influences that can directly or indirectly affect many activities of an organization. Marketing environment divides into macro and micro environment as shown in Table 1.0 below.	clear hyper-Theme: definition and classification – marketing environment
Classification 1 (macro)^	<u>*Macro Environment*</u> P3 On Line Computing mainly concentrate on the technology advances in service products means other companies are aggressively marketing to all clients and given the economic situation the company cannot afford to achieve this level of marketing.	hyper-Theme: not clearly stated (On Line's macro environment)
	P4 Economically the company has reduced the spend on the marketing at this point as OLC is launching a new product. This has been tested and configured for the last five months so there was not any point in marketing the old product. The company has not had any social changes to the marketing in terms of using	Hyper-Theme: relatively clear but not linked with the macro-Theme which is also not clear!

	social media etc as the generation are not yet in a position of power/decision making.	
Classification 2 (micro)^	*Micro Environment* P5 Micro forces have an organisation-specific impact on the individual business. On Line Computing strongly consider the reaction of internal environment when implementing marketing strategies. Shareholders are part of the business so they are inconstant marketing mode due to the update from the ops team and general manager. *Internal –* 'men' would include the service team talking directly to clients on site visits and also the company's appointment setter generating new business meetings. *Money-* the company is currently working to a very restrictive marketing budget so no direct marketing is being done. *Machinery –* the company utilise the new system ConnectWise for marketing via email although this at the moment is infrequent. *Materials* used are mainly electronic as of the nature of the company's clients and vertical market. Markets are not as important as the company is well geographically based.	hyper-Theme: micro environmental impact on On Line; link with macro-Theme not established
Evaluation (of marketing strategies)^	P6 On Line Computing positively market to its suppliers to gain leads and favourable discounts. The company has opened accounts with its suppliers with a certain budget. This ensures the speedy orders and deliveries to either to the company's office workshop or to client's sites. Marketing team is also holding a close relationship with the most of its suppliers to ensure that both parties understand the need of	Hyper-Theme: clearly set out though not linked with the macro-Theme

	quality supplies.	
Procedure/ Process (how the company works with its customers)^	P7 Buyers are our customers -other businesses, who are central to the marketing concept. On Line Computing have four accounts managers who each "look after" its clients. Regular quarterly meetings are being held by accounts managers where any new products, costs and changes to services but also requirements, needs and opinions by the clients are discussed. These meetings bring a vital information to OLC upon marketers anticipate the future decisions.	Hyper-Theme: working with customers
Evaluation (strength of the company)^	P8 On Line Computing has held its strong position on the market over the past several months strived with recession. The company has again recognised that the exceptional service – IT support in a friendly manner, provided to its clients has helped to stay above the competitor's force.	Hyper-Theme: why On Line is strong; no link with macro-Theme

Visual (company's market environment)^	Figure 1.0 The forces of the marketing environment	Summary of On Line's market environment Too distantly placed in the text (should have been after para 2 above.)
Evaluation (of a new product – ConnectWise)^	Products, services and branding P9 As mentioned above On Line Computing is currently using a new system ConnectWise. Generally all products go through life cycle. At present this product is at its "introductory stage" as shown in Figure 1.1 below. The profits for this product are very low due to the development costs and expenses required during promotion and distribution. Only few of our clients are using the features of this product at present time.	Hyper-Theme: connected with para 5: life cycle of ConnectWise
Visual (product life cycle) Image to show product life	Figure 1.1 Product Life Cycle Curve	Reinforces the concept of product life cycle
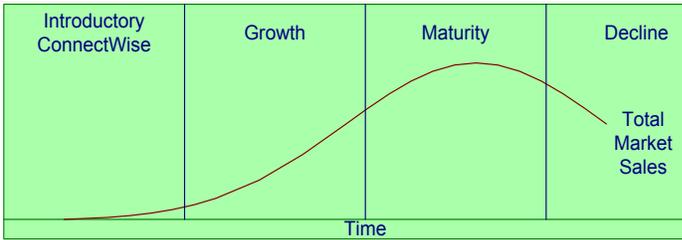
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cycle Though presented as a prominent image, it looks peripheral in the text.		
Procedure/ Process (of marketing the new product)^	P10 To launch this product the company has used the marketing tool product adoption process. There are five stages of product adoption process: *Awareness* – the accounts managers mention the product at their regular meetings so clients become aware of it. *Interest* – upon clients interest of this product a further meeting is scheduled to explain in more depth the features of the product. *Evaluation* – clients then consider the product's benefits and determine whether to try it. *Trial* – the product is then installed into client's virtual server for further testing and examining its usefulness for client's business. *Adoption* – after examining the product clients have made a purchase.	Hyper-Theme: marketing process at On Line; lacks link with the macro-Theme
Conclusion	Conclusion P11 On Line Computing is currently investing in additional programs to ConnectWise such as new antivirus program and online backup. With these features the product is certain to gain a higher value and demand on the market.	Macro- New: no clear link with the macro-Theme – marketing environment

Appendix 7E: Technical categories with examples

Technical categories	Examples
Business environment	Market, business environment, reclaim a share of that market
STEP - sociological	Eating habits, a healthier lifestyle
STEP - technological	Technological, specially developed fermentation process
STEP - economic	a number of economic factors, the local economies
STEP - political	the different legislation
SWOT - strengths	A further strength of Google Chrome operating system, a strong position, global customer relationships
SWOT - weaknesses	several weaknesses,
SWOT - opportunities	a great opportunity, Opportunities
SWOT - threats	A typical threat, price wars
Other business concepts	Organization, Giving value for the money
Macro environment	Macro Environment, recession
Micro environment	micro environment, the reaction of internal environment
Marketing	marketing strategies, marketing mode, direct marketing

Chapter 8: Appendices

Appendix 8A: Transfer task for Kristie

Session 3: Google Nexus One SWOT analysis

Instructions

You are going to read three short case study texts that look at Google's business environment in relation to its brand new smartphone, Nexus One's market:

i)   'Google challenges iPhone with launch of Nexus One mobile' by Bobbie Johnson (a *Guardian* news report on 5 January 2010)

ii)   Is Google's Nexus One phone any good?' by Bobbie Johnson (a *Guardian* news report on 13 January 2010)

iii)   Review: Nexus One good, but no 'super' phone by Rachel Metz (an *Associate Press* news report on 13 January 2010)

These three articles form a case study of Google's Nexus One market. These articles examine the business environment of Google's mobile phone market from different perspectives.

Task

Read the three case study texts about Google's mobile phone market mentioned above and write a SWOT analysis of this product based on the articles. Your SWOT analysis should be of about 500 words. When you have finished writing your SWOT analysis, send it to me (p.n.shrestha@open.ac.uk) by email as an attachment as soon as you can.

