

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF FIRST-YEAR
PUBLIC RELATIONS DIPLOMA STUDENTS AT THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Instructional communication through a second language is considered the most challenging element for students who are not studying in their mother tongue. Students at the Durban University of Technology use English as a medium of instruction. Students also use English to access information knowledge, literacy and for survival at the institution. However, some of the students are speakers of English as a second language and come from under-resourced, historically disadvantaged secondary schools. Scholars suggests that some of these students often struggle to meet the demands of academic instruction in English. The primary purpose of this study was to explore how university students' experience of the English language as a medium of instruction at the Durban University of Technology affects non-native-speaking students' academic success. The study participants were first-year Public Relations Diploma students at DUT who are speakers of English as a second language. Data was collected through online focus group discussions conducted via the WhatsApp social media platform in 2022 with two categories of participants, namely 'at-risk' students, which refers to students who struggle to perform; and average students, meaning those who perform above the average. A deductive qualitative thematic analysis was employed to analyse the findings. Most participants in the study were isiZulu-speaking, while others were isiXhosa-speaking mostly hailing from poorly resourced public schools in rural areas. The findings suggest that the students were not proficient in English, the language of learning and teaching at DUT, and were struggling to survive linguistically in the academy. They revealed that in their previous grades, they used code-switching in school and the academic English used at university was difficult for them. However, some participants felt that the English language did not affect their academic performance negatively. To accommodate those struggling linguistically, translanguaging could be the utilised as an instructional communication strategy to enable students to draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire to access the unfamiliar discourse of academia and improve their academic performance.

Key terms: *Medium of instruction, language learning, non-native English-speaking students, mother tongue, academic performance, grammatical proficiency.*

Declaration

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree, Masters in Public Relations at the Durban University of Technology, is my own work and that all the sources that I quoted have been indicated and accredited using complete references.

L. Mthembu

Date: 07 March 2024

DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this thesis to God for making me believe and trust that I will complete my studies no matter the circumstances and my late mom.

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- Firstly, my acknowledgement goes to my participants for allowing me to have a successful interview during their own time.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
DUT	Durban University of Technology
PR	Public Relations
Ndip	National Diploma
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
L2	second language

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

South Africa is diverse; it is multilingual, and its various languages and cultures interact in various spheres, including education. South Africa has eleven official languages; English is one of the official languages. The majority of South African students are non-native English speakers. According to Howie *et al.* (2008), although English is spoken by less than 10% of the population as their mother tongue, more than 80% of students in South Africa study English from grade four onwards. Furthermore, in the South African context, it is reported that many students who are accepted into higher institutions are not well equipped to face the academic literacy demands in their modules and disciplines (Mbirimi, 2012; Zulu, 2014).

Research reveals that Black South African students are the most affected by this challenge because English, which is the language of teaching and learning in most tertiary institutions, is not their mother tongue language (Maher, 2011). Nonetheless, English continues to be utilised by non-speakers of the language as a language of instruction in higher education (Bosch *et al.* 1996; De Klerk, 1995). From a communications perspective, *language* is the power of communication, and when it is not mutually intelligible, there will be a communication breakdown (Parkson, 1989; Lemmar, 1993; Rademeyer, 2001). As with communication, it can be argued that language is a critical component of learning and can influence academic success.

Jeraltin, Vency and Ramganes (2013) postulate that English is the language used worldwide in different fields, including education. Furthermore, it is also used as a medium of global communication. Bekdas (2015) also emphasises that English is regarded as a common language all over the world. It is used as a language to

communicate in politics, the economy, education, and many other fields. English is a lingua franca. Many people regard English as a prestigious language as it is used worldwide, although it is a European language. English is widely used internationally, making it preferable (Mustuda, 2012). Among other things, knowing how to communicate in English has become more important, meaning that English has become a part of our lives. Chetty (2012) citing (Fataar 2007a) asserts that children even make use of schools with English as the medium to learn, because they consider it as one of essential elements for developing their aptitudes so that they can enter formal middle-class work opportunities and lifestyles.

This has now created a considerable challenge for higher education students who are non-speakers of English because students are now academically challenged with English usage. As the need to communicate in English has increased, teaching and testing English have become more significant (Bekdas, 2015). This is because English is a major international language and is extremely important for every African country (Madileng, 2007). Because the need to communicate in English is high, many forms of assessment are being utilised to gather information on language learners' abilities and their success in using it (Brindley, 2006). Furthermore, it is not uncommon in African countries to use a European language as a medium of instruction (Cantoni, 2007).

In South Africa, Naidoo (2012:) notes that many South African students regard English as their second language, and these students are disadvantaged from getting good examination results. Shahzad, Sajjad, Ahmed and Asghar (2013) comment that "to achieve academic success, students must be able to actively engage with the academic content through discussion, reading, writing, analysis and evaluation". Earlier, Stephan, Welman and Jordaan (2004) studied Black and Indian university students and confirmed the hypothesis that English language proficiency is associated with academic success.

At the Durban University of Technology (DUT), English is used as a medium of instruction, and all examinations are set in English. Students must understand English better so that they will not struggle much during the examination and spend more time comprehending the questions. DUT is in KwaZulu-Natal, where most people are isiZulu native speakers (Burger, 2007). Most of these students speak their mother tongue at home but are expected to use English at university to interact with their lecturers and to write examinations. This creates a considerable challenge for these students, as they must learn, communicate and express their thoughts in English at tertiary institutions in South Africa (Study South Africa 2007:30).

Scholars such as Cummins and Swain (1986), Diaz (1986), Hakuta and Diaz (1985) and Ricciardelli (1989) emphasise that bilingual children show greater flexibility concerning linguistic meanings and may be more flexible in their thinking than monolingual children. The above scholars mentioned that what mainly affects students in KZN who attended schools in rural areas is that, isiZulu is the first language they were taught in and even at school isiZulu is spoken predominantly and their exposure is merely only on isiZulu as the language of instruction. They also come from a background that is dominated by isiZulu native speakers as most English speakers live in suburbs of the province. Learners in rural areas lack exposure to English beyond the classroom, as their home language is their language of choice (Brock-Une, 2015).

Stephen, Walmen and Jordaan (2004) synthesised literature that indicates that such students lack literacy skills necessary for successful university study. Even though some students may be able to speak English, they may not be able to operate optimally because of the language barrier (Baker, 1988; Holder *et al.* 1999).

The expectations of knowing English, which is the university medium of communication, creates a significant challenge for students, specifically for those from rural areas,

schools or predominantly black urban areas where English is a second language or a third additional language (Steyn, Harris, Hartel 2014; Welman and Jordaan, 2004).

In cognizance of the above situation, the university established the Writing Centre, which has facilities at every campus for use by students who struggle with language and writing. However, according to Eastern Express (17 February 2012), not all students know that they can get help from the Writing Centre. Furthermore, disadvantaged Black learners certainly need excellent English programmes (Ramcharan, 2009)

1.2 Research problem

Non-native English-speaking first-year students in institutions of higher learning encounter challenges with instructional communication in English, impacting their academic performance. When students are not competent in the medium of instruction, they are likely to face challenges in their performance in the various school subjects taught in the target language (Feast, 2002). Despite English being the main medium of instruction at DUT, many students come from areas where isiZulu is predominantly spoken, leading to potential difficulties in linguistic competence and English proficiency. This study aims to investigate the experiences of these students with English language instruction at DUT to better understand the factors influencing their academic performance.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The study aims to explore how first-year students for whom English is a second language experience instructional communication in English at DUT. How does this affect their academic performance, and what services are they accessing to improve their language and writing skills?

To accomplish the above task, the study will be guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the experiences of English as a medium of instruction by first-year students for whom English is a second language?
- ii. In what ways does English as a medium of instruction affect their academic performance?
- iii. Are the first-year students for whom English is a second language aware of and utilising the available language and/or writing services to improve their English language proficiency and writing skills?

1.4 Research Objective

Answers to the above questions are pertinent to the achievement of the aim of the study. In order to accomplish this task, the study will seek to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To determine the views of second language first-year students on their experiences of the English language as a medium of instruction.
- ii. To discuss how (if ever) the English language as a medium of instruction affects their performance.
- iii. To establish the students' awareness and utilisation of the available language or writing services to improve their English language proficiency and writing skills.

1.5 Thesis statement

The students at the Durban University of Technology in the Department of Public Relations are receiving instructional communication in English, which is the language of instruction in the institution. The challenging aspect is that English is complex for students who speak English as a second language. Students sometimes can express

themselves well in English in ordinary situations, but still perform very poorly academically when they are deficient in cognitive abilities.

Subsequently, the study's central argument is that language serves as a code for the complete body of knowledge, wisdom and values held by the community. Therefore, the use of English as a second language in teaching and the ability of non-native-speaking learners to express their learning cannot be a practical criterion to assess their learning and academic performance, as it is coded wisdom and an accumulation of the entire community, universe and knowledge.

1.6. Delimitation and limitations of the study

Whites (2011: 241) notes that delimitations are the boundaries set by the researcher. The sample was drawn from a particular group of registered students who have been divided into groups to attend lectures because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirty black students were chosen because they are most impacted by English as a language of instruction. Black students were chosen for the sample of 30 students because they are the most impacted by using English as the language of instruction. Not all the first-year PR students enrolled at DUT were included in the study.

The study was also performed under certain restrictions that would not jeopardise it. The interviews were conducted online and at the student's convenience; therefore, it took them a long time to respond to the questions. This may have influenced the outcomes because face-to-face interaction differs from telephonic or online interviews because, with face-to-face interviews, the researcher may observe non-verbal cues but cannot do so during online interviews.

The participants and their location impacted the study, as some were inactive in a group or did not react timeously throughout the interview since some were in their dorms while others were at home.

1.6.1 Limitation of the study

The limitations are related to the fact that the study cannot be generalised because its scope was limited to the views of certain students at DUT. Gathering data from every individual in this population would be highly unlikely and expensive. The data might enlighten us on the impact of English language proficiency on some students' performance. There are certain drawbacks to convenient sampling. As a result, a conclusion may not apply to the entire population. Because the students at DUT may come from a relatively middle-class socio-economic background, as opposed to those from a lower socio-economic background, it would be impossible to accept the results as valid for that type of student.

The research instruments has their restrictions. To improve the study's quality, the researcher contacted the participants before the discussion to determine when they would be online during the discussion. They were also given contact information if anything came up or if they needed to adjust the time they were allotted. The researcher created a WhatsApp group for this purpose. The process was not as easy as it would have been if there were no COVID-19 restrictions.

The research had to be done outside of their scheduled lecturing time. The fact that communication took place in their residence impacted the students' decision to join. Since it was outside their scheduled lecture hours, aside from attending this discussion, the students may have had a lot on their minds during this time. They may have also thought about how unimportant this discussion was at that time. Although COVID-19 regulations impacted the study, the data gathered was nonetheless sufficient for statistical analysis.

1.7 Significance of the study

At the Durban University of Technology (DUT), English is used as a medium of instruction, and all examinations are set in English. The strong command of English proficiency among non-native Black students is essential for the success of this research, especially first-year students, as they are at the foundation of their careers in public relations. These students are expected to have the ability to understand language structures and to use them appropriately, particularly in communicative situations, when they graduate. The students under study are also expected to have strong academic literacy skills, such as reading, comprehension of academic texts and writing tasks showing command of professional writing in examinations for excellent academic performance. Currently, DUT is in KwaZulu-Natal, where most people are isiZulu native speakers (Burger, 2007). Most of these students speak isiZulu as their mother tongue at home but are expected to use English when they come to university to interact with their lecturers and write the examinations. This creates an enormous challenge for these students, as they must learn and communicate, as well as express their thoughts in English, as they are at tertiary institutes (Study South Africa 2007:30).

1.8 Key Concepts underpinning the study

The following primary concepts that appear frequently in the study are explained to aid comprehension.

1.8.1 Language proficiency

Language proficiency is the ability to use a language correctly and appropriately in its oral and written forms (Cloud *et al.* 2000: 60). Proficiency in a language is a factor that shows the extent to which the learner has understood the language. Many lecturers blame learners' limited second language (L2) proficiency as one factor responsible for their poor academic performance (Channing, 2017). To be literate, an individual must be

able to read, write and think academically, including in language and communication (Ramcharan, 2009).

According to Murray (2013: 299), language proficiency is a general communicative competence that will enable users to "express and understand meaning accurately, fluently and appropriately" and comprises generic skills and abilities. So, when that communicative competence is not met, a communication breakdown might occur, leading to student failure.

1.8.2 Second language acquisition. L2

A second language is any language learned that succeeds the native language, and language acquisition is acquiring language within a socialist context. Second language acquisition occurs in a formal setting, usually the school. First language acquisition is an unconscious process which begins at birth. Learning a language, whether consciously or unconsciously at school can be affected by language differences that may limit communication. As a result, teachers must be sensitive to the abilities and needs of the students.

Krashen (2000:132) considers the acquisition process more fundamental than the learning process. With language acquisition, there is no formal communication, and it takes place in a standard way, for instance, by socialising with other people in whatever way with anything. Hence, there are grammar rules and ways of structuring sentences and formal speech.

An individual acquires a language from birth up to the years of preschool; that process is called language acquisition. It is different from language learning, where learning formally takes place and there is an instructor. Acquiring a first language or mother tongue is typical (Ramcharan, 2009). Researchers dispute that language learning is a transitional process with dissimilar and observable completion. Second language

acquisition comprises different kinds of learning that internalise aspects of language structure and system learning. At the tertiary level, language proficiency is critical because there is a high correlation between language proficiency and academic performance. Hence, this study was conducted at DUT.

Language acquisition occurs during infancy in the sphere of intimate human interaction and in the context of the family and culture of the child. The child receives close and personal attention. Parents engage in communication with their children, and the child learns through response to adult language and imitation of adult language and, by so doing, internalises the complexities of phonology, morphology and semantics. The child is also responsible for learning at his/her own pace, and the errors made by him/her are not highlighted or directly corrected. Instead, caretakers are more concerned with the truth value of the utterances than grammatical accuracy and caretakers may model a correct response or complete a child's incomplete utterance.

1.8.3 Native speaker

According to Skutnabb-Kangas (1998:13), a person thinks, dreams and counts in the language acquired as a child. Language is an essential tool that is used as a means of accessing knowledge as well as skills. A mother tongue is a language that a person knows from his/her childhood stage and is mainly used at home. Sometimes, it is possible to find a person who is more proficient in his/her second language than in his/her native tongue. However, those cases occur mainly in suburban areas. So, most students at DUT are predominantly isiZulu native speakers, but they experience learning in a multilingual environment.

1.8.4 Medium of instruction

The medium of instruction is the mutual language used for education. Civan and Coskun (2016) define the teaching medium as the language of instruction or the language in

which students are taught the curriculum. Dearden (2014) outlines the English medium of instruction as using English to teach academic topics in a country where English is not the first language of the majority of the people. In the current study, English is used as the medium of instruction at DUT, yet most students are English second language speakers. However, Hu and Lei (2014) mentioned that using English as a medium of instruction confers a more incredible reputation on higher education institutions regarding international recognition. It creates a challenge for English second language speakers who are experiencing a communication breakdown through the use of English (Collins, 2010), and it poses difficulties for students who live in areas where English proficiency is low (Shamim *et al.* 2016). In most higher education institutions in South Africa, English is used as a cognitive tool, such as in academic writing (Channing, 2017).

1.8.5 Poor academic performance

Academic performance is the academic results that the student obtained. According to Ward, Stoker and Murray-Ward (1996), academic success results from education and the degree to which a student has met his or her educational objectives. Academic performance refers to students who have failed specific modules for this research study in the public relations programme. Those are students who dismally failed and those who got below 50% in their academic progress reports. Among other things that have been argued by Mgqwashu (2009) is that all students, whether they speak the language of learning and teaching as their first language or not, require support in acquiring academic literacies across disciplines.

1.9 Chapter overview

Chapter one: The thesis has five chapters that make up its framework. The study's historical context is presented in the first chapter, along with the effects of English usage on students' academic progress in South African universities. The research problem,

objectives, thesis statement, delimitation and limitation, the study's rationale, and critical concepts underpinning the study were explained.

Chapter two: This chapter presents a review of previous literature pertinent to the research topic and a review of empirical and theoretical studies that supported the study.

Chapter three: In this chapter, the qualitative research design, participant selection and data collection are presented. This chapter also describes the techniques used to analyse the data.

Chapter four: This chapter presents the results or findings. As well as the analysis of the findings preceding qualitative research.

Chapter five: Based on the research done at DUT, this chapter presents a conclusion from the literature and the study's findings. Additionally, it offers some suggestions that could be used to improve students' academic achievement and language proficiency at DUT.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter outlined my research topic, discussed the setting in which it was conducted, and explained its fundamental idea. I tried to prove why I thought this subject was essential and a merited study. By briefly outlining the research design, quality measurement issues, and study delimitations, I explained how I meant to conduct my research. The next chapter will concentrate on a survey of current and pertinent literature to provide light on the study issue. I will also discuss Cummins's theory.

CHAPTER TWO

ACADEMIC LITERACY AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The theme of this study is that the command of the medium of instruction is linked to cognitive development and has implications for the acquisition of knowledge. However, the use of a second language, such as English in teaching, and the proficiency of non-native-speaking learners in expressing their learning cannot be an effective criterion to assess their learning and academic success.

This chapter further explains the literature on the proficiency of the medium of instruction and how it affects students' academic success at the tertiary level. I reviewed the literature on the medium of instruction and how it is linked with Cummins' (1984) reference to Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). This is followed by literature on how learning and memorising affected the historical review of English in South Africa. The literature on English proficiency and the factors affecting the poor academic performance of South African students were reviewed. Lastly, I also reviewed the literature on how language proficiency affects verbal comprehension, reading, and writing.

2.2 Conceptual framework

BICS and CALP were introduced by Cummins (1979, 1981a); BICS stands for basic interpersonal communicative skills, whereas CALP stands for cognitive academic language proficiency. Accordingly, conversational fluency is classified as BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills), while academic language proficiency is classified as CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) (Channing, 2017). It aids to the extent

that it focuses educators' attention on the timelines and challenges that second language pupils encounter as they attempt to catch up to their peers regarding the academic aspects of the school language. Street and Hornberger (2008) postulate that "BICS refers to conversational fluency in a language while CALP refers to students' ability to understand and express, in both oral and written forms, concepts and ideas relevant to success in school". This ability also refers to the use of language in the classroom and is more concerned with form (Brown, 2000). CALP improves through social interaction from a young age.

Regarding students' ability to understand and express themselves, regarding both the oral and written forms of CALP, Bachman (1996:67) states that language ability comprises two facets: "language knowledge and strategic competence." Language knowledge is said to include both organisational knowledge and practical knowledge. These two components are the most critical knowledge that a student should acquire at the university level and the knowledge of how to connect and comprehend sentences in the form of oral or written texts.

Cummins (2000:13) also shows that it can take one or two years for students to become fluent in conversational English. The context is primarily dependent on high-frequency vocabulary and mutual grammatical constructions. Some learners may vary in their English proficiency, while others may have poor language proficiency depending on the years, they might have been exposed to English. Learners who have been learning English from lower primary levels up to high school are likely to have better language proficiency than those who come from a poor socio-economic background and those whose language proficiency is much poorer. Brown (2008:278) explains that the level of language to which learners are exposed should be just far enough beyond their present competence so that they can understand, but challenges them to make progress. The ability to communicate in the language of instruction is associated with cognitive growth

and has implications for knowledge acquisition (Lafon, 2009). He further states that students who do not have sufficient competency in the language of instruction frequently struggle to learn, not because they do not understand the concepts or ideas but rather because their verbal representation is inadequate.

