

THE ROLE OF THE FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCE COURSE IN PREPARING ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE STUDENTS FOR WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

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Declaration

This is to certify that the work is entirely my own and not of any other person unless explicitly acknowledged (including citation of published and unpublished sources). The work has not previously been submitted in any form to the Durban University of Technology or to any other institution for assessment or for any other purpose.

Signature of student

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Abstract

The advent of democracy in South Africa has led to the influx of numerous students into the higher education system whose first language is not English. However, the medium of instruction at Higher Education Institutions in South Africa is English. This saw English Second Language (ESL) students being confronted with the challenges of communicating in English during Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). To address these challenges, the Foundational Learning Competence (FLC) course in English was introduced in higher education institutions and became a compulsory module for all first-year students irrespective of their course of study. This study, therefore, specifically explored the experiences of English Second Language students who completed the Foundational Learning Competence course in preparation for Work-Integrated Learning, to establish its influence in developing their English language and communication that is necessary during Work-Integrated Learning. This study also examined the perspectives of the employers or the WIL coordinators who accept and supervise these students for work-integrated learning, on the English language and communication skills of ESL students who completed the FLC course in English. The researcher utilised a qualitative explorative, descriptive, and contextual research design in this study. Data was generated through individual participant interviews, based at a private higher education institution in the eThekweni Municipality, in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. All participants were selected through purposive sampling techniques and data was analysed according to Creswell's thematic analytical approach. The overall findings of this study have revealed that the contribution of the FLC course in English to the education of the ESL student is a vital contributor to workplace functioning and efficiency.

Key words: Communication and language competencies, English Second Language (ESL), Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), Work- Integrated Learning (WIL)

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Mickey and Vasie Naidoo, who have given me the strength, motivation and courage to attain this level of education. With their love and guidance, I can accomplish anything.

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- I could not have walked this journey without putting all my faith and trust in God above. I lay this dissertation before his feet and ask for his continued blessings.
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Acronyms

Acronym	Full word/sentence
COVID -19	Coronavirus 2019
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ESL	English as a second language
FLC	Foundational Learning Competence
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IREC	Institutional Research Ethics Committee
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LMS	Learning Management Systems
QTCO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SAQA	South Africans Qualifications Authority
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

English is one of the most important languages that has played a role in the process of globalisation and knowledge explosion. It has also become the most common means of communication throughout the world (Gayton 2016: 231). Bailey and Marsden (2017: 283) agree that English is the indisputable global language of communication. The need for professional communication competencies brought about by globalisation and communication technologies has emphasised the need for all graduates to master the English language to prepare them as potential global employees and international communicators. English is used by millions of speakers for several communicative functions across the world and is the preferred language in many businesses, educational and academic institutions (Gayton 2016: 231). Notably, the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 led to the influx of numerous students into the higher education system whose home language is not English. Despite the fact that the vast majority of higher education students are not first language English speakers, the medium of instruction at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is English. Hence, these students who are English Second Language speakers (ESL) are confronted with challenges of mastering the curriculum content of their subjects in their study programmes.

The Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa 1996: 4) currently recognises eleven official languages and even though this is in keeping with the South African language policy, English remains a second language for many. According to Zikode (2017: 2), the language policies were formulated to drive transformation in South African higher education sectors. Unfortunately, the promotion of multilingualism is essentially the nature of a political settlement, and only secondarily a linguistic one. This continues to pose challenges to the students and facilitators or lecturers of higher education institutions. All tertiary education students need to have a good working

knowledge of English and be familiar with the culture and media of the English-speaking world as they prepare to transition to the outside world. Nevertheless, effective communication in English faces many barriers such as language, culture, physical, organisational structure and other personal barriers. Whilst the cross-cultural communication challenge is the main barrier in communicating, it becomes more of a challenge for the ESL learner during the young adulthood phase of life, as they have to learn to speak and understand a new language. Not only do these students have to learn to use the English language media as sources, but they are also expected to carry out research, writing and other work-based projects in English during their work-integrated learning sessions, in order to be promoted to the next level of their study programme.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), a department of the South African government, oversees universities and other post-school education in South Africa (Government Gazette 2018: 10). The DHET purports to establish an education system that is fully inclusive and allows all South Africans to access relevant post-school education and training, to fulfill the economic and social goals of participation in an inclusive economy and society (Government Gazette 2018: 10). Hence, the DHET recommends that universities must establish or strengthen centres for language development as a means of support to ESL students. Consequently, Vice-Chancellors of universities in South Africa are required to report annually to the DHET on progress made in implementing their language policies and language development plans. This makes it imperative that HEIs, whilst adhering to the Higher Education Act of 1997, provide a means to promote access and success of students by providing quality supporting language services (Higher Education Act, 1997).

Despite these laudable efforts, the diversity of languages in South Africa continues to present challenges and communication difficulties in higher education teaching and learning, posing stumbling blocks and creating barriers to learning for ESL students (Schoeman 2011:51). The DHET has noted that the majority of students admitted to HEIs

are not proficient in English, which is the dominant language of teaching and learning in South Africa. Although most ESL students develop some English reading and writing skills before admission into a tertiary education programme, many of them have few opportunities to speak English in their university residences or homes. Thus, they often experience difficulty in speaking and understanding English when they enter the academic world (Government Gazette 2018).

Resultantly, in 2010, the Independent Examinations Board in South Africa implemented the Foundational Learning Competence (FLC) courses in English and Mathematical Literacy for all higher education institutions because they believed there was a clear need for a higher level of skill in English language proficiency and mathematical skills among the South African workforce. Accordingly, the FLC course was designed and implemented at HEI's such as technical institutions of learning and Universities of Technology to address this critical shortage (Government Gazette 2010). According to a report by the South African Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QTCO), it was noted that completion of the FLC course in English will allow students to apply English language skills in different real-life situations as well as increase their confidence and progress in the workplace, whilst developing a good understanding of work-related texts and other forms of communication (QTCO 2015).

Hence, the researcher, in this study, explored the experiences of selected first-year ESL students who have completed the FLC course in English, to establish how the course helped students to become more fluent, accurate, and confident in their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in English during their work-integrated learning (WIL) placements. This study also aimed to explore the perspectives of the employers who accept these students for WIL. Unfortunately, due to the current Coronavirus 2019 (COVID 19) pandemic and in the interests of adhering to all safety precautions, a decision was taken by the management of the private HEI where this study was based, not to send students out to employers for their WIL practica, but rather to simulate a work environment within the institution. During these simulated work environments, the WIL coordinators of the institution will role-play the employer and manage and supervise the students to execute activities that they will normally perform in the work environment during WIL.

Therefore, this study explored the perspectives of the WIL coordinators in the role of the employer to ascertain whether the FLC course in English had an influence on students' English language and communication skills.

It is hoped that the findings of the study will improve the learning processes of ESL students with regard to their English language and communication proficiencies. The findings of this study could also assist providers of education to make informed decisions regarding the FLC course in English curriculum development, in meeting students' needs, empowering them as individuals with goals and aspirations and striving for effective educational, personal and professional outcomes. Secondly, exploring ESL students' experiences with the FLC course can facilitate a deeper understanding of their challenges that might contribute to policy-making by suggesting a mandatory English course at the secondary education level to facilitate university acceptance. The findings may also suggest alternate teaching and assessment strategies that could assist with ESL student throughput rate at a tertiary level, whilst assisting them to overcome the identified barriers to communication and learning, and becoming productive members of society.

1.3 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

This study was conducted at a private institution of higher learning in the eThekweni region of the Kwa Zulu-Natal Province in South Africa. The HEI in question currently offers 24 undergraduate programmes which include higher certificates, diplomas and degrees. It comprises of four faculties namely, Social Sciences, Humanities, Education, Information Systems and Commerce. The staff complement is made up of full-time and part-time lecturers, programme coordinators and WIL coordinators. The researcher found this institution to be an appropriate context in which to conduct this research study because it has an ESL student population of approximately 1500 undergraduate students and offers the FLC course to its student population.

All ESL students from three separate disciplines within the Commerce Faculty, namely Office Management, Logistics and Supply Chain and Accounting and who completed the FLC course in English were identified as possible participants in this study. The researcher has been employed as a lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities at this private

HEI for approximately two years. Therefore, it was envisaged that the choice of utilising the Commerce Faculty students as a sample population would remove any researcher bias. Students were specifically chosen from the Office Management, Logistics and Supply Chain and Accounting courses, as the sample population because the researcher does not teach or interact with this cohort of students . This also assisted in eliminating any participant coercion during the recruitment of the sample or collection of data. All participants were duly assured that the researcher will not influence any answers or responses and that they could withdraw from the study at any given time.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the steps, procedures and strategies that researchers adopt to structure a study and gather and analyse information that is relevant to the topic of inquiry (Neuman 2014: 16). A qualitative research design using purposive sampling was used in the current study, to explore the experiences of ESL students with the FLC course in preparing them for WIL. The research was conducted in a real-world setting where the participants, in their naturalistic environment, were asked to narrate their experiences of how the FLC course influenced their English language and communication competencies in preparedness for WIL. The study also explored the perspectives of WIL coordinators in their simulated roles as employers on whether the FLC course in English influenced ESL students' English language and communication competencies. Creswell's six-step thematic approach was used to guide data analysis(Creswell 2014: 19-22).

1.4.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of English Second Language (ESL) students with the Foundational Learning Competence course in English, in preparation for Work Integrated Learning. This study also aimed to examine the perspectives of employers who accept and supervise these students for work-based learning during the WIL period so that gaps in students' learning could be identified and addressed.

1.4.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- Explore the experiences of ESL students with the Foundational Learning Competence course in English in preparation for their WIL practicum.
- Examine the employers' perspectives on ESL students' English language and communication skills during WIL.
- Identify aspects of the FLC course development and delivery that can be improved, to provide optimal development of ESL students' English language and communication skills.

1.4.3 Research questions

The research questions that were aligned to the above-mentioned objectives guided the study:

1. What are your experiences of the FLC course in English in terms of your language and communication skills in preparation for work-integrated learning?
2. What are your perspectives of ESL students' preparedness or readiness in terms of their English language and communication skills in preparation for work-integrated learning and the expectations and the realities of WIL?
3. What are some of the aspects of the FLC course development and delivery that can be improved in terms of English language and communication skills in preparation for WIL?

1.4.4 Sampling

In this study, the researcher used a non-probability purposive sampling method, which is frequently used in qualitative research, to select a research sample. Only ESL students who have completed the FLC course and all employers or WIL coordinators, who accepted and supervised students during their WIL placement, were eligible to participate in the study.

There are seven (7) employers/ WIL coordinators per discipline that oversee and operationalize the placement of ESL students. This approximated to sixty (60) ESL

students and fifteen (15) employers/ WIL coordinators, who were eligible to participate in the study, as these 15 employers/ WIL Coordinators facilitated commerce courses which had a student enrollment of approximately 60 ESL students. The researcher proposed a maximum sample size of (thirty) 30 ESL students and seven (7) employers/ WIL coordinators across the three (3) learning disciplines. Therefore, the desired minimum number of participants selected from all learning disciplines was approximately fifteen to twenty (15-20) student participants, and five (5) employer/WIL coordinator participants to ensure that data saturation was reached. However, only seven (7) employers/ WIL coordinators and twenty (20) ESL students actually participated in this study.

1.4.5 Research method

In-depth, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from the participants, as interviews are one of the most important ways of gathering data in a qualitative study. According to Lune and Berg (2017: 67), semi-structured interviews are also useful when the subject being investigated is complex, controversial and personal in nature. In the context of this study, an interview guide was used to facilitate the discussion during the interview sessions. One main broad question was asked to all the research participants and was followed by open-ended, sub-questions to probe and elicit responses. Field notes were made during the interview sessions to capture the contexts and other important non-verbal information that was beneficial to the study. A more comprehensive discussion of the research methodology is provided in chapter three.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Canale and Swain's Theory of Communicative Competence was chosen to underpin the study and focused on four key components such as grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. This theory demonstrates the notion that communication is a behaviour that is dependent on multiple variables such as grammar, sentence construction and language proficiency (Balqis, Ibrahim and Rajab 2013: 15-24).

The researcher found that the components of this theory aligned well with the FLC course because it supported the acquisition of values, behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge related to professional communication skills, thereby enabling the student to be adequately prepared for WIL. The researcher used the Theory of Communicative Competence to demonstrate how the objectives of the FLC course in English, which was to bridge the gap between student communication challenges and effective interpersonal skills in the workplace course, were achieved. A detailed discussion of the theoretical framework and how it was used in the study is provided in chapter two.

1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1.6.1 Work-integrated learning (WIL)

According to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), WIL is defined as an educational approach that aligns occupational learning to workplace practices for the mutual benefit of learners/students and the working environment (Knutson 2003: 9). To ensure student preparedness for the work environment, tertiary institutions place emphasis on WIL and attach learning outcomes with a specific course or curriculum criteria.

1.6.2 Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa governs higher education in South Africa (Government Gazette 2018: 10). The vision of the DHET mandates a fully inclusive post-school system that allows all South Africans to access relevant post-school education and training to fulfill the economic and social goals of the country (Government Gazette 2018: 10).

1.6.3 Foundational Learning Competence (FLC) courses

Foundational Learning Competence (FLC) courses are a part qualification that consists of two learning areas: Communication and Mathematical Literacy. It outlines the minimum level of competence required for optimal functioning in the world of work and for occupational learning at the National Qualifications Framework Levels 2-4. For the employee, the skills gained in communication in English and Mathematical Literacy have

proven foundational for an employee wanting to improve and progress in their workplace. Their ability to communicate effectively is closely linked to their success in learning. They often find it near impossible to understand theoretical concepts and learning new skills and abilities for their working environment proves all, but impossible to achieve. Hence, the FLC course in English was introduced to help students become more fluent, accurate and confident in their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in English (Oo,Proust and Lim 2012: 307-317). One of the main purposes of this course is to ensure that students have the necessary communication skills to succeed in the course they are studying and ultimately improve skills needed for WIL (Ferns, Campbell and Zegwaard 2014: 18).

1.6.4 Quality Council for Trades and Occupations

The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) was established in 2010 in terms of Section 26G of the Skills Development Act of 1998 as a juristic body. The QCTO is responsible for the development, maintenance and quality assurance of qualifications within its sub-framework. The QCTO manages the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework.

According to a report by the QCTO, it was noted that completion of the FLC course in English will allow students to apply language skills in different real-life situations, increasing their confidence and progress in the workplace, whilst developing a good understanding of work-related texts and other forms of communication (QCTO, 2015).

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations that affected the study involved the participants' responses and hesitation during face-to-face interviews. This could have been due to the researcher facilitating the discussion with the ESL students in English. Notably, this was deliberate on the part of the researcher as the focus of the study was on English language competence. However, probing, open-ended questions did yield adequate information from ESL students. Another limitation was that the ESL student participants in this study were drawn specifically from those students registered for only three of the 24 courses on offer at the private HEI where the study was conducted. This could

potentially limit the generalisability of the findings to other ESL students registered for courses other than Office Management, Logistics and Supply Chain and Accounting courses.

During the data collection process, participants were hesitant to be a part of the study due to the COVID 19 pandemic. As a result, participants were reassured that during face-to-face interviews, protocols such as social distancing, hand sanitising and wearing of masks would be adhered to. In addition, no other persons except the researcher and interviewee were allowed into the designated interview area. A space of 1.5 metres was adhered to between the researcher and participant.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Once provisional ethical clearance was received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) of the university where the researcher is registered for this qualification, gatekeeper permission was sought from the ethics committee of the participating HEI to conduct research at the study site and with the participants. Upon receipt of the gatekeeper approval from the participating HEI and only after full ethical clearance was received from IREC, the researcher approached the participants.

Once informed consent was obtained, the researcher scheduled interviews at a time that was convenient for the participants. The data collection sessions were held either face to face at the participating HEI or via an online platform. Participants were assured that all information gathered will be kept confidential and that they have the option to withdraw at any time during the interview process. Participants were aware that should they become overwhelmed during the interview process, the interviews will be immediately terminated and a debriefing by the researcher will occur.

1.9 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

Table 1.1 below provides the outline of the thesis.

Table 1.1: Outline of the thesis

CHAPTER	TITLE	OUTLINE
1	Overview of the study	Introduces and provides an overview of the study by identifying the topic of inquiry, research questions, and study aims. Background information on the FLC course was provided to highlight the importance of the topic and justify this study.
2	Literature review	Analysis of existing literature and evidence served to inform the study's focus and design. The literature review highlighted such issues as Adult Basic Education in South Africa and communication challenges related to WIL. The theoretical framework that underpinned this study was included as part of chapter two.
3	Research methodology	Provides a detailed description of the study methodology with the rationale for the research design and methodological selection, implementation strategies and ethical considerations. The study population, sample, data collection, and data analysis methods were described.
4	Presentation of study findings	Presents the results of the study, using thematic analysis. Key findings are presented as themes and sub-themes and supported by actual participant statements.
5	Discussion of study findings	Discusses the findings of the study in relation to FLC course by reviewing and interpreting data obtained.

6	Conclusions and recommendations	Conclusions drawn from the findings are presented and recommendations are made in relation to the key findings of the study.
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1.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study by identifying the topic of inquiry, research questions, and study aims. Background information regarding the FLC course in English and the role it played in preparing students for WIL was provided to highlight and justify the importance of the topic. Chapter 2 will review, outline and discuss relevant literature pertaining to the FLC course in English in preparing ESL students for WIL, to provide a broader perspective of the topic under study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

To situate this study within the current discourses on the importance of good language and communication skills of students in preparation for the workplace, this chapter will provide an account of the relevant literature. The purpose of this literature review is to describe how the current study is related to prior research in this area and highlight the originality and relevance of the current research problem.

2.2 WORK - INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL)

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is recognised internationally as a strategy to enhance graduate employability in the workplace and can be defined as a term that is given to educational activities that integrate the academic learning of a discipline with its practical component in the workplace (Fleming, McLachlan and Pretti 2018: 321-335). A study conducted in Bangladesh revealed that there is a growing concern about teaching and learning performances at tertiary institutions such as universities and colleges due to the gap between graduate attributes and industry requirements. As a result, this gap has led to a lack of employability of students who are graduating from different educational institutions (Chowdhury 2020: 129-138).

HEI's in South Africa, including the private HEI under study, aim to ensure that students develop the ability to integrate their learning through a combination of academic and work-related activities (du Plessis 2015:89-102). Coupled with this, graduate capability and employability are regarded as critical success factors for degree programmes not only by this private HEI, but other universities in South Africa, industry and the students.

A common response, by the higher education sector, to the demands for employability has been developing and furthering work-based experiences for academic credit within degree programmes (Henderson and Trede 2017: 73-80).The aim of increasing

employment prospects for graduates has led to the private HEI where the researcher is based and other universities, to seek new and increased ways to equip students with employability skills, much sought after by employers. This has been in response to the call for the past decade-and-a-half by employers, for increased job-ready university graduates as their prospective employees, to better meet the changing needs of their industry, sector, or profession (Kaider, Hains-Wesson, and Young 2017: 153).

Hence, to ensure student preparedness for the work environment, tertiary institutions similar to the one where the researcher is employed places emphasis on WIL and attach learning outcomes with a specific course or curriculum criteria to the WIL module. According to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), WIL is defined as an educational approach that aligns occupational learning to workplace practices for the mutual benefit of learners/students and the working environment (Du Plessis 2015: 5). Students' workplace exposures should be appropriate for the learning intervention or qualification concerned. This implies that the student or learner should be able to apply their learning within a working environment that supports the outcomes of the learning intervention linked to the specific industry. In other words, this is termed as an integration of theory and practice (Rowe and Zegwaard 2017: 88). Apart from looking at academic skills, potential employers look for many key factors such as good communication skills in the English language which the researcher has noted from the feedback received from employers, who have accommodated the students for WIL (Rowe and Zegwaard 2017: 88). As a result, tertiary institutions, as well as the institution where this study is based, have started incorporating relevant skills into their curricula such as self-awareness, teamwork, communication skills, problem-solving and use of technology. This was done with the ultimate aim of not only building skills and enhancing student confidence and the ability to transition into a place of work with greater success for both the employer and student (Ferns, Campbell and Zegwaard 2014: 4), but to also increase graduate employability.

2.3 ESL STUDENT PREPAREDNESS FOR WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

Valencia-Forrester *et al.* (2019: 36) argue that language and cultural barriers of international or ESL students who come from culturally diverse backgrounds impact on the ability to engage during their WIL placement. A recent Namibian study by Lipinge, Bartholomeus and Pop (2020: 532) noted that employers have voiced concerns on the lack of work readiness skills amongst students.