Guidance notes

Using the SWOT framework, analyse the internal and external environment of this new mobile phone by Google by drawing on the three texts. As you are using the SWOT framework to analyse Google's business environment based on this case study, look for examples that illustrate the four categories (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) in the SWOT framework in order to produce an effective SWOT analysis while you are making notes. It may also be helpful to use a SWOT table for your notes.

If you are not sure about what SWOT means, please read the documents (about SWOT analysis) that I sent you for the previous assessment tasks. You can also ask me for clarification or more information.

Thank you for participating in this study.

Prithvi Shrestha

Case study texts

Text 1

Google challenges iPhone with launch of Nexus One mobile | Technology | The Guardian 05/01/2010 10:53

http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2010/jan/05/google-nexus-one-mobile-launch

Internet search giant looks for phone market foothold

Bobbie Johnson in San Francisco

Google Nexus One: the latest mobile to take on the iPhone, which is still the market leader.
Photograph: Engadget

Google is expected to launch its hotly-anticipated new mobile phone today in its most direct challenge yet to Apple's hugely popular iPhone.

The Nexus One, which boasts a highly-developed touch screen and other

enhancements, is due to be unveiled at Google's headquarters in Silicon Valley.

Precise details of the launch – including final prices and information on when it will go on sale in Britain – are still unconfirmed, though speculation is rife that it will be priced at $530 (£328).

The phone is based on Google's Android software, which it first launched two years ago as a way of moving sideways into the mobile market. Experts said that the phone was an improvement over other recent Google-based phones, particularly the Motorola Droid, which launched in the US before Christmas.

"The design and feel of the phone is better – much better, in fact – and it's definitely noticeably faster than Motorola's offering," said Joshua Topolsky, editor of technology blog Engadget, which posted video of the Nexus One in action over the weekend. "But it's not so much faster that we felt like the doors were being blown off ... don't get us wrong, the phone cooks – but it's not some paradigmatic shift for Android."

While the handset may not be a radical departure from its predecessors, Google has worked closely with Taiwanese manufacturer HTC to make significant improvements that it hopes will help it break into the mainstream. The Nexus One boasts a 5 megapixel camera compared with the iPhone's 3 megapixels and has a 3.7in screen.

The decision by Google to push forward on its own, rather than take a back seat to a more established mobile phone company, is perhaps one of the most significant steps.

Despite a glut of Android handsets in the last year, developed by companies including Samsung and Motorola, Google decided to oversee the launch of the Nexus One itself. The project had been running behind closed doors for several months, but attempts to keep the launch secret fell by the wayside before Christmas, after thousands of Google employees were given the phones as gifts from the company.

Early sightings of a mysterious new device led the company to issue a statement saying that staff were working to "test out a new technology and help improve it".

While the iPhone remains the acknowledged market leader in the mobile world – more profitable and trend-setting than anything else in the mobile phone market for years – a rabble of challengers is closing in fast.

The Nexus One is just the latest in a long line of challengers to Apple's dominance, including handsets from Nokia, Palm and Microsoft as well as new BlackBerry models.

Google hopes that it can get a foothold in the lucrative mobile phone market – and by doing so build links to hundreds of millions of people around the world, and use the information they can provide it. As a result of these plans, the company has invested heavily in its Android mobile software, which it has been offering for free to phone manufacturers in an attempt to get them to use it.

The timing of the event is clearly intended as a snub to the company's rivals. Apple is expected to announce its own new device – rumoured to be a touchscreen computer – later this month, while Google's chief rival, Microsoft, is due to open the annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas on Wednesday.

How good is it?

There's no denying that the Nexus One has taken its cues from the template set by Apple's iPhone when it first launched in 2007: a large, dark screen with no keyboard. The only obvious sign that you are holding a Nexus One is four small buttons along the bottom edge that allow you to access the phone's main functions. It also has a small roller ball that helps you navigate – an addition used in many BlackBerry handsets, too. Firing up the phone, you first notice the "live wallpapers" – moving photographs that throb or move subtly in the background as you write text messages or look through your phonebook. It's very quick to load and run, and appreciably faster than other handsets running Google's software, such as the Droid or the G1. The only rival that outstrips it, however, is precisely the one that the Nexus One is most desperate to beat: Apple's iPhone.

Text 2

**Is Google's Nexus One phone any good? | Technology | The Guardian 19/01/2010 08:48**

http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2010/jan/08/google-nexus-one-phone

The screen is fantastic, it links superbly with your online Google

account - but does it have what it takes to win over iPhone

obsessives?

Bobbie Johnson

The Guardian, Friday 8 January 2010
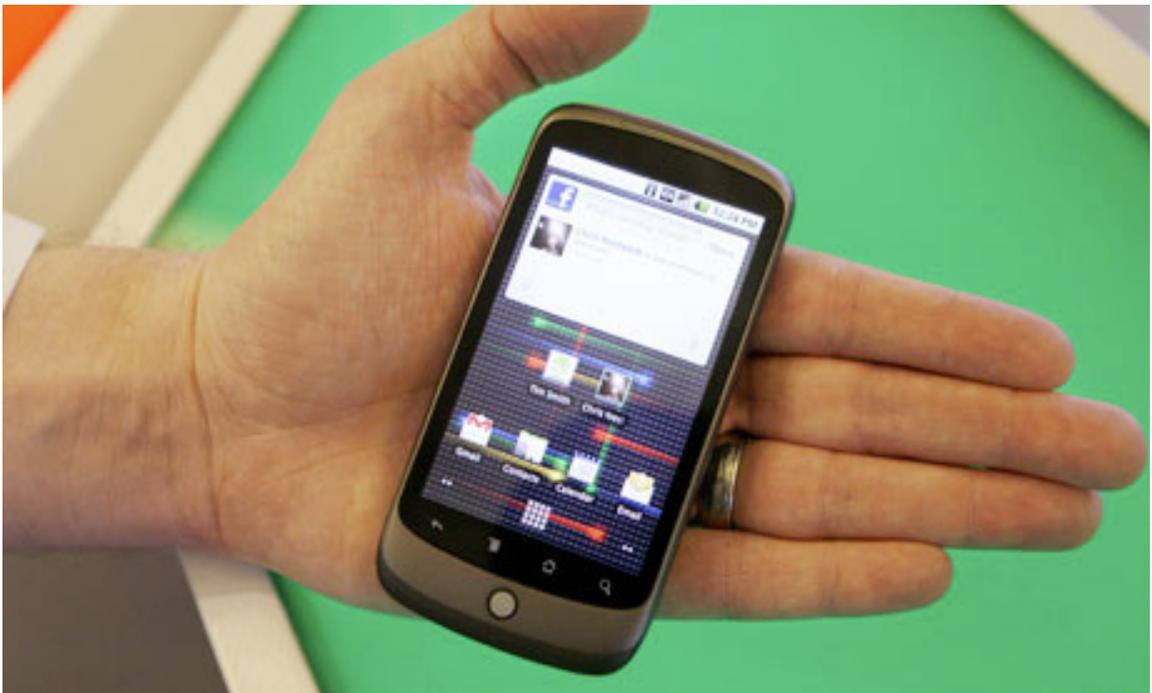
The Nexus One phone from Google Photograph: Jeff Chiu/ASSOCIATED PRESS