CALP is the context-reduced, cognitively demanding use of language. Cummins (2001:58) contends that it is imperative to have cognitive academic language proficiency; hence, this is essential and is mainly required because it is language proficiency needed to succeed in an academic situation. As a result, the students are learning more than just something you can do before a test or exam. It is necessary for the cognitive and overall development of the child (Manyike, 2007). Furthermore, academic language proficiency is required for higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis and synthesis (Cummins, 2001: 58). Lafon (2009) further ascertained that CALP in a second language (L2) is dependent on it already being acquired in the first language. Students are skewed towards mapping each semantic notion to a linguistic unit, a word. Slobin (1986) shows that semantic learning depends on cognitive learning in all languages. Semantic complexity dictates the order of development more than structural complexity. Manyike (2007) mentioned that bilingualism was widely thought to negatively impact learning and development during the first half of the twentieth century.

Cummins and Swain (2014) contend that it is critical to instil the nature of academic language in students who are at risk and are struggling to meet the standard of the medium instruction because that will result in underperforming academically. Furthermore, Cummins (2001: 74) advises "that children whose academic proficiency in the language of instruction is weak will tend to fall behind unless the instruction they receive helps them understand the input and participate in lessons". However, for my study, the focus was only on exploring how first-year students for whom English is a second language experience English as a medium of instruction at DUT. Moreover, this

might have contributed to their not passing their modules and the services they are accessing to improve their language and writing skills.

Van Wyk (2014) avers that CALP is essential for effective academic learning, and many South African students must first transition from their mother tongues to English or acquire CALP. Moreover, Cummins (2000:59) further hypothesised that there is a symbiotic relationship between mother tongue and second language proficiency, as they are linked and facilitate the transfer of knowledge concerning the academic language from the first to the second language. In turn, Collins (2010) argues that students acquire English proficiency merely to pass the exams and for admission to universities but do not have the language proficiency required to interact with the academic content. Accordingly, the theory of Cummins (1984) provides the framework for this study. The inference regarding the difference between BICS and CALP is that lecturers must not assume that non-native English students can participate fluently in routinely spoken English at the equivalent academic language proficiency level.

Cummins (1984) makes a distinction between basic and academic language proficiency. Basic conversational fluency in a second language is referred to as BICS. Thus, BICS is acquired after the early stages of schooling. "The terms "conversational fluency" and "academic language proficiency" are used interchangeably with BICS and CALP in the remainder of this chapter" (Cummins, 1979; 1981a). According to Lendrum (2014), CALP refers to that aspect of proficiency that includes the features of language that do not rely on an interpersonal context. This distinction leads to the purpose of my study because it is set against the backdrop of the students who have basic English conversational skills and are attempting to meet the standard marks required by higher education institutions in order to gain access to the tertiary institution, only to discover that they lack CALP, which is more necessary for effectively engaging with academic content.

Basic conversational fluency is higher among students than academic language skills, which is particularly important for PR students in the current study. This is because they may use English in their social surroundings and be exposed to it on social media. However, that does not imply that they are fluent in English.

BICS refers to the communicative ability pupils possess that enables them to communicate in context. Therefore, Cummins (2012) clarifies that learners' language proficiency in the medium of instruction is linked to academic success. Likewise, Lemmer (2000) highlights that in learning a second language, the learner changes towards the target form of the language, which will contain fewer and fewer mistakes.

According to Vygotsky (1978:90), learning is a cognitive process in a social setting. Lendrum (2014) explains that learners may learn at their own pace depending on various variables, such as individual differences, the quality and quantity of the input and other contextual factors. Bloom (1978:37) claims that the cognitive underpinning of language plays a role in language development.

Following Cummins' (1984) distinction between BICS and CALP, this is further defined under two different tasks expected from students, ranging from cognitively unchallenging to cognitively challenging abilities. Mostly, these tasks are among other aspects that make a student competent concerning language proficiency because they challenge the students' cognitive abilities in English.

Genese (1984), cited by Channing (2017), explains that "BICS refers to students' context-embedded, cognitively undemanding use of language.

Constructivism is built upon definite assumptions about teaching and learning (Brown, 2000: 11). This approach makes it clear that individuals, with their individual experiences, frames of reference, knowledge and cognitive structures, will receive information differently. Borich and Tombari (1997: 177) define cognitive constructivism as the

approach whereby students are given a chance to develop internal links or interconnections among the ideas and information being taught, allowing them to construct their sense of what they are learning. That is why this study is set to investigate first-year experiences regarding English as a language of learning. Brown (2000:29) asserts that children from dissimilar linguistic backgrounds attain linguistic competence at approximately the same age, usually at six. However, in South Africa, learners from Grade R up to Grade 4 are taught in their native language and from Grade 5 to Grade 12 in English. This is where their years of constructing competency in English have been spent. Constructivists consider that learners need to build their knowledge and that their understanding of concepts primarily depends on their mental construction of those concepts (Brown, 2000: 11). The processes of learning and development, according to Piaget (1972: 100), are independent of one another. In other words, learning uses development but does not alter its trajectory.

Vygotsky (1978: 95) debates that learning is something that starts outside people, in the society around them, and is then "transferred inwardly. What happens inside a person first happens between people. Intelligence does not begin in a person, but rather in the relations between a person and the outside world". Vygotsky (1986) further differentiates between the two types of concepts, namely, 'spontaneous concepts' and 'scientific concepts', which are more likely to be the same as what Cummins distinguishes as the different competencies between BICS and CALP. He refers to spontaneous concepts that children acquire circumstantially and automatically from everyday conversations.

In contrast, scientific concepts are concepts learned through mediated experiences between children and adults or at school. Children who do not develop beyond the BICS level in their home language will encounter academic challenges. Thus, ideas taught in English will easily be associated with the concepts learned in the home language.

It is important to note that the American linguist and cognitive scientist Naomi Chomsky (cited in Brown, 2000: 24) discovered the innateness theory, which states that children are born with an innate ability that enables language learning. He termed that ability the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). This ability enables children to decode the intellectual rules of language acquisition. According to Pinker (1994), the innateness theory demonstrates that children are born with an innate acquaintance that monitors them in the language acquisition task. So, the LAD is referred to as an in-born device that enables children to process the language spoken in their social environment. Children learn language through reinforcement.

All these theories concerning language acquisition are subjective regarding the notions that instituted language competency and the language proficiency on which this study is focused.

As Cummins (2012) indicates, it may take up to seven years for the child to be successful in all social and academic situations. Learning a second language in an immersion circumstance is slightly different from language acquisition. Cummins discovered that BICS and CALP are also linked to what has been defined by Canale and Swain (1980, in Brown, 2000: 246), who distinguish between four key competencies that constitute the paradigm of language proficiency. It involves grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. These competencies make a child proficient in language as a whole.

Children acquire their first language within a social environment without any mindful effort or thoughtfulness towards language on the part of their parents or caretakers. However, learning a second language differs from acquiring a language where students engage in one-on-one communication. Learning takes place in a controlled environment where language is context-reduced and may deal with abstract ideas and concepts.

Lemmer (2000) points out that in "the process of second language learning, the student moves towards the target form of the language, which will have fewer and fewer errors" until language competence has been achieved. Furthermore, language competency can only be attained if socio-cultural issues are considered.

Importantly, teaching and learning can only occur in communicative contexts for learners to achieve competence in a language. In a communication scenario, the communicative approach to language teaching and learning stresses meaning rather than the structure of the language. Seemingly, Kilfoil and Van der Walt (2007:9) stress that language teachers began to urge their students to acquire foreign languages as they learned their first languages.

Nonetheless, language proficiency can be accomplished only if socio-cultural factors are considered. Language and culture are connected and cannot be separated (Sun, 2015). Thus, the language proficiency that the study discusses is proficiency in the medium of instruction. Students' academic performance may be influenced by the degree to which they use their communicative skills in assessments. Once again, as Cummins (1984) posits, we cannot make assumptions that a non-native speaker who is fluent and accurate in everyday spoken English is well-developed in terms of English competency and has the same level of proficiency in the academic language.

Although students may perhaps meet the requirements for registration and have the language skills required by a higher institution, some students still struggle to master the academic content, despite their fluency in everyday spoken English. In this regard, Lin and Scherz (2014) point out that non-native English students often experience difficulties with learning content and conceptual structures. Therefore, it can be asserted that poor English language proficiency affects students' poor academic performance.

Most non-native English students pass the basic English proficiency tests at higher education institutions to accomplish the necessities of language proficiency. Nevertheless, they still experience difficulties mastering the content and academic vocabulary in the language of instruction (AlKahtany, 2015). At DUT, where this research was conducted, in its admission policy requirements, it is stated that prospective students applying for admission to any of their academic programmes should be proficient in English. Moreover, having to comply with these entrance conditions set by the Academic Board, institutions usually conduct an English language proficiency test prior to the admission of students, which is recognised as a standardised tool for measuring language proficiency at most of the institutions in South Africa.

2.3 Historical overview of the English language in South African Education

English-language instruction for students is not a recent phenomenon; it existed even before South Africa's democratic government was established. According to Ditsele (2014:1), before democracy, English had a privileged status because of its predominant use in formal settings where Black South African languages had not been established for use in formal functions, such as in higher education.

He further asserts that when South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, the privileged status of English increased as well as its dominance at the expense of Afrikaans and Black South African languages, which did not make significant inroads in formal functions relative to their population size. Previous research (Webb, 1991; Bosch and De Klerk, 1996; Maartens, 1998; Dyers, 2000; Vesely, 2000; Barkhuizen, 2001; Chick and McKay, 2001; Ngcobo, 2001; Letsie, 2002; Moodley, 2003, 2009; Rudwick, 2004) also mentioned that students would instead acquire English to enjoy the prestige and privileges associated with it as well as the benefits it affords in the world of academia

and the economy. Chetty and Mwepu (2008) maintain that educational policy chooses students to be taught in English and students also regard English as a powerful language used to gain more significant personal, economic, or political advantages.

Similarly, Mbatha and colleagues (2018:2) stipulate that even after democracy and despite the South African indigenous languages being recognised, English still reigns in practically every sphere of the culture.

In this regard, Kamwendo (2010:270–282) notes that the apartheid era has resulted in English becoming a prestigious language. Most black South Africans perceive their languages to be inferior to English and regard them as relevant for social and cultural purposes only and not as a language of education. However, this tendency is also visible in the new South Africa, where African parents speak to their children in English (Van Huysteen, 2003). They also want their children to be taught the English language (Chetty and Mwepu, 2008). Moreover, among other things, this contributes to the view by its student population that South African indigenous languages are inferior. The reason for this can lie in the fact that during apartheid, the Bantu Education Act (No. 47 of 1953) was unequal and isolated English in Bantu education. The education was provided to prevent African-language-speaking students from developing ambitions beyond their own communities (Hartshorne, 1995: 309–310). During the Apartheid era in South Africa, the education system was separated, and different funding was made available for resources by the Apartheid government in the educational system, which created severe problems. Moreover, previous research shows that African native speakers are of the "opinion that English is the most important medium of instruction in schools" (Kapp, 2000: 23).

According to Walkip and Van De Walt (2016: 67), South Africans seem to have become more deeply rooted in English as a medium of instruction in institutions of higher education and at lower primary levels of education. Although it is ominous, De Klerk

(1995a) pointed out that many African and Afrikaans-speaking students struggle with English before mastering their native tongue. The official mediums of instruction, English and Afrikaans, in South African schools became overwhelmingly dominant after Grade 3 (Lafon, 2009). According to a study by Macdonald (1990), children who had been learning English as a second language for three years, had not yet developed with an adequate vocabulary to be able to use it competently as the language of instruction. Regarding this phenomenon, it is apparent that English is regarded as a prestigious language worldwide. Similarly, "English functions as a lingua franca and is a primary language of government, business and commerce" (Chetty and Mwepu, 2008). Even though English is now more common worldwide, its trepidations about students' academic success and its effects on learning have not been dealt with (Civan and Coşkun, 2016: 1983). Nonetheless, with all that being stated above, most African-Black children are studying and being assessed in a language that is neither their home language nor their mother tongue. Drummond (2016: 71) thus emphasises that South Africa's educational system does not serve all the country's residents equally. In contrast, for White and Indian learners, there is more often a coincidence between the mother tongue and the language of learning and teaching (Lafon, 2009), even though over 78% of South Africans are non-English or Afrikaans speakers (Statistics South Africa, 2003: 15). Thus, although English is not the most widely spoken mother tongue in South Africa, it is a language of access and obliges as a constructive condition for success both in higher education (Chetty and Mwepu, 2008).

South Africa has 11 official languages, which means South Africa comprises people of different languages. Researchers explain that it is unfair for parents to make choices about the language of instruction for their children. The reason undoubtedly lies in their bad experiences with Black South African languages or "Bantu language" instruction in the past because these languages were part of a poor education system. Another reason could be that "English plays a central role in education, and it is perceived as a powerful

instrument against marginalisation" (Chetty and Mwepu, 2008). Moreover, the Constitution in 1996 proclaimed that 'it is everyone's right to receive education in the official language or languages of his or her own choice' and that the state has to ensure the accomplishment of that right (South Africa, 1996).

Importantly, Lendrum (2014) and Kamwangamulu (1997) mention the complications associated with implementing the mother tongue as the language of instruction. They mentioned that in other provinces, such as Gauteng, it would be challenging to choose a language since it is a province of multiple languages. However, there may be a different situation in KwaZulu-Natal, where DUT is located.

Implementing mother-tongue education may be more feasible; hence, isiZulu is predominantly spoken in the province and may be more readily identified as the mother tongue of a particular community. On the contrary, bilingual education based on the other mother tongue should seek to provide learners with a good command of English, which is a vital tool for success in the global arena.

Undoubtedly, native language instruction is fundamental (Slavin and Cheung, 2005). Hence when an individual is competent in his/her native language, the second language is embedded in the native knowledge. This contrasts with the view that competencies in the native language, especially as they relate to decontextualised language skills, provide a weak cognitive base for second language acquisition and academic learning (Hakuta and Garcia, 1989). Thus, improvement in proficiency in the second language is partially the result of the level of competence in the native language at the time formal instruction in the second language begins.

With all of the above stated, it is also true that educational practices in South Africa that privilege English throughout the educational journey of the learner disadvantage the majority of those who do not speak English as a home language (Drummond 2016: 71).

2.4 English in the South African educational system

South Africa is a country with multicultural and multilingual people, where culture and language play a role in every sphere, including education (Manyike, 2007). Language is a critical learning component; it can impact academic achievement (Lemmer, 1993; Rademeyer, 2001). Undoubtedly, English is essential when accessing knowledge and skills (Lemmer and Squelch, 1993: 41). Most South African students are being taught in or learn through English as the medium of instruction, which is not their native language (Venzke, 2002). The language of instruction plays a vital role in the education of a nation" (Ramcharan, 2009).

Furthermore, where the medium of instruction is different from the language used in the public domain, those who work in the language of instruction become separated from the public (Baker, 2000: 217). Baker's concern regarding the medium of instruction is reinforced by Butler and Van Dyk (2004) and Dalvit and De Klerk (2005), who identify low academic literacy in the language of learning English. This tends to cause numerous effects concerning students' education, such as "a high dropout rate among black South Africans who appear to be inadequately equipped to cope with the demands of tertiary education" where English is concerned. According to Mbirimi (2012), Black students whose first language is not English make up 63% of the total enrolment, and nearly half of these students drop out, with barely one-third graduating within the required years (Merisi and Mgqwashu, 2022).

According to scholars such as Hartshorne (1992:136) and Alexander (1989:37), Black pupils' education has been neglected, particularly in rural regions. Hartshorne (1992:136) argues further that because of the high failure rate and the lack of visible effort to tackle problems in under-resourced schools, a perception has arisen that Black pupils' education is taken for granted. Nonetheless, Mbirimi (2012) and Merisi (2014) mentioned that it should be noted that Black South African students currently make up

a significant portion of the student population at higher education institutions. However, these pupils must learn a foreign language, which is problematic.

To add to what has been said before, Scott (2009: 20–23) refers to the study conducted by the Department of Education. It clearly illustrates what has been happening in the past few years at tertiary levels regarding academic performance and first-time entering students in 2000 and 2001. These students were tracked for up to five years when they failed "to complete their course within the stipulated time" of three years (Scott, 2009). The study notes that 30% of the supervised group could graduate after five years, whereas 14% were still studying, having repeated one or more years.

Furthermore, Scott (2009: 21) declared that the study results show that most students who continue after their first year were not doing well in their year of registration. Only a few who attended the course passed with extremely low marks. Suppose a student had difficulties completing a three-year qualification. The lack of understanding of the language of instruction resulted in many of these students having little chance of academic success (Stephen, Welman and Jordaan, 2004).

It is a fact that isiZulu is the language most spoken in South Africa (Pluddemann, 2001: 26) and has a more significant number of speakers than isiXhosa, isiNdebele, isiSwati, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Tshivenda, Tshitsonga, Afrikaans, as well as English. It also has the highest number of native speakers of isiZulu in KZN.

There is an agreement among scholars that this medium of instruction impedes students' academic success (Huang, 2012; Addow, Abubaka and Abukar, 2013; Binder and Smith, 2013; Jabulani, 2014). In addition, the study conducted by Park (2016) found that academic acculturation through a second language was the most challenging aspect for students who are not studying in their home language. It is important to determine its influence on students' academic achievement. To achieve academic success, students

must engage actively with academic content through discussions, reading, writing, analysis and evaluation (Shahzad, Sajjad, Ahmed and Asghar, 2013).

Cummins (1989:12) reached a different conclusion regarding the extent of instruction in English and English academics among languages with a smaller number of students. This implies that the more instruction a bilingual student receives in English, the lower the academic performance in the majority language (Garcia-Vazquez *et al.* 1997: 397).

Stephen, Welman and Jordaan (2004) list various factors influencing tertiary academic performance concerning English language instruction. These include the English language proficiency of English second language (ESL) students, intelligence, the degree of urbanisation, and family circumstances, among others. In the same vein, Venzke (2002) points out that it is also clear that many lecturers state that learners' limited English proficiency is one of the factors responsible for their poor academic performance. Notably, language proficiency plays a crucial role in many areas. In addition, Van den Berg (1996) found in his study on the pass rates of all race groups that language proficiency was the most significant factor that could be improved concerning the black students' pass rates in the performance tests.

In 1998, the Examination Committee reported on this aspect (Coetzee, 2001: 171). Concern was expressed about the fact that the academic staff reported a 77.4% pass rate for white students, compared with a 47.8% pass rate for black students. It appears that English is the major cause of academic difficulties.

Among other factors, Stephen, Welman and Jordaan (2004) also outline specific factors that affect English language proficiency, such as the rural environment, the schoolteachers' English proficiency, learning and memorising strategies, verbal comprehension, the transferability of language skills and cultural influences, among others.

English is regarded as the language of instruction in most schools in South Africa; therefore, proficiency in English can be regarded as an essential tool "in empowering individuals to gain access to and control over the instruments that govern their existence" (Mgqwashu, 2002: 4). Hence, language is fundamental for cognitive growth and can subsequently impact learners' scholastic performance (Mahabeer, 2003: 26). Moreover, language proficiency is crucial at the university level because there is a strong connection between language proficiency and academic performance (Ramcharan, 2009). He further notes that a decline in language proficiency levels was observed among tertiary-level entrant students between 1990 and 2006. Consequently, this study investigates how English as a medium of instruction affects non-native-speaking students' academic success.