According to Schonell and Macklin (2019: 1197), ESL students are a key group that often find themselves disadvantaged when it comes to WIL placement, and it was found that these students were often less satisfied with WIL experiences and felt frustrated with the lack of equal opportunities for WIL. The same authors argue that communication barriers play a role in this, especially when it comes to understanding colloquial language, and discipline-specific jargon. The researcher became aware that industry stakeholders were reluctant to supervise ESL students based on the fear that their English communication skills were not a fit for the workplace (Dwesini 2017: 3).

A study by Dollinger and Brown (2019: 89) revealed that oral skills or linguistic abilities are vital for the ESL student during work-integrated learning. The researcher is also aware that the WIL modules require students to deliver oral presentations describing their project or activity to their peers or the WIL coordinator. In discussions with the WIL coordinators at the private HEI where the study took place, the researcher concurs with Dollinger and Brown's (2019: 89) study that a good command of the English language assists in students' preparedness for the outside world. Therefore, the researcher came to the conclusion that preparation for WIL placement is crucial for students. This is so because WIL preparation modules enable positive and rewarding experiences in terms of employability skills development required for professional practice, hence the emphasis on the quality preparation for WIL (Singh 2019:70-81).

The purpose of having a WIL module in a qualification is to bring together all the knowledge and skills gained into one consolidated project thereby enabling the student to integrate what they have learned in several modules and demonstrate that they can

apply it to solve a workplace type problem (SAQA, 2020). Conclusively, Schonell and Macklin (2019: 1197) claimed that WIL is a key component of any module framework or curriculum. The researcher believes that another core element to the success of any WIL module is the WIL coordinator, who has to ensure that the ESL student meets deadlines and prepares evidence aligned to expectations as set out in the relevant WIL module.

The researcher, therefore, emphasises that, for ESL students at the institution where this research study was conducted, it becomes essential to develop their language and communication skills to have a rewarding and successful WIL practicum. This view is supported by evidence from the literature review conducted for this study and cited in this chapter.

2.4 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON FOUNDATIONAL ENGLISH COURSES

Higher education institutions around the world are experiencing globalisation in various ways and employers are now calling for students who are prepared to enter a competitive global job market (Naidoo and Sibiya 2018: 351-369). This demands that students should be able to communicate in the workplace environment (Khoza 2016: 18). Yao, Garcia and Collins (2019: 210) agree that globalisation is considered to be the reality of the world in which we are currently living and internationalisation is higher education's response to that reality.

According to a study by Koptur (2017: 2), speaking English is expected globally, and required by employers in several sectors including corporations that have international business relations, government affairs, education, telecommunications, internet technologies, and healthcare. The author of this study also notes that in a globalised business environment, the status of English has long moved beyond being a foreign language. English is now a shared resource and tool for international communication. Moreover, many university programmes require English as part of the admittance process in countries where English is not even the official language (Koptur 2017: 13).

Notably, an adequate command of the English language is needed for effective communication skills. According to Oo,Proust and Lim (2012: 307), communication plays a central role in human society and higher education. The author adds that

communication programmes have been neglected when compared to fields of study such as information technology, management science and engineering science courses and found that poor communication amongst graduates in the workplace, could lead to dissatisfaction amongst employers. This has seen HEIs all over the world tasked with teaching students not only content knowledge and technical skills, but also to analyse the meanings held by different groups or cultures and communicate that knowledge and develop and practice effective interpersonal and professional communication skills (Almeida 2019: 6). A study by Mohammed (2018: 173) reported that Communication Skills courses are being offered in many universities and higher learning institutions globally. The author further notes that, these academic communication courses are often placed in the mandate of Language Departments or Communication Skills Units of the HEI.

A study conducted in Australia that explored the absence of English skills in university students found that, while there can be no “one size fits all” approach in preparing students for work placements, specific skills and competencies, such as communication skills and teamwork prepares the student for active engagement in work activities. These are further considered to be important requirements for students to successfully achieve WIL competencies (Gribble, Rahimi and Blackmore 2017: 15). Findings from an American study agreed with the above author that WIL emphasises developmental relationships of students with the outside world. The study noted that students from a culturally diverse background, very much similar to the ESL student participants in this research study, were able to build connections with a broader social and professional network, helping them to gain hands-on learning opportunities and the chance to take on new roles and responsibilities (Reedy et al 2020:91-101). Findings from this study suggests that, there are opportunities for universities to play a key role in bridging the gulf between ESL students' employability skills, student expectations regarding employment and the expectations of employers.

According to Wang and Zhan (2020: 3009), in China, when preparing students for WIL, a special emphasis is placed on listening and speaking skills. Common teaching strategies such as movies and soap-operas were used to assist ESL students with English as it was

found that students were able to grasp the language skills quicker while being distracted by the storyline. The authors argued that ESL students need innovative strategies to master communication skills and lecturers should try non-traditional methods and include more technological methods or a blended learning approach to prepare students for WIL.

A Nigerian study by Okolocha and Seledi (2021: 77) revealed that preparing students for WIL is considered a very crucial approach in assisting students to get career exposure. The authors further alluded to ESL students needing communication courses to be embedded in the curriculum as skills such as writing and problem-solving skills were problematic to these students.

Another study in Zimbabwe argued that providing ESL students with access to discipline-related work experience has emerged as a major issue for the country. The study found that enhancing the employability skills of ESL students was dependent on the English language proficiency and writing skills of the student. The author added that the growing need for communication skills during the WIL module required English to be made a compulsory module for students to enable them to function competently in the workplace (Garwe 2020: 193-204).

2.5 COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATES

Communication skills in any profession are seen as a vital component that allows a graduate to function and communicate effectively in the workplace and is one that all exit level students need to possess. However, it has been found that some students lack basic professional English skills and as a result, private technical colleges have implemented foundational English courses into the syllabus (Taskov and Mitreva 2015: 229). Oral communication is a necessity in the workplace, as graduates need to tailor their messages to multiple audiences in their everyday work (Almeida 2019: 15).

According to a study that explored the communication competencies amongst first-year university students, findings report that even in professions in the engineering sector, effective interpersonal skills were necessary. Other findings from the same study alluded to effective communication skills being a vital component for employees in the applied

science fields to be able to impart and operationalise descriptions of tasks and ideas and to successfully interact with higher-level management. Their communication skills also allowed them to prepare and deliver effective presentations, high-quality written materials and communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Hondy's (2011:3) study evaluated communication skills amongst engineering students in a tertiary institution and found that engineering students perceived communication skills were not of importance. The findings further noted that this resulted in students developing a general negativity towards linguistic skills (Hondy 2011: 3). A study done by Oo, Proust and Lim (2012: 307-3017), concur that many employers were dissatisfied with the performance of engineers as communicators in the workplace due to the lack of fluency in professional English. The author noted that it was vital that students should be adequately prepared at the institutional level on how to communicate in professional English, thereby enabling students for optimal workplace performance or experiential training.

2.6 SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa governs higher education (Government Gazette 2018). The vision of the DHET mandates a fully inclusive post-school system that allows all South Africans to access relevant post-school education and training to fulfill the economic and social goals of the country (Government Gazette 2018). Contrary to this, it should be noted that to date, the management of linguistic diversity in post-apartheid South Africa has been made problematic by the lack of a clearly defined language policy, leading to the use of English and Afrikaans as the most dominant languages in the socio-economic and political domains of our society (Government Gazette, 2018).

2.7 WHITE PAPER EDUCATION POLICY

The Education White Paper 3 (1997: 1.27.9) spells out the need to produce graduates with the skills and competencies that build the foundations for lifelong learning, including, critical, analytical, problem-solving and communication skills. It further argued for the

enabling of all students to deal with change and diversity, whilst being tolerant of different views and ideas.

Mkhize and Balfour (2017: 128), in their study, have revealed that students still face the additional disadvantage that teaching and learning is carried out in English and not in their first or indigenous language in which they are most competent, and with which, they feel most comfortable. Lack of educational resources such as books, magazines, newspapers and dictionaries at home as well as at school, puts these learners at an added disadvantage of limited second language skills.

2.8 ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

English as a second or foreign language can be termed as the use of English by speakers who speak different native languages. Language education for people learning English may be known as English second language, English as a foreign language, English as an additional language, or English for speakers of other languages.

According to Suryasa, Prayoga and Werdistira (2017: 43), foreign language teaching, is still far from successful. The study also noted that students' English proficiency, which they have been studying since elementary school level, is still considered as inadequate. Suryasa, Prayoga and Werdistira (2017: 43) also found that the low frequency of the use of English among students is also common in South Africa. It is caused by the feelings of anxiety and lack of confidence to communicate using English. Based on these problems, it is a must for the teacher to improve the quality of English teaching so that communicating in English becomes effective and more efficient for the students. It is argued that some factors affect the success of teaching English. Those factors are teachers, students, curriculum, teaching materials and learning facilities. It was found that students learn English because of the motivation that they have and a students' motivation influences their success in learning (Naidoo, Gokool and Ndebele 2017: 1).

The language of learning and teaching in tertiary education has been identified as a crucial barrier to learning for the majority of South African learners (Mthiyane 2016: 111). Multilingual education has remained a controversial issue in South Africa even with the Constitutional and Legislative Frameworks that were put in place by the new democratic South African government after 1994. Even though the majority of the population in South Africa speaks languages other than English and Afrikaans, English continues to dominate official public domains (Mkhize and Balfour 2017: 133-150). The South African Constitution currently recognises eleven official languages and although learners have the right to choose a second language in the formative schooling phase such as secondary schools and English is also the language of instruction in the higher education sector (Naidoo, Gokool and Ndebele 2017: 1-5). According to a study done by Mkhize and Balfour (2017: 133), the authors noted that at tertiary institutions, the under-development of English is evidenced by low levels of student academic literacy in English. According to a study by Mthiyane (2016:116), the author noted that one of the key challenges ESL students experience was the linguistic barrier to their understanding of terminology and concepts in the classroom. The study further alluded to the participants claiming that their problems were not just limited to understanding teachers' explanations, but that they had problems understanding explanations in prescribed textbooks. This further justifies the need for English proficiency amongst ESL learners.

2.9 ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS NEEDED IN THE WORKPLACE

Employers and companies have noted that finding the right candidate or graduate to take up employment is about recognising a specific person who has the right skills and quality traits and is capable of fulfilling the duties of the role and ultimately adding value to the organisation's growth (Poedjiastutie and Rifah 2019: 71).

Graduates may have the educational qualifications and skills desired to fulfill the job description, but without communication skills and other related quality traits, employers are likely to be less motivated to employ them. Some of these skills entail reliability, intellectual ability, collaboration and teamwork, logical and problem-solving skills, generic communication skills and an appreciation of the workplace in the sense that the graduate can function proficiently (Rajamäki and Mikkola 2021: 18-35). Other related quality traits

and basic skills are computer knowledge, verbal demonstration skills, practical capability, expertise in an academic field of study, and the ability to find and access information (Yusof and Rahmat 2020: 230).

Interpersonal communication is noted as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another, which is very essential for the success of any organisation or working environment (Naumovski 2017:11). The same author also notes that interpersonal relationships are perceived as behavioral traits that employees demonstrate at work during the process of interaction. Interpersonal relationships in the workplace between supervisors and subordinates could be considered an imperative factor that may affect organisational wellbeing, psychological working conditions, employee satisfaction and overall workplace productivity (Barends and Nel 2017: 3). A study by Henderson and Trede (2017: 73-80) concurs that the contemporary workplace demands much more than language proficiency from individuals. The authors explain that to be able to communicate competently at the workplace, one needs to be able to speak openly and truthfully about one's feelings, listen actively to different perspectives without pre-judging and exercise assertiveness when necessary. Added to this combination of necessary skills is the ability to interact with colleagues from different cultures, a common feature of contemporary workplaces. Indeed, these are formidable goals, some requiring years of practice to refine (Henderson and Trede 2017:73-80). The same study found that many workplace communicative competence curricula are skills-based to equip students with writing and speaking skills that they can readily apply when they go out into the outside world.

2.10 COVID 19 AND WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted higher education institutions to rethink their approaches and come up with innovative ways to deliver all their courses, including WIL preparedness, as students are not able to be physically present in institutions and make use of existing WIL programmes (Lipinge, Batholmeus and Pop 2020: 532).

As a result, learning institutions including, the learning institution selected for this study, and WIL coordinators have had to find innovative methods such as role-play and

simulations in the classroom to ensure students meet all WIL module-learning outcomes. A simulation is defined as an act of imitating the behaviour of a physical or abstract system such as an event, situation or process that does or could exist. According to McGarr (2020: 10), simulations depict real-life situations, where students participate in role-playing, making decisions in a work-based scenario and receive feedback on their actions. Participants could observe the results, reflect on their previous decisions, and improve their future decisions.

Findings by authors Shaw and Switky (2018: 523-534) revealed that, simulation-based teaching relates to a specific skills-set that is not generally well cultivated through theoretical approaches as it needs a practical approach such as those simulation activities that can be done in the class or online. These contingency measures to prepare students for WIL is of the utmost significance because it influences the employability of the students who will be graduating in the near future.

2.11 GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

Graduate employability has become a crucial issue for higher education as it has been noted that there has been a significant decline in the employment prospects of new graduates over the past few years due to the global financial crisis (Koloba 2017: 73-90). Graduates also do not have relevant skills or career maturity that empower them to engage with their potential employers. Brink and Ohei (2019: 30) point out a misalignment between theory and application through practical work and programmes at universities. University courses are based primarily on theory and have neglected the technical aspects such as basic communication skills to prepare their graduates for the workplace (Brink and Ohei 2019: 31).

Graduate unemployment is one of the most predominant problems in South Africa, as in several other countries. The intensity of unemployment within the country's economy is revealed in the constantly rising unemployment rate, year after year (Ohei and Brink 2019: 30). This has raised many unanswered questions about universities' curricula, the quality of graduates and their ability to meet employers' expectations and criteria for employment. The same study emphasised that HEIs need to play definitive roles in

producing academic graduates with the relevant skills and traits, coherent knowledge and application through using work-integrated learning as best practice for improvement (Ohei and Brink 2019: 30). Graduate employability can only be achieved through building graduates with practical and basic communication skills, whilst highlighting its importance in the job market (Koloba 2017: 74).

To understand, make sense of, and give meaning to the literature that has been reviewed, the theoretical framework that underpinned this study will be explained next.

2.12 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Maree (2012: 30-31) defined a theoretical framework as a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory of a study. The Communicative Competence Framework created by Canale and Swain (Figure 2.1) was found to be most suitable to guide the current study. Communicative Competence is a term in linguistics that refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of sentence construction as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately, whilst understanding the pattern of speech sounds (Balqis, Ibrahim and Rajab 2013: 15-24).

Canale and Swain understood Communicative Competence to be a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge, grammar and skill, that was needed if a person wanted to communicate effectively (Mart 2018:163-167). These theorists have proposed a theoretical framework of Communicative Competence which is believed to be applicable in second language teaching and testing, adding that, Communicative Competence knowledge referred to the conscious or unconscious knowledge of an individual about language and language use. Figure 2.1 illustrates Canale and Swain's Theory of Communicative Competence.

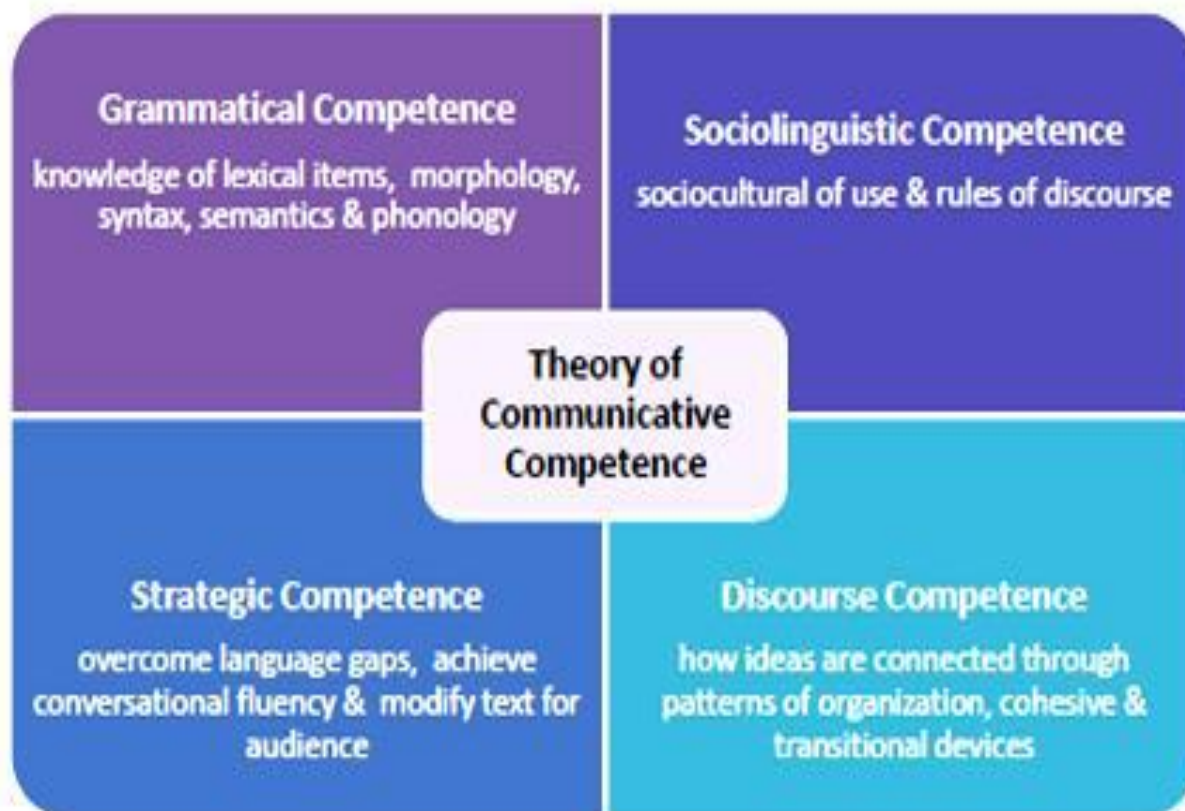


Figure 2.1 Canale and Swain's Theory of Communicative Competence (Balqis, Ibrahim and Rajab 2013: 15-24)

2.12.1 Rationale for use of Canale and Swain's Theory of Communicative Competence

Language proficiency is closely linked to success in learning. Many adult learners have a gap in their understanding of, and ability to apply language and mathematical literacy concepts in the workplace. Learners are often able to perform a task in an occupational environment however, their language skills in English such as the language of teaching and learning, are at a much lower level. They are often unable to deal with theoretical concepts in learning material and the acquisition of new skills and knowledge in the occupational training, thus hampering their progression (Balqis, Ibrahim and Rajab 2013: 15-24).

According to Mart (2018: 163-167) the theorists, Canale and Swain, noted that the ability to communicate required four different sub-competencies as follows:

- Grammatical competence - is an important concern for any communicative approach and is aimed at providing learners with knowledge on how to determine and express precisely the literal meaning of words.
- Sociolinguistic competence - is a competence that is vital in interpreting statements for social meaning.
- Strategic competence - is made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies assisting to overcome communication breakdown between people.
- Discourse competence - is the knowledge on how ideas are connected and organised in a logical manner referring to how individuals can actually communicate with each other.

The FLC syllabus was designed to equip the student with the skills necessary to ensure that they become fluent, accurate and more confident in the English language. This specifically includes reading, writing and listening skills (QTCO 2015). The main focus in this programme is to help the student improve their skills to deal with formal written texts, training materials and occupational assessments or trade tests in English. The programme also aims to revise and consolidate the student's knowledge and their use of English language skills, which includes language structure and use as well as visual literacy (QTCO 2015).

The FLC course design includes the following course content:

- Learning about language
- Sounds in English
- Parts of speech
- Visual Literacy
- Work place texts (Agendas and minutes)

- Reading for different purposes
- The writing process
- Speaking for effect
- Correcting and editing
- Sentences and paragraphs
- Electronic forms of communication
- Writing for the workplace (QTCO 2015).

The FLC course is facilitated to all students whose English is their first language as well as their second language. The students attend FLC classes three times a week and each period is approximately an hour. Assessment strategies include written and oral assignments, class presentations and individual and group work.

2.12.2 Application of Canale and Swain's Theory of Communicative Competence to the study

The language barriers to effective communication experienced by an ESL student impacts his/her ability to communicate and function in the workplace. The following figure (Figure 2.2) is aligned with the above-mentioned four sub-competencies and depicts the possible influence of the FLC course in developing the language and communication skills necessary for professional socialisation and communication in the workplace. Figure 2.2 shows the application of Canale and Swain's Theory of Communicative Competence for foundational communication in the English course, in preparing students for WIL.