At first glance, the Nexus One doesn't look like a revolution waiting to happen. In fact, Google's much heralded rival to the Apple iPhone looks remarkably similar to almost every high-end mobile phone released in the last two years: big black screen with small button at the bottom. But as soon as you switch on the handset and swipe your finger across the screen to unlock it, it is clear this is more than just another also-ran.

The first thing that strikes you is how incredibly bright and clear the screen is. It's a 3.7in,

low-power, "organic LED" screen that doesn't need backlighting and allows deep, clear blacks and vivid colours. In terms of visibility, it's streets ahead of the competition: a gang of Nexus One users waving their prized gadgets in the air could probably send a signal into space.

The second thing that leaps at your eyeballs is the animated background. Whether you've got rippling pools of water or computerised lights zipping around the screen, the constant movement whenever you're using the phone breathes a strange sort of life into this static object.

Above all, though, you are stepping through a portal into Google's world. On first use, the phone prompts you to log into your Google account – within seconds it has synchronised your email, web searches, contacts book and any other information you happen to keep with the company. Convenient for you, but also – thanks to the constant stream of data being fed back to California – handy for Google. You're now a satellite-tracked, walking, talking, web-surfing recruit into Google's informationalised army.

Despite this nagging feeling that you've stepped into the pages of Nineteen Eighty-Four, becoming one of Google's disciples boasts some impressive benefits. Browsing the web is fast, the powerful five-megapixel camera-phone with built-in flash should the web is fast, the powerful five-megapixel camera-phone with built-in flash should make the all-important business of taking good photos a doddle. The really futuristic extra, though, is "voice search". On other handsets, including the iPhone, this addition seems like a gimmick – hey, what kind of dimwit talks to their phone? – but the accuracy and speed of the Nexus One makes it feels like something from Star Trek. I asked for "toy shops in San Francisco" and it found me a (Google) map of local toy shops in a couple of seconds. Combine this with the phone's simplified "in-car mode" display and ability to speak turn-by-turn directions, and it spells goodbye to satnav.

The downsides are its appearance – sleek but bland, made from a dull, metalliclooking plastic – and the small, rubber trackball that sits under your thumb, which feels like an awkward afterthought (although it does glow in different colours to let you know when the phone is charging or connected via Bluetooth).

But a big "miss" is the feature that makes the iPhone so simple to use: multi-touch. While

the Nexus One's single-finger prodding works well enough, there's none of the pinching action to zoom into maps and photographs that makes the iPhone feel so advanced, nor its realistic-feel friction. Google's on-screen keyboard feels cramped, too, and won't completely satisfy text freaks and heavy emailers.

[Since this article was written, it has been confirmed that - unlike the US model – the forthcoming UK model of the Nexus One will have multi-touch.]

Also missing is the depth of downloadable applications that have turned the iPhone into something much more like a mini-computer. There are plenty of programs available through the Android Market (and Google is, of course, encouraging armies of coders to feverishly build more), but there is still nowhere near the volume you can get for Apple's gizmo.

Then, of course, there's the price. Salivating British gadget fans can buy one now from Google's US shop – without a sim card or contract – for £330, and Vodafone is scrambling to make it available on a contract here for significantly less. But even then, it's unlikely to come cheap.

What ultimately justifies the price, Google argues, is the phone's sheer power. And the thing certainly is fast, with the memory and processing guts equivalent to a top-of-therange laptop from eight or nine years ago.

But will it beat the iPhone? This debut model falls short of the smooth and totally intuitive design that Apple came up with. Google prides itself on being a company of engineers, and – despite all its bells and whistles – the Nexus One still leaves behind an aftertaste of nerdiness.

• This article was amended on 13 January 2009. The original said that Nexus One had no multi-touch feature. This information has been updated for Britain

Text 3

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS January 13, 2010, 3:16PM ET

Review: Nexus One good, but no 'super' phone

By RACHEL METZ

SAN FRANCISCO

Many people consider the iPhone the ultimate "smart" phone. Now Google wants you to think of its new Nexus One device as a "super" phone.

The Nexus One offers a sleek handset, the latest version of Google Inc.'s easy-to-use Android operating software and compelling features such as voice recognition technology for speaking e-mails and tweets.

Yet, it's not as super duper as it could be.

Google is selling the Nexus One directly to consumers for $529. The phone's unlocked to support multiple phone networks, but the current version is only compatible with GSM wireless technology. That limits the device in the United States to T-Mobile or AT&T -- and only T-Mobile if you want high-speed Web surfing. You can also buy the Nexus One for $179 with a two-year service contract with T-Mobile.

On the surface, the phone looks sturdy and, with a thickness of 0.45 inch and a weight of 4.6 ounces, is slightly slimmer and lighter than the iPhone.

Made by Taiwan's HTC Corp., which also put together the first Android phone back in 2008, the Nexus One has a crisp, responsive, 3.7-inch touch screen.

It replaces most physical buttons found on other phones with a row of touch-sensitive keys that perform such tasks as pulling up the menu, taking you to the home screen and conducting searches.

There's also a clickable trackball as you'd find on a BlackBerry -- a convenient navigational tool, though it looks almost retro on the slick handset.

Under the hood, the Nexus One runs the Android 2.1 operating system, also known as Eclair. This is a slight upgrade over what's on another recent high-profile Android phone, Motorola's Droid. Like previous editions of Android, Eclair is responsive, easy to navigate

and includes an on-screen keyboard (Unlike the Droid, the Nexus One has no physical keyboard). It keeps the cool turn-by-turn GPS navigation feature introduced with the Droid, and adds some new tricks, too.

There are some visual updates: The Nexus One has five home screens, which is at least two more than most phones. You can scroll through them one by one by swiping a finger, and unlike most phones, you can also use little dots at the bottom of the screen to jump from one to the next in line. Pressing on the dots pulls up a mini view of all five screens, and you can select one.