2.5. Language proficiency

Language proficiency is the ability to use a language correctly and appropriately in its oral and written forms (Cloud *et al.* 2000:60). A measure of how well a learner understands a language is called proficiency in that language. Cummins (2001: 68) states that a language that is used in casual settings may be easier to master than a language that is used in a reduced environment. Language proficiency affects students' academic success in various ways. In the research that was done by Teemat (2010), it was discovered that students face assessment challenges such as: 1) limited English vocabulary; 2) difficulty in understanding the questions; 3) memorisation; 4) expressing knowledge in writing; 5) time limits; 6) having content knowledge "trapped" in their home language; and 7) difficulty in keeping pace with the lecturers from a language perspective. This results in students writing incomprehensible answers during the assessment task, which negatively influences their academic success.

2.5.1 Language proficiency affects verbal comprehension.

While many black students can engage in general conversational English, they cannot express themselves in writing to handle the technicalities of the subject matter. In the same vein, English as the main language of "learning in classrooms is a barrier because English Additional Language learners find it difficult to express themselves in the additional language" (Paxton, 2009). A study conducted by the Council of Higher Education in 2013 at the University in the Western Cape Province, South Africa, found that students mentioned that their challenges lie in 'not understanding instructions, terminology and test questions in English, which is the language of learning and teaching at the institution. This appears to be their main obstacle (Kumar, 2017). The relationship between language proficiency and academic success is well documented (Civan and Coşkun, 2016:1984).

Comprehension and production might include qualities of comprehension and production. Although production is more easily observable, comprehension encompasses considerably more than performance (Manyike 2007).

Kumar (2017) notes that during the examinations, students are only expected to answer questions because they cannot construct their original sentences because of their limited vocabulary. It is also important to point out that the lack of academic and intellectual growth among Black learners at secondary and tertiary levels is mainly related to the use of English as a medium of instruction (Banda, 2000:51). Previous research, according to Bretag (2007) and Sawir (2005), debates the insufficient levels of communicative competence of students in English, and it also tends to subdue academic staff's level of understanding in order to make learning more accessible to students.

Furthermore, when students do not understand the instruction, an interpreter is required, or they will withdraw and, in most cases, become uncooperative when they

feel overwhelmed by an environment in which English is utilised for everything (Jackson, 2000). Consequently, a communication breakdown will occur. To achieve successful communication, both parties must have linguistic knowledge of the language, which must be mutual. Furthermore, Channing (2017) posits that at a certain higher institution, even the tutors find it necessary to code-switch to the mutual native language of the students to support them in understanding the academic content set out in their curriculum and learning guides.

Kagwesage (2012) noted that students had difficulty taking notes because of lecturers' speed and pronunciation during English lectures, making it difficult for them to understand the lessons. All of this was mainly caused by having a limited English vocabulary.

Coleman (2006) identifies seven reasons for higher education institutions (HEIs) to include English in their academic programmes: (1) internationalisation; (2) content and language-integrated learning; (3) student exchanges; (4) teaching and research materials; (5) staff mobility; (6) graduate employability; and (7) the market for international students.

Extensive research has been done on the current position of English as the dominant language of instruction. (Scott, 2009; Macfarlane, 2007; Van Dyk, 2005; Pretorius, 2002; Butler and Van Dyk, 2004; Dalvit and De Klerk, 2005), that hampers the access and success of students academically in higher education. As African students entering higher education are not proficient enough concerning the use of English, it is also indicated that there is a low academic literacy in the language of learning "and a high dropout rate among black South Africans who appear to be inadequately equipped to cope with the demands of tertiary education" (Ngcobo, 2011). Concurrently, in 2000, only a mere 23% of isiZulu, isiXhosa and Siswati speakers were able to enrol at university (DHET 2002).

Hence, Cummins (2001:58) indicates that cognitive academic language proficiency is the language proficiency that is essential in order to be successful in an academic setting.

It is, however, worth mentioning that the learning difficulties among students taught in a second language (L2) are an international crisis. Gatwiri (2015) states that one of the most critical issues facing international students is the language difficulties they experience.

Not only South Africans face this phenomenon of utilising the European language despite it being a foreign language for students who are not native citizens. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007: 4) note that "only 30% of United States of America (USA) secondary level L2 students read proficiently." According to Chen and Yang (2017), Park (2016), Han (2014) and Lee and Lee (2013), there is evidence in the literature on internationalisation in higher education that utilising English as the language of instruction creates the necessity for developing language support programmes to help students who are not native speakers of English. In addition, Bialystok (2002: 161) speculates that the USA's literacy and linguistics issues regarding the poor English skills of its Hispanic students, who are educated in poor social and tutorial conditions, compromise their capability to learn successfully. In the study undertaken by the South African Institute of Race Relations (2006), it is pointed out "that only 8% (84 741 out of 1 057 935) of black learners who started Grade 10 in 2004 passed the final Grade 12 examination in 2006 well enough to obtain university entrance". Scott (2009: 24) asserts that it is agreed that South Africa's poor schooling system and underprivileged socioeconomic conditions are the prime reasons students are under-prepared for conventional forms of higher education.

Moreover, Ngcobo (2016) testifies that in his study on the progression analysis of the 2003–2006 student cycle, it was found that the quantity rate was nothing in some departments, such as those of the Faculty of Engineering. One of the engineering

departments, which registered 111 students in the first semester of 2003, had a dropout rate of 82% by 2005. Furthermore, "out of the remaining twenty students, only four graduated in the set time, while the remaining sixteen had to repeat failed subjects" (Ngcobo, 2016). Considering what has been said above, African languages should be implemented in learning and teaching so that students can learn to comprehend easily and effectively achieve academic success, despite the evidence contained in the past and dropout rates that show that learners are not acquiring the conceptual knowledge and academic literacy required to be successful (Van De Walt and Klapwijk, 2015).

Furthermore, Mqgwashu (2009:1) postulates that Africans learn best in their own languages, which they have learned from their parents at home. Undoubtedly, it shows that using English for students to understand everything is certainly challenging for them. Although students realise the importance of being proficient in English, the language serves as a means to an end, which does not necessarily have to mean the avoidance or loss of other languages (Klapwijk and Van De Walt, 2016).

English is a powerful language. In the same vein, despite having a majority population, "results from the 2011 national census show that isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans remain the three most spoken languages at home, although the use of English as a home language has increased compared to the other official languages" (Statistics South Africa, 2012). In addition, Ngcobo (2016) notes that "sociolinguistic studies have generally indicated that many African-language-speaking stakeholders do not support the idea of using black African languages in education." Despite the numerous legislative policy documents and frameworks and their implementation concerning teaching, it appears that learning in and research on indigenous African languages does not seem to regard native languages as the language of teaching and learning. Subsequently, English and Afrikaans and their speakers continue to enjoy an advantage in higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015:10). According to Carnow,

Steenkamp and Ekron (2020), it is discouraging that after the long walk to freedom of two decades of democracy in South Africa, the quality of education is still underprivileged "in previously disadvantaged black schools, which still leads to poorly equipped students," particularly in English, where they have to cope with the academic requirements of higher education institutions.

Importantly, students ought to have attained cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) before they acquire adequate BICS so that they can cope with any academic challenges (Brock-Utne, 2009: 30). This, however, is becoming impossible because of the lack of comprehension and reading skills of students that start long before they enter tertiary institutions. Literacy deficiency tends to "accumulate to secondary level" (Babaci-Wilhite, 2010: 288), which applies mainly to higher education levels. Lendrum (2014) explains:

It must be known that CALP does not refer to evolving literacy in a language. It is not merely a difference between oral and written language. It refers to understanding classroom discourse and refers to being able to write academic discourse as well as being able to read and understand the language of textbooks.

Linguistic competency in a language results in successful communication. This means that learners must be able to utilise a language firstly to grasp concepts in it, secondly to articulate information transmitted orally or in writing, and, lastly, to develop relationships between concepts or information (Cummins 1980, cited in Lemmer, 2000: 47, 48).

The concept of 'BICS' also pertains to when a person can remember something previously encountered or learned, to be able to comprehend the basic meaning without

necessarily relating it to other material and to apply the use of ideas in particular and tangible situations (Lemmer, 2000:48)

However, it is acknowledged that most of the academic challenges facing the majority of black citizens are not entirely the result of using English as the second language as the medium of instruction. However, it is possible to find that when the native speaker is not fluent in the mother tongue but is fluent in the L2. The statement was approved by Nkaola (2020) when a student stated that "English is the only language I understand better than all the other languages in South Africa."

According to Lendrum (2014), for learners to attain academic success, they should initially be taught in their first language (L1) or their mother tongue to fully understand the academic content.

2.5.2 Language proficiency affects reading.

Metacognition is an important element regarding adequate comprehension in literature. Metacognition is the awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes. Most researchers propose a strong correlation between L1 and L2 reading comprehension skills (Spies, 2011). According to Riches and Genesee (2006), the connection between academic language proficiency and reading comprehension is multifaceted. Thus, the importance of L2 academic language proficiency for L2 reading comprehension may be regarded as an aspect of L2 academic language proficiency concerning the native language. While language proficiency is linked to academic success, language proficiency in both the learners' L1 and L2 is crucial for academic success (Lendrum, 2014).

According to Pereira (1986:76), reading and writing assist progenies in learning grammatical patterns that are not employed in oral discourse. This vital stimulation for verbal development is denied to children. Manyike (2007) furthermore says this could

be important for bilingual learners who do not utilise their native language and whose language of learning and teaching is not well formed, as it is likely they will struggle to read in it. Similarly, if they are not required to read in their native language, they are deprived of the opportunity to develop the abilities needed to process non-speech language.

Research conducted by Pretorius (2000) aimed to look at the English reading ability and English language proficiency of English second language learners at the university level and how these variables related to academic performance. The reading scores of Medical University of South Africa's (MEDUNSA) students obtained through reading tests were compared with marks achieved in the final exam in two subjects they were registered for. The students were divided according to their average academic performance: *fail* (below 49%), *at-risk* (50–59%) and *pass* (+60%). The study presented a strong connection between English reading ability and academic performance. Clearly, the better a student's English reading ability, the better the academic achievement.

The ultimate purpose of effective reading instruction is reading comprehension. *Reading* is a complex process simplified as a combination of decoding and linguistic competence (Gough and Tunmer, 1986). Van Rooyen and Jordaan (2009) indicate that one of the aspects of language as an academic predictor is the ability to understand syntactically complex sentences. Decoding involves the breakdown and interpretation of written words into the sounds of language. In turn, linguistic competence, or oral language proficiency, comprises phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, vocabulary, and pragmatics. In addition, McGuinness (2005) specifies that while vocabulary plays a small role in learning to decode, it also plays a significant role in reading comprehension. As much as reading is essential for a student, oral language proficiency has little effect on reading (Roth, 1996) concerning English proficiency. Stephen, Welman and Jordaan

(2004: 45) articulate that while students may be capable of reasonable social discourse, Black kids in South Africa have extremely poor reading maturity levels.

Hence, the literature on academic language proficiency and its influence show reading education concerning the English language and second speakers has been among the most pressing issues in educational practice (Slavin and Cheung, 2005: 247).

Accordingly, a solid L1 vocabulary basis serves as the basis of L2 vocabulary knowledge and a prerequisite for L2 reading comprehension.

As much as the language of instruction plays a significant role and has a considerable effect on students' academic success, reading fast and understanding the contents is critical for academic success. However, South Africa has a poor reading culture and language proficiency and performs perfunctorily in contrast with other countries (Bohlman and Pretorius, 2002). Pretorius (2002: 99) also believes that South African learners lack the proficiency to demonstrate the ability to engage in independent learning regarding reading.

Furthermore, McGuiness (2005) points out that vocabulary plays a role in learning to decode what is written in the context and plays a substantial role in reading comprehension. Moreover, L1 vocabulary knowledge enhances L2 reading comprehension (Spies 2011), and vocabulary knowledge is one element of the oral language that is an important indicator of reading comprehension. Thus, learners whose vocabulary may not be as developed as their first language peers may lag in reading comprehension and in understanding context-reduced classroom discourse.

Reading competency is one of the most crucial linguistic skills an individual need to possess as an academic student. Rose (2003) also mentions that reading is a core competency at school, and all academic success depends on reading literacy.

Concurrently, reading is a fundamental capability at school, and all academic success depends to a lesser or greater extent on reading ability (Cekiso, 2017).

The role of L2 academic language proficiency in L2 reading comprehension cannot be examined without considering the influence the native language has on second language acquisition. (Spies, 2011). Therefore, mainstream L2 literacy research considers the English second-speaker learners' native language and includes measures of native language proficiency. In addition, there is a strong connection between language proficiency and reading ability. If you have not acquired language proficiency, you will be unable to read and understand texts in that particular language. In this regard, the aptitude for reading is an aspect of language proficiency and is essential for CALP. Furthermore, according to Van Rooyen and Jordaan (2009), Aarts and Verhoewen (1999) and Zulu (2007), language proficiency is also required for reading ability and comprehension.

Reading is a skill (Department of Education, 2008: 19) learned through all learning. Learners who are not proficient readers are unlikely to do well at school or even after school (Ramcharan, 2009). In the U.S., Kindler (2002), cited by Spies (2011) mentioned that students categorised as English language learners often have a pass rate of 18.7% for reading and have higher dropout rates at school.

Students from poor backgrounds experience various challenges, such as not being proficient in the pronunciation of the target language, not knowing the correct grammatical and spelling rules and not having knowledge of how to construct proper sentences, as English is regarded as a foreign language by them. In short, learners cannot grasp the meanings of words in given texts and neither can they construct meaningful sentences (Lendrum, 2014).

According to Ramcharan (2009), a learner whose native language "is not English and who receives instruction via the medium of English might struggle to acquire reading and writing skills." Thus, without high-quality English second language instruction, students may develop academic language proficiency but are ineffective in utilising these skills (Spies, 2011). In this regard, Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004) argue that empowerment through education can only be expressive if the instruction makes sense. For that to be effective, it must take place through an understandable medium for the student.

Pretorius and Machet (2004:129) assert that literacy, explicitly reading literacy, forms the backbone of educational success at all school levels. Students need to be equipped more effectively to read and be critically literate. Furthermore, reading comprehension entails the amalgamation of linguistic knowledge and the complex relationships of various intellectual strategies. Therefore, reading aims to arrive at the meaning or understanding of the text. However, students can never attain this when they do not understand the language in which it is written; hence, it is impossible to attain what Molden (2007) refers to as reading proficiency, a constituent of literacy proficiency. This involves asking questions to analyse terminology, identifying the purpose of the text and the elements of the argument introduced by the author, as well as having a limited vocabulary. So many students experience alienation (Keating, 1987), which has a negative impact on their learning. Many students approach lecturers with the attitude "you owe me something" and do not react to the queries or communicate with the staff (Goduka, 1996).

English, as the language of instruction, is the most challenging aspect in South African higher institutions. Numerous learners are unable to read with understanding, and they also fail to produce proficient written outputs. They cannot also make inferences based on the given information in a text (Department of Basic Education, 2012:5). It shows

clearly that the struggle with English starts in the lower grades and continues in the higher grades at school.

It was further reported that learners who took English as a first additional language pointed out that they had severe limitations in comprehending and using simple language structures. This concern shows that the challenge of using English as the medium of instruction affects students profoundly, as the lack of English language proficiency hampers students' academic possibility of success at DUT. In this regard, Cummins (2012) makes it clear that learners' language proficiency in the medium of instruction is clearly linked to academic success.

On the contrary, Raman, Sharma and Collins (2013: 261) claim that reading competency is possible through effective and regular application of reading strategies. Similarly, Olifant, Cekiso and Rautenbach (2020) emphasise that learners' profound reading practices are influenced by their ability to interpret, validate and form an opinion about a text.

Cloud *et al.* (2000:60) define language proficiency as "the ability to use a language accurately and appropriately in its oral and written forms" in various settings. This definition means that you must be able to understand proficiently and be proficient enough with the language in terms of vocabulary to participate effectively in any conversation. However, a person who is equally proficient in both the native and the second language is called a balanced bilingual, and finding people from rural areas who are balanced bilinguals is rare, especially regarding English.

People from rural areas are mostly monolingual, and when they are bilingual, in most cases, it is only because those individuals probably attended multiracial schools. Concerning the above matter, it is not always the case that an individual will be as

proficient in the native language as in the L2. For instance, pupils who had attended multiracial schools from their low levels of education up to the higher levels.

Lamberger (1997: 176) specifies that proficiency also differs depending on the function, purpose and context of communication. In this regard, Cummins (2001: 68) notes that the language used in informal social settings is predominantly about real matters and may be easier to master than the language used in formal settings, especially when the content is more abstract and cognitively demanding.

Subsequently, poor reading ability reduces comprehension levels, which affects the student's ability to cope in school. The ability to read "includes the ability to construct meaning from the written word and familiarity with the various forms and functions of written texts" (Pretorius and Machet 2004: 45). According to Weideman and Van Rensberg (2002: 57), "there is no doubt that reading ability, more than any other skill, is a critically important factor in academic success". Accordingly, Vaseghi, Gholami and Barjestech (2012: 406) indicate that critical reading pertains to thinking, that is, meditating, while reading.

Becoming a fluent reader is a long process. The objective of reading is to comprehend what is written. In this regard, Graves, Juel and Graves (1998) indicate that comprehension involves:

- The ability to interpret the written word,
- The aptitude to conceptualise meaning from the text, and
- The aptitude to understand the writer's intention and the ability to use language to create special effects.

According to Cziko *et al.* (2000), reading is not a straightforward process of lifting words off the page. They further mention that reading is the multifaceted process of solving problems in which the reader tries to create meaning from a text and "not just from the

words and sentences on the page but also from the ideas, memories, and understanding" through words and sentences. Graves, Juel and Graves (1998), Snow (2002) and Williams (2008) argue that reading involves finding and constructing meaning from the text. It seems impossible for students to understand the meaning of what is written when they are not proficient enough in that language. Sometimes you find a student who is not proficient in his/her native language; nevertheless, such a student is expected to understand the language of instruction. Among other things, Howie *et al.* (2017) mention that "factors related to learners' underperformance include resource constraints, inadequate teacher training, poor instructional practices, low parental literacy levels, learning in a second or additional language, and high rates of absenteeism." This study focused on learning in a second or additional language as a factor, which in our case is English being used as the language of instruction. "Serving the large population of children requiring reading intervention is a challenge, especially in resource-constrained contexts" (Dean, Pascoe and Le Roux, 2021). In this case, the majority of students at DUT are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In attempting to address the objectives, in the study that was conducted by Nkoala (2020), students were asked about their perception of how language use influenced their academic performance 'I think for me each and every student would perform better when they are being taught in a language that they grow up in or were born in than being introduced to a foreign language at a later stage in their lives.' (first-year student).

Most black students read at the lowest level of reading—the frustration level (less than 90% decoding accuracy and 60% or less comprehension)—when they should be operating at a minimum of the instructional level and preferably at the level of skilled readers. This view is supported by the Department of Basic Education (2014) and Mullis *et al.* (2017), when they point out that most South African pupils are not mastering reading skills as expected for each grade compared to their international peers.

In order to be effective in reading and academic studies, an individual ought to be effective in decoding and comprehending. Hence, Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) claim that the cognitive-linguistic achievement of reading encompasses two components, namely, decoding and comprehension. Comprehending entails understanding what is written, whereas decoding entails breaking down what is written into ideas. Consequently, that is not easy to achieve when you are not proficient in the current language.

It is argued that "being a skilled reader does not mean one has an explicit awareness of the structures of written and spoken language that is necessary" to teach reading effectively (Hurst, Wallace and Nixon, 2013). In the matter above, it can be the language instructors at a tertiary level, such as lecturers and tutors. In this regard, Cekiso and Madikiza (2014) state that teachers' knowledge and application of reading approach instruction are essential to improve learners' reading proficiency. In the same vein, Sheorey and Mokhtar (2001) agree that in order to develop learners' reading skills, programmes in a conversant "manner, teachers' understanding of their learners' metacognitive knowledge about reading and reading strategies had to be improved."