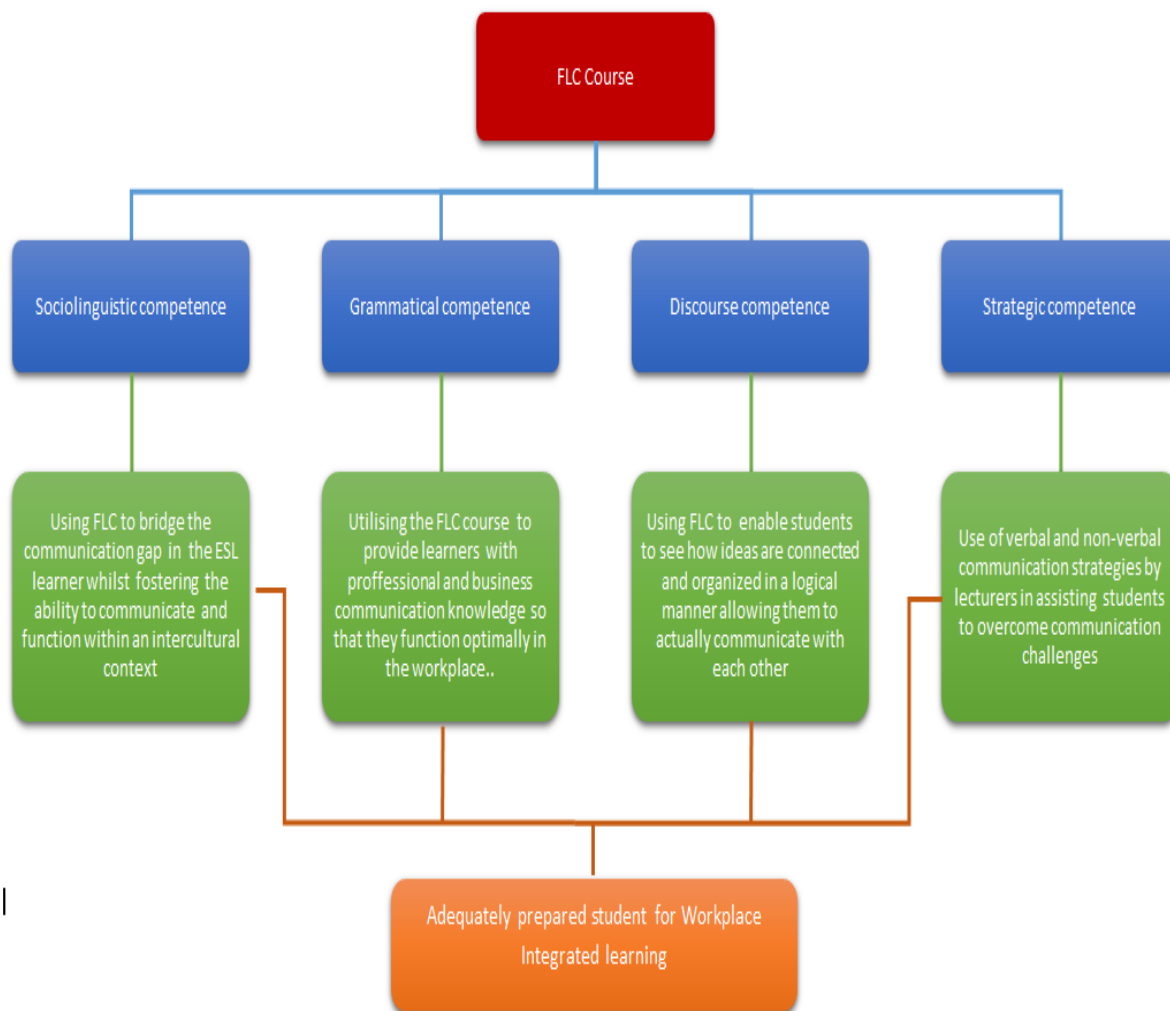


Figure 2.2 Application of Canale and Swain’s Theory of Communicative Competence to the Foundational Communication in English course in preparing students for work-integrated learning

Grammatical competence: One of the main objectives of the FLC course is to provide students with professional and business communication knowledge(Mart 2018:163-167). This knowledge helps to develop confidence in the student and enables the student to transition into a place of work, resulting in a greater success rate for both the employer and student(Balqis, Ibrahim and Rajab 2013: 15-24).

Sociolinguistic competence: It is vital for students enrolled in tertiary institutions to have a good command of English that will help them become familiar with the culture and the media of the English-speaking world. This will also enhance their learning outcomes during the WIL placement thereby increasing employability opportunities (Balqis, Ibrahim and Rajab 2013: 15-24).

Strategic competence: The FLC course enhances the student preparedness in English communication for workplace performance. It is strategically designed to provide basic level skills whilst helping them become more fluent, accurate and confident in their speaking, listening, reading and writing English skills.

Discourse competence: The FLC course assists the student with communication skills and proper use of the English language. The ability to effectively communicate influences the student's socialisation experience during WIL and promotes job satisfaction while enhancing interpersonal skills.

Balqis, Ibrahim and Rajab (2013: 15-24) describe the Theory of Communicative Competence as one that assists with effective communication. Similarly, the FLC course was instituted at the HEI where this research study was undertaken and designed as a tool to develop effective workplace skills. The various components of the Theory of Communicative Competence speak to the FLC course which supports the acquisition of values, behaviours, attitudes and knowledge related to professional business communication skills, enabling the student to be adequately prepared for WIL. Therefore, the researcher used the Theory of Communicative Competence to illustrate that its components play a vital role in satisfying the objectives of the FLC course whose main aim is to bridge the gap between student communication challenges and effective interpersonal skills in the workplace.

2.13 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, the context of the ESL student and his/her preparedness for WIL was explored. This chapter has also provided national and international insights into WIL linked to workplace communication. This chapter has further referred to and discussed the theoretical framework that guided the study.

The following chapter details the research methodology section and includes the study design, the setting, population, sampling approach and technique, sample size, data collection method, processing and analysis.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher used a step-by-step systematic process to answer the research questions. The research methodology used in the study is discussed in this chapter. This includes the study design, the setting, population, sampling approach and technique, sample size, data collection method, processing, and data analysis. The research methodology and design were chosen as they suited the topic of inquiry.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Neuman (2014: 41) describes a paradigm as a world view, a way of looking at natural phenomena that encompass a set of philosophical assumptions that guides one's approach to inquiry. The constructivist paradigm, which is also known, as the naturalist paradigm, is aligned to the qualitative research methodology (Khalidi 2017: 17). It further assumes that reality is not a fixed entity but rather a construction of the individuals participating in the research (Khalidi 2017: 18). This can then allow for many possible constructions.

In line with these descriptions, the researcher's position is aligned with that of a Constructivist paradigm, believing that the participants of this qualitative inquiry which are the students and the WIL coordinators/employers, will be the best people to provide insight related to the objectives of this study.

3.2.1 APPLICATION OF A CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM TO THE CURRENT STUDY

The researcher embraced this paradigm based on other philosophical assumptions namely ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Creswell 2014: 19-22). Ontology is defined as a belief about the nature of reality (Creswell 2014: 20). In the current study, this is characterised by how the participants related to the importance of language and communication training such as the FLC course to prepare them for the workplace. The researcher believed that the challenges experienced by ESL students with the delivery of FLC course (Objective 1), could

be used to identify aspects of the FLC course that warrants improvement to enhance learning, teaching and knowledge acquisition related to language and communication skills. This knowledge can then be beneficial to the students during their WIL placement (Objective 3).

The researcher believes that the students' and WIL coordinators'/employers' experiences regarding the development of work plans are drawn from their naturalistic or real-life situations and the various responses and subjective experiences will align to the different constructs of the emerging themes (Objective 2). Thus, the researcher's choice of conducting one on one interviews with ESL students allowed freedom of speech and protection to get a deeper understanding of each unique real situation.

Epistemology is about assumptions of what counts as knowledge and the way the claimed knowledge and the information about the phenomenon are collected (Kamal 2019: 1390). The epistemological premise in the current study is that the ESL students and employers/WIL coordinators are the best sources of knowledge and information related to students' experiences and exposure to the workplace.

The researcher in the current study gathered information from the ESL students and employers/WIL coordinators to analyse, interpret and discuss the topic of inquiry, using relevant literature to understand the participants' perspectives to develop subjective meaning from their multiple experiences and gain a deeper understanding of the topic at hand.

This paradigm also positions the current study as part of the relevant discourses on the utilisation and importance of effective language and communication skills in the ESL students' readiness for the outside world. Therefore, the researcher believed that the nature of reality is inherently meaningful, that all participants have the ability to interpret their own experiences (Creswell 2014: 24-25), and that the study method and processes adopted and the methodology are contextually appropriate.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Ipohfen and Tolich (2018: 38) note that a research design is a general plan that researchers utilise to answer research questions, and takes into consideration the number of research participants, data collection and data analysis methods. It includes the interpretation that researchers propose for their studies such as comparing the findings to the literature and stating limitations. Figure 3.1 illustrates the research design and methods for this study.

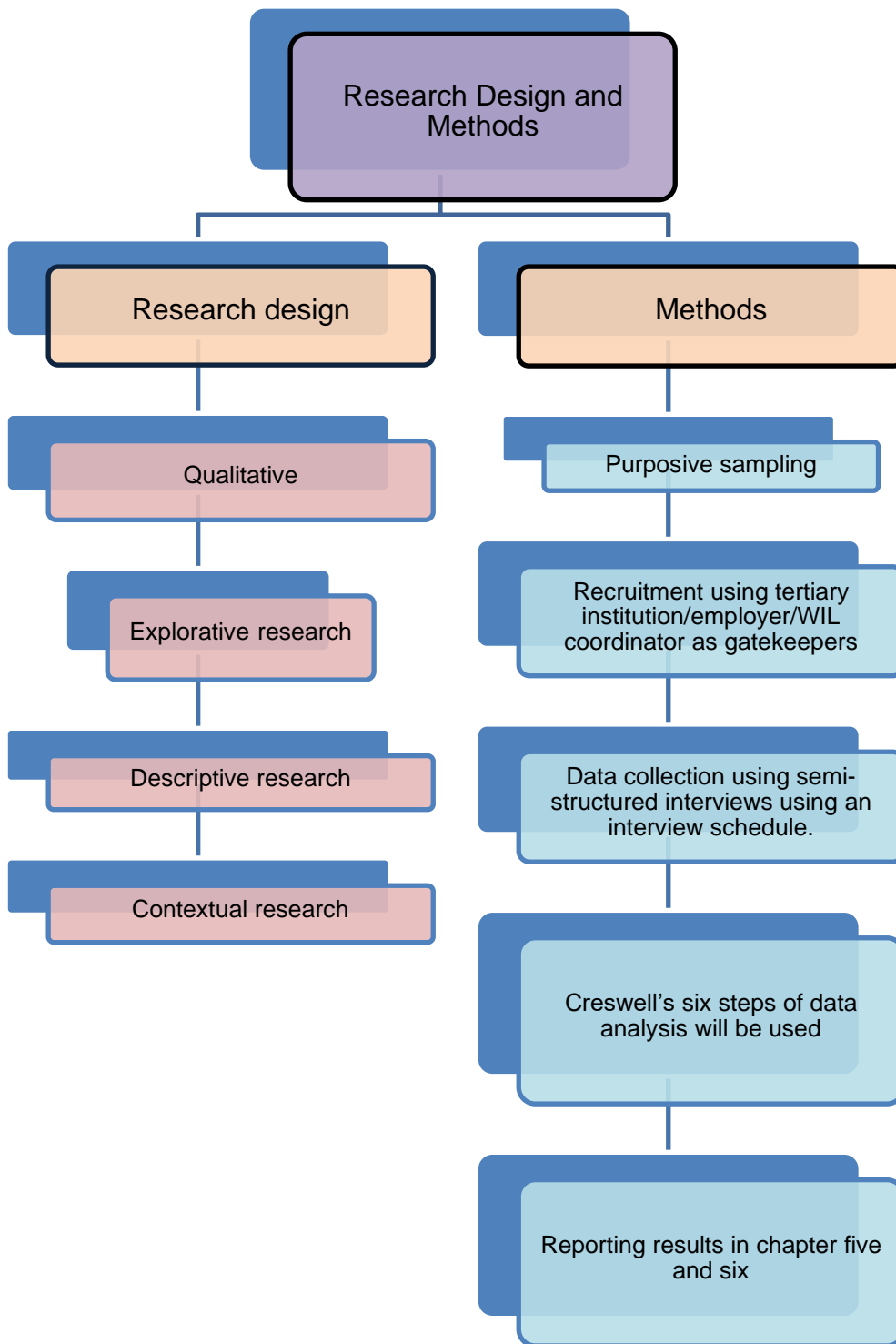


Figure 3.1 Research design and method

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a plan which the researcher uses to address the research objectives. It also directs the researcher on the research methods essential to answer the research questions (Lune and Berg 2017: 68). A qualitative research methodology was used to conduct this study. Neuman (2014: 151) notes that a qualitative research design is suitable to gain insight into the experiences, behaviours and beliefs of people within the context where the experiences take place. Therefore, the researcher utilised an explorative, descriptive and contextual research design to explore the perspectives of both employers or WIL coordinators and students.

3.4.1 Qualitative design

A qualitative research design is often used by researchers especially when limited information is known about a topic and a more in-depth investigation is needed (Lune and Berg 2017: 68). Qualitative researchers are known to study real-life situations in order to ascertain an understanding of the experiences of human beings. Iphofen and Tolich (2018: 28) note that a qualitative research design is suitable to gain insight into the experiences, behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of people within the context where the experiences take place.

Therefore, a qualitative research design was suitable to explore and describe the experiences of ESL students with the FLC course in English in preparation for WIL. Semi-structured, individual interviews were used to gather and collect information related to the experiences of students who completed the FLC course and the impact it had on them during WIL in the workplace.

3.4.2 Explorative research

Explorative research is concerned with examining a topic of interest whereby minimal information is known (Iphofen and Tolich 2018: 38). Using this approach in this study enabled the researcher to clarify and give more information about the topic of inquiry, thus broadening the body of knowledge on the issue of concern (Lune and Berg 2017: 62). For this study, the researcher conducted semi-structured, individual interviews with ESL students to explore their experiences with the FLC course in English and the potential employers or WIL

coordinators to establish how the FLC course influenced students' language and communication skills during WIL.

3.4.3 Descriptive research

Descriptive research provides information related to a particular phenomenon through the provision of detailed information that describes the phenomenon of interest (Hall and Roussel 2017: 33). In this instance, the researcher gathered descriptive information from research participants through interviews, to paint an in-depth picture of the topic that is explored and examine the experiences of ESL students with the FLC course in English in preparation for work-integrated learning.

3.4.4 Contextual research

A contextual study involves data such as a history and a background that is related to the topic under exploration. It paints a clear picture to the reader regarding the circumstances which surround the issue of concern, and it is often a result of people's experiences or is influenced by the circumstances or context in which they find themselves (Lune and Berg 2017: 16). In this study, the focus was on ESL students and their experiences during WIL. This study also examined the context within which the FLC course took place and its influence on the experiences of ESL students during WIL placements. For contextualisation, this research study was conducted in a simulated workplace at a private tertiary higher education institution where WIL activities took place.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology are ways that the researcher has chosen to conduct the research study and include the research subjects, choice of research setting, data collection methods and data analysis (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter 2006: 30).

3.5.1 Study setting

A research setting is a physical location in which data collection takes place (Silverman 2017: 45). The researcher conducted this study in the academic environment of one private higher education institution where the researcher is an employee and in the simulated workplace of

the same institution where WIL activities took place. Under normal conditions, both the higher education institution and the workplace setting that accepts these students for WIL placements, are regulated and governed by the relevant structures such as QTCO and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). DHET employers that accept students for WIL are regulated and accredited with their respective controlling bodies.

3.5.2 Research population

Hall and Roussel (2017: 69) note that a research population is a group of people or objects with specific criteria who are of interest to the researcher. For this study, the population comprised of students enrolled at the participating tertiary educational institution that has completed the FLC course. The research population approximated 150 students.

3.6 RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Once provisional ethical clearance was received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) of the university where the researcher is registered for this qualification, gatekeeper permission was sought from the ethics committee of the participating HEI to conduct research at the study site. The researcher set up a meeting with the Head of Academics of the participating HEI to provide the chairperson of the ethics committee, with a letter asking for gatekeeper permission, the letter of provisional ethical clearance from IREC and the Letter of Information that detailed the proposed study and the processes involved.

On receipt of gatekeeper permission from the participating HEI and only after full ethical clearance was received from IREC, the researcher approached students and WIL coordinators role-playing as employers who mentored students during the WIL phase, to arrange for data collection sessions. Participants were approached to participate in the interviews during normal working hours after the researcher obtained permission from the educational institution and WIL coordinators. This was done pending student and WIL coordinator availability, without disrupting class or work time.

All participants were informed about the study prior to commencement and given an opportunity to read the information letter and provide written consent to participate in the

study. Once informed consent (Appendix 2 and 3) was obtained, the researcher scheduled interviews at a time that was convenient for the participants. The data collection sessions were held face to face at the participating HEI and via an online platform. During the face-to-face interviews, strict COVID-19 protocols such as social distancing, hand sanitising and wearing of masks were adhered to. In addition, no other persons except the researcher and interviewee were allowed into the designated interview area. Interviews sessions were approximately 20 to 30 minutes duration. The researcher ensured that a space of 1.5 metres was kept between the researcher and interviewee as each interview was conducted. (See Table 4.1)

3.6.1 Sampling

Sampling involves a process whereby a researcher chooses a section of the population who will be representative of the entire research population and those that are a portion of the selected population, but represents the larger population, by having the same characteristics (Neuman 2014: 91). In this instance, only ESL students who completed the FLC course were eligible to participate in the study.

3.6.2 Sampling method

A sampling method refers to a method that is used to select a sample such as probability sampling or non-probability sampling strategy. For the purpose of the study, the researcher used a non-probability purposive sampling method, which is frequently used in qualitative research to select a research sample. This sampling method occurs when qualitative researchers use their judgement to purposefully choose a sample or a group of people that may have the required knowledge or experiences to answer the research questions (Hall and Roussel 2017: 71). This is often done so that the participants can provide rich information to answer the research questions. In this study, the researcher wanted to explore and gain an understanding of students' experiences of the FLC course and how it prepared them to communicate in grammatically correct English during WIL. In addition, the researcher identified the WIL coordinators from the higher education institution, who were acting as employers in simulated workplace environments to provide their perspectives on students' ability to communicate in grammatically correct English. English Second Language (ESL) students from three separate disciplines, namely Logistics, Administration, and Accounting

specialities, who have completed the FLC course and were ready for WIL, were chosen to participate in the study. It should be noted that this was done as students from these disciplines often focused on the course content of their programmes and neglected to focus on English communication skills.

There were sixty (60) ESL students and fifteen (15) WIL coordinators who were eligible to participate in the study. Thus, the researcher proposed a maximum sample size of (thirty) 30 ESL students and eight (8) WIL coordinators across the three (3) learning disciplines. As with the nature of qualitative studies, data was generated through voluntary participation and guided by data saturation. Hall and Roussel (2017: 52) state that data saturation refers to a situation during data gathering where no new information is observed or discovered and is often a criterion for researchers to cease with data collection. Therefore, the desired minimum number of participants selected from all learning disciplines was twenty (20) student participants, and five (5) WIL coordinator participants to ensure that data saturation is reached.

3.6.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The following criteria guided the sampling process, noting that the sample population comprised of employers/WIL coordinators that facilitated courses within the Faculty of Commerce. The researcher only selected students enrolled in the commerce courses whose second language was English.

Inclusion criteria

- All students at the HEI, who have completed the FLC module in English and are preparing for WIL placement.
- WIL coordinators from HEI where this study took place who were acting as employers in simulated work environments.

Exclusion criteria

- All students who have not completed the FLC module and are not preparing for WIL placement.

- The WIL coordinators who are not from the HEI where this study took place and those who were are not acting as employers in simulated work environments.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection refers to the gathering of information from research participants utilising data gathering tools such as observations or interviews (Lune and Berg 2017: 20). The data collection strategy used in the study was face-to-face and online interviews. In this research study, data was collected from participants using semi-structured interviews which are often used in qualitative research (Silverman 2017: 45). Interviews were conducted online or in the form of face-to-face interviews. Online interviews took the form of Skype and Microsoft Teams online meetings with the permission of the participants and was later transcribed by the researcher. Interview questions focused on students' experiences of the foundational courses in English in preparing them for work-integrated learning and was divided into two subsets of interview questions for each sample set (Appendix 4a, 4b). Hall and Roussel (2017: 31) state that the researcher should give careful thought to the wording of questions, which should make sense to participants and reflect their worldview. Interviews as a method of data collection are known to capture the unique experiences and special stories of the interviewees (Hall and Roussel 2017: 35). Thus, the researcher's task with this method was to use this information to portray multiple views of the topic of inquiry. According to Neuman (2014:40), interviews are good sources of data for qualitative methodologies because they focus directly on study topics and provide additional insight into them from the perspectives of the interviewees. Semi-structured interviews are also useful when the subject that is being investigated is complex, controversial and personal in nature and allow the participants the freedom to express their opinion or understanding of the topic of inquiry, without the restrictions of closed-ended questions or the interviewer's opinion (Lune and Berg 2017: 113).