You have a choice of animated wallpapers to set as the phone's background, including one that shows grass swaying softly on the screen.

The coolest update is the expansion of Android's voice recognition capabilities so you can dictate Facebook status updates, Twitter posts, e-mails, texts and instant messages.

I quickly found myself speaking my side of instant-messaging conversations with my mom and dictating my responses to friends' e-mails. Sometimes I used a combination of the two to communicate with friends and family.

There are some drawbacks to all this vocalizing, though. I quickly realised the Nexus One didn't really understand punctuation, so it was easiest to speak short sentences. I also found that I had to enunciate clearly, or else "what time should we meet?" might become "attention to me." Still, it was a pretty neat tool.

Fun aside, I had some network issues. The reception was often markedly worse than that on the HTC G1 phone using the same SIM card from T-Mobile. And while surfing the Web, I noticed the Nexus One was often using T-Mobile's EDGE network, rather than the speedier 3G network, and I was often unsuccessful in attempts to load YouTube videos.

Although I didn't experience any dropped phone calls, the number of bars showing the quality of the reception often dropped suddenly as I was about to make a call. That's odd because the reception's usually good in my apartment when using another phone on T-Mobile's network. And several times while talking to friends, I felt as if the phone's volume

was rising and falling.

It was also exasperating to have such a nice screen that didn't support multiple-finger touches as the iPhone does in letting you pinch your fingers together and apart to zoom in and out of images and Web pages.

The Nexus One has a pretty good 5-megapixel camera -- better than the iPhone's -- but if you want to see your snapshots up close, you'll still have to press the little on-screen magnifying icon over and over again. That's not very advanced for a "super" phone.

And though looks aren't everything, I did wish the handset was more of an attention-grabber. The Nexus One's silvery gray and black exterior gives off a sort of industrial chic vibe. It just doesn't pack the same sexy geekiness that the iPhone has in spades, though.

A sweet phone, definitely, but super, it's not.

Source:

Metz, Rachel (2010). Review: Nexus One good, but no 'super' phone. The Associated Press, January 13, 2010. Available online at

http://www.businessweek.com/ap/tech/D9D72K480.htm [accessed 19 January 2010]

Appendix 8B: Kristie's transfer assessment text

Session 3: Google Nexus One SWOT analysis

P1 The launch of Google's Nexus One mobile phone was hotly pursued by mobile techno fans after attempts to keep it a secret failed. Would the promise of even more advanced technology at a finger tip ensure its success and overtake its competitors? Using the SWOT analysis framework we will look at the various aspects of this new product in details.

P2 The Nexus One strength is not just in its popularity but its high tech touch screen and other updated features, some of them promising to set it apart from the rest. The phone features great access to the web and great new gimmicks such as visual updates, voice recognition and a pretty good camera, but is that enough of a competition to make it profitable?

P3 Initially, expectations of a new state of the art phone which would surpass even the most advanced phones raised a great deal of interest. After much hype, the new Google Nexus One phone is now firmly established and in direct competition with Apple's iPhone. Its price still could make it an instant success or may hold it back from buyer who may feel it's not worth the extra expense. Either way there is a definite opportunity for Google to break into new markets in the price versus technology world of competition between manufacturers. The price is attractive and reflects the speed and power and the phone can be purchased without a contract or a Sim card or via a contract with T-mobile at much reduced price.

P4 One of Nexus One weakest point is probably its uninteresting appearance, looks sell in the high-tech world and many will be disappointed by its "nerdy" appearance. In terms of new gadgets it seems to fall down from its original promises of an advanced tool; it has no multi-touch facility, which Apple's clients are familiar with, this is unlikely to sway them to acquire this phone, while others may feel that Apple has the upper end.

P5 Its other weak points are Google's delay in launching the phone to the UK market; (currently under development). If this wasn't bad enough, Nexus One is currently only compatible with GSM wireless technology which restricts it to the US T-Mobile or AT&T network. After all the publicity, it seems as though the Nexus One phone has now become a much less interesting proposition then its counterpart the iPhone.

P6 The Nexus One phone is Google's opportunity to establish itself as a mobile phone leader, promoting a phone that offers great design improvements on existing phones on the market. Working closely with HTC, Google has been able to develop a technologically advanced product never seen on the market before with enviable features.

P7 A further opportunity to develop services through Google is likely to be based on the fact that it can through the Nexus One know what its client are looking at on the web or what other services they may be using at any time and can tailor it sales according to its clients' needs.

Appendix 8C: Amina's B201 assignment task

Task

Word limit

1500 word for initial report, and 2000 words for the finished report plus copies of feedback from other students.

The TMA exercise

The detailed instructions for this activity are on the course website, but this summarises the main activities you need to undertake during these weeks.

Week 17 In the first week of the exercise, you will choose a field of work to explore and begin to research what it might be like to work in that field. With your colleagues, you will collaboratively develop your own list of criteria of what you think is important in a workplace or a career.

Week 18 In the second week of the exercise, you will finalise your list of criteria with your colleagues. You will pick one of the organisations you identified in the previous week and use it as the focus of the rest of the exercise. You will research information on the employer and the sector you've chosen, and begin planning and writing your report.

Week 19 You will finish writing a report of approximately 1000 words and share it with two of your colleagues for feedback. You will read two of your colleagues' reports and provide structured feedback on their work.

Week 20 Using the feedback you received from your colleagues, you will make any changes or additions to your report. Your TMA submission will include your original report, the feedback you received from your colleagues, and your rewrite that incorporates the feedback you received.

Appendix 8D: Lou's B301 assignment task

Task

Using tools and concepts from Units 1–4 of Block 3 (including, if you wish, the analysis referred to in Part 1 of this TMA), write a report which identifies the key challenges facing an organisation with which you are familiar (you may use the same organisation you described in Part 1, or in TMA 01 Part 2 or TMA 02). (2000 words)

Guidance notes

This question requires you to apply a variety of the tools and concepts you have been introduced to in the 'Analysis' phase of the strategy process (i.e., Units 1–4 of Block 3). We would expect that as part of your analysis you will need to comment upon external challenges (Unit 1), internal challenges (Unit 2), challenges posed by stakeholders (Unit 3), and the challenges posed by the context within which your chosen organisation operates (Unit 4). Your report should emphasise the conclusions you draw from the application of these frameworks, rather than the applied frameworks themselves, though it needs to be clear how you have used them and what, if any, issues they have presented to you in terms of their adequacy or suitability. You are free to include more detailed analyses using the frameworks in appendices attached to your report. These will not feature in your word count for the assignment, but will not attract marks in themselves.