2.5.3 Language proficiency affects writing.

Academic writing can be a barrier for non-native students with a poor command of English language proficiency who need to complete written tasks and assessments in English (Channing, 2017). In the same view, Jordaan and Moonsamy (2015) proclaim a relationship between students' skills in academic literacy and their writing skills in answering examination questions. DUT students in this study do not often use English socially or at home, a factor that can significantly impact their writing skills due to their limited proficiency in this language. Hence, most students entering DUT have been taught in their mother tongue. Furthermore, Ismail, Hussin and Darus (2012) have identified the problems and necessities encountered by second-language English

students at a higher education institution in Malaysia. At this institution, students experienced difficulties with critical thinking. They could also not produce comprehensible essays in terms of content due to an inadequate understanding and underdeveloped writing skills in a language other than their mother tongue.

"The declining level of writing skills among English First Additional Language" learners are a cause for concern (Akinyenye, 2012; Blease and Condry, 2015; Pineteh, 2014). However, writing is a highly critical skill. This view is supported by Blease and Condry (2015), who claim that writing is one of the most crucial language skills. Poor English language proficiency results in poor reading and writing skills that have a negative impact on students' success levels at the tertiary level. In South Africa, poor writing skills of learners have been commonly ascribed to the "teachers' lack of knowledge of effective writing approaches to constructively support the progress of writing", especially among second language learners (Blease and Condry, 2015). Students build meaning by rewriting old discourses and appropriating and adapting new discourses to make their own (Paxton, 2007). This, she explains, is based on a wide range of spoken discourses and oral traditions. This is called failing to master a given discourse (Gee, 1996).

Writing is an essential instrument for creating and expressing thoughts (Ngubane, Ntombela and Govender, 2020). It is also a means for combining linguistic structures when used for interactive communication (Isleem, 2012). Practising writing is useful because it helps learners use their target language and explore numerous linguistic elements, such as grammar and vocabulary, in their texts (Isleem, 2012). All these elements are what a tertiary student is expected to have. Still, it is daunting when an individual is not competent in a language, particularly in English in this case, as it is the language of learning. Apart from that, verbal comprehension is also one of the important prerequisites for written competency at the university level. Importantly, not all students

who have met the aggregate requirements to enter university, particularly DUT, are competent in English.

"Language is the means by which learners access knowledge in all other learning areas" (Keary and Kirkby, 2018). Thus, language is initially established in a natural context (Spies, 2011) and is embedded in everyday communication within the situational context (Cummins, 1981), referred to as basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). BICS does not reflect the cognitive and academic demands necessary for literacy tasks. It is often the case that literacy tasks require decontextualised language. This type of language proficiency is called cognitive academic language proficiency, or CALP (Cummins, 1981).

It is possible for a student to speak English fluently but have inadequate writing skills, especially concerning the writing of coherent, organised assignments or essays, resulting in markers frequently being concerned about the quality of such students' essays. Learners should, therefore, improve their writing skills through active participation within their social and cultural contexts, including their classrooms (Dippenaar and Anker, 2018). Classroom instruction is required concerning the knowledge and beliefs about what students must learn, what they can do, and which methods will be best for individual learners. Furthermore, Isleem (2012) advocates that learners should develop critical skills such as innovation, creativity and self-expression through writing. He further mentions that these skills are critical for academic success. In the same vein, Akinyenye (2012) states that writing is significant for accountability in standardised assessments across the schooling curriculum. *Effective writing* is a skill that is cognitively based. It entails comprehension, application and writing well, which entails more than just following writing standards (Defazio *et al.* 2010).

Furthermore, a lack of academic writing skills can be a barrier for non-native students with poor English language proficiency who must complete written tasks and

assessments in English (Channing, 2017). The DUT students in this study did not use English socially or at home. Hence, most students entered DUT having been taught primarily in their mother tongue.

Students from poor backgrounds experience various challenges, mainly as a consequence of not having proper pronunciation skills, knowledge of grammatical rules and spelling, and how to construct a proper sentence because English is regarded as a foreign language. Moreover, in the study conducted by Hurst (2015), the students indicated that vocabulary limitations put them in a difficult situation because of their inability to interact with and understand the content and communicate both orally and in writing.

As much as excellence in writing is demanded, especially of a tertiary student, Channing (2017) states that "during my involvement with the assessment tasks of B. Ed. [Bachelor of Education] undergraduate students at a private higher education institution, I realised that non-native students experience obstructions with English as a medium of instruction". He further mentions that they sometimes write incomprehensible answers that negatively influence their academic performance. Consequently, a case study on English as the medium of instruction by Hu and Lei (2014) and Mahboob and Elyas (2014) at some overseas universities identified the problem with English as the learning vernacular, namely, that it is an obstacle that results in students' inability to comprehend the content and having limited speaking and listening skills in English. Students felt that they might not be able to understand the content completely when taught in English (Hu and Lei, 2014). Thus, if students cannot understand the content, they can perform extremely poorly in their English assignments and assessments. According to Konopak and Drum (1987: 67), writing assignments result in a stronger comprehension of knowledge and can be utilised to increase students' content understanding.

Reading and writing are vital for linguistic student development; hence, they help to acquire grammatical patterns. Writing is highly challenging as is speaking, as it requires knowledge of grammatical structures. The above situation is challenging to address if you possess low proficiency levels in English, as this situation creates barriers to academic success.

2.6 Academic literacy and English language proficiency

The ability to communicate in a language appropriate for an academic setting is an ability a student ought to have, particularly at the tertiary level. Subsequently, Stevens, Butler and Castellan-Wellington (2000: 5) confirm that academic language proficiency is used in teaching and other academic settings to obtain information. It is the language learners and teachers need to acquire access to and speak in the learning environment. Consequently, language proficiency comprises four discrete skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Ramcharan, 2009). According to Nation (2005), children acquire literacy skills from the foundation of a spoken language. Thus, it would be reasonable to expect that their reading system would depend on all aspects of language. However, a language used in casual settings may be easier to master than a language used in a reduced environment (Cummins, 2001: 68). Nonetheless, Mgqwashu (2009) contends that all students, whether they speak the language of instruction or their native language, require assistance in developing academic literacies across subjects.

Language proficiency is the foundation of all learning and is interrelated with a person's experiences. Moreover, communicating in one's native language is critical for understanding input in other languages. Once this is well entrenched, it frequently transfers to the student's second language, with beneficial results (Manyike, 2007).

Moreover, Cummins (2000) proclaims experimental studies that show that additive bilingualism has constructive effects on learners' cognitive, linguistic and academic

development. Thus, additive bilingualism encompasses the learners' mother tongue ability being used as a supporting and developing element simultaneously as learning takes place, leading to increased BICS but not increased CALP. Hence, language skills achieved in the native language can be transferred to second language learning. This notion is supported by Williams (1996), Durgunoglu (1998), Wagner (1999) and Cummins (2000: 3), who indicate that well-developed home language abilities facilitate improved additional language. On the other hand, this capacity emerges from learners' cognitive and metalinguistic abilities. Using the Mathew effect to explain the ability of strong command of the second language, it is posited that children with poor language skills and a short instruction command will automatically perform below par academically and have a falling intelligence quotient (IQ) score. In contrast, those with proficient language skills and good reading instruction will help students attain higher IQ scores and academic results. However, as Mgqwashu (2009) contends, all students, regardless of whether they speak the language of instruction as their first language, require assistance developing academic literacies across disciplines.

However, students in multiracial schools find themselves in submersion contexts where subtractive bilingualism occurs. The students in that environment have no support in their mother tongue, and all learning takes place in their second language, and they may or may not be orally proficient in it.

2.7. Linguistic proficiency and academic success

L2 scholars posit that language learning is a transitional process with a different and noticeable end product. Ramcharan (2009) further mentions that learning in humans is understood to be the acquisition of the rules or sequences of language.

Low levels of academic language proficiency are regarded as one of the leading causes of the lack of academic success experienced by many students (van Dyk and Weideman,

2002: 5). Many researchers have mentioned that a lack of English proficiency has affected many students in the learning environment. Ivan and Coşkun (2016: 1984) also mentioned that language proficiency is another critical factor influencing academic success. In research done in Turkey at a private university with approximately 11 000 students, it was recorded that 24% of the students felt that their English proficiency was insufficient to learn their subjects in detail; 31% did not feel confident enough to participate in classroom discussions using the English language; and 30% experienced difficulties following lecturers who offered content through the medium of English (Collins, 2010). This research also revealed that students tended to memorise content without engaging with it.

However, according to Wales (1990: 174), learners who are already literate in their L1 understand the reading process and can transfer the process skills to reading in their L2. Hence, language learning skills boost a learner's academic performance (Ramcharan, 2009). He further asserts that learners who are not completely proficient in English attain poor academic results. The present study at the Durban University of Technology will also focus on the so-called "at-risk students".

Language learning is a natural process for natives, but for students of other languages, more effort is required to become proficient in it (Kumar, 2017). Moreover, learning a second language entails acquiring a language with its own system of rules about which little is known. This creates a considerable problem for students when they must express themselves in English. Amongst other things, Shamim, Abdelhalim and Hami (2016) point out that non-native students' command of English is not adequate for them to follow lectures, read and understand the content, and answer examination questions on the content. The importance of language instruction throughout a student's educational journey cannot be overstated (Drummond, 2016).

In recent research conducted by Ramcharan (2009), it was found that the learners lacked average proficiency in English, which hampered their academic success. Accordingly, Cummins (2001: 74) emphasises that children with a poor command of English and a lack of academic proficiency in English as the language of instruction will eventually be left behind unless the instruction, they receive permits them to understand the input. Similarly, Evans and Cleghorn (2012) state that adequate proficiency in the language of learning is critical and provides access to the language needed for higher education as far as English is concerned. When students experience difficulties with their studies, at some point, these challenges will contribute to them not finishing their qualifications in the stipulated time.

Cummins (1984) also argues that it must not be assumed that students' ability to interact in everyday social situations will be sufficient for cognitive communication in an academic context.

Usually, students take English as a subject, not a language, and they only study English to pass the examination and not to understand it. In turn, Park (2016) found that academic acculturation through a second language was the most challenging aspect for students who were not studying in their home language. Learning English as a medium of instruction creates a formidable challenge for students unfamiliar with the language. Therefore, it poses a formidable hurdle that hampers students from obtaining good results.

Furthermore, Cummins (2001: 74) highlights that students with poor academic proficiency in the language of instruction will tend to be left behind. Likewise, Nyika (2015) contends that learning English as the primary medium of instruction at universities contributes to the poor academic performance of some indigenous students at universities. Hence, most students at DUT come from poor socio-economic backgrounds, which mostly affects their command of English. In South Africa, learners

from Grade R up to Grade 4, are taught in their native language and from Grade 5 up to Grade 12 in English. In addition, Wildsmith-Cromarty and Balfour (2019) further ascertained that the English language is taken as the first additional language. It often becomes the language of learning from the lower grades. Thus, it has become a common practice for teachers to code-switch to the language they understand better than any other language and in which they are more conversant, particularly "when explaining concepts or when teachers notice that their learners have difficulty understanding the subject matter the teachers are trying to bring across to them" (Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, 2004). Along the same lines, Lafon (2009) also explains that code-switching has always occurred in classrooms, with teachers and learners moving between the official and another language they both are familiar with. Various studies have revealed that code-switching is a typical feature used in South African society as it is a multilingual country (Murray, 2002: 439). His phenomenon of code-switching aids in eliminating the language barrier, and code-switching to the local language expedites understanding and permits students to express themselves more freely (Lafon, 2009). Thus, code-switching can be used by multilingual educators to assess their students' linguistic proficiency (Chetty and Mwepu, 2008)

In order to overcome the problems of inadequate English comprehension, many black students resort to writing learning strategies that result in the superficial regurgitation of information while frequently lacking understanding or insight into what has been memorised. Moreover, according to scholars (Maher, 2011 and McKenna, 2010), because English, which is the language of learning and teaching in most higher institutions, is not their first language, South African students are the most affected by this difficulty. What is needed is a deep approach that requires understanding and deeper information. Therefore, it is evident that students' language ability is essential to academic success and should not be taken lightly. Moreover, language proficiency is the backbone of all learning and is partially related to a person's experiences (Ramcharan,

2009). Correspondingly, the leading cause of students' struggles within the academic framework is their lack of competency in English, which is the language of classroom teaching in higher education institutions (Naidoo and Tshivhase, 2003).

Similarly, Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) affirm a correlation between language and reading. Therefore, learners should be learning in the language they understand best. In addition, Van Rooyen and Jordaan (2009) indicate that academic success involves being able to understand and be active during the classroom discourse and having an excellent pragmatic understanding of the instructors' language.

In a recent study by Lendrum (2014), language proficiency and reading ability were investigated as predictors of academic performance for Grade 7 English second language students in a submersion context. The results showed that English language proficiency and reading skills significantly correlated with academic performance. Furthermore, Murray (2013) concludes that language proficiency entails various skills and is reflected in learning a language that will include grammar, phonology, listening skills, vocabulary, reading and writing skills, and communication strategies. However, when students encounter problems with the medium of instruction, a communication breakdown will occur, resulting in inadequate academic levels.

Due to the challenges that hamper attaining proficiency in English (Cheng, 2013; Lin and Scherz, 2014; Kagwesage, 2012), there are difficulties in understanding the academic content, a limited vocabulary and "an inability to express themselves adequately" in spoken and written responses to the academic content.

Recent studies by Hamel (2007) indicate that 75–90% of academic papers are written in English globally. Even China, which is mainly known as the country of Mandarin, is ruled by the massification of English and tests their students for English language competency before they are admitted to higher education. Following the globalisation movement and

its effect on the adoption of English in higher education institutions worldwide, some institutions even teach their courses in English, despite it not being the native language of the country. The difficulty of grasping the language of teaching and learning is most acute in nations where most of the population does not speak English as a first language and English is used as an additional language (Merisi and Mqwashu, 2022). Similarly, AyGegül (2015) speculates that the desire to keep up with English has compelled the non-English-speaking majority countries to incorporate English into their academic curricula, notably in higher education. However, the reasons behind English's dominance are rooted in history, and it is propagated "by systems of dominance and oppression that started long before the present", according to an online article by Paul Gordon Brown (2014).

According to Briguglio and Watson (2014), students have challenges with English when trying to satisfy the English language entry requirements to start their studies, which does not guarantee that they have the necessary academic skills to complete their courses once they have been accepted. In the same way as Mbirimi (2012) said, many students entering university in South Africa are under-prepared to meet the academic literacy needs of their modules and disciplines.

In this regard, Cummins (2001: 58) defines *academic language proficiency* as a language that occurs in the context of concentrated situations. High-order thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis are required. In short, cognitive academic language proficiency is required to prosper in an academic environment (Cummins, 2001: 58).

Ward, Stoker and Murray-Ward (1996) defined *academic performance* as the outcome of education and "the extent to which a student has achieved the educational goals". Therefore, if the outcome is not well produced, it leads to academic failure when English is introduced as the medium of instruction (Channing, 2017). In this regard, Hu and Lei

(2013) affirm that there is increased adoption of English “as a medium of instruction at universities across the world”.

Dearden (2014) defines the English medium of instruction as the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in a country where most of the population does not speak English as its first language. This also plays a critical role in students attaining poor academic results. Previous research has shown that many South African language speakers regard English as the most widespread medium of instruction used in schools (Kapp, 2000: 2).

Literature on English medium instruction (EMI) in higher education in Asia (Turkey, Malaysia, China and Saudi Arabia) suggests that it is problematic for non-native English speaking (NNES) students to comprehend the academic content. In Turkey, research done at a private university with approximately 11 000 students showed that 24% of the students felt their English proficiency was insufficient to learn subjects in detail; 31% did not feel comfortable taking part in class discussions through the medium of English and 30% experienced difficulties following lecturers who presented content through the medium of English (Collins, 2010).

Language proficiency is the ability to use a language accurately (Cloud *et al.* 2000: 60). Cummins (2003: 15) explains that receptive skills are developed prior to expressive skills because it is much easier to acquire information than give it. Furthermore, students can perceive more of what has been given to them than they can express themselves. Proficiency also varies depending on the function and context of communication (Manyike, 2007) and differs to the extent to which the language is conceptualised, which makes it easier to be processed. In addition, regarding the aspect of academic language proficiency, the most crucial capability is being able to create multifaceted meanings in the oral or written forms of the language itself. The next chapter will elaborate further

on how English has been established in South African education and how it continues to be happening.

2.8 Factors affecting students' academic achievement.

Students' academic achievements are influenced by many factors (Civan and Coşkun, 2016:1984). A number of factors have been identified, among them are low socioeconomic status and the poor quality of schools (Lafon, 2009: 1). Most of the students in the current DUT study come from disadvantaged backgrounds, which negatively influence communicative competence in English. However, language skill is a significant factor that influences academic achievement. Similarly, Manyike (2007) states that learners' language attitudes and socioeconomic conditions have negatively affected the education system. Accordingly, the Department of Higher Education and Training (2013) concurs with Manyike that "African students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds are still mostly affected by poor graduation and throughput rates."

Furthermore, language proficiency in English is affected by a variety of factors. The most important moderator of examination performance, according to Van Eeden, de Beer and Coetzee (2001: 171), "is reading proficiency". "The reading situation in South Africa is a national education catastrophe", according to the majority of particularly, Black kids" (Pretorius 2002: 170).

2.8.1 Student's social background

Dawes, Yeld and Smith (1999) and Miller (1989) state that in South Africa, students from rural areas performed more poorly than students from urban areas. Most South Africans live in poverty is a well-known fact. Consequently, they are vulnerable and isolated (Pretorius and Mampuru, 2007; Prinsloo, 2005). Lafon (2009), citing Lolwana (2004: 47), mentioned that "there is an increasing weight of evidence that, after poverty, language,

and in particular proficiency in the medium of instruction, is the largest single factor affecting learner performance at school". This is influenced further by the degree of urbanisation and socioeconomic backgrounds. Pascarella, Terezini and Wolfle (1986) mentioned that the lower one's socioeconomic status, the more likely they are to fail. According to Chisholm (2015: 51), most rural areas and township schools still exhibit a great deal of deprivation. The same view is expressed by Hlalele (2012: 269), namely that rural residents work in the agriculture sector for low salaries and face various barriers to learning. However, despite that unfavourable environment, students are expected to perform well in the language of instruction. Furthermore, in some rural areas, English is regarded as a foreign language (Stephen, Welman and Jordaan, 2004). For students whose mother tongue differs from the medium of instruction, academic progress heavily relies on their linguistic abilities, and overcoming language hurdles becomes even more challenging in stressful circumstances.

The truth is that rural students' situations are exceptionally unfavourable compared to urban students. It is not easy to educate rural children, as there are multiple challenges that they face in their daily lives. For instance, many students in the study at DUT come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and they come to school starving despite the feeding schemes in many South African schools. A shortage of physical and learning resources, as well as overcrowded classrooms, further block the road to literacy (Blease and Condry 2015). They have few opportunities, for instance, access to the internet, language laboratories and audio-visuais. Czerniewicz and Brown (2014) confirm that rural scholars experience poor learning conditions.

Moreover, in rural areas, poverty and illiteracy still prevail. Furthermore, Hoadley (2012; 2016) discovered a surprising consistency in the small-sized studies on language learning and teaching that she reviewed. She uncovered the exact aspects of classroom practices that have impacted learning and showed the teachers' knowledge base limitations.

There was very little learner interaction with books; oral discourse was dominant; low levels of cognitive load were combined with a slow delivery rate; very little individual reading or writing was done; and inadequate evaluation was used.