The researcher in this study collected data by using both ESL students and the WIL coordinators as the research participants. The study primarily focused on the experiences of students who had completed the FLC course and the perspectives of the WIL coordinators, who mentored these students for work-based learning during their WIL practicum. Experiences and perspectives were explored and probed to determine how the FLC course

developed students' language and communication skills to prepare them for communicating in professional English in the workplace during their WIL period. This method of data collection was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researcher to make meaning of the participant's experiences with the learning and teaching processes related to the FLC course. The researcher used an interview schedule to guide the interview process and a voice recorder, with permission of the research participants, to record the interview sessions. Appendices 4a and 4b provides a schedule of the research questions for the respective research participants. The duration of the participants' interviews lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes and participants were informed when the recording commenced to allay any fears or anxieties. One main broad question was asked to all the research participants and was followed by sub-questions to probe and elicit responses. Field notes were made during the interview sessions to capture the contexts and other important non-verbal information that was beneficial to the study. Table 3.1 is an example of the interview schedule for the students and Table 3.2 is an example of the interview schedule for the WIL coordinators.

Table 3.1 Interview schedule- ESL Students

Main Question	Sub-questions
What are your experiences related to the FLC course and its preparation for WIL?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the aspects of your language and communication skills did the FLC course target? • On completing the course, were there any changes in the skills you mentioned? • What effect will these changes have on your ability to communicate in professional English in the workplace environment during WIL? • Which module of the course did you enjoy the most/least and why? • Were the teaching methods effective?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your opinion, what aspects of the FLC course can be improved on to prepare you better for the workplace during WIL?
--	--

Table 3.2 Interview schedule-WIL Coordinators

Main Question	Sub-questions
What are your perspectives on ESL students' language and communication skills during WIL?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the language and communication skills that you would consider important in the workplace? • How would you describe the language and communication skills of students who come to your organisation for WIL? • Can you provide an explanation of some of the language and communication challenges that you may have experienced with these interns in this work environment? • How would you describe the intern's/student ability to communicate with other staff members of different races, language and cultural backgrounds? • Which language and communication skills do you think the learning institution should focus on to prepare students sufficiently to communicate in professional English in the workplace?

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher read and understood the collected data and organised the data according to Creswell's Six Steps of qualitative data analysis (Creswell 2014: 19-22). The researcher selected this method of data analysis as it involves a structured way of understanding the data and systematically applies logical techniques to describe , illustrate ,condense and

evaluate and re-evaluate the collected data(Creswell 2014: 19-22). The following six phases used in thematic analysis was followed when analysing the data.

Phase 1: Organising and preparing data

The researcher went through the collected data by reading it carefully to obtain a sense of what is being said and make meaning of the participant responses. The researcher then went through the data by transcribing the interviews and scanning the material to arrange and sort out the data.

Phase 2: Read through all the data

The researcher acquired a general sense of the information and reflected on its meaning and a general idea of what the participant was trying to say. Notes were made on the side of the margins. The researcher then started recording thoughts about the data.

Phase 3: Coding the data

Once the researcher was acquainted with the data for qualitative research, the coding commenced, and a list of codes was generated. The codes were used to identify a component of the data of particular interest to the researcher by giving labels. Manual coding of data was used, whereby notes were written on the printed transcripts . In this phase the researcher found the most descriptive wording for the themes or topics and categorized them. Lines were then drawn between categories to show the relationships.

Phase 4: Description involves detailed information

The themes were consolidated after coding of data to generate a small number of themes or categories and refine the findings. These were created through headings and subheadings in the data analysis chapter.

Phase 5: Interrelate themes

The core of each theme was to identify them from the data and convey the narrative findings. The use of figures and tables depicting themes and sub-themes aided in their detailed discussion.

Phase 6: Constructing the report

The data findings were combined into a concise, logical and non-repetitive report which was justified and supported by relevant literature.

3.9 RESEARCH RIGOUR

3.9.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence researchers have in their data and analysis and how credible their findings are (Silverman 2017: 77). The same authors state that a research study that meets the requirements of trustworthiness, should include the following components:

3.9.2 Credibility

Research data is noted as credible when it is accurately reflected and interpreted. The researcher ensured the credibility of findings by observing the research participant's behaviour and reactions during the interview sessions to gain additional information. The researcher used a voice recorder during the interview sessions to ensure the credibility of the data.

The credibility of findings is validated by accurately transcribing the data collected in the exact words that were used by the research participants during the interview sessions. The researcher guarded against personal opinions and influencing the research data by remaining objective throughout the research study (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter 2006: 30).

The credibility of findings was also ensured by accurately transcribing the data in the exact words that were used by the research participants during the interview sessions. The researcher also handed the interview transcripts to an independent coder to assess for accuracy of data collection (Silverman 2017: 77).

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability according to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:30) is the provision of evidence such that if it were to be repeated with the same or similar participants in the same or similar context, its findings would be similar. The researcher ensured dependability by

conducting an inquiry audit whereby an external reviewer scrutinised the data and the supporting documentation.

3.9.4 Confirmability

This refers to accurate reporting of the real meaning of data as provided by the participants. The interviews for this study were voice recorded so that the information provided by the participants was accurate and truthful. The researcher maintained objectivity during the research process, which is known as bracketing. This allowed the researcher to set aside any preconceived beliefs, opinions, knowledge and experiences and remain as objective as possible (Silverman 2017: 68).

3.9.5 Transferability

Transferability is the ability of research findings to be applied to similar or other circumstances or research participants (Silverman 2017: 68). The researcher used two strategies to increase the transferability of the study. The first strategy was a rich description of the context, the research participants, and the research design. The second strategy is through the purposive sampling method. An additional strategy to enhance transferability is data saturation. This will enable other researchers to decide on the transferability or applicability of the research findings to any other or similar context of the study.

The researcher demonstrated the transferability of findings by collecting sufficient detailed information to give a detailed description of the experiences of students with regard to their experiences of the FLC course in preparation for WIL. Transferability is demonstrated if the research findings are applied to other research participants in the same context. The research sample was selected purposefully in terms of students whose second language is English. Another strategy to enhance transferability was to collect data until data saturation took place. Data was collected from research participants until no new information could be acquired (Hall and Roussel 2017: 35).

3.9.6 Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the extent to which the researcher faithfully and fairly shows a range of different realities. It emerges in a report when it conveys the feeling of the participants' lives

as they lived it (Hall and Roussel 2017: 50). The data that was collected in the course of the study was described accurately and depicted the actual experiences of the participants in their real-life settings, enabling readers to develop a heightened sensitivity to the experiences of ESL students with the FLC course in English in preparation for work-integrated learning.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics refers to a system of moral values that is concerned with the degree to which research procedures adhere to professional, legal, and social obligations in interacting with participants (Neuman 2014: 147). The study commenced after the ethical clearance (IREC 050/21) was granted by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) (Appendix 1a). Certain ethical principles must be maintained to ensure that the rights of participants are upheld. Neuman (2014:147) identified the following four principles namely, beneficence, justice, informed consent, and confidentiality that are vital for ethical consideration by any researcher.

Application of ethical principles in a research study indicate that the researcher is concerned about the welfare of the research participants (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter 2006: 68). The following is a description of the ethical principles that were observed throughout the research study:

3.10.1 Respect for persons

This principle of human dignity, according to Neuman (2014:147), encompasses the right to autonomy and the right to full disclosure by the researcher. The principle of respect for human dignity addresses anonymity, confidentiality, and self-determination. In this study, anonymity was assured because the researcher did not disclose the identity of the research participants at any time. Confidentiality was maintained as unauthorised persons were not allowed access to the research data. The voice recordings and transcripts are stored in a secure electronic site that is password protected.

3.10.2 Non-maleficence

Non-maleficence refers to the ethical principle of “no harm” or the protection of research participants from any harmful situations and discomfort (Neuman 2014: 147). The researcher carefully structured research questions to avoid discomfort to the participant. Research

participants were informed that if the interview process caused them any discomfort, they were free to withdraw from the interview.

3.10.3 Justice

This principle refers to research participants being treated fairly and with respect. The researcher adhered to all agreements as was communicated to the research participants in the information letter. The researcher also took cognisance of the research participants' culture and tradition and did not let them participate in activities that went against their culture or religion (Neuman 2014: 150).

3.10.4 Informed consent

Informed consent is vital to any research study (Neuman 2014: 147). The researcher in this study obtained informed consent from the research participants before the data collection process commenced. All participants were made aware of the purpose and objectives of the research study, expectations during the research process, the potential benefits to them or others and the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any time without fear of victimisation. The participants in this study had the opportunity to ask questions and clarify concepts.

3.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the research design and the methodology that was used in this study. The data collection method and data analysis were explained in detail. The researcher provided an opportunity for FLC students, lecturers, and WIL coordinators to confer their experiences of the FLC course in English. Trustworthiness of the study was also guaranteed, and ethical considerations and the rights of participants were maintained. The next chapter will present the findings of qualitative data and analysis of the data using a thematic approach.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the research methodology used to conduct the study. This chapter presents the results of the data obtained during the individual semi-structured interviews that were conducted with seven (7) WIL coordinators and twenty (20) ESL students from the participating institution. This chapter highlights the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data obtained during the interviews. This study explored the experiences of ESL students who completed the Foundational Learning Competence course in English in preparation for Work- Integrated Learning. The theoretical framework that underpinned this study drew from the constructs of Canale and Swain's Theory of Communicative Competence (see Chapter two) to facilitate the discussions between interviewer and interviewee.

4.2 SAMPLE REALISATION

Data in this study was gathered from two subsets, firstly the ESL students followed by the WIL coordinators. As is the nature of qualitative studies, data saturation refers to a situation whereby no new information is forthcoming from participants during the gathering of data (Hall and Roussel 2017: 52). Therefore, the sample size from both sets of participants was guided by data saturation. Although the desired minimum number of ESL student participants in this study was approximately twenty (20) participants, data saturation was reached at participant number fifteen (15). However, for data confirmation with ESL student sampling, five (5) additional interviews with students were carried out. The desired minimum number of WIL coordinator participants was approximately five (5). Data saturation with this subset was reached at participant number four (4). However, for data confirmation, three (3) additional interviews with WIL coordinators were carried out. Table 4.1 below illustrates the sample realisation for the study sample.

Table 4.1 Table illustrating the sample realisation for the study

Description	ESL students	WIL coordinators/employers
Proposed minimum sample	20	5
Achievement of data saturation	15	4
Confirmation of data saturation	5	3
Actual numbers interviewed	20	7
Total for each subset	20	7
Total number of participants interviewed for study = 27		

For clarity and ease of reference, Section A will provide details on the demographic data of participants and interview findings from the ESL students. Section B will provide demographic details and interview findings from WIL coordinators, acting as employers, who mentored and supervised ESL students during their WIL placement.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.3.1 Demographic data of participants

The participants were allowed to accept or decline the interviews and details were explained to them as outlined in Appendices 4a and 4b. The participants were also identified through predetermined eligibility criteria as outlined in Chapter 3. The collection of data for this study was done at a private HEI in KZN. The ESL students who participated in this study were registered in three separate disciplines namely Logistics and Supply Chain, Office Administration and Accounting specialisations. The study sample comprised of those students who had completed the FLC course in their first year of study as well as the WIL component of their respective courses. The ESL

students who were interviewed are part of the African¹ race group, in the age group ranging from 19 to 25 years. Fourteen of the interviewees were female and six were male. Of these students, ten (10) were registered for the Office Administration course, five (5) students were registered for the Logistics and Supply Chain course and the remaining five (5) students were completing their Accounting course. Table 4.2 and 4.3 illustrates the demographic data of the participants in the study.

Table 4.2 Demographic data of ESL Students

Participant (P) code	Age of participant	Gender	Race	Study discipline
P 1	20	Female	African	Office Administration
P2	19	Female	African	Office Administration
P3	19	Female	African	Office Administration
P4	20	Male	African	Logistics and Supply Chain
P5	20	Male	African	Logistics and Supply Chain
P6	22	Female	African	Logistics and Supply Chain
P7	19	Female	African	Office Administration
P8	19	Female	African	Office Administration
P9	20	Female	African	Logistics and Supply Chain
P10	20	Female	African	Logistics and Supply Chain
P11	20	Female	African	Accounting
P12	20	Female	African	Accounting
P13	20	Female	African	Accounting
P14	20	Male	African	Accounting
P15	19	Male	African	Accounting
P16	19	Female	African	Office Administration
P17	21	Female	African	Office Administration
P18	21	Female	African	Office Administration
P19	21	Male	African	Office Administration
P20	20	Male	African	Office Administration

¹ The racial categories introduced by Apartheid remain ingrained in South African society even after apartheid was abolished in 1994. The mid-twentieth-century South African apartheid racial state cultivated a tri-racial hierarchy through officially naming three groups into law: White, Black (native African), and Coloured, with Coloured being defined and situated in the “racial middle” as neither White nor Black African (Pirtle 2020:145-159).

Participating WIL coordinators, acting as employers in a simulated work environment, were responsible for supervision, mentorship and support of ESL students. The seven (7) participants in this data subset comprised of one (1) male and six (6) females. Two (2) of the participants were of the Coloured race group, four (4) were of Indian descent and one was African. All those interviewed had been employed at the institution for more than one (1) year. Each participant had an average number of two (2) years of experience with mentoring or supervising students in the workplace.

Table 4.2 Demographic data of WIL coordinators

Participant (P) code	Gender	Race	Length of employment at institution	Number of years as a WIL coordinator
P1	Male	Indian	Three years	Four years
P2	Female	Indian	One year	Three years
P3	Female	Coloured	Two years	Two years
P4	Female	Indian	Three years	Three years
P5	Female	Indian	One year	Two years
P6	Female	Coloured	Two years	Two years
P7	Female	African	Two years	Two years

Two (2) main empirical themes emerged after data analysis for each subset of participants namely students and WIL coordinators / employers as illustrated in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 below. These main themes were further categorised into sub-themes. A summary of the two (2) main themes and related sub-themes per respective data set, outlined in this chapter will be discussed in detail with supporting quotations and excerpts from participant interviews.

4.4 SECTION A-OVERVIEW OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES-ESL STUDENT

Table 4.4 illustrates the themes that emerged from the interviews with ESL students.

Table 4.4: Themes that emerged from interviews with ESL students

THEME	SUB-THEMES	
Theme 1: Communication barriers to learning	1.1	Lack of confidence of the ESL student
	1.2	Socio-cultural barriers to communication
	1.3	FLC course continuity in all levels of study
	1.4	Improved learning capabilities with instructional technology
Theme 2: FLC course and student WIL preparedness	2.1	Improvement in written communication
	2.2	Enhanced oral communication
	2.3	Promotion of ESL student self- efficacy
	2.4	Learning management systems

4.4.1 Section A-Theme 1: Communication barriers to learning

The main theme that emerged from the data was the communication barriers to learning. ESL students found that a major challenge encountered was grasping and understanding the knowledge that was presented in the English language and the requirement of being fluent in the English language. Four related sub-themes namely, the lack of confidence of the ESL student; socio-cultural barriers to communication; desire of having the FLC course continue in all levels of study and an improvement in learning capabilities with instructional technology, were highlighted. The responses from students are presented in italics within the narrative.

Well, like for communication we learned the barriers of communication. And things like how language can be a barrier, some people cannot understand English and some people cannot speak it properly and that's the barrier of communication and about media and how it plays the role in communicating and then basically that's what the whole thing was – like the barriers of communication (#P5; Male; ESL student).

I had no confidence in speaking English however the course assisted (#P3; Female; ESL student)

The communication course helped me to become more fluent in my written and oral skills (#P9; Female; ESL student)

4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Lack of confidence of the ESL student

Students indicated that they felt disadvantaged because English was not their first language and they were uncomfortable when interacting with other students whose first language was English. They felt intimidated when answering questions in the class or in the work environment and were not confident enough to ask for clarity from the lecturer. Most students preferred to search for answers online and seek assistance from fellow students. This was evident in the excerpts below:

Well, first when I was in high school, I use to be shy and not come out of the class but when I came to college and saw the different environment and in a few years I am going to be working, so I had to force myself to learn English. So, confidence were a big problem, sometimes as African people we do not have confidence in ourselves. When you are confident it helps a lot (#P4; Male; ESL student)

It helped me in teamwork .In teamwork I used to be shy so they won't pick me when it comes to group work but after the communication course, more people

want me in their group. Because when I speak – I speak sense in the correct tense (#P8; Female; ESL student)

People also take me more seriously. Now I can speak without having a lack of confidence and it helps me to continue empowering myself and accomplish my goals. So skills that I have learnt from this course –have helped me especially during WIL or in the workplace (#P7; Female; ESL student)

4.4.1.2 Sub-theme 1. 2: Socio-cultural barriers to communication

Most participants approximating to 70 % of the student sample mentioned that their culture and social upbringing appeared to influence the way they communicated in class and in the working environment. It was noted that when students attempted to convert English to isiZulu for a better understanding, the context of the sentence changes and this posed a stumbling block to both oral and written communication as they interacted in the workplace during WIL. It was evident from participants that cultural sensitivity played a huge role in how these students communicated as they sometimes found it difficult to maintain certain interpersonal skills as this was not consistent within their socio-cultural norms. The following student quotations are provided:

Like so I am isiZulu and ... so when you switch from isiZulu to English, we have to have like a backup thing, like calculating in my head if I am going to say something now in English I am taking it from English and...still I am trying to make sense (#P4; Male; ESL student)

As a IsiZulu speaker, it can be a problem during oral or presentations as we do not look at elders or teachers in their eyes so we avoid eye contact (#P3; Female; ESL student)

Communication can be very challenging for us who are ESL especially translating from English to isiZulu as her becomes him or he means she (#P8; Female; ESL student)

4.4.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: FLC course continuity in all levels of study

The majority of students approximately 80 % were unhappy that the FLC module was done just in the first year of their course. They felt that in order to be fluent in English and be able to be proficient in communicating in English during WIL, the FLC course should be integrated into all levels of their study. Some students were vocal that the theory and practical modules could also be separated, to allow it to run throughout the course to ensure continuity of learning and practicing foundational communication in English. The following statements from some of the participants highlight their views:

Yes, the communication course should be offered in first year till you graduate because as an ESL student we want to improve our skills as much as possible so that we survive the workplace (#P7; Female; ESL student)

I think communication is something that we should be practicing all the time like our written skills and speaking and because we do it in our first year or semester we forget what we learnt (#P11; Female; ESL student)

For me, I feel like communication especially in English is where I lack so if I can also do it in my final year it will help me (#P13; Female; ESL student)

4.4.1.4 Sub-theme 1. 4: Improved learning capabilities with Instructional technology

Several students also felt that completion of the FLC course in English improved their abilities to use technology. During the course, students were required to prepare and present their work using powerpoint slides and this allowed them to become proficient in using a computer, downloading recordings or pictures that assisted them in the workplace.

The FLC course also taught students how to analyse statistics and graphs and how to incorporate them in report writing. The following quotations were noted:

I learnt how to be a good public speaker and how to do presentations in class using PowerPoint slides (#P9; Female; ESL student)

When we did communication, we learnt how to use a computer when we had to download pictures or videos (#P12; Female; ESL student)

I came from a rural area and using technology was a challenge but because we had many presentations, I learnt what a power point is and how to use basic things (#P5; Male; ESL student)

4.4.2 Theme 2: FLC course in student WIL preparedness

It was evident that the focus of the FLC course was on developing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills that enabled the student to function optimally during WIL. The course prepared the students to deal with further learning and to access and become proficient in work-related or occupational training materials and technology.