This question is likely to involve some research on your part, locating appropriate data to enable you to perform this analysis. It may be that your final choice of organisation will depend upon the availability of information from a number of sources (for example, the sources you engaged with in TMA 01 Part 2). Using a number of sources of information means that you will have to weigh up the merits and reliability of each. The section on critical thinking skills towards the end of Block 1 should be helpful in

organising your approach to this material.

In marking this section of your TMA, your tutor will take into account the depth and coherence of your analysis, your critical use of a range of tools and data, and your ability to use the report format to argue clearly and convincingly for appropriate recommendations.

Appendix 8E: Natasha's B322 assignment task

Question 2 (80 marks)

Write a report of no more than 2,000 words addressed to an interested investor, justifying your proposed marketing and promotion strategy for launching your new creation. You must also describe the target markets, the competitive environment, potential risks and rewards, your preferred customer communications and promotion options, and how you will access or acquire the resources and capabilities to attract and deliver to your target segments.

Provide an estimate (including a projected cash flow and outline of budgets where appropriate) of the financial implications of your launch and promotion strategy. You should take into account:

- the concepts covered in Sessions 6 and 7 of Workbook 2. (You may find some of your activities from Session 5 and Activity 8.1 also helpful.)
- your analyses made in response to the questions in the workbook and online activities
- your tutor's feedback on TMA 02
- online discussions with your tutor group.

Note: you may refer to or repeat points made in Question 1. You are also encouraged to attach your responses to relevant workbook questions and online activities as appendices in order to support your report. Appendices do not count towards the word limit.

Appendix 8F: Natasha's transfer assessment text

Question 2 Marketing strategy

P1 Marketing strategy is central question in every business. In this strategy the goal is to launch the company with a minimal marketing budget.

P2 Segmentation is the identification of the customers within a market who demonstrate similar buyer behavior. I segmented two main group of market segments in Question 1. B. I grouped the customers by using *primary data* such as observation the garden company I used to work for and *secondary data*. The sources of the secondary data based on my *internal sources*, for example, my gardening experience and my experience as a nanny. These sources showed there is a demand on a DIY type gardening and there is a need for a mentor. *Other sources* derived from personal contact networks and from *other external sources*, for instant, from the statistics of the local council. (B322, Workbook 2) activity 7.1 (appendix) shows the results of the research process and the benefits of the service for the market segments. My marketing research has not required any financial resources. The long term of opportunities of the business will depend upon factors such as: the potential growth of the segment, how much profit the segment will deliver, how big the segment is and how the segment fits with the current direction of the company and its vision. The company will consider the expectations of the consumers and will try to fulfil these needs to attract the main target. (B322 Workbook2) From the gardening service the customers will gain an array of benefits, according to these advantages I would place the company on the bottom right square on the market orientation matrix (Figure 6.5 B322 Workbook 2)The result of my research estimates the size of the target market, which is 80,000-100,000 customers. This size will provide adequate profit a stable consumer market for this organisation. Although forecasting consumer demand is difficult, I assume that these segments will be stable as current economic crisis will force households to seek financially more affordable services. (B322 Workbook 2)

 P3 The competitive environment of the company will include the traditional gardening services and Vicars Green Primary School, where children had been learning gardening in class. (Educate Online, 2008) The company is in an advantageous position as there are no companies offering similar services and the philosophy of the company differs from its competitors. I will promote real gardening for everyone, instead of the pricy TV makeover

kind of gardening. The primary school above is the only one, which offers gardening lessons for its students and there are 60 more state schools in the area, which will provide me enough customers for the workshops. (Schoolsnet, 2009) I analysed this competitive environment by the Five Forces Analysis (activity 3.4. Workbook 1) This shows that the treat of new entry will be high, as my new idea of gardening can be adopted by existing competitors. It is because it is not require a high cost or new technology. However, it requires professional gardening knowledge, qualifications and the ability to work with customers. Furthermore, it needs commitment to run the business and change the way of gardening. I also considered the competitive environment with the STEP analysis, which presents that the external factors, especially the social and economic factors have positive influence on launching the business. The attitudes to healthy lifestyle, pressure to seek low cost gardening and demand on useful activities for children is rising. The current need of the individuals in terms of gardening services has been changing. People try to spend less on gardening and more willing to participate themselves.

P4 Having identified the market segments and the competitive environment, I designed the marketing strategy, which will emphasis the ethical image of the business and the purpose to educate customers and promote the benefits of gardening. This will make the company to stand out from the crowd and develop competitive edge, gain competitive advantage over the competitors. (B322, Workbook 2) To achieve my marketing objectives I have chosen the customer orientated 4 Cs Lauterborn marketing mix. (B322, Workbook 2) This type of marketing mix describes well the tactics used by the business to achieve its objectives. Activity 7.2 (Appendix 3) represents the element of the marketing mix. The benefits of the service to the CUSTOMER   described in activity 6.3 (Appendix 1) the unique selling proposition, which will attracts the customers of the traditional gardening company is the modern gardening service itself. (B322, Workbook2) The new unusual service personalised "garden together session" and the workshop for children is an innovative idea, which will provide a 'value for money ' quality service. COST is the only element of the marketing mix, which provides revenue, all the other elements represents costs for the company. Therefore, pricing is one of the most important issue for the company. The price will cover the costs and reflects the quality of the service. I set the price according to customer - based pricing method. (B322, Workbook 2) This method is suitable to calculate the right price according to the price the customer' willingness to pay. The pricing strategy also includes

the *promotional discounts*, "4 hours gardening session for a price of 3 hours" to attract to clients more effectively. COMMUNCATION, the promotion includes a number of tools from the communications mix. Activity 7.3 (Appendix 4) shows the range of methods. There are many ways to advertise this business. It is desirable to choose an appropriate promotional strategy. I concentrate on low cost methods in order to keep the internal costs low. (B322) The company vehicle is a great opportunity to promote the business, which with the modern Sign Writing Method is affordable. (Van Signs Online). The Newsagent's window an other great opportunity to raise awareness, bigger supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury' s also have a board for advertising local services free, where I can place the free business cards printed by Vista Print. Due to limited resources, most of these promotion methods are free or low priced, therefore the marketing strategy will not increase the start up cost of the company

P5 The only paid promotions consists of the cost of producing leaflets estimated £10 and the Sign Writing on van £115. This shows the promotion will not have a significant effect on the budget. Besides, after launching the business, the pester power of the children can be a further opportunity to promote the company. It helps to find common grand with clients and power of making personal connections with my future clients. This type of networking based on trust and can be a good start for a healthy marketing relationship with customers It will give instant credibility to the trust

P6 While the marketing strategy proves that I took account of the strengths and weaknesses, which will affect the launch of the enterprise, from the cash- flow I can monitor the financial position of the company. A steady flow of cash running through a business is critical to the company's long-term success.