2.8.2 Schoolteacher's English proficiency

Young, inexperienced black teachers from rural areas are often under-qualified, have low levels of English proficiency and operate at a literal level. In a recent study, Channing (2017) found that "pre-service teachers' inadequate English written proficiency contributed to almost a third (25,6%) of the reasons for their poor academic performance". Moreover, she contended that there was a need to develop new teaching strategies to assist and provide language support to non-speakers of English in the higher education system. Furthermore, Moyo (2011) emphasises that there are not enough trained language teachers and that most are not adequately equipped to teach English as the language of instruction. Hence, most black students pass the English matriculation exam with moderate marks and not with distinctions. 'Children learn more effectively when they understand what the teacher is saying (Drummond 2016: 71).

In the present study at DUT, most students did not get good results at their previous schools in English as a subject as it was the second additional language. English in rural schools is not an "L2 but a foreign language, as it is not often used in the immediate environment of the learner" (Ramcharan, 2009). This explains the poor academic results and the student's lack of English proficiency. It is, however, becoming problematic since the students are taught in English, as the teachers may not be proficient in English and the administration and communication of the school may be the predominant local language. The situation of students under study at DUT is that they do not possess academic language proficiency, which poses considerable challenges for teaching and learning. Moreover, during the interview she had with the participants, Murray (2002: 438) learned that several African teachers are aware of the problems their learners

encounter when learning a second language and that they would do better in their mother tongue. That was during the interview she had with the participants.

Academic language proficiency is a prerequisite for academic success (Van Rensberg and Weideman 2002: 1). According to Carnow, Steenkamp and Ekron (2020), teachers often struggle to express themselves in English and resort to using their home language in their classroom teaching. In the process, they pass their poor or incorrect use of English on to their learners. Nonetheless, under these challenging circumstances, the home language becomes a bridge to assist "learners to understand better, improving their chances for success" in the subjects they teach (Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, 2004). When language differences limit communication, teachers may find their tasks more challenging than usual (Manyike, 2007).

Most teachers lack English proficiency. Furthermore, the resources in informal settlement schools and teacher training are inadequate, and the classes are too large. These obstacles hamper the proper teaching of English as a medium of instruction (Ramcharan 2009). Dornbrack and Atwood (2019) observe that many teachers who teach English as a first additional language in classrooms have a limited understanding of English and its writing approaches. As such, they use inappropriate writing strategies in their classrooms. The majority of teachers, therefore, struggle to apply the curriculum in practice. "This also affects their attitudes towards writing and teaching" (Ngubane, Ntombela and Govender, 2020).

To make the problem worse, many teachers are also not sufficiently proficient in English to teach the different content of subjects effectively through the medium of English (Lemmer, 1995: 88). However, Mahlobo and Lemmer (1996: 334) posit that the English language proficiency of South African learners is a requirement for academic achievement. Concurrently, Lendrum (2014) indicates that "teachers may not be proficient in English and administration and communication". Therefore, a mutual

language or a dominant language must be used, which will make the communication much more understandable. In addition, Moyo (2000) indicates that "teachers who are trained in the learners' mother tongue often continues teaching in their mother tongue when the medium is English." This has created a considerable problem when written tests need to be answered in English.

Eventually, English may be like a foreign language to the learners since they are less exposed to it, their grasp of the language is poor, and they cannot produce outputs in the language that are up to standard. Undoubtedly, the English deficiencies of students influence their academic performance. This can pose a barrier for non-native students with inadequate English language proficiency (Channing, 2017). Students cannot possess good writing skills and acquire the excellent English proficiency that their teachers lack. The other challenge is that teachers in rural areas cannot attend workshops and seminars to learn better ways of teaching. Hence, most of the teachers are trained to explain new concepts in various subjects (Chick, 1992: 33). In the study that was conducted by Venzke (2002), it was found that many teachers and researchers observe low levels of English proficiency among South Africans.

A recent study by Channing (2017) describes receptive and expressive language skills under the "clarification of concepts". He or she speculates the following regarding expressive skills:

Expressive language is indicated as the 'output' of language and includes not only words but also the grammar rules that dictate how words are combined into phrases, sentences and paragraphs.

2.8.3. Students' cultural background.

According to Ramcharan (2009), only when sociocultural concerns are considered can language competency be achieved. In order for learners to gain linguistic competence,

teaching and learning must occur in a communicative context. Cummins (2012: 41) states that English is regarded as the language of instruction that unintentionally side-lines students' L1 knowledge and cultural experiences as largely irrelevant. Students' academic performance and confidence are lessened in a relatively short time.

Gatwiri (2015) states that one of the most critical issues facing international students is the language difficulties they experience. Not all Black students speak English confidently compared to their white counterparts and are out of their depth in an alien culture. The situation in South Africa is exacerbated by the morality of Bantu languages, especially in an academic context, while English is based more on the written word.

Multicultural and multilingual classes often pose linguistic barriers for learners due to the language differences between teachers and learners (Ramcharan 2009). Consequently, fewer students will obtain excellent academic results if there is a barrier between communicators. DHET (2002:4) states that language has been, and continues to be, a barrier to higher education access and success. Many students are not fully proficient in English as well as Afrikaans, despite the fact that these languages predominate in South African academic institutions.

Concurrently, with what has been explained by Murray (2013: 299), *language proficiency* is the general communicative competence that will enable its users to "express and understand meaning accurately, fluently and appropriately" and comprises generic skills and abilities. However, these are the skills that are mostly lacking in students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Consequently, they are the most affected by these challenges, even though they try to meet the educational standards of the institution. Importantly, Ramcharan (2009) contends that the use of language in a multilingual society is a matter of functional integration. Moreover, Kramsch (2009) argues that the milieu in which English is learned often affects its acquisition, thereby pointing to the multifaceted relationship between acquisition and participation. Accordingly, culture

cannot be separated from language, and language permeates all aspects of people's lives. In effect, language allows people to identify as members of a particular social group. For instance, concerning students under study at DUT, sociocultural factors influence their language development considerably.

In her study, Rudwick (2008: 110) finds that for about 46% of the high school pupils who had completed the questionnaires, English had a destructive impact on their culture. It can therefore be inferred that a good portion of the learners rejected English as a marker of their cultural identity. However, this explains not only the social and cultural characteristics but also the dimensional linkage between language, culture and identity that is still predominant today (Klapwijk and Van De Walt, 2016: 70). It is evident that language and culture are intimately correlated and subsequently influence each other (Mahabeer, 2003: 23). Importantly, Ramcharan (2009) indicates that Black learners at predominantly White schools have adopted the dominant culture and have rejected their racial and cultural identities.

In addition, in the previous year, academics and researchers have been developing novel teaching methods to help students from diverse cultural backgrounds learn English more quickly. Thompson (2004) advocated "color talk" in addition to the use of culturally appropriate 'caring-in-action'. The differences between the two are that "color talk" advises that all the instructors in the classroom be conscious of the diversity of their students' cultural requirements, and on the other hand, 'caring-in-action' helps with this kind of training. It allows students from different racial and cultural backgrounds to express themselves freely and without inhibition while still being open to learning new things.

2.9 Conclusion

The medium of instruction has a substantial influence on the student's chances of success and their ability to excel in their academic studies. Literature aids in giving light to the study, as students are being taught in a language, they are unfamiliar with. The English language is challenging and very difficult for students who speak English as a second language. They cannot communicate their learning effectively in a second language because of their limited cognitive abilities and they are not native English speakers. Nonetheless, everything will be explained next as the chapter unfolds the research methodology undertaken under the study. It will explain how the research was conducted, the research approach, the design, the research participants, data collection, sampling method, data analysis, validity and reliability and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore how first-year students who speak English as a second language interact with English as a medium of instruction at DUT and how this influences their academic achievement. This chapter introduces the research methodology employed for the study. It explains and justifies the research approach, design and study techniques. The chapter contains a detailed description of the sampling method, data collection procedures, and analysis. Also described are the steps taken to ensure the research's quality and ethical consideration in its execution.

3.2 Research approach

The researcher has worked within the methodological paradigm of qualitative research. The study was thus an exploratory inquiry conducted within a qualitative paradigm, which deals with how particular individuals experience a particular phenomenon (Saunders *et al.* 2012; Denzin and Lincon, 2005). This approach is suitable because the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of English as a medium of instruction among selected first-year students at the Durban University of Technology in the Department of Public Relations for whom English is the second or third language.

According to Numan (1992), qualitative research assumes that knowledge is relative and that all knowledge and research are subjective. The goal of qualitative research is to investigate phenomena in their natural environment. Interviews, observation, and other approaches are used to collect data, while analysis allows for the researcher's presence.

3.3 Research design

The study's qualitative design involved a case study of students at DUT. According to Maree (2007), a case study gives academics a chance to examine a real-world phenomenon while learning why it occurred. The actual occurrence in my study is DUT Black students who are studying through English instruction but are not competent in the medium.

Moreover, a case study is an object or unit of analysis for which researchers gather data to comprehend ideographic and nomothetic explanations of occurrences (Lubombo, 2010). A case study in this research was chosen to get close-up information by examining the students and determining to what extent the use of English as a medium of instruction affects non-native-speaking students' academic success. The case study is distinguished by paying close attention to a phenomenon to produce information that can be utilised to broaden and generalise theories outside its scope.

My study focused on first-year public relations students because the first year is crucial for laying the career foundation. These students are most affected in terms of their academic performance because they are second-language English speakers who come from under-resourced historically disadvantaged secondary schools in rural areas. This is among other factors that contribute to a poor command of English as the medium of instruction. Moreover, according to Brew *et al.* (2021), they also state that students who are above average academically and are positively exposed to these factors are likely to perform better as compared to those who are less exposed to these factors. More than 50% of our undergraduates do not complete their studies and black South Africans are far less likely to succeed than their white counterparts (Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2007). In

the research conducted by Casale and Posel (2011), it was revealed that English proficiency in South Africa is linked to socio-economic progression.

According to Ramcharan (2009), a case study is categorised by close consideration of a phenomenon with the purpose of acquiescent data, which is also accessible to magnify and generalise theories beyond the banded case system. Okeke and Van Wyk (2015) outlined the motivation for using a case study to reconnoitre a general problem within a fixed setting. This justification employed for my study examines how the use of English as a medium of instruction affects non-native-speaking students' academic success.

3.4 Research Participants

This research is primarily concerned with first-year Black students studying towards a national diploma in public relations at the Durban University of Technology. This group of students is particularly relevant as they are first-year students and at the foundation of their journey in their careers in PR. They are also the affected students who, when entering higher education, encountered considerable dislocation due to the language issue (Stephan, Welman, Jordaan, 2004). The study was targeted at two different categories of students, namely:

- Students who struggle to perform, otherwise known as at-risk students, and
- Average students who are performing above the average pass rate of 50%.

These students are studying at a university where English is primarily used as a medium of instruction and where their native language receives little or no support. DUT is based in KwaZulu-Natal with approximately 30 000 students, and I am also a registered master's student. In their first year, students are thrown into an English environment regardless of their prior language knowledge. This study focuses on how language matters affect students in their first year at higher learning institutions. As they progress towards their careers, they will increasingly be required to read to learn and be able to

read expository texts. They would need to analyse texts and be able to communicate expressively in public. The university where the participants are registered is well-resourced, and all students have access to the online library. This proved challenging, particularly for those living off-campus who experienced power outages while trying to complete assignments.

Willis (2007: 96) proposed that each individual participating in the research, whether the researcher, a person or a group, possesses a different understanding of the world, gradually built up through experiences. Carnow, Steenkamp and Ekron (2020) postulate that as individuals in a sample group share their understanding, meaning is built, and a new or different reality about the topic being studied is created. The Public Relations Department is also relevant because one of the professional competencies' students must have been language skills.

3.4.1 Sampling Method

Moreover, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) and Maxwell (2013:96), a purposive sampling method would provide in-depth understanding and information-rich data relevant to the research question and the goals of the inquiry. Purposive sampling is a technique for selecting people to represent a phenomenon based on criteria (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). In this research, first-year students were purposively chosen because the first year is a crucial stage in developing academic language competency, as this is the foundation stage of a career. It was chosen to assess the student's ability to cope with the linguistic demands of the curriculum and the tertiary setting because English as the language of instruction is very demanding at the tertiary level.

The population consists of average and at-risk Black NDip PR students for whom English is the second language. They were purposely selected and 86% of the students were isiZulu language speakers. Thus, most of them had attended isiZulu-medium schools,

which is rare in higher education institutions (Mashiya, 2011). They shared a common background that was poorly resourced and disadvantaged secondary schools in rural areas, which significantly impacted their academic performance. Children from rural areas may experience a background of poverty and live in physical environments that offer less stimulation and fewer resources for learning. Education at the secondary school level is supposed to be the bedrock and the foundation towards higher knowledge in tertiary institutions (Brew *et al.* 2021). The participants under the study regard English as their second language and the other two South African indigenous languages, isiZulu and isiXhosa as their home languages. According to Curtis, Gesler, Smith and Washburn (2000), the methodology used to choose the data must be compatible with the theoretical framework and the research goals.

3.4.2 Online focus group discussions

Online focus group discussions were used since it is easier to work with a group of students to acquire elementary information for research. A focus group allows students to communicate and freely discuss their difficulties, making it easier to identify their issues. It was much easier to interact with the students in the current study at DUT, and they were so free to say whatever they wanted without regard for their inadequate mastery of English. The students can work in a group setting, so the time constraint is not an issue. A focus group is a better alternative since it provides for clarification of definitions and makes it easier to understand the difficulties addressed. The group dynamics permit incentives and conversation to obtain additional knowledge, giving a more thorough picture of how students feel about the topic. As a starting point, broad questions were asked. Every student was given time to respond to the questions. In that way, a focus group allows all students to participate. Since the group interviews were conducted online, those who were not present during the interviews were given a chance to respond to the questions. The online questions were not deleted so that

everyone could see what transpired in their absence and for the benefit of this study. That is how everyone got to participate in the study.

A focus group discussion was used to collect data. A focus group is an informal discussion on a selected topic among a group of selected individuals (Wilkison, 2004). In this research, the discussion between the students and the researcher investigated how the use of English as a medium of instruction affects particularly first-year non-native-speaking students' academic success. In that regard, it enables an in-depth discussion on a specific area of interest with a relatively small number of participants that ranges between five and ten (Krueger, 2002). As the researcher engaged with the participants, they were able to share their experiences and the challenges they encountered with English as a medium of instruction in the institution. I was able to receive reliable data to address my study topic as the researcher through an in-depth group interview. A focus group is regarded as a crucial qualitative research technique that is highly effective in generating eloquent information about participants' experiences and attitudes towards various topics.

I was able to recruit 30 students to participate in my study from the total number of 72 students that I received. Given the fact that it is much easier to work with a group of students to obtain specific information for research, I then engaged in a focus group form of interview with the first-year non-native English-speaking Black students. In the group, students were free to divulge whatever concerned them about the language of instruction, and the problem areas were identified. The focus group is a more feasible option, as it allows for clarification of meanings and facilitates understanding as students raise issues while interacting. Comprehensive questions were used to test their level of understanding. The focus group also enables students to be active and allows for interviews or interactions within a group. As the interview progressed, I attempted to

identify the degree to which English language proficiency contributed to English second language speaking students' poor academic performance.

Focus groups are regarded as a critical qualitative research technique that is enormously effective in generating eloquent information about participants' experiences and attitudes towards various topics. A focus group comprises a relatively small number of participants, ranging between five and ten (Kreuger, 2002). Based on this formula and the targeted number of focus groups conducted, the total number of participants I managed to recruit for this research was 30. As much as the participants represent students from the Public Relations Department, a qualitative study does not seek representativeness or generalisation of the findings but to explain phenomena as subjectively experienced by participants (Saunders *et al.* 2012; Denzil and Lincon, 2005). According to Curtis, Gesler, Smith and Washburn (2000), the data selection strategy must be appropriate for the theoretical framework and research question. Therefore, the data selection was made to fit the purpose of my research.

The number of DUT students who participated in the study and their home language are illustrated in the figure below.

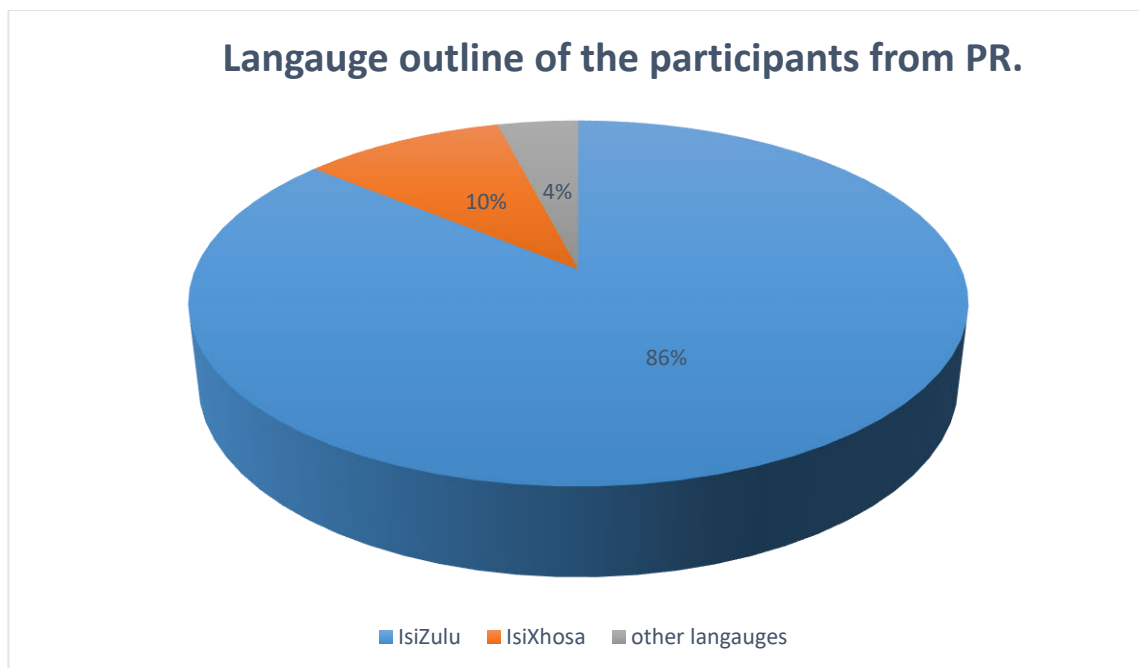


Figure 3.1: Language outline of the participants from Public Relations

Of the total number of students, 86% are from rural areas and poorly-resourced historically, disadvantaged secondary schools. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these students mostly attended online lectures, which may have negatively added to their studies' challenges. These students their experience with English is restricted, and although they are studying via remote education, they are not fluent in the language. Nonetheless, they indicated that English is their second language. The opportunity was given during the discussion for those who wanted to code-switch.

All the students were interviewed according to the classification of this study; students who struggle to perform, otherwise known as 'at-risk' students and average students. Participants were divided into two groups: Seventeen students were identified as average students and selected for Group 1. Thirteen participants were identified as at-

risk students and made-up Group 2. Hence, these two groups provided the data for the study

3.5 Data Collection

To generate data, the study used group interviews, and a purposive sampling method was chosen. The study comprised 30 at-risk students from DUT. The class register of the first-year students was obtained from the department. Then participants were individually approached and invited by the researcher to participate in the study. And they voluntarily participated in the study.