I learnt how to use English better in my writing skills and this helped me because for WIL we had to write emails (#P2; Female; ESL student)

My speaking skills really improved when I did the course as in a workplace you have to be able to speak and get your point across, I felt that this is one of the biggest challenges I was able to overcome during the course (#P15; Female; ESL student)

For me both my written and speaking skills improved with course and made me confident in the working world. I still have a lot to learn but from where I was I made a lot of progress (#P7; Female; ESL student)

4.4.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Improvement in written communication

Students felt that their written communication and language skills in English were at a much lower level before they had done the course. After completion of the FLC course in English, they were able to deal with theoretical concepts in learning and acquire new skills in workplace training, which they felt could help progress their careers. Students who successfully completed the FLC course displayed a marked increase in confidence and expertise in applying their knowledge to their writing skills in different real-life situations and workplace contexts. Thus, they felt they could confidently and successfully communicate on email and other social media platforms that organisations generally use. Student participants commented as follows:

At first when I did the course I had no understanding of what an email is or a business letter. I have now learnt how to write these and the different formats (#P16; Female; ESL student)

When I did my WIL I was surprised at how I was able to correct my own grammar and punctuation mistakes (#P5; Female; ESL student)

Now if I have a writing exercise I need to complete; I have more confidence in my abilities. We did a lot of writing tasks in the course that taught me writing skills (#P13; Female; ESL student)

4.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Enhanced oral communication

Students noted that their ability to speak English was closely linked to success in learning. Many of them felt that a gap in their understanding of the English language hampered their ability to apply literacy concepts during WIL. However, after completion of the FLC course, students could converse with improved English outside of the classroom. Group discussions in the classroom also aided in providing more opportunities for speaking and raising student awareness of what their shortcomings including where and how this could be addressed. Additionally, the students noted that the digital nature of online communication programmes made it easier for them to record and review their speech, allowing them to develop linguistic self-awareness and oral competence with the English language. The following are student statements that reflect this:

In communication, a big emphasis was placed on speaking and our pronunciation during presentations. Our lecturer always gave us feedback so we knew what to work on (#P10; Female; ESL student)

Class discussions helped a lot, the more we spoke the more confident we became in presentations. We spoke more in English than in isiZulu during communication (#P7; Female; ESL student)

Well...at first, I hated the speaking part but as the course continued, I started participating more and speaking so it was not that bad (#P16; Female; ESL student)

4.4.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Promotion of ESL student self- efficacy

Students felt that being deficient in English language proficiency, demotivated them which adversely affected their self-efficacy in learning. However, when they were able to solve problems related to English language learning, they were able to achieve their learning

goals. This appeared to reinforce a strong belief in themselves and their ability to manage tasks related to the workplace, overcome obstacles and achieve the desired goals. The following statements allude to this:

It boosted my confidence a lot and made me feel that I can achieve anything I set my mind to (#P3; Female; ESL student)

As someone who is ESL you have to work harder to believe in your language skills and the main medium in the workplace is English, so you have to be confident (#P3; Female; ESL student)

Learning English was always a challenge, but I had to find a way to become competent. I read a lot and together with the communication course I can communicate properly (#P8; Female; ESL student)

4.4.2.4 Sub-theme 2. 4: Learning Management Systems

Students cited other learning advantages of completing the FLC course. They relied on the Learning Management Systems (LMS) that was offered by the HEI and found that this became their “go to” portal for advice or assistance. There were times when students were unable to attend all the FLC lectures or were unable to fully understand lecturers. The LMS offered them an avenue to bridge that gap and enabled them to download lecture recordings and relevant learning material. The following statements support this:

I used to think that if I miss things in class or if I do not concentrate, I will be lost but having a way to access lecturer recordings was a way to help me learn (#P15; Female; ESL student)

At times I was not able to attend my classes but luckily I was able to download them online (#P12; Female; ESL student)

Having an online platform is very convenient as it assists if you need to communicate with the lecturer and with the LMS it helps you to do that (#P2; Female; ESL student)

4.5 SECTION B- OVERVIEW OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES-WIL COORDINATORS/EMPLOYERS

Table 4.5 provides an illustration of themes from the interviews with the WIL coordinators/employers.

Table 4.5: WIL coordinators/employers' interview themes and sub-themes

THEME	SUB-THEMES	
Theme 1: Conceptualisation of WIL	1.1	Functioning of ESL student in the work environment
	1.2	Role of WIL coordinator/employer in the work environment
	1.3	Importance of interpersonal skills to the ESL student
	1.4	Preparation for workplace transition
Theme 2: Teaching and learning challenges	2.1	Lack of interpersonal skills
	2.2	Poor transition from secondary to tertiary education
	2.3	Technological challenges and ESL students
	2.4	Support structures

Section B presents the findings from the interviews with WIL coordinators or employers. Both parties perform similar functions in preparing, supervising and mentoring students for, and sometimes at the workplace.

Having interviewed this subset, it was noted that, due to the COVID-19 situation and lockdown protocols, the “new academic environment” and the WIL module was adapted and adjusted to offer further support to all students. This meant that the sample HEI offered a campus industry project and “acted” as the employer and developed activities that were completed under simulated working conditions. The WIL coordinators also assumed the role of the employer as well as the supervisor, mentor and assessor. They were allowed to monitor student progress and sign off all relevant documentation related to the WIL module.

Interviews with this subset yielded two (2) main themes and relevant sub-themes as highlighted in Table 4.5 above.

4.5.1 Section B-Theme 1: Conceptualisation of WIL

All participants in this subset indicated that they understood WIL allowed ESL students to embrace prospective future careers and that it promoted student career development, whilst enhancing their business communication skills. There was also an understanding that academics have the opportunity to not only integrate theory and practice, but also to expose graduates to the world of work, supervise, mentor and assess their experiential learning. The statements below provide evidence to this:

As a WIL-coordinator you try and take the theory aspect of the communication course students completed and link it to the practical part during WIL (#P2; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

During the COVID 19 pandemic, the WIL coordinator also took the role of the employer for the WIL module. So, we had to integrate both aspects so that students get the necessary experience as they would in normal circumstances (#P3; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

In this module, we try to expose students to real-life work situations that they may encounter and give them tasks that test their communication skills as it's an essential part of the working world (#P4; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.5.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Functioning of the ESL student in the work environment

Participants agreed that being able to understand and speak English increases their chances of getting a good job in a multinational company, within the home country, or abroad, as English is a global language. Some participants also noted that all the students are expected to fulfil their roles in the work environment as they interact with others. It was also noted that the students would interact with people in the workplace who speak English and have a good command of business communication, either in the written or oral form. Therefore, for job security purposes, it is vital that students have good English communication skills. The following statements allude to this:

A lot of the WIL components include working in groups so the interactions with others during WIL is important (#P2; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

During the beginning of the WIL module we tell students the importance of the module and the importance of the real-life working scenarios given to them (#P1; Male; WIL coordinator/Employer)

A lot of the skills tested during WIL is made up of communication skills as well and tasks include written or oral. It could be reports or presentations (#P4; Male; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.5.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Role of WIL coordinator/employer in the work environment

Participants noted that they often have to adjust and adapt their teaching strategies to cater for the needs of their students. They verbalised that this was very evident during the current disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby they had to work with the industry and facilitate the WIL module for the student. Participants noted that due to social lockdown regulations, WIL coordinators' and employers' roles became interchangeable. The HEI itself became an "employer" and allowed many students to complete their WIL practicum for the modules of Office Management, Logistics and Supply Chain and Accounting at the university.

They were also very aware of the multicultural, diverse student population that they taught and supervised, and at times they find themselves simplifying content to make the student understand. They also encourage feedback to assess student learning needs, regarding the effectiveness of certain learning activities. Students are continuously motivated to gain more exposure to the English language through the use of commercials on television and the radio and other multimodal teaching modalities. Participants often utilised computer-mediated communication for ESL students' classes to assist solve problems and develop grammatically correct English speaking skills. Participants have commented as below:

During the WIL module, most of the students are ESL students and many of the students can understand English. What poses as a challenge is understanding the different instructional words in tasks that we as WIL-coordinators who act as the employers, have to now simplify and break down the meaning (#P5; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

What helped in my classes was using social media or getting them to research concepts in the computer labs (#P5; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

I found especially with ESL students they had an issue when it came to simple grammar. I had to then spend more time re-enforcing these concepts (#P7; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.5.1.3 Sub-theme 1. 3: Importance of interpersonal skills to the ESL student

Participants agreed that having good interpersonal skills during WIL placement was incumbent on being able to speak and understand the English language. They noted that it was important to be able to interact with people through effective listening and communication. All participants in this data subset agreed that effective oral and written skills helped ESL students to connect with people in the outside world whilst benefitting their personality development. Some participants felt that communication was not just about speaking, but also about listening. They agreed that they helped their students develop listening skills by reading a selection of texts aloud, and then having the class discuss and reflect on the content. Others commented that active listening also meant listening to understand rather than just replying. They stated that this is a crucial skill to have in the workplace as they felt that this would strengthen ESL students' spoken English as they would be able to understand the speaker's intended message and reply appropriately. Excerpts from participant's interviews are provided:

I feel having good listening skills is very important because when students listen they can comprehend exactly what is required from the task (#P2; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

I think that effective oral and written skills helped ESL students to connect with people, interact with other students and communicate better (P4; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

Reading was a good strategy to keep the student engaged in class and having discussions assisted students (#P6; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.5.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Preparation for workplace transition

Participants felt that the efforts of ESL students to transition into the work environment were more likely to be successful if the knowledge and skills that students learn reflect the demands of the workplace. It was also noted, that HEIs do not just offer qualifications but also prepare the student for the outside world of employment. Participants emphasised that WIL is gaining momentum in the world of HEI collaborations and partnerships with businesses to set up customised job roles specifically for ESL students. According to participants, this further enables ESL students to gain valuable work experience so that they can apply in the workplace what they have learned in the classroom as outlined in the responses below:

I feel that students can be successful in the work environment after completing the communication course and using that for WIL, because we teach them the sufficient skills for the work environment (#P7; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

I believe that the course enabled ESL students to gain valuable workplace experience so that they could be able to apply that knowledge to the workplace (#P6; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

I think students will be able to transition into the workplace, because the skills that they learn example speaking, report writing, how to write an email are basic skills needed in a work place (#P3; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.5.2 Theme 2: Teaching and learning challenges

The findings from the interviews revealed that ESL students often faced a series of transitional difficulties immediately after enrolling to study at the HEI. They further stated that the problems could be classified as academic, social and cultural which plays a significant role in how the student copes with tertiary education. They added that being socialised into a differentiated class, with ESL and first language speakers of English, has

its advantages and disadvantages. Some ESL students buddied with their peers or other students who were first language English speaking and learnt from them, while other ESL students needed more attention. The COVID -19 pandemic disruption in the academic environment brought its own set of challenges as the online, multimodal teaching posed a setback for ESL students. Participants added that ESL students appeared to benefit from face-face contact sessions with the lecturer. The following statements reflect this:

I noticed that many of the first year ESL students had difficulties adjusting to the requirements needed at a tertiary higher institution (#P4; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

Even though majority of students were ESL students, they were mixed with first language speakers and sometimes this helped in their understanding and learning (#P6; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

As a WIL coordinator I found that ESL students needed more attention and due to the pandemic that brought disruptions, we then had to use online methods of teaching and had to make sure students were still understanding (#P3; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.5.2.1 Sub-theme 2. 1: Lack of interpersonal skills

Notably, it was stated that ESL students had to be taught and trained in communication, listening and written skills. Cultural sensitivity played a role in the interpersonal skills of the ESL students. It was evident during the interviews that their cultural upbringing dominated the behaviour of certain ESL students in the way they spoke and portrayed verbal and non-verbal gestures and questions. These students had to be often reminded that English was the language of business communication and that they needed to adapt their behaviour to the needs of the work environment if they wanted to progress in their chosen career. Many WIL coordinators had to emphasise active listening skills

and at times had to incorporate them into role-plays and simulations for students to be able to understand. The statements below note this:

I had to be creative in my teaching strategies and as a result used role plays and real-life scenarios for them to have an understanding of the content (#P7; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

Some students found it difficult in verbal or non-verbal communication, as in the Zulu culture or upbringing they do not give direct eye –contact to elders or point fingers. During presentations eye contact with the audience is important so students had to learn to become comfortable with this (#P5; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

Listening skills specifically active listening was very crucial as ESL students need to listen carefully to follow the relevant instructions (#P3; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.5.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Transition from secondary to tertiary education

The transition from a high school to a tertiary education environment comes with its own set of challenges, but more so with an ESL student. This was uttered by almost 60% of the participants interviewed in this data subset. Participants alluded to a sizable gap between high school education and tertiary education for the ESL student. This, they claimed, made it more crucial for the process of integrating English communication skills in as many of the high school subjects in preparation for the ESL student's transition to the tertiary environment. The following statements are noted:

I found students still have the mentality of a high school student and do not have the mindset required of a tertiary student (#P3; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

Students do find the transition from high school to tertiary challenging, it takes a couple of months for them to settle in (#P5; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

I feel communication courses can be integrated into high school to make the transition easier (#P6; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.5.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Technological challenges and ESL students

Participants also noted that even though all students including ESL students undergo a basic computer literacy course at the start of their studies, challenges persisted, and this added to the frustration of knowledge transfer and ESL student knowledge acquisition. It was also noted that some students' disadvantaged backgrounds were sometimes used as an excuse for students not to produce their work timeously. However, some participants noted that the HEI in question had well-equipped computer laboratories and simulated workplace environments that allowed for these students to do their work and gain sufficient exposure to technological equipment. Participants noted the following:

Some students do come from rural areas or backgrounds and have challenges with technology and learning to use a computer (#P5; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

At this higher education institution, yes students find technology challenging but there are computer labs for them to practice their skills (#P2; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

I feel sometimes students use being ESL as an excuse to not submit work, but you also get students who make of the technological equipment and resources to excel despite challenges (#P4; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.5.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Support structures

Although it was noted that multimodal teaching took on a new dimension during the lockdown and subsequent COVID -19 precautionary measures, ESL students need to attend class for them to complete the WIL module. Innovative ways of teaching and learning had to be instituted to aid these students. Those interviewed felt that ESL students needed support structures to assist them with progress in the outside world. They noted that although the HEI did have library facilities and career centres, ESL students may benefit from a Writing Centre that could guide these students with their written English. It was also recommended that guest lectures and lecturers would be a good starting point to allow ESL students to hear firsthand about the working environment, specific to their chosen career, the challenges they can encounter and how these can be addressed are indicated in the responses below:

When lock down took place, we needed to come up with innovative ways to engage with the student as a result we used the online platform (#P7; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

I think there should be more support structures in place to assist students with English and communication skills such as a writing centre (#P6; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

Some support structures could be maybe getting professionals in the field that the student is studying as it will give a real life scenario of what students can expect in the real world (#P 1; Female; WIL coordinator/Employer)

4.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, findings from the interviews of both sets of participants were presented. This chapter focused on the main themes and related sub-themes which were aligned to the objectives of the study. Chapter 5 will present a discussion of the study findings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF STUDY FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the findings of the study and presented actual excerpts and statements to justify the findings. This chapter presents a discussion of these findings. Reference will also be made to the objectives, research questions and the theoretical framework of the current study, which will be further related to its relevance to the findings and discussion.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE CURRENT STUDY

The participants were selected from two different categories namely the ESL students and WIL coordinators/employers. This further assisted the researcher to maintain the principle of triangulation. According to Jonsen and Jehn (2009: 125), triangulation is a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings. Data triangulation occurs when there is the use of multiple data sources in a single study to ensure that biases arising from the use of a single method or data source are overcome (Jonsen and Jehn 2009: 125). The demographic data that was collected from ESL participants included age, gender and course discipline and was consistent with the inclusion criteria as set out in Chapter 3. The demographic data that was collected from the WIL coordinators/employers, was also consistent in that it outlined the gender, race and duration of experience in facilitating the WIL module for ESL students.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The discussion of the findings in this chapter will be presented as Section A and Section B for ease of reference and clarity related to the two data subsets as follows:

Section A- Discussion of the findings based on interviews with ESL students.

Section B- Discussion of the findings based on interviews with WIL coordinators/employers.

SECTION A- DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH ESL STUDENTS

5.3.1 Theme 1: Communication barriers to learning

Based on the analysis of the findings, the first theme that emerged based on the findings from interviews with ESL students was the communication challenges or barriers in their learning. The findings of this study noted that ESL students perceived their inability to speak or write in English as a major obstacle to their learning and their workplace readiness. Student participants reported increased anxiety, especially when they were unable to sound grammatically correct when communicating in front of a large audience. However, the majority of ESL students that were interviewed, agreed that there was a noticeable improvement in their oral communication skills, including communication with their peers and the classroom after completing the FLC course in English. They added that being unable to pronounce words correctly gave them anxiety especially when they were speaking in front of a large audience. Carrillo (2020: 3) agrees with this notion and points out that the anxiety of an ESL learner can pose a barrier to oral communication, which is believed to be associated with negative feelings leading to uneasiness and frustration in the classroom and the outside world.

Al-Musalli (2019: 3) notes that communication expertise is one of the key requirements that employers look for when hiring a person and stressed the need for aligning classroom content with real-life working scenarios. Participants noted that completing the FLC course

provided them with adequate skills in preparation for WIL. All the participants agreed that the course assisted them in both, written and oral skills whilst teaching them how to construct their thinking and ideas logically.

According to Kocaman (2017: 579), it was noted that communication deficiencies can hamper the ESL student's progress in the work environment. However, the author also argues that bilingual education has the potential for empowering traditionally disadvantaged groups, particularly through competence in English concerning power, privilege and status and therefore it is not just a political issue , but should also be looked at as an economic issue (Kocaman 2017: 581). Hence, it can be concluded that ESL students have been empowered because their language and communications skills were improved after they completed the FLC course in English and therefore they can make a significant contribution to the economy of the country by securing suitable employment.

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Lack of confidence of the ESL student

Many ESL students understood the importance of language development towards the second or additional language, but during the interview discussions it was revealed that ESL students, sometimes felt intimidated due to their lack confidence and inability to express themselves well in English. Bagalay *et al.* (2021: 11) concurred that language anxiety is a crucial factor that demotivates and discourages ESL students in the English language teaching and learning situation. Santos, Cunanan and Mandap (2021: 33) agree by stating that the lack of confidence due to language anxieties, is just an apprehension of the learner as he or she gets ready to learn a new language and there is always a negative effect of the language anxiety on the learning of a second or foreign language. The authors add that once a change in one's behaviour and personality occurs, the student feels a sense of accomplishment. Likewise, when students were asked about their level of confidence after the FLC course, they revealed that the course boosted their confidence levels leaving them more comfortable and self-assured in their abilities such as writing reports and engaging with other people during WIL.

Students were probed about the aspects of the FLC course that they enjoyed the most or least. Notably, many students appeared to have enjoyed the practical component of the course such as role-plays and presentations. The findings from these scholarly articles were consistent with the findings of the current study, whereby the FLC course content was modified and simplified to impart relevant knowledge and skill to ESL students. These measures were noted to allay their fears and anxiety of learning a new language.

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1. 2: Socio-cultural barriers to communication

The indigenous language of an ESL student can be a form of self-expression and their identity is shaped by their socio-cultural context. Findings noted that cultural factors could not be ignored while discussing language education simply because a language is a product of culture. During discussions around cultural diversity in the classroom, students described their experiences in the classroom and stated that it took them some time to understand that their home language such as isiZulu, could not be directly translated to English, as the meaning changed. They further added that the FLC course assisted them to understand and embrace each other's cultural identities. While culture and educational settings may come across as conflicting at times, Oktaviani and Fauzan (2017: 10) stated that the importance of English is now being realised globally for economy, business, technology, and higher education. The same author states that cultural sensitivity is important, as the integration of local culture can be an effective tool to combat cultural barriers in English classrooms.

ESL students participating in this study further acknowledged and highlighted the importance of English skills not merely for WIL competencies, but as an employment requirement. Students also noted that although teaching methods were adequate and WIL coordinators and lecturers tried their best to explain concepts, they felt more confident at times asking other ESL students in their class what was required if they did not understand. This was evident in the findings of this study, whereby ESL students sometimes looked to

their peers for guidance, support and further explanation when they encountered difficulties with the English language.

5.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: FLC course continuity in all levels of study

When ESL students were asked to comment on what could be done to improve the FLC course, they stated that they preferred to have the theory and practical modules of the course in all years of study to ensure that they gained proficiency with practicing English language skills throughout their study period. These viewpoints are in keeping with research on English language proficiency and workplace communication, conducted in national and international contexts. This revealed that non-native English speakers encountered difficulties in terms of English workplace communication (Hu and Gonzales 2020: 91-108). The same study noted that employers were often dissatisfied with the communication skills of new graduates. Such findings can lead to pedagogical implications such as specifically having the current FLC course implemented at all levels of study. Not only will this allow the ESL student to function more confidently but will enable him or her to proficiently communicate in the English language in real-life situations whilst preparing for WIL.

5.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1. 4: Improved learning capabilities with Instructional technology

While findings reflected that not all ESL students' challenges were related to linguistic abilities, some ESL students tended to search for some other forms of support while learning. Some students also looked for useful resources such as textbooks, dictionaries, materials or any technological support to provide necessary information for their second language development (Maznun, Monsefi and Nimehchisalem 2017: 10).