P7 Although, the company has an income in the first month of the business, which comes from the workshops, please note that January is not the optional months for starting a gardening business.

 Addition notes to the expensis:

The *start up costs* includes, lawnmower, tools, jetwash and the purchase of a second hand green car costs at £ 10,000. The *rent* means the rent of a semi detached house, which will be the base of the company. The basement floor can be also the venue to keep workshops for up to 15 children, whereas the first floor will be the living space for myself and a partner, therefore the expense of renting a house will be more affordable for the business.

The net cash flow shows that the business is profitable and at the end of the first year is ready to expand an take on additional permanent workforce. The organisation has relatively low start up cost, and can be profitable quite quickly if the costs are kept as low as it possible. It also shows that the workshops are a good way to reduce the seasonality of the business.

After the first three months there is an increase in sales which can be linked to the good weather and it is the right time to start running the company as a full – time work. The cash flow indicate that the company has a future in gardening market.

Table .1

CASH FLOW								
Item	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
COSTS								
Wages					1,000	2,000	2,000	
Drawings			500	1,500	1,500	2,000	2,500	2,500
Plants, Row materials	300	500	500	1,000	3000	3000	5000	5000
Telephone, stationery	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Insurance	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Rent	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Start up cost	12,000							
TOTAL	**13,500**	**1,700**	**1,700**	**2,700**	**5,700**	**5,700**	**7,700**	**7,200**
INCOME								
Start up money	15,000							
Payment for gardening	-	500	3,000	8,000	10,00	15,000	10,000	10,000
Payment for workshop activities	1000	1000	1,000	1000	3,000	3000	3000	3000
TOTAL	**16,000**	**1,500**	**4,000**	**9,000**	**13,000**	**18,000**	**13,000**	**13,000**
Income less Costs	**2,300**	**-200**	**2,300**	**6,300**	**7,300**	**12,300**	**5,300**	**5,800**
Cumulative	2300	2100	4300	10,600	17,900	30,200	35,500	41,300
CASH FLOW								
Item	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May
COSTS								
Wages	2,000	2,000			1,000	1,500	2,500	2,500
Drawings	2,000	2,000	2000	2000	2000	3000	3000	3000
Plants, Row materials	2,000	2000	1000	1000	1000	2000	3000	3000
Telephone, stationery	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Insurance	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Rent	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Start up cost								
TOTAL	**7,200**	**7,200**	**4,200**	**4,200**	**5,200**	**7,700**	**9,200**	**9,200**
INCOME								
Payment for gardening	10,000	10,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	10,000	10,000	15,000
Payment for workshop activities	3000	5,000	5,000	2000	2000	2000	4000	4000
TOTAL	**13,000**	**15,000**	**10,000**	**7,000**	**7,000**	**12,000**	**14,000**	**19,000**
Income less costs	**5,800**	**7,800**	**5,800**	**2,800**	**2200-**	**4300-**	**4,800**	**9,800**
cumulative	-47,100	54900	60,700	63500	65,700-	70,00	74800-	84600

Appendices […]

Appendix 8G: Amina's transfer assessment text

Introduction

P1 In this report I am analysing the company in which I am working as customer service assistant named as Alliance Boots UK. Boots is a best place to work, according to the criteria we are agreed in our Forum. This criterion is based on our priorities in a work place. We have agreed to six points, we would like to see in our chosen company, as follows; culture, training, money, flexible work, location and rewards and recognition. The role of work I have chosen is a store manager. All the information about the company is taken by the company website and my personnel experience of work there.

P2 Boots is a leading health and beauty retailer with 115000 plus employees. The aim of the company is to become the world's largest health and beauty retailer and key of business is exceptional customer care. The company is providing products and services by expert and friendly people, to help people look and feel better.

Culture and environment

P3 The first criteria we agreed on, is a culture and environment of the company. Culture is made BY the company's values and behaviour norms shared by company's members. (Edgar Schein). Culture is a key factor in an organization which affects the law implementation, innovation, job satisfaction, organization success and team building.

P4 Every organisation has its own unique culture. Boots is a company with more than 150 years old heritage. The environment is friendly and welcoming for any new employee. Individuals are considered as a part of team and senior staff does help them to get settled in the job instead of making the use of the person due to lack of knowledge of work. The company's culture is a mechanistic according to Burn's idea (week8,block 2,B201), as it is career oriented and more levels of structure with good admin work.

P5 I am working for last 2 years in Boots and I found it as family culture. Boots gives a systematic respect to all employees from customer service assistant to store manager. It is further explored with the help of HR director Stephen Lehane, who was interviewed by

Times news said "*Working with Boots is about interacting with customers, even the headquarters at Nottingham is not executed from this, they are called the support office staff and they have shop floor days to actually meet the customers and know about the products. They do not just do controlling activities*".

P6 One of the employee Angela Chalmers(in charge of health team) says;" *I feel as I can do my job 110% then go home and be happy, not worrying about things. Most things I deal with I can sort out then and there*".

P7 The environment of the organisation is valuable for me because I would feel comfortable and confident to meet my targets together with my team.

P8 Communication and ways of doing work have an impact on people's productivity. At boots there is a less political environment. Good communication is a key for success for any organisation. At boots company's values and ethics are shared by all staff and they are all working with the same passion as the management.

P9 According to peter and waterman, Boots does believe in productivity through people. All staff is treated fairly and people proudly represent themselves as a part of company. Their performance is high with great personnel achievements.

Training and progression

P10 The second most important criteria I used to analyse Boots is a training and progression. Training and progressions are two common words in now days. Training develops the skills of an individual and helps them to build a way towards progression, which is defined as moving up a level in a profession.

P11 Boots recognise the importance of training and progression and offering a range of training and development programmes. The experienced support office based teams develop and maintain a huge library of courses, workshops, self directed learning and e-learning materials for all staff in whatever role they are working. There are fast track development schemes that help people internally and graduates new to company, to progress into management roles in store and at head office

P12 Boots train and develop their people so they can fulfil their potential at work and make the Boots UK a great place to work. By this entire support Boots helps the staff to look and feel better as well as customers. People enjoy personal growth which comes with learning. (www.boots.com)

P13 Training and development policy is important for me, as I like to see my way to the future goals. Progression will keep me motivated as doing the same job for longer period of time de-motivates me and I do get slow down in productivity.