So, data was collected through online focus group discussions conducted via the WhatsApp social media platform in 2022. The interview took place on WhatsApp during the students' free time. The researcher personally facilitated the discussion through the WhatsApp group by posting questions to the participants during the interview. All the communication was done online due to the regulations of COVID-19. Prior to the interviews, the researcher first posted the interview questionnaire on WhatsApp. The research questions focused on the extent to which English language proficiency as a medium of instruction contributed to non-native English-speaking students' poor academic performance and their experiences with the language during the interaction with the groups. In this study, verbal and written communication were the most helpful tools, as the participants responded in both the written and audio formats. All students were accommodated, irrespective of their language variations and levels of competence in English. The researcher asked one question per day as the interview progressed in order to give all the participants the opportunity to respond to the given question on that day. The students were able to divulge their experiences regarding the language used at DUT as a medium of instruction.

The researcher allotted one to two hours to interact with the students. However, that was dependent on the time a participant needed to respond to a given question, which was agreed upon at any time of the day. Those who were not present during the interaction were also permitted to respond later. The questions were open-ended and mostly straightforward. Thus, the students were required to elaborate on their points as the researcher gathered the responses from their own words.

As the instructor, I paid attention to the whole process, including how the students responded to the question. The minority were able to answer the questions correctly and show that they comprehended the questions. The majority of the students responded with sentences that exhibited poor grammar and structure, resulting in incomprehensible English writing. Although the chance to ask any questions was given, none were asked. The purpose of asking questions was meant to determine if any of the participants wanted more clarity or information regarding the questions. As the interview format was not very strict, with all the above being said, only one student was shy to ask questions in the group. He even asked to respond privately out of the group because his English was poor, and he was shy. He also mentioned that he did not participate even in class or group discussions because he was shy. When students do not understand an instruction, an interpreter is required, or they will simply withdraw and become uncooperative in most cases when they feel overwhelmed in an environment that uses English as the medium of communication (Jackson, 2000). That was how the data that represented the phenomenon I intended to study was collected. The data can be considered reliable.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data was analysed qualitatively using deductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This method involves examining and describing data according to emerging themes and patterns. These themes were developed from a process comprising several

stages, including transcribing and coding essential themes that emerged from the data. These were presented as language data and analysed against the review of the literature.

The students' responses were captured online and transcribed, as all the conversations were on WhatsApp. This is the first and most crucial phase in qualitative research. Once all the responses had been transcribed, the data was analysed transcriptionally using a written verbatim transcription. All interview sets were analysed using the same method. The at-risk students are students who are struggling to perform academically and often get below the average pass rate of 50 percent. These students are at risk of being excluded academically. However, average students often perform at 50 percent or above of the average pass rate. The researcher noted that the average students were able to spontaneously answer the questions correctly, and they showed that they comprehended the questions. Nonetheless, the at-risk students struggled to answer the questions.

Although the interviews were online, the researcher did not only concentrate on the spoken responses, which were via audio, but also on other skills, including writing abilities, which came through in the form of a text. Since speaking and writing are two of the major communication skills in the public relations programme, participants need to obtain them and be highly competent. The results will be the main topic of discussion for this study; references to language proficiency and the use of English as a main code to receive information at DUT will be made when they are significant and help to clarify difficulties found.

3.7 Validity and Reliability/ trustworthiness (qualitative research)

Patton (2001) states that validity and reliability are factors that any researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the study's quality. While these terms are essential for quality in quantitative paradigms, in

qualitative paradigms, credibility, neutrality, conformability, consistency, dependability, and applicability and transferability are essential criteria for quality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this study, the validity or trustworthiness of the study will be ensured through the use of a clearly described methodology (the scientific process of conducting research) and the triangulation of multiple sources of information in the form of three focus group discussions (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

3.7.1 Validity

To ensure the study's validity, I focused on second-language English speaker students' speaking skills as a probable reason for their poor performance in their modules. The focus was more on spoken English than written English, which I evaluated during the interview session by employing sentences with simple structure. The interview was via WhatsApp in their comfort zone, so they were free to say anything they wanted about the questions being asked. I did not only concentrate on the spoken responses via audio but also on their writing abilities that came through as text. However, language competency encompasses more than just a student's speaking abilities. Since speaking is one of the critical skills in the public relations programme, students need to be highly competent in communicative skills. Nevertheless, the student's speaking abilities had not been improved in any manner so that they could demonstrate their actual English-speaking ability in real-life contexts. This also ensured that I measured what I had set out to do.

The interview accurately assessed students' academic English language ability, which is essential to academic success, to make critical decisions regarding their language production abilities. Purposive sampling was used to acquire data, ensuring, among other things, that the data was carried out through online focus group discussions conducted via the WhatsApp social media platform with two groups: at-risk students and average students. Theory evidence is another way to assess validity (Heale and Twycross,

2015). Cummins' BICS and CALP concepts, which distinguish between second language English speakers, basic social English proficiency, and their ability to master academic language, give a theoretical foundation for the validity of my study.

3.7.2 Reliability

The constancy of measurement is what reliability is all about (Heale and Twycross, 2015). The degree to which an interview will produce a consistent result when administered to the same group of students will be referred to as the study's reliability. Language proficiency, for example, cannot be measured in a second language study in the same way that height or weight can (Lendrum, 2014). This study is intended to analyse the interview among second-language speakers' students. Basic English-speaking skills can only be adequately measured when the interview is conducted in a free-space atmosphere where students are allowed to say whatever they want in response to the questions. There was also the option to code-switch to any language or rely on any other assistance from other language users to help students speak impeccable English. The measurement of second-language English speakers' proficiency was reliable because only expressive language abilities were examined in focus group talks and in written form. Nevertheless, writing proficiency was reliable because the whole session was online. However, the cell phone can correct a spelling error, although the responses and sentence structures were not well constructed and connected grammatically.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The study followed all ethical considerations of voluntary participants, confidentiality and beneficence. Gatekeeper's permission was requested from the Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. The required procedures to apply for ethical clearance for my research were followed, which the ethics committee office of the Durban University of Technology approved. No

inducements were provided to the respondents in the study. All the rights of the participants were explained in a detailed information letter. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the discussion on WhatsApp. Those who did not take part in the study were allowed to do so without any punishment. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were also guaranteed. Consent to WhatsApp discussions was secured from the participants before the discussion commenced.

3.8.1 Voluntary participation of the students

The researcher sent the participants an information letter about the study before any participant engagement. Everything was communicated to the participant in the information letter, including the fact that it was voluntary and that he/she might withdraw at any time. No monetary compensation for taking part in the research project was offered to students. However, the researcher offered WhatsApp data to the students who participated in the study, which was used for discussion to ensure that no one would drop out due to the online nature of the discussion. The discussion progressed smoothly.

3.8.2 Confidentiality

As far as confidentiality is concerned, the subjects' rights to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were taken into account. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) outlined the crucial ideas to consider when conducting research. Students received an informed consent letter from the researcher informing them about their rights and how confidentiality will be maintained in the study and stating the study's objective. Information was kept private. In order to adhere to ethical considerations, the researcher did not conduct research without the necessary approval. Students also received the consent letter, which they signed and returned. The consent and information letters are attached in Appendices A and B respectively. Each student was

allocated a number, and all details were recorded under that number to ensure that anyone who looked at the records would not be able to trace the participants. Data that may be reported in scientific journals or published will not include information that will identify you as a participant in this study. No participant's name was connected to the data gathered. This was done to protect the students' privacy. Furthermore, the guidelines in the Ethics and Research Statement of the Faculty of Management Sciences of the Durban University of Technology were adhered to.

3.8.3 Non-maleficence

The information letter clarified that there would be no harm to the students due to participating in the research study. The researcher clearly stated that, as participants, students will be engaged in focus group discussions from their residences due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

No risks, research-related injuries, or adverse reactions were anticipated. Moreover, they have no foreseeable risks, discomforts, or adverse reactions. All of that was explained in the information letter. Please see Appendix A for the attachment.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher goes over the methodology utilised to determine the role of inadequate English proficiency in students' academic achievement as second-language speakers. Only one type of data collection, a focus group with students in the form of an interview, was chosen. I could concentrate on low English competence among DUT students and how it affects their academic achievement. In addition, data analysis was also described.

The results of the research project are examined in Chapter Four. The goal is to identify potential and existing issues and recommend solutions.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to explore how university students' experiences of the English language as a medium of instruction at the Durban University of Technology affect non-native-speaking students' academic success. The study participants were Black students for whom English is an additional language. The researcher carefully reviewed the interview recordings as the interviews were conducted online, and the codes for the participants were created. The study was conducted under with objectives. In this chapter, the results of the empirical investigation are presented.

4.2 Presentation and discussion of the findings

This section elaborates on the findings and the way they have been presented. The first theme explains more about participants' experiences with English language as a medium of instruction at DUT. The second theme is about the effects of English as the medium of instruction on second language speakers' academic performance. The last theme is about students' awareness and the utilisation of services to improve their academic performance at DUT.

4.2.1 Experiences with the English language as a medium of instruction

Learners in rural areas also lack exposure to English beyond the classroom, as their home language is their language of choice (Brock-Une, 2015). Thus, according to the findings in the study that was conducted by Omidire (2019), one of the most frequently indicated challenges the students faced was limited expressive and receptive skills in English. Zulu (2014) reported that first-year university students from poorly resourced schools who

are speakers of English as a second language habitually enroll in university being under-prepared for the demands of academic work.

I find it very difficult; most of the time I find it hard to understand what is explained by the lecturer since they use English, not just English (*njee*) but a strong one. Some of us are coming from rural areas, poorly developed schools (*la besifundiswa ngolwimi lwethu*), most of the time. (Participant 1)

I find it very hard sometimes to understand some of the instructions and fail to give good answers. Sometimes I fail things I know just because I couldn't understand the instruction because of the language used as the medium of instruction. (Participant 2)

I find the use of English as a medium of instruction normal as I find it hard sometimes and easy at the same time, depending on what I'm doing. (Participant 3)

From the above quotation, the first student further mentioned that the level of her English language proficiency does impact her academic performance. Kagwesage (2012) determined that students encounter challenges in note taking during lectures due to their struggle with understanding their lecturers' English delivery, primarily because of the lecturers' rapid pace and pronunciation. However, all of this was mainly caused by having a limited English vocabulary. However, according to Venzke (2002: 20), citing Cummins (1999) argues that one should be careful not to judge the learners' proficiency in English upon their proficiency in BICS because learners sometimes are able to express themselves well in English in natural settings but still perform very poorly academically. Deficiency in cognitive abilities or poor motivation could be blamed for poor academic

performance when the learner has not yet developed adequate levels of CALP to cope with academic work.

According to Chisholm (2015: 51), most rural areas and township schools still exhibit a great deal of deprivation. The participant's statement above confirms that the academic performance of students from rural areas and poorly resourced schools are more significantly affected when compared to the academic performance of students from urban schools because language proficiency requires students to have access to the necessary resources in their schools (Omidire, 2019). Thus, other challenges include teachers not being adequately trained and supported to teach English or to teach in English (Williams, 2006; Omidire, 2019). So, because they come from under-resourced, historically disadvantaged secondary schools and from backgrounds where the university language of instruction is different from their home language, or rather, mother tongue language, and their background is regarded as a disadvantaged background according to this research. In addition to the poor quality of education, other social issues and poor economic status are also factors (Kotze, 2011).

Consequently, this translates into poor academic performance, because students may still not be able to operate optimally because of the language barrier (Baker, 1988). Although individuals might be influenced by their ecological settings, their identities cannot be defined based on their area; nonetheless, many of the students stay motivated to continue and pursue their dreams of the future (Omidire, 2019). For instance, like participants under study.

The researcher further asked the participants how the level of their English proficiency impacted their academic performance? Their responses were as follows:

Yes, I get lower marks. (Participant 1)

Yes, my marks are not good. (Participant 2)

No, I don't think so because I'm still performing the way I was performing during my high school level. (Participant 3)

This response indicates that students "found English as a stumbling block in their academic achievement" (Nkosi 2014). Furthermore, the responses above also reveal indeed that students are being under-prepared for tertiary literacy at DUT where the study was conducted. As their sentence structuring was not grammatical correct, this is based on the above responses that the researcher got from the participants. Poor proficiency in the English language therefore makes it difficult for under-prepared students to access the unfamiliar "discourse of academia. Thus, the researcher is in similar vein with the literature when it declares that general proficiency in language is not a reliable factor of learners' academic success. Although the students under study mentioned that they started learning in English at their lower levels of education, and nonetheless most of them also divulged that their experiences with English is good.

Here is no problem with English as a medium of instruction because I have been using English since in primary school to high schools. There is no problem with English. (Participant 4)

English has been a medium and I don't have a problem with it because it's much easier for me to communicate with outside people than isiZulu sometimes. (Participant 5)

For me, English as a medium of instruction has never been an issue; I got to learn it at an early age. My experiences when it comes to English being a medium of instruction are not so bad. (Participant 6)

According to Basic Education, after Grade 4, many learners switch to English, which results in most learners switching to a language of learning and teaching when they have reached a maximum of three years of learning English between three and four hours a week, according to the curriculum documents (The Department of Basic Education's National Curriculum and Policy Statement for Grades 7–9 for English, 2011: 7). Concurrently, many learners in South Africa who are African language speakers are expected to learn in their first language until Grade 4, and thereafter there is a switch to English or Afrikaans (Kamwangamalu, 2001).

However, when the participants were further asked, Does the level of your English proficiency impact your academic performance? They continued by saying:

Yes, it does because everything we study or write is in English. If your English proficiency is not good, it can make everything hard to understand. (Participant 4)

Yes, because I used to learn six subjects in high school and I managed to pass. So, as I get used to it, it makes it easy for me to understand it; read it with an understanding that will be easy to communicate with people who speak English. (Participant 5)

Yes, because academically, things have gotten easier as I've gotten used to the language. (Participant 6)

Furthermore, another participant mentioned that English has made him where he is today when he was asked "Does the level of your English proficiency impact your studies".

Yes, it is because it's the only language that made me to be where I'm today. As most of the subjects in high school and primary were taught in English for us to understand. (Participant 7)

Yes, because I see the improvement in my studies, and it is very interesting. (Participant 8)

Yeah, it does because things become easy when analysing and answering questions. (Participant 9)

Meaning that the preference for English and is very high. Students do regard English as a prestigious language. Consequently, Parmegiani's (2010) findings in the study that was conducted at UKZN have brought to light that most students favoured English to any other language for various reasons, for instance, academic achievement. This concurs with the findings of Moodley (2010), who indicated that students at UKZN did not prefer isiZulu to be used as another language of instruction at the university. Eventually, this view changed when students recognised that learning in their mother tongue makes learning better and more interesting than when learning in the second language (Nkosi, 2014).

I find no problem with the use of English as a medium of instruction, even though some terms may cause me to misunderstand the statement; otherwise, it is fine. (Participant 10)

Nonetheless, there were few students whose English was good, even their grammar was perfect and they mentioned that they knew English since they were young, meaning that their English experience is favourable for them as first-year students and thus compared with the rest of the participants in the study.

I grew up in areas where English was used as a medium of instruction and full of English speakers. I find it quite beneficial because I understand it. (Participant 11)

I find no problem with it as English Home Language has always been a medium of instruction for me from early primary all the way to high school. (Participant 12)

A minority of participants successfully answered the questions and showed that they comprehended the questions. However, many of the students in this research continue to struggle with expressing themselves in written English. Their preference of words is too weak for someone at tertiary level. They also answered in poor grammatical sentences, with incomprehensible English. Therefore, this aspect of my research is more relevant to the broader study.

A minority of participants successfully answered the questions and demonstrated their understanding. However, a significant portion of the students in this study continue to struggle with expressing themselves in written English. Their vocabulary choices appear insufficient for tertiary-level work, and they also provided responses in the form of poorly structured sentences with incomprehensible English. Consequently, research gains greater relevance within the broader study.

English has been a medium and I don't have a problem with it because it's much easy for me to communicate with outside people than isiZulu speakers. (Participant 13)

I find the use of English as a medium of instruction small difficult as it little challenging, sometimes when I want to get full understanding of it in a sentence. (Participant 14)

Hence, Chetty and Mwepu (2008) mentioned that a cognitive approach to teaching ensures that we succeed in presenting English as a potentially emancipatory force in students' lives. The fact that a student started learning English in a lower primary school with a predominant population of Black students, taught by a Black teacher who occasionally transitions from English to the language primarily spoken by the class majority while delivering content, it hinders the development of competence in English or any other language, for that matter.

I find it very difficult. Most of the time, I find it hard to understand what is explained by the lecturer since they use English not just English (*njeeee*). A strong one, some of us are coming from rural areas, poorly developed schools (*la besifundiswa ngolwimi lwethu*), where we were being thought in our native language} most of the time. (Participant 15)

The literature confirms that code switching, and translation are frequently used in South African classrooms when students interact with academic materials and utilise resources they have in other languages (Madiba, 2014; Probyn, 2009). The participants under study were also experiencing code-switching. Outwardly, at the university level, it is essentially acceptable that instruction will take place in English, and English seems to have cemented itself as the language of instruction at schools in South Africa (Klapwijk and Van Der Walt, 2016: 67). Moreover, learning English should not be the only goal of education (Brock-Utne 2010: 95). According to Klapwijk and Van Der Walt, (2016: 68), "students apprehend the prominence of being proficient in English, the language serves as a means to an end".

In attempting to address the objective of this study and from what has been gathered from the participants, it was noted that student highly regard English as a prestigious language that despite the fact that South Africa is a multilingual country. Thus, English is

a lingua franca in higher institutions. Klapwijk and Van Der Walt, (2016: 67) highlight that English language proficiency is a requirement for admission to higher education in South Africa, which is a sign of job opportunities and upward social mobility. The below responses were further taken from the students, when the researcher question the students that “How do you find the use of English language as a medium of instruction? And do they think that their level of English proficiency does impact their academic performance?

I personally think that English is the best language as a medium of instruction because we’ve got different people from different places who obviously speak different languages, so English is the best way for us to understand each other and be able to communicate. It is easy to understand what is being taught by the lecturers and/or tutors, although sometimes it may be challenging, but we are given chances to ask so as to understand. (Participant 16)

Well, I wouldn’t really say it's easy, but it's understandable, and it depends on how you interact with questions and dissect them (Participant 16)

Participant 17 further mentioned that

I think English is the best language to be used because it acts as a medium language for us to communicate. The university or the institution consists of various students from various backgrounds. (Participant17)

No, it does not affect my academic performance because I am able to cope with the way they phrase questions an also their notes. (Participant 17)

The study is not claiming to propose that English instruction should be replaced with instruction in another language. However, something must be done to assist the first-year students in improving their command of English in order to excel in their academic performance. As South Africa has nine indigenous languages that are spoken in our country, English should be accompanied or be effectively placed with one South African indigenous language that is mostly spoken by the majority population of that province.

4.2.2 English language effects on second language speakers' academic performance

The participants were asked in which aspects of learning (reading, verbal comprehension, and writing) they found English most challenging. There was a participant who responded by saying:

“Verbal comprehension”

And then, when he was asked to explain how his proficiency in English affected him in that area, he replied:

I struggle a lot with questions to the lecturers, and sometimes you find that maybe we given a group assignment and I have to participate and communicate in English, and u find that u know the exactly (ukuthi mele ngithini ngesiZulu), but I struggle to find the words in English. (Participant 1)

This statement confirms exactly what was asserted by Cummins (1999) when he differentiated between BICS and CALP and argues that one can have proficiency in English upon proficiency in BICS because students sometimes are able to express themselves well in English in ordinary scenarios, but still perform very poorly

academically when they lack cognitive abilities, which is CALP, which means that it has not yet developed adequately to perform with an academic load.