This finding concurs with the findings of the current study as students interviewed, indicated that the teaching methods and techniques applied in classroom enhanced their

capabilities to use instructional technology. Participants also agreed that online programmes assisted them if they faced difficulties with their second language development. This was in keeping with Rajprasit and Hemchua (2015: 110), who noted that globalisation and the use of technology have also put greater emphasis on the learning capabilities and interpersonal skills of persons who are second language English speakers.

5.3.2 Theme 2: FLC course in student workplace preparedness

Students interviewed appeared to have a clear understanding of WIL language needs and communication practices. They also appreciated that the FLC course provided undergraduate students with the linguistic competence required for communication in the workplace. This was in stark comparison to findings from a Malaysian study that stated the English language teaching at tertiary level in Malaysia did not provide adequate language skills needed by students for the work environment (Nair and Hui 2018: 29).

Hu and Gonzales (2020: 100) agreed with this author and stated that sometimes there was a clear divide between tertiary education providers and employers' perception of graduates' communication skills and abilities. However, Al-Musalli (2019: 1-20) noted that having ESL courses largely prepared the ESL student to function in the outside world and these courses should be embraced by all ESL students. The author also mentioned that poor English communication skills significantly affected graduates' employability. ESL students interviewed stated that the FLC course is needed in the classroom as it enhanced their interpersonal skills and allowed them to become fully prepared for the workplace.

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2. 1: Improvement in written communication

ESL students, when asked about the skills that were enhanced, agreed that prior to completing the FLC course, their written communication skills in English were of a very poor standard. Moses and Mohamad (2019: 3385) readily claimed that for any second language learner, writing is an extension of listening and speaking. Therefore, students must be provided opportunities to build, extend and refine oral language skills to improve written output. Participants in this study agreed that the writing skills acquired in the FLC course allowed them to also gain practice in report writing, office management skills and promoted their overall interpersonal skills. This is in keeping with Hu and Gonzales (2020: 91) who claimed that good grammar is an important element of a student's education where students have to show more sophisticated writing skills and complete more tasks through their writing. It can also serve as an important element of an employee's job and an important form of communication.

5.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2. 2: Enhanced oral communication

Analysis of data in this study also revealed that the FLC course helped with students' English communication. This helped them with direct conversations or telephone conversations, preparation of speeches, presentations and other group discussions. According to Andrienko, Chumak and Genin (2020: 67), communicating in English allows the student to engage in meaningful language construction. The receiving and processing of pieces of information and then producing a reactive response to the received information and properly forming that response according to the context in which communication takes place, is required in acquiring good English communication skills. Andrienko, Chumak and Genin (2020: 69) also suggested that speaking is very important and enhanced oral communication and learning to confidently converse in English can positively impact on the ESL student who had previously lacked confidence.

5.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2. 3: Promotion of ESL student self- efficacy

This study also found that ESL students were discouraged and demotivated when they made grammatical errors. Those interviewed, explained that when they tried to translate directly from their “mother tongue” into a second language, the meaning tended to be lost or distorted. However, after completing the FLC course in English, they felt empowered, motivated and had renewed faith in their abilities as they felt a sense of accomplishment in their surroundings with the learning of a new language. This is in keeping with findings from Khan (2016: 3), who stated that motivation influences language achievement and that certain approaches can exert positive interest towards learning a language due to increased motivation levels of a student. Another study found that the attitude of the ESL learners can be one of the most important indicators of their achievement (Lestari *et al.* 2019: 15-32).

5.3.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Learning Management System (LMS)

ESL students interviewed in this study noted that the learning management systems offered by the HEI, was commonly used to supplement their learning. Study findings reveal that good online courses that teach English as a second language may give students a better idea of pronunciation and dialect (McCrocklin 2019:100). Ahmed and Mesonovich (2019: 583) also agree that communication in organisations can be socially learned, taught, and further improved through organisational training instructional programmes. Even though knowledge and technical knowledge are significant, the use of presentation software/hardware employed in the language classrooms and training courses are beneficial to a student’s growth and outcomes. Students agreed and felt that the LMS used by the institution, allowed them to engage in independent, self-directed learning, whilst learning at their own pace. They were also of the opinion that if they were intimidated to ask a question in class, they could utilise the online learning platforms to seek out solutions.

SECTION B- DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH WIL COORDINATORS/EMPLOYERS

5.4.1 Theme 1: Conceptualisation of WIL

Participants understood the importance of the WIL component for the ESL students. Employers /WIL coordinators described WIL as an approach to allow students to enter the industry and their chosen career path. They also agreed that it included classroom-based and workplace-based forms of learning that should be appropriately integrated for students' professional qualifications. This was in keeping with Schonell and Macklin (2018: 2) who stated that students needed to know exactly how the outside world of work functioned. Therefore, lecturers in the classroom had to make them learn through use of simulated workplace environments, to make them acquire real skills. Another study by Pham *et al.* (2018: 64) suggested that lecturers also need to intensify the idea of self-determination, exploration and cooperation amongst second language learners in the classroom to prepare them to enter the working environment (Pham *et al.* 2018: 64). Kalyar, Ahmad and Kalyar (2018: 91-119) also agreed that WIL was an important and achievable learning outcome that imparted practical and technical abilities to enable ESL students to handle their courses or job requirements.

5.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Functioning of the ESL student in the work environment

Study findings noted that WIL coordinators understood the importance of the FLC course in English to ESL students, as it would advance their employment and career paths. It was also apparent by their responses that they collaborated with the workplace, supervised, and mentored students to allow them to achieve all their learning outcomes. Fleming, McLachlan and Pretti (2018: 18) revealed that in any academic setting, the classroom situation is where the learning is initiated and the type of instruction and learning serves as the starting point for identifying specific curricular needs and in the case of ESL students, it should provide guidance for their linguistic capabilities to enhance their career

prospects. All WIL coordinators interviewed alluded to the fact that communication is a key concept needed for successful achievement of the WIL competencies. They also agreed that written and oral skills were fundamental aspects of the FLC course that helped improved learning outcomes of ESL students.

Wurdinger and Allison (2017: 16) concur that the work environment is an extension of what is learnt in the WIL module, making it a broader framework beyond the classroom situation to provide important input for student goals and objectives. WIL coordinators interviewed also stated that they advised ESL students to routinely communicate in English inside and outside the classroom and encouraged them to use English most of the time in every core class or other classes they attended. This was similar to the findings of Al-Musalli (2019:12) who stated that when ESL students hear, speak, read and write accurate English, they will manage in almost any English language situation they meet outside and inside the classroom.

5.4.1.2 Sub-theme 1. 2: Role WIL coordinator/employer in the work environment

There was consensus among interviewees of this subset that the role of a WIL coordinator was to prepare students for the real working world by incorporating real-life examples into the classroom situation. Other participants noted that the FLC course potentially alleviated some of the writing challenges that ESL graduates face at work. This was in keeping with the study findings by Milliken, Dean and Eady (2021: 51) who noted that businesses usually expect to hire employees who are competent in their ability to write effectively. Therefore the burden is placed upon the educational institution to provide effective education that prepares ESL students for the workplace. Almeida (2019: 20) found that a teacher can be instrumental in assisting students with problems in language learning and students who are not assisted face some difficulties that affect their second language development.

WIL coordinators also agreed that it was their role to provide professional development opportunities and resources concerning language development for ESL students while modifying and innovating learning to assist these students. They recommended that industry training and other in-house training classes and seminars that utilised work vocabulary should be offered. Other software writing programmes as well teaching through role-plays, debates and other methods were also recommended. Milliken, Dean and Eady (2021: 54) agree and add that today's world requires that the goal of teaching languages to students to improve communicative skills, as this is the only way in which students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate for each communicative situation. They go on to suggest that lecturers or instructors use teaching strategies to enhance the oral skills of students such as developing speaking skills. Many of the WIL coordinators interviewed stated that they try to use innovative practical strategies when preparing students for WIL.

5.4.1.3 Sub-theme 1. 3: Importance of interpersonal skills to the ESL student

Participants interviewed understood that the FLC course aimed to help students become better communicators in the workplace. They also agreed that it was better that the English language was promoted in the classroom instead of the student encountering difficulties in the workplace. Participants reiterated that once ESL students developed sound English and communication skills through the FLC course in English, they were able to do presentations and initiate conversations in daily practical situations. This translated to a healthy working environment when the student does enter the job market. When asked about the challenges faced in the classroom, **all** participants mentioned that ESL students lacked basic English skills from their school phase and this created a gap in the transition from high school to tertiary education level. The participants added that more emphasis should be placed on teaching English language at all levels, so that by the time the students entered tertiary education, they have sufficient English communication skills. All participants agreed that many ESL students who had previously lacked basic writing, communication and presentation skills, appeared to show a considerable improvement on

completion of the FLC course in English. Additionally, students came across as motivated and more confident during their WIL module.

Tamunomiebi and John-Eke (2020: 260) established in their study that communicative language teaching during WIL is based on real-life workplace situations such as authentic activities and meaningful tasks that promote the oral language. In this way, ESL students are given the opportunity of communicating with each other and becoming proficient in a language that builds their self-esteem. The importance of active listening was further emphasised by Ebron and Mabuan (2021: 16), who viewed speaking and writing skills for second language learning as something that should not be ignored. The authors added that to increase students' confidence levels and make them feel part of a team in the workplace, students need to learn how to ask questions and listen carefully when a person replies.

5.4.1.4 Sub-theme 1. 4: Preparation for workplace transition

Participants also agreed that WIL played a huge role in allowing student to transition from the education environment to the workplace environment in terms of their communication abilities. They also noted that there are many activities where students can role play in the classroom such as in general daily conversations with friends and peers to help them with workplace duties and responsibilities such as, answering and talking on the telephone at work. Al-Musalli (2019: 12) is in total agreement when he argued that effective communication skills should not be seen as skills attained from the home environment that can influence a person's ability to function well in the workplace. Rather he noted, they should be looked at as tools that require training and practice in suitable contexts to help individuals build communicative competence for the workplace, which can be the driving force of success in the outside world.

In agreement with Sackstein, Coleman and Ndobe (2019: 1-28), the WIL coordinators that were interviewed also recommended that workplace communication competence training

should be aligned to the job market needs and therefore it should be impressed upon ESL students to acquire English language competencies if they wanted to successfully transition to the workplace. Sackstein, Coleman and Ndobe (2019:1-28) also agreed that second language students should be encouraged to use word processing programmes throughout the writing process as it can improve their writing ability. Other authors believe that computer-assisted writing with spelling and grammar checks are significant for second language students because they can easily find their spelling errors. This can augment their learning and allow them to become proficient in grammar as well as technology (Ahmed and Mesonovich 2019: 583).

5.4.2 Theme 2: Teaching and learning challenges

It is evident from the findings in this study that the employer and WIL coordinators experienced challenges with ESL students during the FLC course. WIL coordinators stated that the most important contributing factor for ESL students was that English was their second language and this meant going “back to basics.” They added that those activities such as sentence construction and listening skills posed challenges for students. Hondy (2011: 115-117) noted that other factors that contributed to learning and teaching difficulties with ESL learners were the cultural, psychological, environmental and physical factors. The author further agreed that some of these factors were avoidable and some unavoidable. Barends and Nel (2017:1-13) argued that the ability for any ESL person to be motivated to succeed in the workplace depended on the person. Participants agreed that cultural diversity in the classroom had its advantages and disadvantages. Some students felt comfortable interacting with English first language speakers and had good interactions with them as their peers. This allowed the ESL student to engage in teamwork, as well as grow and thrive in the FLC course.

Participants noted that they found themselves, as WIL coordinators and lecturers, being the biggest drivers of motivating ESL students to become knowledgeable with the English

language. WIL coordinators added that students sometimes felt intimidated to ask questions in class and would rather ask other students. This was in keeping with Muzaki (2017: 100), who investigated ESL students' motivation to learn English in Indonesia. The study revealed that students needed to use the English language to execute their workplace responsibilities and that the teacher played a huge role in improving the quality of teaching English so that it became effective and more relevant to the ESL student (Muzaki 2017: 101).

5.4.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Lack of interpersonal skills

Participant responses also indicated that a lack of ESL student interpersonal skills played a role in the way they communicated. They found themselves reminding students of the workplace requirements and the need for developing sound English oral communication skills. Language and workplace communicative events warrant the use of effective English language use to execute their workplace responsibilities (Nigh 2021: 3). To deliver and listen to presentations, give and receive instructions and communicate with customers and external stakeholders either via e-mail, telephone or face-to-face discussion, more emphasis must be placed on English oral communication skills Al-(Musalli 2019: 4). These findings solidify the importance of developing interpersonal skills among ESL students that will allow them to function in the working environment and be competitive in the job market. Suarta *et al.* (2017: 337) studied the perception of the employers of business graduates, both native speakers and ESL students from Monash University, regarding their needs for and use of oral communication in the workplace. They agreed that interpersonal communication was a significant part of undergraduates' preparation for the workplace and was an important factor for recruitment, promotion and is essential in ensuring employees' career success (Suarte *et al.* 2017: 337). Participants noted that it was important that the focus should be more on listening skills, as this was an area that students struggled with the most and failed to properly follow instructions.

5.4.2.2 Sub- theme 2.2: Transition from secondary to tertiary education

The WIL coordinators that were interviewed also found that during their engagement with ESL students, problems with transitioning from secondary schooling into tertiary education surfaced. Remembering that some ESL students come from rural backgrounds, they found that they also lacked social interaction skills and were unable to cope with instructional technology. There seemed to be an improvement in language skills noted with ESL students who had attended schools in urban settings. Participants stated that due to the different backgrounds that students come from, they found it difficult to converse with other students from different cultures and race groups. However, interviewees did agree that there was a significant improvement in students' ability to communicate in English and their resultant social interactions once they had completed the FLC course.

Those interviewed were also of the opinion that foundational English learning courses must be integrated into secondary school education to assist ESL students in the tertiary educational environment. A study done in Thailand reflected that academic staff themselves reported a knowledge gap in terms of the outcomes of graduates who were not competent in the English language (Al-Musalli 2019: 8). Another study reported that even if the nature and the extent of English language use were due to a variety of individual factors, English needed to be characterised as a tool to reach communicative goals and for international intelligibility among speakers of different first languages (Raju and Joshith 2017: 48).

5.4.2.3 Sub- theme 2.3: Technological challenges and ESL students

Interviewees in this section stated that online learning tools and other blended learning approaches of teaching-learning proved successful and were well received by some ESL students, whilst others still experienced challenges. Students need to understand that the multi-modal approaches of teaching and learning such as computer software programmes, digital versatile discs and videos can be used for learning (Rajprasit and Hemchua 2020:

110).The same authors noted that technology should be embraced,as it reinforced students' autonomy, which ultimately led them to becoming confident and competent users of English. These reports thus prove that in the current computer-dominated world all students need to become computer literate to ensure the effectiveness of the learning environment of the ESL classroom.

5.4.2.4 Sub- theme 2.4: Support structures

Participants concluded that adequate support was needed for ESL students to grasp the knowledge that was imparted during the lecturing or mentoring sessions. Ferns, Campbell and Zegwaard (2014: 4) note that for self-motivated ESL learners', instructional books may be just the ticket to learning the English language at a pace that is comfortable for them. Baaqeel (2020: 42) found that an interactive medium of learning such as inviting writing experts or hosting language seminars online makes the language classroom more interesting with the help of technology. It can also guide the ESL students to make use of technology properly, provide enthusiasm among students and make classroom sessions with ESL students active and interactive rather than passive.

While global employment demands better qualified workers with a diversity of skills such as literacy and business communication, Msimanga,Denley and Gumede (2017: 245-255), concluded that teachers can provide various support structures that enhance the real workplace responsibilities. Students can then benefit from attending writing centre workshops, simulated meetings, workshops and conducting group projects. This will aid them in utilising and applying their knowledge in real communication practice. All participants felt that the FLC courses needed to be consistently implemented in all years of study.

5.5 RELEVANCE OF STUDY FINDINGS TO STUDY OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher had specifically chosen to utilise a qualitative approach to invite rich descriptions of the topic of inquiry from the participants. This had also entailed using open-ended questions and a probing technique during the semi-structured interview method of data gathering. The qualitative data that was obtained had aimed to achieve the following three objectives which were guided by the research questions of the study. A detailed relevance of the study findings to each objective and the research questions is provided below and supported by relevant literature searches. The following were the set objectives that guided the study as outlined in Chapter 1.

5.5.1 Objectives of the study

- Explore the role of the Foundational Learning Competence course in preparing English Second Language students for Work Integrated Learning
- Examine the employer's/WIL coordinator's perspectives on ESL students' language and communication skills during WIL.
- Identify aspects of the FLC course development and delivery which can be improved on to provide optimal development of ESL students' language and communication skills

The primary aim of the current study was to explore the role of the FLC course in preparing ESL students for WIL. The secondary aim was to examine the perspectives of the employer or the WIL coordinator who mentored or supervised these students during the WIL period.

Four research questions had to be answered to achieve this aim and these questions further guided the discussion and are outlined below.

5.5.2 Research questions that guided the study

1. What are your experiences of the FLC course in English in terms of your language and communication skills in preparation for work-integrated learning?
2. What are your perspectives of ESL students' preparedness or readiness in terms of their English language and communication skills in preparation for work-integrated learning and the expectations and the realities of WIL?
3. What are some of the aspects of the FLC course development and delivery that can be improved in terms of English language and communication skills in preparation for WIL?

These research questions, which were aligned to the study's objectives, are discussed below.

5.6 DISCUSSION OF STUDY OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

5.6.1 Objective 1: The role of the foundational competence course in English in preparing English Second Language students for Work Integrated Learning

It was noted that the foundational competence course in English plays a crucial role in the development of the ESL student. It was evident from both sets of participants namely the employer/ WIL-coordinators and the ESL students, that there was an increased level of confidence in the ESL students' written and oral skills on completion of the FLC course. In a study by Al-Musalli (2019: 2) it was stated that communication courses especially in English bridged the gap of what the job market expects from tertiary students completing WIL. ESL students needed to be trained and equipped with interpersonal and intercultural communication skills as part of their academic course and during their WIL period to become fully competent in the workplace (Jhaiyanuntana and Nomnian 2020: 206).

WIL coordinators/ Employers indicated that many ESL tertiary graduates are lacking the competencies and relevant communication skills needed in the workplace and are not considered to be career-ready. As a result, the FLC course provided support to the student by enhancing their oral and written communication skills.

Jackson *et al* (2017:35-51) noted that professions are calling for enhanced problem solving, communication and leadership skills through active learning as opposed to more traditional passive learning techniques, as this has been shown to produce better student outcomes. This alludes to the FLC course playing a vital role in preparing ESL students for the working environment.

5.6.2 Objective 2: The employer's/WIL coordinator's perspectives on ESL students' language and communication skills during WIL

Employer's/WIL coordinators stated that many students lack confidence in their ability to communicate and this sometimes demotivated the student. It was found that the student's ability to obtain employment and career progression in English-medium institutions can be related to their ability to write in English. Many employers find speaking and writing critical for the prospective employee, as some of the requirements will be to deliver presentations or send emails.

During data collection, it was noted by Employers/ WIL coordinators that the main aim of the module was to ensure ESL students have sufficient verbal, written and communication skills to become successful in the job market. It was stressed that the completion of the course would assist ESL students in real-life situations that would enable them to develop a good understanding of work-related texts, the usage of language skills and visual literacy.

It was noted that the FLC course ensures that the ESL student is able to read, write, speak with confidence, listen and understand, to enable them to function to their full potential, both within the occupational environment, their personal lives and their interaction with society at large. An ESL student who can become proficient in a

language can also learn, understand and grow with regards to occupational specific learning, provided by the company and thus be a more valuable asset to a company or an organisation.

5.6.3 Objective 3: Aspects of the FLC course development and delivery that can be improved

Many of the participants noted that the FLC course contains most of the components needed for the ESL learner to excel during WIL or a real-life working environment. It was mentioned that although the FLC course provides basic level skills, it enabled students to complete WIL and provided a platform for better employment opportunities. Although it was seen to enhance their linguistic abilities, listening skills of these students should be reviewed as they needed more focus on active listening (Almeida 2019: 20). Notably, ESL students sometimes struggle with listening skills, which poses a great challenge as one needs to always be adhering to workplace instructions during WIL placement. In the communication module, there is lots of theory, so more practical scenarios related to the workplace should be included (Schonell and Macklin 2019:1197-1208).

5.7 RELEVANCE OF STUDY FINDINGS TO CANALE AND SWAIN 'S THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

According to Maree (2012: 30-31), it was noted that a theoretical framework is an abstract, logical structure of meaning that can guide the development and organisation of a research study. It should also enable the researcher to link the findings of the study to its various constructs. With the current study, the researcher adopted Canale and Swain's Theory of Communicative Competence which was further outlined in Chapter 2.