Flexible working

P14 Another factor which is agreed as a motivator in the job is flexible working conditions. Flexible work is term used to describe a wide range of work styles and the companies who differ from the 9-5 full time permanent contracts. For employees, flexible work is a freedom to fit work in other part of their life. For employer, flexibility is the ability to organise their human resources within the needs of customers (flexibility.co.uk).

P15 In Boots, there are part time workers and job share. During the busy Charismas times, workers have different start and finish times in order to keep open till late. There are two 45minute breaks for everyone in the store. Workers can swap their shifts if needed. There are some zero contractors, who are trained staff, who is called as and when required.

P16 I believe flexible working hours are important these days to meet our busy life routines. I feel free working in a Boots because it gives me flexible time according to my daily life needs by changing shifts. Specially working Mums, who need to pick up their kids from school. Boots have flexible working conditions. People are employed as part time, temporary contacts to reduce the pressure of permanent staff and give them break.

P17 Paul Stretton says "we ensure the employees work/life balance by offering them flexibility and measuring and testing how they feel."

Rewards and Recognition

P18 Next criteria to assess Boots, is rewards and recognition. Reward and recognition is main effective tool for giving appraisal to the employees. Employees who feel appreciated

are more positive and motivated and are trying to contribute more in the organization. Boots is one of the best organization which gives appraisal and rewards to boost up their employees. Boots offering a range of benefits and rewards for its people including;

- Bonuses.
- A discount BUPA and dental care plan.
- Employee discount card giving you 22.5% in store and 15% discount online.
- Discounts on insurance and health clubs and holidays
- Stakeholder pension scheme
- 22 days holidays (www.boots.com)

P19 To recognise employee's effort and hard work, company have arranged regular customer surveys, which helps to keep informed of customers trends and also their views on boots staff.

P20 When a customer mentions a staff member for the best service, they are given a 'wao certificate' on the notice board in the store. The person who comes on wao board the most gets the reward and appraisal letter from top management. I have personally received the best customer care person reward and a letter from regional manager.

P21 Paul Stretton describes the company's ethos as;" we celebrate our success, develop our people and do what we do with pride."

Salary/money

P22 Salary is one of the key factors in our chosen criteria, when one is searching for a job in a news paper or on the internet. He reads job description automatically he builds the salary as they going deeper and deeper in advert. For high quality of services one can expect good remuneration and gets high motivation. According to Taylor (1911) wages or salary is the most important motivator for employees. He said that "non-incentive wage system encourages low productivity." He said that if employees receive the same wage irrespective of their individual contribution to the goal, they will loos their efforts and will work less. A competitive salary is that you are getting paid fairly compared with what other employers are paying to someone in the same location or same type of field. I believe

money is vital key factor for motivation, as it does motivate everyone at some degree. Less or the most everyone needs to full fill their needs and a standard life.

P23 The starting salary for the role of manager is 23000, which increases with experience and responsibility. Boots is providing with competitive salary order to meet the person needs. Salaries at boots are paid according t experience and role. I believe Boots payments are very competitive compared to other high street retailers (www.boots.com). For me 23,000 beginning salary is competitive as it has a potential to increase up to 48,000.

Location

P24 The last criteria of choice, is the location of the company. Location is one of the important factors for any business which can be varying for different businesses. It is a place where the business is situated. There are many factors for choosing a good business location. For example if one think to locate a business, he keep the following factors in mind.

- Market
- Raw materials
- Transport costs
- Land
- Labour
- Safety
- Waste disposal
- Government

P25 A convenient location for a business is that which satisfies the entire above factor. Boots is one of the greatest pharmaceutical and health and beauty retailers in UK. They have more than 2,500 stores in the UK. It is main high street retailer so location of business is very accessible for every city, as the public transport is available to every store and some parking for mangers. Travel costs are very frustrating for me, especially if I am not earning as much as I am spending on travel. The convenient location of boots stores also reduces the transactions costs for the company and consumers.

P26 Location is important to me because I live near London, where goods are expensive compared to other areas of the UK. Working nearby can help me keep better balance of life/work.

Summary

P27 Motivation and performance are very complex issues caused by many factors in the organisations these days (Mae Lon Ding). We are living in diverse community where people have their own priorities at work. Different factors motivates different people, no one factor can guarantee the motivations for all. Above are the six motivators, which are important to all employees of my group. Boots is a best place to work for me, as it meets all priorities I have for my career.

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Appendix 8H: Lou's transfer assessment text

Introduction

P1 The following report is based on M&S retail business and using different concepts and tools from units1-4 of block 3and evidence from (M&S Annual report). An introduction of key success factors, listing the knowledge and management techniques has been mentioned with the view that they help the firm. The use of Political, Economic, Social, Technology, Legal and Environment analysis from part 1 focuses on addressing the developments and challenges that faces M&S and meeting its corporate business capabilities or competencies that are required to deal with a very competitive world.

P2 M&S takes pride in exploiting their brand name which has been in business over a hundred of years and knowing that it is reliable for quality, innovation and value.

External analysis

P3 In this section it is important to understand the meaning of external analysis and what it means for the organisation. M&S has different external (far) environments that have strong influence on the business. In most cases the business can not control the different levels or changes that operate so therefore the organisation finds itself in the need to adapt to the best changes physically possible. It is necessary to host several observations techniques and develop a strategic response to any problems arising from these environments.

P4 As mentioned before in using the PESTLE or STEP analysis which means the segments of political (currency exchanges, taxes), economical (spending habits, income), social (attitudes or shoppers), technological (electronic communications, company website), legal (government intervention) and environments (such as local communities) itself. See the stakeholders diagram and analysing the environment in the Appendices. According to the retail sector, it is important to watch the growing markets upon entry, whether it is geographic location across the country or bringing in promotional offers to the shop floor. M&S has also a strong influence regarding to international sales (Middle East, Southern and Eastern Europe), delivery of extensive overseas markets with the help of logistics and technology upgrades. Without the commitment of this field can result to losing business (M&S Annual report).

P5 When it comes to analysing the near environment, it tends to look a little closer to the organisation and points out the methods in which the business can react to different problems. This is mainly the developments of using the SWOT analysis. This is the strengths that may be hidden within the business, such as through the skills of talents of employees. The weaknesses that could spell trouble for the organisation, asking questions in how they could improve their position in the retail sector, and leading up to the knowledge of improving the business performance compared to the monthly stats in particular areas. Due to the weaknesses of the business which could lead the organisation open to threats from their rivals and therefore taking away competition. What a business regards a threat to some may be an opportunity to others.