Under the circumstances, reading and writing seem to be the most challenging aspects for first-year students under the study. Another participant said that she is mostly challenged by:

“Reading”

She further said that:

“Sometimes it is hard to read aloud, or maybe in front of others. Some words become challenging. When it comes to pronunciation, most of the time, I prefer reading in silence”. (Participant 2)

The statement above confirms what has been alluded to in literature: a lack of regular English language practice results in a lack of confidence in one’s ability to read and speak English fluently and freely. Ivan and Coşkun (2016) mentioned that a language skill is another critical factor influencing academic success. This deficiency contributes to the issue that most students require the support of their lectures to write, read, listen and comprehend comprehension material. Additionally, they struggle with writing well, listening intently, and using English to its full potential (Hurst, 2015).

The participant mentioned that:

Reading—because I can’t pronounce well English words, especially when they start with ‘gr, dr and cr”. (Participant 3)

When she was further asked to explain how her proficiency in English affects her in that area, she said:

“When I fail to manage grammar in a sentence”.

The majority of students lack the abilities to communicate effectively in a written format, which will enable them to be successful after graduation (Defazio *et al.* 2010). Furthermore, as far as writing is concerned for a tertiary student, Defazio *et al.* (2010) highlight that it is critical for students at all levels to not just be strong written communicators but also to recognise the value of good writing abilities. Furthermore, being able to critically evaluate the writing of others is a vital aspect of written communication, particularly at the graduate level and in professional programmes. The following participants mentioned that writing is one of the challenging aspects:

“**Writing:** is the aspect that I am mainly being affected at”. (Participant 4)

“Because sometimes (*ngiyashesha*) when it comes to writing and I end up missing words in between”.

The participant 5 also mentioned that:

“Personally, for me, it has to be **writing**”. (Participant 5).

She was further asked how her proficiency in English affects her writing. The answer was:

I’m pretty sure it is negligence on my side because I hardly pay attention to grammar when I’m writing anything long, like essays, for an example, and due to that, a lot of marks get penalised on my essays.

However, with all the challenges that students are facing, they seem to be unaware of their incompetence in L2. From the evidence that has been discovered by the research, it was clear that the majority of non-native students lacked the abilities that would have enabled them to handle academics, although they think they are coping with English. Academic texts written in English are often quite dense and complex and, hence, inaccessible to a student who might only be proficient in conversational English (Zulu 2014). Hence, during the examinations, students are only expected to answer questions, but they are unable to construct original sentences of their own because of their limited vocabularies (Kumar, 2017). This causes an enormous predicament since students at tertiary institutions are obligated to have necessary skills such as critical thinking, critical reading and critical writing. Such skills are considered significant in coping with academic stresses, particularly PR students. From this perspective, it could be concluded that tertiary students are said to be academic language competent when they are able to infer, express opinion, think critically, form personal arguments and establish their own viewpoints (Merisi and Mgqwashu 2022). Participants under study also lacked the language of learning and teaching English linguistic abilities, which is the medium of instruction in the study.

4.2.3 Students' awareness and utilisation of services to improve their academic performance

This section has to do with all the resources that DUT offered the first-year students, because they are the ones who are most affected. When they enter tertiary education, they are overwhelmed by the environment and the language of instruction that they are not proficient in. Universities with a high intake of students with a low proficiency in language are compelled to offer certain courses to assist students in the transition from their previous education to university learning (Zulu, 2014).

I've never used writing centre and there are no services that university provided to improve our language and writing skills that I know. (Participant 1)

It is apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative effect on students' success as well. These students did not have any access to the institution as everything was online. Other students mentioned that most of the communication with their lecturers was online, so even the tutorials. Attending the tutorials assisted them because they got the chance to ask questions that were not clear during lecture.

It tutorials, but I've never used one, and I think there are some programmes that help students adapt to higher institutions. (Participant 2)

The students were also using tutorials as a support structure that were facilitated by tutors, during those tutorials sessions students would ask any challenging aspects they had during lecture. However, in tutorial sessions students are also given chance to explain and debate intellectually academic concepts that are meant to be challenging to them. Although, the above statement seems to be vague. What does it mean, for someone who is supposed to have every information about the institution that could aid him/her with academically to say?

"I think there is some programme that helps students to adapt to the higher institutions".

This statement is having two thoughts: that the student never used any of the services because are not available to him. Or rather the student never used any of the resources because there was no need for him to have access to them.

Well, not much due to COVID-19. And the other thing is that although we have access to the library, in most cases, the load-shedding contributed negatively to

our studies as well, because whenever we had to use computers in the library. It would be much easier to have individual tablets or compact computers that are not fully dependent on electricity and will be manageable by us. (Participant 3)

I use the school library online, nakhona. I use it when doing research for my assignment. (participant 4)

It was not only the pandemic that was affecting students as other factors, but also load shedding was the factor; the interruption of electricity supply was also affecting students under study. Meaning that when they needed to use library, they would have to leave early because there would be an electricity supply. Thus, the vulnerability and desperation of the students make them eager to study. The students even suggested other compact devices that they could use to avoid this phenomenon. This statement also reveals that when first-year students enter higher institutions, their first year of education is most challenging as they depend on school resources for everything and have achieved academic success. The sign of not having his own laptop, is a sign the participant cannot afford to have one; possibly because of his low socioeconomic background.

In the research that was conducted by Ramcharan (2009) the results showed that 79% of the learners performed below the 40% range. From the findings of my research, the above statement is concurrently confirming that it is true that students are having a serious struggle when it comes to comprehending the language of instruction, hence critical reading is one of the utmost aspects for the tertiary students to obtain and particularly the students in public relations. In my research the majority students mentioned that reading is amongst other aspects that really challenges them.

It was quite perturbing to find out that the majority of the students who participated in the study were having serious challenges concerning the university premises.

I don't know anything about DUT all I know is that (*kune*) student gym and they also offer student counselling (*kuphela*). I don't know where to get the information. (Participant 5)

Although the interviews were being conducted online, the students that I engaged with were full-time first-year students. The online classes had a huge negative impact on the students, who were still lacking in the language of instruction. Although the effects of COVID-19 were still noticeable, the fact that students are part of the institution means that they should have met their lecturer and been introduced to the university so that they would understand that they were no longer in the lower levels of study but at a university, and they would need to uplift their level of study. As the grammatical errors were plentiful in their responses, the following statement's sentence structure and choice of words are very poor.

The supplying of more technology appliances that make studying easier. And this could help me whenever I'm undergoing studying. (Participant 6)

On the other hand, DUT offers English as the medium of instruction. Since the majority of lecturers do not use students' native languages, they are unable to provide assistance in their mother tongue when needed, which hinders students' comprehension of the concepts during lectures. The findings in the study concurrently confirm what Cummins (2001) highlighted: that students who lack the academic language of the instruction will automatically be left behind, unless the medium qualifies them to comprehend what has been said by the lecturer. The participants in this research spent almost six months in the institution, which shows that these findings support the sluggish improvement of

language proficiency. Students only have conversations in English during lectures; afterwards, they revert to their comfortable home language. Their ability to learn the language skills required for academic success is hampered by this phenomenon. Ramcharan (2009) highlighted that social segregation is one of the obstacles to language acquisition for these students.

Most of the participants in this study did not have access to adequate resources or available services that could support their mastery of English as the language of instruction.

There are no services that are available for the first-year students.

Most of the time, (*kade ngisebenzisa*) Google. (Participant 7)

Moreover, in helping students progress in their language of instruction, libraries, English-language books, and newspapers stand out as crucial educational tools for improving language proficiency.

Nonetheless, when the researcher reviewed the interviews, she found out that there was a module called Cornerstone that was primarily designed for students as a kind of facilitating module used to enhance their command of English. Nonetheless, a participant mentioned that the module was not much help because it was more like a life orientation subject.

I'm not too sure about any of the resources that DUT offered for first-year students. The only thing that I know is that there was a Cornerstone subject last semester which was more like life sciences {orientation}; it not about aiding us with English or anything. (Participant 8).

When universities with a high intake of students with a general lack of proficiency in the language of instruction are obliged to offer certain courses to assist students in the transition from their previous education to university learning (Zulu, 2014), such courses are often offered in the first year of the student's academic career.

4.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings were represented, and these results are consistent with Cummins' distinction between BICS and CALP, which maintains that non-native English students' have a basic ability to communicate in cognitively undemanding language but do struggle in the context-reduced, cognitively demanding use of language. The English writing in their answers revealed that the students understood the basics of the language, but they had trouble with academic vocabulary and substance and lacked the ability to employ this cognitively demanding language in an appropriate English response. The analysis and discussion of the data follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The major goal of this study was to investigate how the use of English as a medium of instruction affects non-native-speaking students' academic success. In this chapter, the outcomes of the empirical exploration are provided. The researcher talks further about the study's overall findings and then presents the conclusion.

5.2 Summary of findings

This section analyses the findings of the study according to the themes that were presented in the previous chapter. The first theme is about students' experiences of the English language as a medium of instruction; the second one is about the effects of the English language on second language speakers' academic performance; and the last one explains the students' awareness and utilisation of the services they are using to improve their academic performance.

5.2.1 Students' experiences with the English language as a medium of instruction

The researcher also discovered that the participants displayed poor proficiency in English. Consequently, first-year university students who are English second language speakers from under-resourced schools in South Africa habitually enrol in university under-prepared for the demands of academic work (Zulu 2014). Nonetheless, students in this research displayed positive dedication to acquiring a second language. Moreover, some of the participants made it clear that they were from rural areas where their schools are poorly developed, and they were able to code-switch to their native languages with their teachers in their previous grades but are unable to do so at DUT.

The participants further elaborated that they find it difficult to express themselves in proper English. This demonstrates that students are facing difficulties with English as the medium of instruction, leading to poor academic performance, which is primarily due to their inability to express themselves effectively due to their limited proficiency in English. This shows that students are struggling with English as a medium of instruction. This phenomenon results in poor academic performance because the students fail to express themselves because of poor proficiency in English. Moreover, poor language proficiency and a lack of confidence lead to a lack of active participation during lectures. Poor proficiency in the English language therefore makes it difficult for under-prepared students to access the unfamiliar "discourse of academia" (Mbiri, 2012; Zulu, 2014; Merisi and Mgwashu, 2022). Most of the participants in the research were isiZulu and isiXhosa speakers. I also discovered that students had a different cultural context than most of their lecturers, so their lecturers may not grasp the various nuances of their backgrounds.

Nonetheless, the limits posed by the learners' demographics and the linguistic abilities of multilingual and multicultural education in South Africa prompted the necessity of this study. Eighty-six percent of the participants were from rural areas. Multilingual education should be considered in most South African higher institutions. South African indigenous languages deserve initiatives aimed at elevating their status to a more sophisticated level and providing them with comprehensive support. According to Chetty and Mwepu (2008), we successfully portray English as a potential emancipatory force in students' lives because of a cognitive approach to teaching. This statement confirms Participant 3's utterance that students regard English as a prestigious language because it is used worldwide.

The researcher found out that students find it difficult to absorb what the lecturer is portraying when their background experience is different. For instance, Participant 2

mentioned that students struggle to grasp the content of what is being delivered during lectures. The chance of getting remarkable marks during examinations is very low, and eventually that student may even drop out. Ramcharan (2009) confirms that when the teaching style, communication style, cognitive schemata, or background experience of the teacher is different from that of the students, they tend to find it difficult to grasp what has been delivered by the lecturer. However, this suggests that rather than solely focusing on one language, English, bilingual education could benefit students because of the close interactions between learning, culture and languages.

In the study, nonetheless, other participants, for instance, Participants 4 and 5, mentioned that they were having good experiences with English. Whereas, they lack writing, verbal comprehension, and reading abilities as second-language English speakers. When you investigate their sentences, the grammar is not correct and the choice of words in their sentences is very poor for someone in a tertiary institution studying towards a career in public relations. When the participants were further asked whether English affected their studies, the answer was yes, yet they have no problem with English as a language of learning and teaching. The fact is that non-native students do experience obstructions with English as a medium of instruction; they sometimes write incomprehensible answers that influence their academic performance negatively. Although the participants mentioned that, among other reasons, they favour English because it is the only mutual language known by many people, English is a lingua franca, which means South African students can communicate with international students at DUT. But we cannot ignore the fact that students are struggling with the medium of instruction. It is obvious that in most events, first-year English second language students' prior educational experiences which continue to have an impact on them even at the tertiary level have an outward impact.

Similarly, Weideman and Van Rensburg (2002) note that there is a strong association between language competency and academic performance and that low language proficiency is not just a problem for English speakers who speak it as a second language. Participant 6 mentioned that he used to study six subjects in English back in high school and managed to pass all his subjects. The difference between high school and tertiary education is that the knowledge you acquire at the tertiary level will be applied in the corporate world using English. Whereas the one you obtain in high school is only to become knowledgeable (Zulu, 2014). So, a strong command of English in students is paramount, and one cannot compare the command of English acquired at the school level with that acquired at the tertiary level. What seems surprising is that Participant 9 mentioned that when they are “analysing and answering questions”, it becomes easy for her to participate in studies, which is where the problem becomes contentious because many of the student participants are struggling with English as the medium of instruction to infer what has been explained by the lecturer during class into their own writing and understanding. Participant 11 mentioned that she grew up in areas where English-speaking people were dominant and English was used as a medium of instruction. This shows that when an individual who is a second-language English speaker is exposed to an environment where English is the predominant language, proficiency in English is acquired. Hence, the participant who is exposed to English, does not have a challenge with English as a non-native English speaker. Learners in rural areas lack exposure to English beyond the classroom, as their home language is their language of choice.

This study's research findings could be employed in a development effort to improve learners' educational experiences. The study participants were level-one students in the Department of Public Relations. According to previous research, apart from the fact that the majority of first-year students learn English as an additional language, (Chetty and Mqquashu, 2022; Lea and Street 1998), research has also discovered that the mother tongue speakers of the English language do not possess academic language proficiency

since it is embedded in new ways of knowing. Due to the connection between academic achievement and language proficiency, this has been characterised as essential to learning in higher education (Read, 2019).

5.2.2 English language effects on second language speakers' academic performance

In this section, participants were asked which aspect among verbal comprehension, reading and writing affected them the most. One participant uttered that he struggled with **verbal comprehension**, having a limited vocabulary to use in English during lectures, which results in non-participation in any activities given in class, especially group work since he can only express himself clearly in isiZulu. This means that inadequate English proficiency can have a negative impact on students who struggle to express themselves in proper English, leading to lower self-esteem, particularly among those participating in the PR programme. While oral presentations, a form of public speaking, are meant to be beneficial for students with a poor command of English, this practice can also limit their ability to express their thoughts and views freely.

The other participants mentioned that low English competency contributes to low academic success. Merisi and Mgqwashu (2022) add that the primary cause of students' struggles within the academic framework is their lack of proficiency in English, which is the language of classroom teaching. Similarly, Naidoo and Tshivhase (2003) opine that students who speak English as a second language are more influencing (using fewer words), less accurate (making mistakes), and less successful, which leads to achieving lower scores. Some participants mentioned that their **reading** was affected. Another participant mentioned that she was struggling with the pronunciation of words in the text. Pronunciation really needs to be considered because communication skills are paramount for PR students, especially first-year students, as it sets the foundation for their careers.

Fifty percent of the participants struggle with **writing** aspects. Participant 4 mentioned that it is because she reads fast. It is possible that the participant reads fast in English because she does not want to pronounce words that she does not understand, which could potentially affect her self-esteem if she mispronounces words in the presence of her classmates. This is an upshot of her previous schooling experience where the teaching of language and writhing was not strong, and students mistakenly believe that if they are fluent speakers of English, they can automatically read or write well. So, if a student is afraid to make mistakes in the presence of her lecturers, how many mistakes can the student make in the assignment or examination? During an examination, a student can only infer or demonstrate what has been said to him/ her during lecture times. If a student cannot demonstrate that, then the student will automatically produce poor academic results. The participant declared that her writing is also affected, probably because of negligence. It is crucial for students studying at tertiary institutions to be observant of their academic performance because negligence can affect academic performance profoundly. Hence, this study concurs with Mbirimi's (2012) and Zulu's (2014) assertions that in the South African context, many students who are accepted into higher institutions are under-prepared to face the academic literacy demands in their modules and disciplines. Additionally, Zulu (2014) revealed first year students' perception of their language and academic writing skills often differ from their actual performance. This is simply because students may have inaccurate perception about their writing skill when they enter university as their high school experience would have exposed them primarily to simple method such as punctuation, spelling and grammar.

5.2.3 Students' awareness and utilisation services to improve their performance

This section expands on the awareness and utilisation of the services that are being used at DUT to enhance students' academic performance. When the participants were asked what services, they were using to enhance their English, they seemed to have little information about their institution, although that can be due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even though they can mention the services they think are available at DUT, they have never utilised them. However, Participant 7 pointed out that they were studying a module aimed at enhancing their skills. Despite the module's presence, they felt it was not effectively contributing to their English improvement. Instead, the participant likened it to the life sciences, which they had studied in high school. So, this is not beneficial for students to improve English. Zulu (2014) mentioned that universities with a high intake of students with a low proficiency in language should offer certain courses to assist students in making the transition from high school to university learning.

In the recent case study conducted by Merisi and Mqgqashu (2022) in a School of Education in KwaZulu-Natal, it was determined that, from a lecturer's point of view, there was an Academic Literacy for Undergraduate Students (ALUGS) module that was specifically designed for the second language students since they lack the abilities thought to be essential for academic success at the institution. Furthermore, he mentioned that this demonstrates that the module's main goal was to give the students, especially those who speak English as a second language, academic literacy abilities. Additionally, Zulu (2014) mentioned that at the university where he conducted his research, an academic module was introduced to students in 2009 called Advanced General Literacy in English that was meant to support students academically.

This is essential, as the majority of participants in this research lacked the abilities to acquire English as a medium of instruction. As much as the module can help here and there, it cannot help much without being accompanied by other services that second language English students can utilise to develop the English language as a medium of instruction for improvement in academics. Without a doubt, the ability to read effectively is one of the most crucial factors in the academic achievement of PR students (Weideman and Van Rensburg, 2002).

Nonetheless, a language support programme is required for tertiary students, especially disadvantaged students who are from backgrounds that are unfamiliar with the university's primary language of instruction, for this predicament to be overcome (Archer, 2010). However, education is not about acquiring the language but about obtaining the knowledge. "University learning goes beyond the ability to communicate in the language of instruction, whether in written or oral forms, but it is that which involves adapting to new ways of knowing" (Chetty and Mwepu, 2008).

We cannot hide from the fact that students select English as their language of instruction, regardless of whether we challenge the idea that English is a potent language that can be used for better personal advantage or a suitable language for students in higher institutions. Furthermore, Chetty and Mwepu (2008) confirm that teaching English is a way of giving students the identity tools they will need to unlock doors to opportunities in the future. On the other hand, the preference for English is that it is educationally compulsory for every student to have English as a subject in lower levels of education and is preferred as a medium of instruction in almost every higher institution in South Africa. A major technique needs to be implemented at DUT to help first-year Black students from disadvantageous backgrounds. Perhaps bilingual education should be implemented. This could probably be a chance for isiZulu to be implemented as one of the academic languages at DUT since the majority of students are from KZN, where the majority of the population predominantly speaks isiZulu. As per previous research, Cummins (2000) identified a correlation between first and second language proficiency in order for learners to move from one language to the next.