According to the theorists, Canale and Swain, the ability to communicate requires four different sub-competencies as follows:

The following are four sub-competencies according to the theorists and were used as a backdrop for the evaluation of this research and its findings. They are as follows:

- 1) Grammatical competence
- 2) Sociolinguistic competence
- 3) Strategic competence
- 4) Discourse competence

5.7.1 Grammatical competence

Fikron (2018: 101) noted that communicative teaching which only focuses on meaning and gives little attention to grammatical rules are not sufficient to prepare students to be fluent. The author added that students tend to commit grammatical errors. At the same time, they are unable to spot them because they lack proper grammatical knowledge (Fikron 2018: 102).

Within the context of this study and the findings, it was noted that grammatical competence assisted students in the language skills required to write business letters or in report writing. This increased the ESL student's confidence in the necessary grammatical skills such as past tense, adjectives and comprehension skills. However, there was a strong consensus in this study from all participants that grammatical competence starts at secondary school level and should then transition to a tertiary level.

5.7.2 Sociolinguistic competence

Sociolinguistic competence is an important aspect of communication as it has the ability to produce utterances appropriate to the social situation in which they are spoken (Rubtsova 2019: 1). Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to produce utterances appropriate to the social situation in which they are spoken. An important component of sociolinguistic competence is knowledge of the target language culture and an awareness of cross-cultural differences (Anora 2020: 2).

Taking all these factors into consideration, and in the context of this study, ESL students learnt how to interact with learners from different cultures, religions and who spoke different languages.

5.7.3 Strategic competence

The ultimate goal of teaching the English language is to develop the students' communicative competence, which will enable them to communicate successfully in the real world. Communicating successfully refers to passing on a comprehensible message to the listener. According to Kuen, Rafik- Galea and Heng (2017: 58), strategic competence embraces all aspects of the assessment, planning and execution of communicative tasks. The authors view strategic competence not only as a component of communicative competence but also as a more general cognitive capacity. In the context of this study, it was found that strategic competence referred to the ESL student's ability to use communication strategies such as paraphrasing, visual literacy, sentence construction and role-playing, to relay messages. This further allows the student to compensate for having English as a second language (Schaefer 2018: 274).

5.7.4. Discourse competence

According to Saighi and Chaouki (2017: 17), it was noted that discourse competence is usually a term referring to the ability to understand and express oneself in a given language. This is fundamentally a measure of how well an individual can read different texts and understand them. Different kinds of text include fiction and non-fiction, narratives, instructional guides, and other types of written communications, like transcriptions of recorded conversations or technical materials. The better readers can understand these texts; the more textual discourse competence they have. In the context of this study, it was found that discourse competence referred to the ESL student's ability to use communication strategies such as connecting ideas in a logical manner.

5.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, a discussion of the findings of this study was presented and aligned to the related themes and sub-themes. The relevance of the findings to the study's objectives, research questions and the chosen theoretical framework was detailed and supported in the form of references to relevant literature sources. The chapter that follows will present a summary of the study, its conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF STUDY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a summary of the research findings and the conclusions will be discussed. Recommendations will be suggested for the FLC course curriculum, WIL curriculum development, providers of higher education and further research. This chapter will also specify the strengths and limitations of the study to prevent any generalisation of the conclusions or the recommendations.

6.2 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.2.1 Strengths of the study

This study focused on the experiences of ESL students of the FLC course in preparation for WIL placement and the perspectives of ESL students and WIL coordinators /employers were analysed. Findings are documented and will be made known to the Humanities Faculty of the HEI and other stakeholders (See Appendix 5a Gatekeeper permission). The fact that the researcher is a lecturer with vast experience teaching FLC/Communication courses influenced the research content and findings. It is hoped that the research findings would further influence the policymakers of the Humanities faculties and the related curriculum developers in HEI. They can allow them to focus on, and alleviate the stumbling blocks that promote the effective acquisition of English communication skills of ESL students.

6.2.2 Limitations of the study

The limitations that affected the study involved the participants' responses and hesitation during face-to-face interviews. This could be attributed to the researcher facilitating the discussion with the ESL students in English. Notably, this was deliberate

on the part of the researcher as the focus of the study was on English language competence. However, probing, open ended-questions did yield adequate information from ESL students. Another limitation was that the ESL student participants in this study were drawn specifically from those students registered for only three of the 24 courses on offer at the sample HEI. This could potentially limit the generalisability of the findings to other ESL students registered for other courses than, Office Management, Logistics and Supply Chain and Accounting courses.

The researcher, who is a lecturer in the HEI under study used students specifically from these courses, as part of the inclusion criteria, as she does not teach or interact with this cohort of students in any way. This also assisted in eliminating any researcher bias during the collection of data. All participants were duly assured that the researcher will not influence any answers or responses and that they withdraw from the study at any given time. It should also be noted that COVID restrictions did not place any limitations especially with the workplace simulations.

Despite some of these limitations, the following conclusions are drawn and recommendations made based on these conclusions.

6.3 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of ESL students of the FLC course in preparation for WIL. In doing so, the perspectives of the employer or the WIL coordinator who accepts and supervises these students for work-based learning were explored and discussed. This study also found it necessary to identify, explore and discuss the role of the FLC course in preparing ESL students for the workplace from their perspectives. This was done, so that any positive or negative factors in students' learning could be identified and addressed accordingly, by way of research findings and recommendations. The findings and discussion from Chapters 5 supported the main objectives of the study namely:

1. To explore the experiences of ESL students with the FLC course in preparing them for WIL.
2. To examine the employer's/WIL coordinator's perspectives on ESL students' language and communication skills during WIL.
3. To identify aspects of the FLC course development and delivery, which can be improved on to provide optimal development of ESL students' language and communication skills.

Having set out to interview and explore ESL students' experiences with the FLC course in preparing them for the WIL, the researcher was able to achieve objectives one and three. Feedback from interviews with WIL coordinators/employers assisted the researcher to accomplish objectives two and three.

The findings pertaining to this study are discussed in depth in Chapter 4 with the major themes and sub-themes illustrated in Tables 4.4. and 4.5. Two major themes per data subsets emerged during the analysis of the findings and were further categorised into sub-themes.

The conclusions, based on the literature search and findings of this the study, revealed that foundational English courses are an integral part of HEIs, as acquisition and knowledge of English communication skills are vital in the working environment. Knowledge transfer to ESL students, as a result of these courses assist them in the workplace to communicate in English and are seen as being the essential tools to establish several core elements such as the fluency of the English language and the fundamentals of English written communication.

English communication skills were also recognised as an effective way to improve the overall performance of students in oral and written communication. It was concluded by all participants that those entering the workplace are assisted by FLC courses in English to communicate orally and in writing in English, which is seen by employers as being a basic requirement.

The major role that effective interpersonal skills played in the workplace was acknowledged by the findings of this study. Being able to hold telephone conversations, informal work-related discussions, meetings, give oral presentations, provide explanations and demonstrations to peers, lecturers or their WIL coordinators during real-life or simulated sessions, was seen to boost the ESL student's confidence. Additionally, it imparted necessary skills and competencies, equipping them to function independently during work-based learning.

The challenges of communication in the workplace and the classroom were influenced by different social, cultural and educational backgrounds of a person. However, findings of this study, concluded that communication skills are important, but can be a challenge both as an integrated part of the WIL module and as a necessary competency to acquire the respective qualification. It was also found that learning to communicate properly was not always ingrained in a person's formative years and communication skills may not always be generic personality traits. Acquiring effective communication skills that can be utilised to a student's benefit in the workplace requires training and practice in suitable contexts for example, the FLC course in English. This was a vital learning component to specifically help ESL students build communication competence for the workplace. In addition, industries and organisations appeared to depend on educational institutions to provide communication skills training for their potential employees. Seemingly, each organisation appeared to have certain expectations of the kind of training graduates before joining their team. These factors make it necessary for potential employers to collaborate with WIL coordinators from the HEI to share the common objectives of defining the skills expected of students during, their WIL placements. These findings highlighted the need for communication skills to be promoted amongst students in such a way that, it is attractive to ESL students, practical and pertains to the needs of the workplace. Chapter 5 also related the study findings to the theoretical framework and the related research questions of the study.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings of this study and stemming from the emerging themes that were also guided by the chosen theoretical framework, the researcher proposes recommendations that may positively contribute to the role of the FLC course in English for the ESL student and how it can prepare these students for the outside world. Recommendations are made with special reference to the FLC course curriculum, WIL curriculum development, providers of higher education and further research.

6.4.1 FLC course curriculum

Findings from this study have noted that the WIL coordinators believe that if the FLC is mandated as a programme pre-requisite to registering for the WIL module, there is a possibility that it would have a better impact on workplace practices. It may promote additional benefits for the ESL student, who will be able to grasp the technical language of the discipline before entering the workplace. Therefore, the following recommendations are made based on these findings:

- The FLC course should be promoted as a core competency of any programme in the higher education curriculum.
- Communication skills strategies should provide support for ESL/international or foreign students to develop their English language proficiency. Support should be available to all students in developing the essential skills necessary for success, including writing, speaking, reading and interpersonal skills.
- FLC or language proficiency courses and communication skills development should be discipline-specific for students and students must be prepared for these within their study disciplines.
- All levels of study should incorporate modules of the FLC course to ensure continuity throughout the learning programme. This will also reinforce

continuous student learning, language proficiency and communicative competence.

6.4.2 WIL curriculum development

The findings from this study have also revealed that there is a need for the content and learning outcomes of the WIL module to be adjusted. Therefore, the researcher suggests the following modifications to the WIL module:

- WIL can be offered as a programme on its own and not as a module that is part of a programme.
- Student placement in the industry should incorporate more hours that are practica-based.
- There should be strategies put in place to enhance the improvement of pedagogical skills for lecturers of the WIL module. This will ensure diversity in teaching and learning approaches.
- The use of experts in the fields of the various professions should be integrated into the WIL module.
- Embedding communication skills in course curricula, pedagogical practices and assessments is essential to putting these principles into practice, and includes the development of the staff capabilities to do so
- The training of university teachers, encompassing teaching as delivery, programme design and evaluation and the scholarship of teaching and learning is critical. The curricular modalities of WIL programmes presented by the Council for Higher Education are diverse in their approach as they integrate classroom and workplace environments.
- The choice of curricular modalities/learning modes and assessment methods for WIL should be well planned and structured.

6.4.3 Providers of higher education

All HEIs have a constitutional responsibility to ensure that the needs of ESL students are catered for, therefore this study recommends that:

- Facilitators of WIL should adopt new teaching and learning activities and assessment methods to stimulate the modern, technology-empowered student to engage in deep learning.
- There should be a continuous, rigorous and reflective inquiry into refining innovative learning environments as well as to reveal new design principles related to communication courses.
- There should be engagement and collaboration among researchers and practitioners to adopt best operating practices to enhance ESL students' skills and abilities in accordance with South African policies

6.4.4 Further research

This study focused on the aspects of the ESL course from the perspectives of ESL students and WIL coordinators/employers. Further research is therefore recommended to:

- Investigate specific aspects such as the training or lack thereof of mentors and supervisors involved in the management and coordination of WIL.
- Evaluate the implementation of communication courses in all years of study for the ESL student.
- Examine the experiences of first language students in the workplace as compared to the ESL student.

6.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The overall findings of this study have revealed that the impact of the FLC course on the learning of the ESL student is a vital contributor to workplace functioning and efficiency.

However, the need for upgraded skill and knowledge on the part of the ESL student related to the topic of inquiry in this study was highlighted and does require attention. Improved insight and understanding of this specialised area of teaching by all stakeholders will allow lecturers to effectively and competently execute their teaching duties. This is anticipated to positively impact the quality and delivery of the ESL student who has achieved grammatical and communicative competencies. These competencies will further enable him/her to not only be productive in the workplace but be a member who feels a sense of “safety and belonging” in society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: DUT Ethics clearance



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology
P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001
Tel: 031 373 2375
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http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics
www.dut.ac.za

3 May 2021

Ms V Naidoo
House 359 Road 701
Montford
Chatsworth
Durban

Dear Ms Naidoo

The role of the Foundational Learning Competence course in preparing English Second Language students for Work Integrated Learning
Ethical Clearance number IREC 050/21

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC

Appendix 2a: Letter of request to participating institution

PG 2a

4092

To Whom It May Concern
Head of Academics
Rosebank College
221 Dr Pixley Kasame Street
Durban
4001

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

I am presently registered as a master's student in the Adult and Community Education programme with the Durban University of Technology. The proposed title of my research study is: The role of the Foundational Learning Competence course in preparing English Second Language students for Work Integrated Learning.

While Work Integrated Learning (WIL) assists undergraduates to interact in a professional environment, lack of fluency in professional English means that ESL speakers require courses such as FLC, to prepare them for the workplace. This research will explore the role of the Foundational Learning Competence course in preparing English Second Language students for Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and the possible influence in developing the language and communication skills that are necessary for professional communication in the workplace.

The proposed objectives for the study include:

- Explore ESL students' experiences related to the FLC course and its preparation for their WIL.
- Examine the employer's perspectives on ESL students' language and communication skills during WIL.
- Identify aspects of the FLC course development and delivery which can be improved on to provide optimal development of ESL students' language and communication skills

I hereby request your permission to conduct the study at your institution and a copy of the proposal is attached for your perusal. Your support and permission to conduct the study at your institution will be appreciated.

Yours Sincerely

Ms V Naidoo Email: naidooveantha@gmail.com Tel: 0794246856	Dr Anita Hiraalal (Supervisor) Email: anitah@dut.ac.za Tel: 082535277
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Form PG 2a – 2020

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Updated 02/05/2019

Appendix 2b: Letter of permission from participating institution



Reference: R.15516
Enquiries: bvanwyk@iie.ac.za
research@iie.ac.za

30 April 2021



Permission to conduct research on IIE staff, students, sites or artefacts with standard and additional conditions

Initials and surname:	V. Naidoo
Institution:	Durban University of Technology
Qualification:	Master in Adult and Community Education
Research to be conducted in:	2021
Title of study:	The role of the Foundational Learning Competence course in preparing English Second Language students for Work Integrated Learning



Dear Ms Naidoo,



The committee considered your request and have granted permission to conduct research on IIE staff, students, sites or artefacts in accordance with your request – on condition that you strictly adhere to the conditions stipulated below. This approval is based on the assumptions that (1) the information you have provided is true and factually correct and that (2) the study will be conducted in an ethical manner.

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to meeting the conditions listed below. Permission may be withdrawn should any of these conditions not be met.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Standard conditions to be met	
1.	A copy of the final paper must be submitted electronically to The IIE's Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies at research@iie.ac.za no later than 30 days post finalisation.
2.	The researcher(s) is neither permitted to refer to The IIE or any of its educational brands nor to the name, logo, brand or any other identifiers of The IIE or any of its educational brands in any way, including, but not limited to, in questionnaires, surveys, interviews, proposal or research reports. The IIE or educational brand in question must be referred to in a generic manner, for example 'A private provider'.
3.	The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
4.	If the Learning Management System (LMS) of The IIE is used, the researcher(s) is not permitted to refer to it by name. It needs to be referred to in a generic manner, for example "the Learning Management System of a Higher Education provider."
5.	A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the relevant person(s) at the brand or The IIE that would be involved in the study.
6.	Research must be conducted in such a way that the normal programme and operations of the site/ offices is not interrupted.

ADTECH HOUSE

Inanda Greens
54 Wierda Rd West
Wierda Valley 2196
P.O. Box 2369
Randburg 2125



Directors: RJ Douglas (UK), JDR Oesch, MD Aitken, FJ Coughlan
Group Company Secretary: CB Crouse

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7.	The principal/ manager of a site must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher(s) may carry out the research at the site.
8.	The researcher(s) may only use this data for these research purposes and in no other way.
9.	Should the researcher(s) wish to publish this research or in any way make the results public, for example by publishing the results on a social media platform, this committee will need to approve a request to this end first.
10.	No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
11.	Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research and informed consent from the participants or respondents was obtained, and, even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published.
12.	The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/ her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13.	If any of The IIE reports or policies are used as part of the research, all identifying information needs to be removed.
14.	Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled or advised based on this.
15.	The reference number for this letter must appear, in one format or another, on all research documentation distributed amongst IIE staff or students.
Additional conditions to be met	
16.	Data collection may only commence once the Research Office receives a copy of your full or final ethics clearance as issued by the Durban University of Technology.

Yours sincerely,

Dr B. van Wyk
Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies
The Independent Institute of Education



Appendix 3: Letter of Information

Appendix 3



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: *The role of the Foundational Learning Competence course in preparing English Second Language students for Work Integrated Learning*

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Veantha Naidoo (B Tech Journalism)

Supervisor: Dr Anita Hiralaal

Co-Supervisor: Professor Makhondo

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: The diversity of languages in South Africa continues to present challenges and communication difficulties in higher education teaching and learning, posing stumbling blocks and creating barriers to learning for English as a Second Language (ESL) students (Schoeman 2011:17). Although most ESL students develop some English reading and writing skills before admission into a tertiary education programme, many of them have few opportunities to speak English in their residences or homes (Ramcharan 2009: 4). Thus, they often have difficulty speaking and understanding English when they enter the academic world. Lack of fluency in professional English makes it difficult for mainly isiZulu-speaking young adults in KwaZulu-Natal to enter the job market. While work integrated learning (WIL) assists undergraduates to interact in a professional environment, lack of fluency in professional English means that ESL speakers require courses (such as FLC) to prepare them for the workplace. The research problem to be explored is to what extent such courses develop the language/communication skills necessary for professional communication.

Having provided a brief introduction and purpose of the proposed study, I would like to invite you to participate in this research study and should you agree, I sincerely thank you.

The following sections provide more detail and clarity regarding the proposed study.

The proposed objectives of this study will be to establish:

- Explore ESL students' experiences related to the FLC course and its preparation for their WIL.
- Examine the employer's perspectives on ESL students' language and communication skills during WIL.
- Identify aspects of the FLC course development and delivery which can be improved on to provide optimal development of ESL students' language and communication skills

Outline of the Procedures: This is a qualitative study and you will be asked to participate in an interview/focus group discussion after reading the information letter and giving consent. During the interview, you will be expected to use your expert knowledge, skill and experience when discussing your perspectives on handover.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts for participating in the study.

Benefits: It is hoped that the findings of the proposed study will improve the learning process of ESL students by identifying their challenges to learning and the English language as well as strategies they could use to overcome these challenges. The findings of this study could also assist lecturers and facilitators in their efforts to help such learners and might contribute to curriculum development by suggesting a mandatory English course at Secondary educational level in order to facilitate university acceptance. The findings may also suggest alternate teaching and assessment strategies that could assist with ESL student throughput rate, whilst assisting them to overcome the identified barriers to communication and learning.

Reasons why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: Your participation is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate and may withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Remuneration: No money or other remuneration will be given to you for your participation in the study.

Costs of the Study: You will not incur any cost to yourself for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: All information supplied by you will be strictly private and confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study. All the interviews will be video recorded or audiotaped with your permission, to provide a precise record of all the interview proceedings. Confidentiality will be ensured by the researcher by limiting unauthorised persons access to the research data and by storing the voice recordings and transcripts in a secure electronic site with a password. All those participating in the interviews, will be known only to the researcher and recordings will receive code or numbers to remain unidentifiable. No other parties, besides the researcher will have access to the raw data or field notes to prevent breach of confidentiality and no information will be linked to the your identity.

Results: The findings of the proposed research study will be published and will be available at the DUT repository on completion.

Research-related Injury: The researcher does not for see any risks ,but due to the current pandemic and in view of observing all the COVID-19 regulations, all interviews will be conducted by the researcher either in a private room using social distancing (according to COVID-19 risk protocols), telephonically or via as an online medium such as TEAMS or Skype, interview method. You will not be coerced into participating and have a right to withdraw from the study at any time. This has been taken into consideration in view of your physical and psychological safety.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings:

The data (tape-recordings/field notes/transcripts) will be stored for a period of five (5) years in a safe place such as the researcher's personal computer, with the password known only to her(the researcher). After the research is completed, all hard copies of the field- notes, transcripts or tape-recordings and will be shredded, and all electronic data will be deleted by the researcher.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact the researcher Veantha Naidoo on 0794246856, my supervisor Dr A Hiralaal on 0338458935 or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganis on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za

Appendix 4: Consent

Appendix 4: Consent form



Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Veantha Naidoo about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____.
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my gender, age, date of birth and initials will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature / Right Thumbprint
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I, V Naidoo herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature
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Appendix 5 a: Interview Guide – ESL Students

Appendix 5a: Interview Guide – Students

This guide will be used by the researcher to probe participants for their responses during the interview. It comprises of a demographic section and the questions that could help facilitate the interview. These questions will facilitate responses in relation to **objective 1** of the study.