P6 According to Porter's five forces framework, the above reasons have been highlighted through the behaviour of their competitors. The five forces consist of industry rivalry, which generally have bargaining power. In M&S case it is the high street retailers such as Selfridges, Monsoon, BHS and John Lewis. All these are known as department stores and sell similar goods but target different customers. An example of this is where M&S produced 'collections portfolio' and 'Autograph' whilst working with a well known women's' Institute, a 'potential entrant to the market place. The threats involve the use of internet sales taking away the fact that fewer customers are willing to come into the shop.

P7 Internet shopping helps busy people to shop online for bargains/ discounts when it is convenient for them and they do not have to wait when the shop opens. Another threat could be other retail outlets opening up near by, selling similar goods but at 'rock bottom' prices but may be of poor quality and the delivery of substitutes. M&S tends to lack in this department and is therefore open to threats from other rivals who can offer this service. The buyers and suppliers are of opposite ends of the five forces diagram.

P8 M&S can take their custom elsewhere if they feel that the supplier is not performing to the best of their abilities and not producing the goods to M&S standards. This also depends on the cost and price of manufacturing and mass production of raw materials. One of the ways in which M&S used their influence in focusing on 'garment engineering from the operations department', looking at ways by working with fabric suppliers, e.g. weave of fabric or basic cotton blend, in reduction of price working closely with the marketing and sales group for a marginal profit. The use of Porters five forces demonstrates the

importance of industry developments and competition advantage with the example of Porters generic strategies. This model involves the different areas of competition that can effect M&S position in the market place.

P9 An example of this is by looking at the different design styles geared towards the men's (Blue Harbour) and marketing womenswear ranges. I would say that M&S is sitting in-between the cost leadership, focus and differentiation box. M&S is very aware of its cost implications and strategies to their customers, especially in today's climate, trying to get the best deal where possible but not skipping on value for money. See diagram on competitive advantage in the Appendices.

Internal Challenges

P10 Under this section, it is important to mention the need for organisation like M&S to have core competencies that are necessary for the business to be successful. The reason behind this is to look how the business follows simple steps in order to fulfil its many goals as well as 'vision' for the future. M&S CEO believes the importance of conducting business in a professional manner, introducing new products and services in their core business.

P11 This is the same for increasing the pace of change and operational style and building new international portfolio in reaching global customers and shareholders. The other core competencies for the business are to develop the different resources on offer. These hidden assets would include the different capabilities within the business structure, human resources, physical or capital. This would be identified with growth, procedures, planning and tangible assets (machinery). This would range from improving management structures, in taking advantage of opportunities that may lie ahead, including putting strong engagement polices in brand communications and requiring strategies towards a corporate level of leadership.

P12 In general core competencies (Reading 2, page 33) are often shared interests between rival businesses such as M&S and high street stores identified previously. They often use skills, knowledge and communication from employees and use them to their advantage against competitors. (Reading 4, page 70). The employee may decide to take that skill (training, strategic planning) to a rival firm, which they have learnt such as knowledge

sharing. Therefore it can be an opportunity, strength or weakness to both parties. The knowledge gained by the employee is valuable but the make-up of Porters value chain also relates to the mapping internal analysis for M&S in the layout of departments in the organisation framework. All of the departments are important and can not work efficiently without the other. For instance, the Human resource management and the use of the latest technology operate the logistics department. This is noted in block 3 on page 73.

P13 In the case for M&S, they used these competencies to build upon training programs such as the 'Business Placement Programme' for University students. Another angle for this could be Strategic Business Unit (SBU), where the firm invests upon individual employees (Reading 2, page 40). One of the key success factors for organisations is hidden behind the knowledge and expertise of their management decision-making processes.

P14 M&S International believes in making significant changes in their distribution methods towards being efficient and cost-effective as a major key factor. This will allow the chance to expand upon its carbon emissions into new markets, which will give more flexibility in providing subsidiaries in growing markets. M&S use this skill to their advantage and wished to expand in different areas. An area of concern would be the marketing department. It is important to explore all options open in providing passionate displays of advertising/ campaigning new promotions.

Challenges posed by Stakeholders

P15 There are several stakeholders who hold a special interest in M&S developments and achievements. This is particularly challenging through gaining access from the media by reporting the annual profits. The internal stakeholders are usually employees, managers and owners or executive chairpersons. The external stakeholders are far from between, customers, investors, creditors, suppliers, NGOs and other government agencies (Block 3, p, 90). It is clear that stakeholders for M&S help to outline the principle policies for future success. See diagram of stakeholders.

P16 Each stakeholder has some form of influence and a degree of identifying the performance levels within M&S business environment. This also contributes in building a solid relationship aimed at the organisation corporate social responsibility (CSR) of governance and strategic management. Under this guidance, the stakeholders mentioned

find themselves in providing power in relation to being pro-active but voluntary perspectives, philosophy interests in the strategy process. An association business code of ethics is implemented as well (M&S Annual report) when monitoring control, especially provided by the Business Involvement groups, who are a network of employees representatives. A further explanation is on page 112 of block 3.

Strategic Contexts

P17 The final part of the report concentrates on the relationship of international trade, role of government and domestic policies, exchange rates, inflation, tariffs and globalisation (Reading 11, page 146) influence for M&S. There are different groups to consider such as the necessary equipment stages for growth strategies, telecommunications, skills, Research and development (Reading 12, page 172). The same could be said for social attitudes concerning work issues. These mentioned are examples of external influences to measure how the latest technology and global competition is vital for bringing rapid change and diversity to the organisation. M&S has quoted examples of this in their annual report under international business section.

P18 The group hopes to expand their success in emerging markets driving through the need for brand integrity and awareness with innovation. The use of Porter's diamond concept introduces the different influences surrounding the organisation and better known as clusters. Things such as the conditions of competitors and the demands related to the growing markets and customer expectations. This can extend to foreign investment which M&S is keen in doing.

P19 Working in global markets has allowed M&S to improve upon gaining support from its investors and building an international portfolio. Porter relates this theory to the five forces in a similar way to the 'diamond.' The government bodies introduce different Laws, Health & safety and regulations that are expected of the firm to abide by. The penalty for breaking the Law could be serious but depends on the nature of the offense.

Conclusion

P20 This report has identified some concepts and tools from Units 1-4 of Block 3 including the PESTLE and SWOT analysis. It is helpful to know the extent of internal and external challenges waiting for M&S and applying different course models. The main body of the

report looked at the different groups (clusters) of shareholders and stakeholders who hold various interests/ influences towards the organisation. The experience that they bring is very important, especially employees, HR building upon training programmes, being able to understand the needs for M&S as a business to drive expectations of growth forwards the next year.