SECTION 1

Demographic details of participant

1. Age of participant

18 - 24 years	
25 - 34 years	
35 - 45 years	

2. Gender

MALE	
FEMALE	
OTHER	

3. Race

BLACK	
WHITE	
COLOURED	
INDIAN	

4. English as a second language student

YES	
NO	

SECTION 2

Probing questions for the researcher that will assist in facilitating the interview process with the student

- What are some of the aspects of your language and communication skills did the FLC course target?
- On completing the course, were there any changes in the skills you mentioned?
- What effect will these changes have on your ability to communicate in professional English in the workplace environment during WIL?
- What module of the course did you enjoy the most/least and why?
- Were the teaching methods effective?
- In your opinion, what aspects of the FLC course can be improved on to prepare you better for the workplace during WIL?

Appendix 5 b: Interview Guide – Employers/WIL-coordinators

Appendix 5 b: Interview Guide – Employers/WIL-Co-ordinators

The following questions will be used by the researcher to probe participants for their responses during the interview. It comprises of a demographic section and the questions that could help facilitate the interview. These questions will facilitate responses in relation to objective 2 of the study.

SECTION 1 –Demographic details of participant

1. Gender

MALE	
FEMALE	
OTHER	

3. Race

BLACK	
WHITE	
COLOURED	
INDIAN	

1.

2. How long have you been employed at this institution?

yrs.

3. Have you worked with interns from this private higher education institution?

YES	
NO	

4. If your answer to the above question is "Yes" please state for how long

yrs.

SECTION 2

Probing questions for the researcher that will assist in facilitating the interview process with the employer

- What are some of the language and communication skills that you would consider important in the workplace?
- How would you describe the language and communication skills of students who come to your organisation for WIL?
- Can you provide an explanation of some of the language and communication challenges that you may have experienced with these interns in this work environment?
- How would you describe the intern's ability to communicate with other staff members of different races, language and cultural backgrounds?
- Which language and communication skills do you think the learning institution should focus on to prepare students sufficiently to communicate in professional English in the workplace?

Appendix 6a : Sample 1 of an ESL student transcript

Interviewer	Good morning to you. How are you doing? Thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this interview session
Participant	Good morning. I am good. I'm happy to be here
Interviewer	That's great. As I discussed with you earlier, this interview is for the purpose of my master's study. All the information that we discuss will be confidential and used only for the purpose of the study. Did you manage to read the information letter I gave to you earlier.
Participant	Yes, I managed to go through it
Interviewer	That's great. There is a consent form that I would like you to sign that outlines the research. Are you okay to sign the consent
Participant	Yes sure
Interviewer	Thanks for that. Do you have any questions for me before we start with the interview proper
Participant	Umm, I think I'm good for the moment
Interviewer	You can stop me at any time if anything comes to mind. Oh, before I forget I need to ask for your permission to record the interview. The purpose for this is to have the information available later on when I analyse the information. Is this okay with you?

Participant	Yes, sure no problem
Interviewer	So as I mentioned the whole point of this interview is to look at whether the FLC or communication course assisted you when you did your WIL. Firstly, what is your understanding of WIL.
Participant	Basically it is a module or it helps you when you like going in a working place, it gives you an idea of what goes on and what is happening because when I did WIL you were able to communicate with each other. It gives your sort of an idea to what the working place is and what is expected of you.
Interviewer	And in terms of the communication course, what exactly did you learn in that module.
Participant	We, we like for communication we learned the barriers of communication. And things like how language can be a barrier, some people cannot understand English and some people cannot speak it properly and that's the barrier of communication and about media and how it plays the role in communicating and then basically that's what the whole thing was – like the barriers of communication. And about me communicating with you and there are other aspects where I can put my hand up - and there's certain gestures I am not sure in other cultures like when you point fingers at other people and its rude and its sort of what the course is about.
Interviewer	And in terms of being an ESL student what are some of the challenges that you have with English that you have come across.

Participant	Ok , like so I am Zulu so when you switch from Zulu to English , we have to have like a backup thing ,like calculating in my head if I am going to say something now in English I am taking it from English and trying to make sense.
Interviewer	Is it a challenge in the classroom because the medium of instruction is English
Participant	yes
Interviewer	So how are you coping in terms of your lectures
Participant	Well , first when I was in high school , I use to be shy and not come out of the class but when I came to college and saw the different environment and in a few years I am going to be working so I had to force myself to learn English. So confidence was a big problem, sometimes as African people we do not have confidence in ourselves. When you are confident it helps a lot, I also read.
Interviewer	In terms of the communication course that you did , did you find that it had assisted you when you did your work integrated learning

Participant	<p>Yes it did because when we did communication –it was linked with WIL because you now had to say the barriers that you had with communication you now have to take those barriers and take them out and and say that you are actually going to do it without having those barriers. Like for English I am not going to put myself down because I do not know it. Because I am going to speak. We had our WIL task and we had an oral – so I had to make sure I was able to speak correct English and forget that I am ESL.</p>
Interviewer	<p>When you mentioned barriers-what kind of barriers</p>
Participant	<p>I had a lot of issues with language –sometimes when you speak to lecturers you don't really know what they are asking of you. I try and practise more at home with my younger siblings who attend multi-racial schools. I started connecting the dots that if you are confident in what you are saying that is how you will improve.</p>
Interviewer	<p>What did you learn in the communication course</p>
Participant	<p>Basically it targeted the workplace –it teaches you about communication in the workplace. How to deal with conflict and the barriers of communication.</p>
Interviewer	<p>And when you completed this module were there any changes in your skills</p>
Participant	<p>Conflict, people actually listen when I speak- I am more confident, I take charge in group work. I had a lot of issues in my first year of college- people used to say I am so small I should not be here. But when I learned communication – I learned skills to overcome this and be confident .</p>

Interviewer	How did the course help you during WIL
Participant	We learned how to handle interviews-like how to be successful when doing an interview. Conducting yourself. When I completed the module communication become easier –interacting with other people also in a workplace became easier. Now I could relate to everyone – I learnt about oral presentations – emails – writing skills. We learnt a bit of excel as well.
Interviewer	Did those presentation skills help you in the workplace
Participant	It helped me in teamwork –in team work I used to be shy so they won't pick me in the group but after the communication course but after the course –more people want me in their group. Because when I speak – I speak sense in the correct tense. It did help me a lot. People also take me more seriously. Now I can speak without have a lack of confidence and it helps me to continue empowering myself and accomplish my goals. So skills that I have learnt from this course –have helped me especially during WIL or in the workplace
Interviewer	What did you enjoy the most or least in the course?
Participant	I hated writing – so the writing part was a struggle for me .At first I didn't like speaking but I ended up enjoying that.
Interviewer	Do you feel the lecturer of the module , used different teaching strategies to cater for ESL.

Participant	Our lecturer he was very good –he went overboard trying to explain the different concepts with us – using real life examples we could relate to from real life made it easier for us to process and memorise and use in the working environment. He covered the content –always gave feedback on where we can improve as well. Students who did not do well with the lecturer did not communicate with the lecture or did not attend the lectures.
Interviewer	Do you feel that anything should be changed or added in this course
Participant	Everything in the course did assist especially for WIL. Because in a work environment people can take advantage of you if you do not know the different aspects of how to carry out yourself in a working environment. I feel key words in isiZulu should be learnt so if you see a student suffering –you can assist.
Interviewer	Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add
Participant	No thank you. I think I have said all I wanted to say
Interviewer	Thank you once again for your time
Participant	Thank you

Appendix 6b : Sample 2 of an ESL student transcript

Interviewer	Good morning to you. How are you doing? Thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this interview session
Participant	Good morning. I am good. I'm happy to be here
Interviewer	That's great. As I discussed with you earlier, this interview is for the purpose of my master's study. All the information that we discuss will be confidential and used only for the purpose of the study. Did you manage to read the information letter I gave to you earlier.
Participant	Yes, I managed to go through it
Interviewer	That's great. There is a consent form that I would like you to sign that outlines the research. Are you okay to sign the consent
Participant	Yes sure
Interviewer	Thanks for that. Do you have any questions for me before we start with the interview proper
Participant	Umm, I think I'm good for the moment
Interviewer	You can stop me at any time if anything comes to mind. Oh, before I forget I need to ask for your permission to record the interview. The purpose for this is to have the information available later on when I analyse the information. Is this okay with you?
Participant	Yes, sure no problem

Interviewer	So as I mentioned the whole point of this interview is to look at whether the FLC or communication course assisted you when you did your WIL. Firstly, what is your understanding of the communication course , what did you learn?.
Participant	I did learn a lot. For example, when we are writing essays or emails, we learnt how to develop our sentences and write properly. It helped me to communicate better with others, so that they know and understand what you are saying to them. Yes it helps a lot.
Interviewer	Being a ESL student what are some of the challenges you faced during high school and the transition to tertiary education.
Participant	I had a very, very difficult time. For example, in a class if there is someone who works at a University or Public college it is very difficult for me for example I went to a public school and there was a lot of students from private schools and its very scary. Especially when speaking English in case the laugh at you and make fun of you. It gets to you emotionally in case the tease you. So that is why it I important to know English as everyone speaks English now. It is the first ...It allows you to connect in the class. Yes, it is very much important.
Interviewer	Ok and in terms of English in the Working environment why do you feel it is important.

Participant	It is important, very important. For example, my lecturer is Indian. I have to understand what he is trying to say to me and at the same time he needs to understand me. So English is very much important. I can see the other languages but English is the first language to communicate with around the world.
Interviewer	Do you think if lecturers spoke conversational Zulu that it would make a difference?
Participant	Yes, I mean I am a Zulu you are an Indian. So I can be able to talk in Zulu but you will not understand what is being said. I think both languages are important so that we all can communicate.
Interviewer	Do you think it can be implemented?
Participant	Not that much because we learn communication to speak in English and there will be a lot of confusion. We as a nation need to know English because in South Africa it is important.
Interviewer	After completing this course did you become more confident.
Participant	<p>Yes, I am confident, it is still hard speaking in front of people but with my communication skills, it helps a lot. Standing in front of a lot of people it is not easy to voice your opinion, but I do try.</p> <p>These communication skills help because one day your go out and you need to know how to communicate with people from different backgrounds and cultures. So, it does help a lot because it pushes you to do that.</p>

Interviewer	What were some of the skills that you learnt when you did communication?
Participant	To be able to express yourself, as a person. Communicate with others. Talk Infront of people example the whole class duing presentations that we had in groups. Interview situations , how to conduct yourself and to become confident in writing and speaking in a working place.
Interviewer	Did the skills you learnt; did it assist you during WIL?
Participant	It helped a lot. It is not easy working in a group or doing any group work and for WIL we had to work with others which was very hard, and we had to use communication to help us to understand each other and to motivate each other so we could pass the WIL. The skills helped when we wrote or had to present to our WIL coordinator so yes it helped a lot.
Interviewer	Do you feel the skills assisted you in the workplace?
Participant	The course helped, it did help with my confidence and presentation skills.
Interviewer	What did you enjoy the most and the least from the module?
Participant	I enjoyed the practical parts where we did activities, the presentations were a bit scary speaking in front of other people that you do not know.
Interviewer	Were you able to understand the lecturer?

Participant	Yes, we were able to understand they explained well.
Interviewer	Should the course be done in all years of study?
Participant	Yes, it should be done in all years of study because it will help us to be more confident and better at it.
Interviewer	What is your understanding of WIL?
Participant	WIL helps to know what happens in a working environment it teaches you skills and examples of what happens when you are working.
Interviewer	What skills are needed to be successful?
Participant	Time management, communication and working well in advance are all important skills.
Interviewer	Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add
Participant	No thank you. I think I have said all I wanted to say
Interviewer	Thank you once again for your time
Participant	Thank you

Appendix 6c: Sample 1 of an Employer /WIL coordinator transcript

Interviewer	Good day and welcome to our interview session. How are you doing?
Participant	Good day, I am well.
Interviewer	That's good. Firstly, I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As I discussed with you earlier, the information that is exchanged is confidential and will only be used for the purpose of the research. I will require you to sign a consent form that states that you are participating in this research voluntarily. Are you okay with this?
Participant	That's fine
Interviewer	Did you manage to read the letter of information that I gave you earlier?
Participant	Yes, I managed read a little bit of it.
Interviewer	The information letter outlines the study. We can have a look at it together and please feel free to ask me any questions you may have.
Participant	Okay, that's fine
Interviewer	Please can you take a minute to sign the consent form for me
Participant	Yes okay
Interviewer	Do you have any questions about the study?
Participant	No, I am fine
Interviewer	Thank you. I would like to use an audio recorder to record our conversations if it's okay with you. This is strictly so that I can give you my full attention but I will have to analyse the information at a later stage. Are you okay with that?
Participant	Yes no problem
Interviewer	I am going to start by asking you the demographic questions that form the first part of the survey. Can you tell me your age?
Participant	I am 30 years old

Interviewer	Thank you. Can you tell me the position you hold in the unit you work in?
Participant	I am a lecturer /Wil coordinator
Interviewer	Can you tell me how many years you are working as a lecturer /Wil coordinator
Participant	Ummm it's about 3 years now
Interviewer	So firstly in terms of being a lecturer who teaches communication courses especially to students who speak English as a second language, what are some of the challenges you see in the classroom.
Participant	I think one of the main challenges I find is confidence in the ESL student in the language. Learners are apprehensive and are not very confident in just attempting something. Listening skills are not at the level that it should be at tertiary education and I don't think that is specific to English second language speakers. I think it also has to do with the transition from High school to tertiary education and uhm yeah other than that there is one main challenge that I find that due to the nature of the subject like communication skills, language skills, literacy skills and the types of activities the student has to do. Due to the nature of activities students are not fond of sitting down quietly and doing activities such as writing which I feel is the best way for students to actually learn. So those three are the main ones listening, types of activities and confidence.
Interviewer	Ok and in terms of the communication course you are lecturing, what is actually in the syllabus or curriculum. Does it include written skills or presentation skills.
Participant	Yes, looking across the module which includes literacy skills and an introduction module to that. They do go across the board with the types of skills needed. They try to improve however the only module that needs or is lacking is a listening skill however it is not specific to this institution, communication skills in general have never seen to give emphasis on listening skills and I think that is very important with ESL speakers. I do have experience with international ESL students and internationally they are looking at international experience with listening skills. But I have never experienced listening skills being a solid concept in tertiary course designs.

Interviewer	Ok and if you look at the general communication course and the purpose of it. In your opinion what do you think is the purpose of a communication course.
Participant	Ok so I think it is designed to inform students in good communication skills. And at the essence of everything, and you know it is something that I tell all my students that no matter what you study it is going to elevate your thinking level, no matter the subject as long as you engage in it well enough it is going to elevate the thinking level and in the case of communication skills, it will make students problem solvers. It is something that I have said to them that for example we are breaking down a paragraph and in this case and module what you thinking has been trained to do is to deconstruct your thinking and if you get that thinking skill across then you can deconstruct projects or problems or anything in your personal life as well. Because even though students learn about language and communication skills this teaches them life skills to develop solutions to problems in almost any situation in life.
Interviewer	Ok and in terms of the students in your classes how would you describe their skills. communication skills
Participant	I think because my students are first year students and are mostly ESL speakers they are at a base tertiary level. So I feel there is a big transition issue with students. Not that the student is not capable but the fact that there are gaps from tertiary to high school I in between the level they are required to engage at. As the semester starts you see an improvement in their skills in communication. It also seems that once they get results it pushes them to elevate themselves. They enter with a very basic communication skill.
Interviewer	So you have been taking your group since March have you seen an improvement or is it still early.
Participant	No I think that after the first assessment they do begin to focus more. Which lends the fact to that it is not entirely to do with the communication level. It is also to do with the subject matter and their focus level. Also their maturity in understanding the content.
Interviewer	Do you feel that the skills taught assists students during WIL?

Participant	Yes, I think so. I think the module I teach prepare the student for WIL. Example Microsoft word and the course is designed in specific themes to assist the student. And the student can relate that to a real life scenario and manage and deal with that situation. Students are very upfront and ask how can we use this in the work place. And how this will help in the work place so I have connected the dots with real experiences and when I do writing activities I tell students that we are practicing writing so what will you be using this for in the work place. And if you end up writing a proposal for a client it needs to be written properly in good English. So the communication skills learnt will give them that base to stand on in the workplace and anything further will come from their experience.
Interviewer	Ok and do you feel that your students would be able to perform tasks in the workplace such as writing an email or using their communication skills
Participant	I think that they would be able to, I think yes because if they were ever stuck they have their notes to refer back to for example – they did not know what bcc means but they can go back to study material to complete tasks needed. And once the student starts practicing then they should be good.
Interviewer	In terms of the module what do you think could be added , so that it assists students more.
Participant	I would I am not sure if it would be new to the South African design of the module but I would suggest a theme on listening skills , some activity on that.
Interviewer	Do you feel that more practical example should be included so that students have a solid understanding of what goes on in the workplace?
Participant	I find that would communication courses that students eventually have to use these skills individually, so the teamwork that they do is sufficient. I would encourage individual work for communication because students can get lost in the group work and you get only one student doing the work.
Interviewer	A lot of students mentioned being taught in isiZulu what are your thoughts on that.
Participant	I am not so sure that will work in classroom setting as the subject matter is communication. The whole point of the course in to make students confident in English so that is up for discussion. But I do not see it working in the students favor.

Interviewer	Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add
Participant	No thank you. I think I have said all I wanted to say
Interviewer	Thank you once again for your time
Participant	Thank you

Appendix 6d : Sample 2 of an Employer /WIL coordinator transcript

Interviewer	Good morning to you. How are you doing? Thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this interview session
Participant	Good morning. I am good. I'm happy to be here
Interviewer	That's great. As I discussed with you earlier, this interview is for the purpose of my master's study. All the information that we discuss will be confidential and used only for the purpose of the study. Did you manage to read the information letter I gave to you earlier.
Participant	Yes, I managed to go through it
Interviewer	That's great. There is a consent form that I would like you to sign that outlines the research. Are you okay to sign the consent
Participant	Yes sure
Interviewer	Thanks for that. Do you have any questions for me before we start with the interview proper
Participant	Umm, I think I'm good for the moment
Interviewer	You can stop me at any time if anything comes to mind. Oh, before I forget I need to ask for your permission to record the interview. The purpose for this is to have the information available later on when I analyse the information. Is this okay with you?

Participant	Yes, sure no problem
Interviewer	So firstly as a lecturer what is your understanding of the communication course?
Participant	The communication course is a course that helps individuals become full functioning in the workplace. It is a course that has a language aspect and is compulsory for first year students to learn about these skills. It helps to prepare the writing skills and verbal skills. So it prepares students for that world and working environment.
Interviewer	What challenges do you find in a classroom?
Participant	The challenge is the technology part. Students are not familiar with how to use a computer and that demotivates them. Some students come from rural areas a different background so that is a challenge. Many students are not exposed to technology even though we live in the so-called 4 th industrial revolution. Not everyone understands technology only some do.
Interviewer	Do you find that students find it difficult to talk to lecturers or fellow students in class?
Participant	Well with learners, they do have challenges if the student comes from a different culture or background then some ESL students can feel intimidated however when they converse in their own language then they feel more comfortable.
Interviewer	How do you feel about communication courses?

Participant	I feel it is something that is necessary specially to prepare the student for WIL. These skills determine whether the student will thrive and get employment. These skills should be compulsory and focus on written and verbal skills.
Interviewer	Do you feel the course is sufficient?
Participant	No , more practical aspects can be added so students can get a more well-rounded experience for WIL.
Interviewer	What would you change?
Participant	I would expose students to more group work so they understand the importance of it. Because during WIL there is a lot of working with other members required so that is why team work or working with other people is very important in the class just as it is in the workplace.
Interviewer	Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add
Participant	No thank you. I think I have said all I wanted to say
Interviewer	Thank you once again for your time
Participant	Thank you

Appendix 7: Certificate from the professional editor

DR NELLIE NARANJEE

Doctorate Nursing, MBA, MCur (Health Sciences)
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EDITING / PROOFREADING CERTIFICATE

Student: Ms Veantha Naidoo

Student Number: 21313575

Masters thesis:

The Role of the Foundational Learning Competence Course in Preparing English Second Language Students for Work Integrated Learning

I confirm that I have edited this thesis for writing style, clarity, language, sentence structure and layout. The document is formatted according to the prescribed guidelines. I returned the document to the author with track changes. The author remains responsible for the correct application of the changes in the text and references.

I am a freelance editor specialising in proofreading and editing of academic documents. I have a Doctorate Degree in Nursing from Durban University of Technology. I have a Master's Degree in Business Administration (Public Health) and a Master's Degree in Health Sciences. I have a Diploma in Proofreading and Copy Editing with Distinction from the Blackford Institute, UK.

I wish the student all the best.

4 September 2021

DR NELLIE NARANJEE

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