Although research conducted by Bangeni (2001) highlights that bilingual students would still choose to submit their written academic essays in English rather than their native languages, submitting in their native languages could prevent them from utilising all of the educational resources that are available to them. Nonetheless, a participant

mentioned that from his own perspective, the impact of English makes things much easier for him. “Yeah, it does because things become easy when analysing and answering the questions”. This response proves that English is regarded as a prestigious language by Black South African students. Further, for first-year Black students at DUT, the use of IsiZulu together with English, would also serve as a linguistic tie for communication, attaining knowledge and demonstrating proficiency in English. Concurrently, language hurdles, according to Merisi (2013), continue to be a defining aspect of the teaching and learning process in South Africa. Merisi and Mgwashu (2022) also highlight that South African students' lack of preparedness for higher education is not solely caused by obstacles they encounter as a result of learning and teaching in a second language. With that being uttered, we must not forget that every student at a tertiary institution is required to acquire English when they enrol in every institution, most importantly first-year students, notwithstanding how crucial it is to know English as a language of instruction.

Moreover, it was proven that the English grammatical proficiency of the participants contributes significantly to their poor academic performance. Similarly, Merisi and Mgwashu (2022) also stated that according to a lecturer's participant, these students lacked academic language in addition to the conversational language used in the classroom. Highlighting the impact of language-related frustration on lecturers, he added that for effective functioning within an academic setting, a lecturer must understand their intricacies of academic language, as the environment.

The irony of English as a medium of instruction is that students themselves praise the language for putting them in a better place equipping them with the necessary skills to make things easier when they want to write their essays. Similarly, though literacy is related to the mental processes that emerge from practising it over time, in contexts

heavy with written messages, writing and reading techniques are not always a neutral medium for transmitting knowledge (Lafon, 2009).

5.3 Conclusion

Among the factors that mainly affected the student participants at DUT were their previous poor education experiences with regards to English as a learning mechanism at their high school level. Their poor academic performance and their extended backgrounds played a role in their second language acquisition. However, English academic performance and heritage or indigenous language ability are favourably correlated, mainly when the former is employed to facilitate the latter (Garcia-Vasquez, Vasquez, and Lopez, 1997). Furthermore, Mbirimi (2012) and Zulu (2014) revealed that in the South African context, many students who are accepted into higher institutions are under-prepared to face the academic literacy demands in their modules and disciplines. Subsequently, the student participants in this study struggled to survive linguistically in academia because of their limited English language competence. Therefore, inadequate proficiency in the English language, makes it difficult for under-prepared students to access the discourse of academia (Zulu, 2014). The study therefore concludes that translanguaging (isiZulu language) could be the best teaching and learning strategy to enable students to draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire to access the unfamiliar discourse of academia and improve their academic performance. This would greatly benefit students at DUT, particularly in the PR department as most of them are from community backgrounds where university language of instruction is different from their home language. The question that would arise would notably be, why isiZulu? It is because DUT is in Durban, in KZN where 74.6% of people primarily speak isiZulu as their mother tongue. Students prefer to be taught in isiZulu just because they do not have another substitute, as they find it difficult to cope with learning in the medium of English (Nkosi, 2014). According to Gumbi and Ndimande-Hlongwa (2015),

while the importance of the English language in this global era cannot be overlooked, the importance of indigenous African languages in education can never be over-emphasised because they are a mother tongue to the most significant proportion of the population of the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Language and academic performance are interrelated because a student cannot have outstanding marks in the learning environment if he/she lacks the medium of instruction. Hence, I am saying this because the overall marks for the progress report at tertiary institutions are constituted not only by writing the examination but also by other assessments that include oral presentations. Oral presentations are imperative for PR students. Nevertheless, English proficiency should be emphasised in bilingual education (Chetty and Mwepu, 2008). Improving language proficiency in universities is a lengthy endeavour; there is no short answer.

Moreover, Hill (2009) stresses that the phrases "bilingual education" and "bilingual universities in language policy have grown in popularity in the literature. "Dual media instruction" refers to an educational setting where all students receive teaching in both languages, presuming that they have a minimum level of bilingualism. Between 2000 and 2002, language policies in South Africa's higher education system became official (Drummond, 2016). In contrast, several authors (Purser, 2000; van der Walt and Brink, 2005) have remarked that bilingual institutions are significantly more expensive to operate than their monolingual equivalents since the formulation and implementation of the standards are expensive processes (Haugen, 1983).

The results showed that first-year students need tutorial language guidance programmes or courses. The results also showed that the students responded in incomprehensible English because of their poor proficiency in the language and the answers were grammatically incorrect. In the programme, they should be taught English and advanced reading and writing skills, which will develop students' grammar, word order

construction and vocabulary. They will receive guidance, which will prove invaluable as the first year of tertiary education is often regarded as the cornerstone of student's future career. First, the fact that interviews were conducted online creates constraints. Second, interviews continued to be conducted while students were out for recess, preventing them from attending the meeting as it was scheduled before they went on holidays. It was, to a certain degree, challenging. Future researchers should make changes to collect data at a different time and not during university recess.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A



INFORMED CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, , 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 sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis 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
Thumbprint**

Date

Time

Signature / Right

I, _____ (name of researcher) 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

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) Date

Signature

Appendix B



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: English proficiency and academic performance of first year Public Relations Diploma students at the Durban University of Technology.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Lwazi Mthembu, NDip Language Practice, BTech; Language practice.

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Dr Musara Lubombo, Ph.D, MA, PG Dip PR.

Dear Student

My name is Lwazi Mthembu. I am a Masters student at DUT doing research for my Master's degree in the Faculty of Management Sciences in the Department of Public Relations.

I would appreciate if you could accept my invite to participate in the research that I'm conducting as part of my Master degree.

The study aims to explore how first-year students for whom English is a second language experience English as a medium of instruction at DUT, how this affect their academic performance and what services they are accessing in order to improve their language and writing skills.

Outline of the Procedures:

You will be asked to participate in focus group discussions with your classmates on how you experience English as a medium of instruction at DUT, and how this affects your academic performance. The discussion will also cover aspects on what services you are currently accessing in order to improve your language and writing skills.

The discussion will take place via WhatsApp. But, before commencement of each focus group discussion, each student will be emailed with a letter of information and consent form, detailing all the possible benefits and risks for participating in the study. This will be followed by verbal explanation of the same when we talk on WhatsApp. The signed consent letters will be emailed back at the end of the engagement. Opportunity will be afforded to clear any misconceptions and queries regarding the participant's involvement.

Depending on your availability arrangements will be made to meet on WhatsApp for this purpose.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts or adverse reactions to you.

Can I withdraw from the Study?

Participation in the study will be totally voluntary. You may withdraw from the research study at any time and for any reason. There will be no adverse consequences for withdrawal. However, data that you will have provided before withdrawal will still be used in the study.

Benefits:

The outcomes of the research are hoped to enhance the academic performances of the students. Secondly, publication of the research findings in journal is also envisaged.

Remuneration:

There is no remuneration for participating in the research study. However, you will be compensated for data you will have used for discussions.

Costs of the Study:

No costs will be incurred from you for this study. Any cost you incur on data will be reimbursed.

Confidentiality:

All the information collected will be kept confidential. You will be allocated a number and all details will be recorded under that number. This means that anyone who looks at my records will not be able to trace it to you. Data that may be reported in the scientific journals or published will not include information that will identify you as a participant in this study. This is done to protect your privacy.

Results:

If you will be interested in knowing the results of the study, you will be pointed to the DUT repository where the dissertation can be accessed.

Research-related Injury:

As a participant you will be engaging in focus group discussions online since we are in a COVID-19 environment. No risk or research-related injury or adverse reaction is anticipated.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings

Transcribed WhatsApp conversations and Voice notes will be stored in a safe storage for five years and thereafter deleted.

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

If you have any query, please contact the researcher (083 522 4884), or my supervisor Dr Musara Lubombo on 083 490 1604 or Lubombom1@ukzn.ac.za.

You can also contact the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375.

Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L. Linguino on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

Okuxhunyelwe B



INCWADI YOLWAZI

Isihloko sesifundo socwaningo: Ubuchwepheshe bokusetshenziswa kolimi lwesiNgisi kanye nobuchwepheshe bezemfundo kubafundi abenza ibanga lokuqala kwizifundo zeDiploma yokuXhumana noMphakathi kwiNyuvesi yakaThekwini yezobuChwepheshe.

Umphenyi omkhulu/s/ umcwaningi: Lwazi Mthembu, *NDip Language practice, Btech; Language practice.*

Umsizi womphenyi/s/umsizi womcwaningi/s: *Dkt. Musara Lubombo, Ph.D., MA, PG Dip PR.*

Isingeniso esifushane kanye nenhlosongqangi yalesifundo: Lesifundo sihlose ukuhlola ukuthi abafundi abenza unyaka wokuqala ulimi lwesiNgisi okuwulimi lwabo lwesibili lubaphatheka kanjani uma isiNgisi kuyilona limu elisetshenziswayo njengolimu lokufunda nokuxhumana eDUTt lokhu ingabe kukuthinta kanjani ukusebenza kwabo ezifundweni zabo kanye nokuthi iziphi izinsiza kusebenza abasebenzisayo ukukhuphula indlela abalisebenzisa ngayo lolwimi kanye nakumakhono abo okubhala.

Ukubingelela: Sawubona

Zazise kuba bambiqhaza: (Ngingumfundi owenza iziqu ze*Masters eDUT* ngenza ucwaningo khona eMkhakheni wezokuphatha kwezobuChwepheshe eMnyangweni wezifundo zokuXhumana noMphakathi)

Isimemo kwabazobamba iqhaza abaqavile: (Ngingakuthokozela ukuthi wamukele isimemo sami sokuthi ubambe iqhaza kulolucwaningo engilwenzayo).

Luyini ucwaningo: (ucwaningo isenzo sokwakha ulwazi olusha noma ukusebenzisa ulwazi obeluvele lukhona ngendlela entsha futhi enamasu amasha ezokwazi ukuveza umqondo omusha kanye nokuqonda okusha). Njengoba isho njalo incazelo yegama ucwaningo ukuthi ukusetshenziswa kolwazi oludala ukwakha ukuqonda okusha. Ilokho ucwaningo lwami elizama ukukwenza, ukuhlola ukuthi iziphi izinqinamba ababhekanazo abafundi abenza ibanga lokuqala ekusetshenzisweni kolwimi lwesiNgisi njengolimi lokufunda nokuxhumana kwiNyuvesi yaseThekwini Yezobuchwepheshe, nokuthi kukuthinta kanjani ukusebenza kwakho ezifundweni nokuthi uzisebenzisa kanjani izinsiza kusebenza iDUT ekunikeza zona, uma zikhona ukufukula ulimi lwakho kanye namakhono akho okubhala.

Uvumelekile ukubuza noma yimuphi umbuzo uma ubona angathi kunencazelo oyidingayo mayelana nokuhloswe ilolucwaningo, ungasabi noma ngabe yini ofuna ukuyazi mayelana nalolucwaningo. Uvumelekile nanokukhuluma nabazali bakho noma nomqaphi wakho ngalokhu engikucela kona.

Ungakwazi nokuxhumana nami noma nomphathi wami nanoma ingaluphi ulwazi neminingwane egcwele isekugcineni kwalelikhasi.

Uhlaka lwenqubo: Lesifundo sihlose ukukhetha abafundi abakwisilinganiso songukaphasi kanye nobungozi yokungaphasi bebala elimnyama abenza izifundo ze NDip

PR okubona ulimi lwesingisi luyilwimi lwabo lwesibili, lokhu kuzokwenzeka ukubamba iqhaza kwizingxoxo ezigxile kumaqembu athile eDUT kwisikhungo *i-ML Sultan*.

Lezingxoxo sizozibamba kwinkundla yezokuxhumana iWhatsApp. Kodwa, ngaphambi kokuqala kwalezingxoxo zamaqembu ezigxile kumaqembu athile, umfundi ngamunye uyosendelwa nge-imeyili incwadi yolwazi kanye namafomu okuvuma, echaza ngazonke izinzuzo ezikhona kanye nobungozi bokubayingxanye yalolucwaningo. Bese kuzolandela incazelo ezokwenziwa ngomlomo efanayo mangabe sesikhuluma kuWhatsApp. Amafomu ezimvumo azothunyelwa emuva futhi ekupheleni kwalomhlangano. Ithuba lokucacisa konke okungacacanga mayelana nokubandakanyeka kwababambe iqhaza lizoba khona.

Ubungozi Kanye nokungakhululeki kwababambe iqhaza: Akunabungozi obubonakalayo noma ukuzizwa ungakhululekile noma okulimazayo okubhekiswe kuwe.

Chaza kobambe iqhaza isizathu esingenza ahoxe kulesifundo: Ukubamba iqhaza kuwukuzikhethela kanti ungahoxa nanoma inini kulesifundo uma ufuna nanoma ingasiphi isizathu. Angeke futhi kubenabungozi ngokuhoxa kwakho.

Izinzuzo: Umphumela walolucwaningo uhlose ukukhuphula izinga lokusebenza kwabafundi. Okwesibili, ukushicilelwa kwemiphumela yalolucwaningo ibe iphephabhuku nakho ilokho okucatshwangayo.

Iholo: Akunaliholo ozolithola ngokuba ingxenye yalolucwaningo. Noma kunjalo, abafundi bayonikezwa idatha lokuxoxisana kuleyondawo.

Indleko zalesifundo: Akunazindleko ezizofunwa kuwe ngalesifundo.

Ukungadalulwa kolwazi: Lonke ulwazi oluqoqiwe luzogcinwa luyimfihlo. Uzonikezwa inombolo kanti futhi lonke ulwazi luzoqoshwa ngaphansi kwaleyonamba. Lokho kuchaza ukuthi wonke umuntu obuka lololwazi oluqoshiwe angeke akwazi ukukuyamanisa nalo. Ulwazi oluyoshicilelwa kwiphephabhuku lesayensi angeke lufake ulwazi oluyokhomba wena njengobe bambe iqhaza kulesifundo. Lokhu kwenzelwa ukuvikela ukungaziwa kwakho.

Imiphumela: Labo abazoba nesasa lokwazi ngemiphumela yalesifundo bazothunyelwa e-DUT kwindawo egcina izinto lapho leziqu bezokwazi ukuzithola khona.

Ukulimala okuhlobene nocwaningo: Njengo bambe iqhaza uzohlanganyela ezingxoxweni ezigxile emaqoqweni athize lapho uhlala khona njengoba sisesikhathini lapho sibhekene nobhubhane lwe *COVID-19*. Akunabungozi noma ukulimala okuhlobene nalesifundo noma ukusabela okungalungile okungenzeka.

Ukugcinwa kwako konke ubuxhakaxhaka Kanye namakhophi angamaphepha kubalwa nokuqoshiwe: Uhlu lwemibuzo luzogcinwa endaweni ephephile iminyaka emihlanu bese emva kwalokho luzoshiswa/ okuqoshwe ngobuxhakaxhaka nakho kuzogcinwa iminyaka emihlanu bese emva kwalokho bese kususwa.

Umntu okungaxhunywana naye uma kunezinkinga noma imibuzo:(Umphathi, Dkt. Lubombo) Ngicela uxhumane nomcwaningi (083 522 4884), umphathi wami noma umsingathi kwisikhungo socwaningo kulenombolo (031 373 2375). Izikhalazo yiswa kumqondisi wezocwaningo nokwesekwa kwabenza iziqu uDokt L Langaniso kulenombolo 031 373 2577 noma ku researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

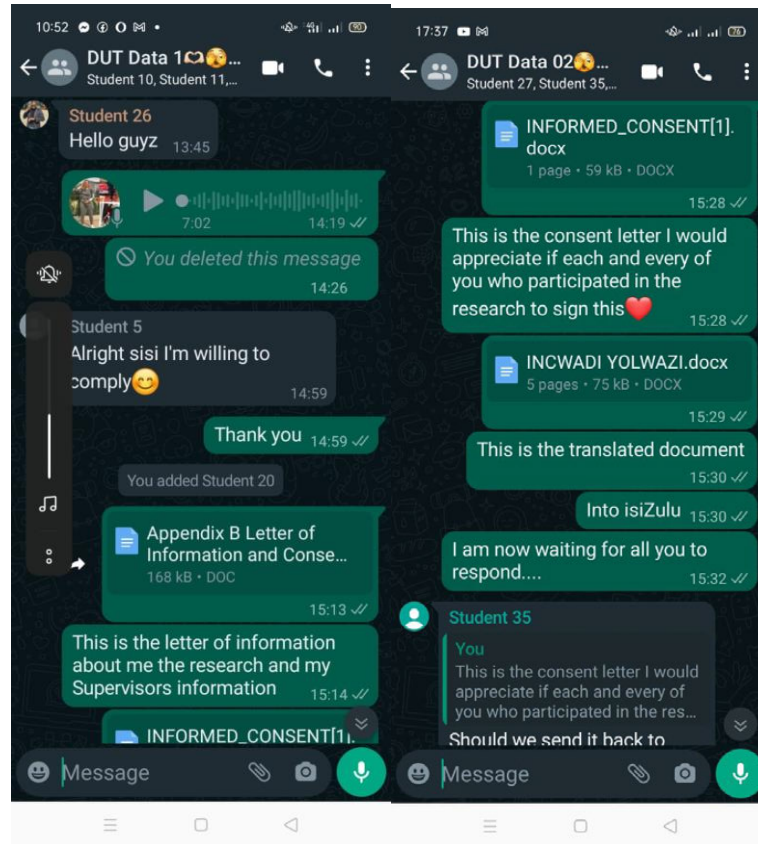
Okujwayelekile:

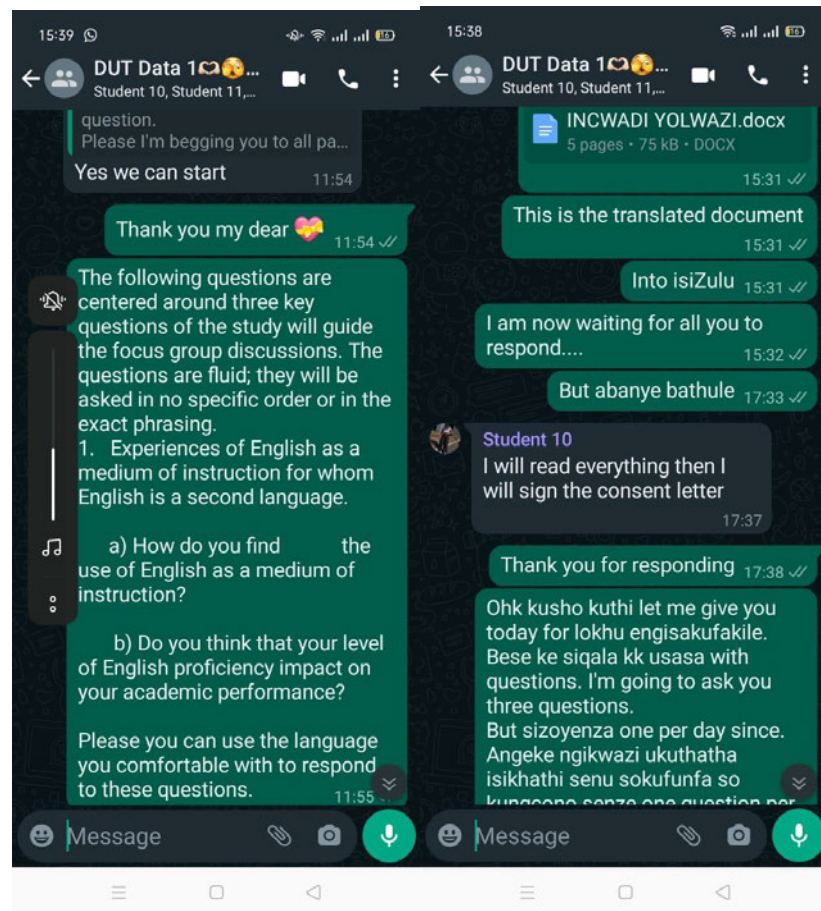
(lenxenywe kufanele isuswe ngaphambi kokufaka amadokhumenti ku PG 2a)

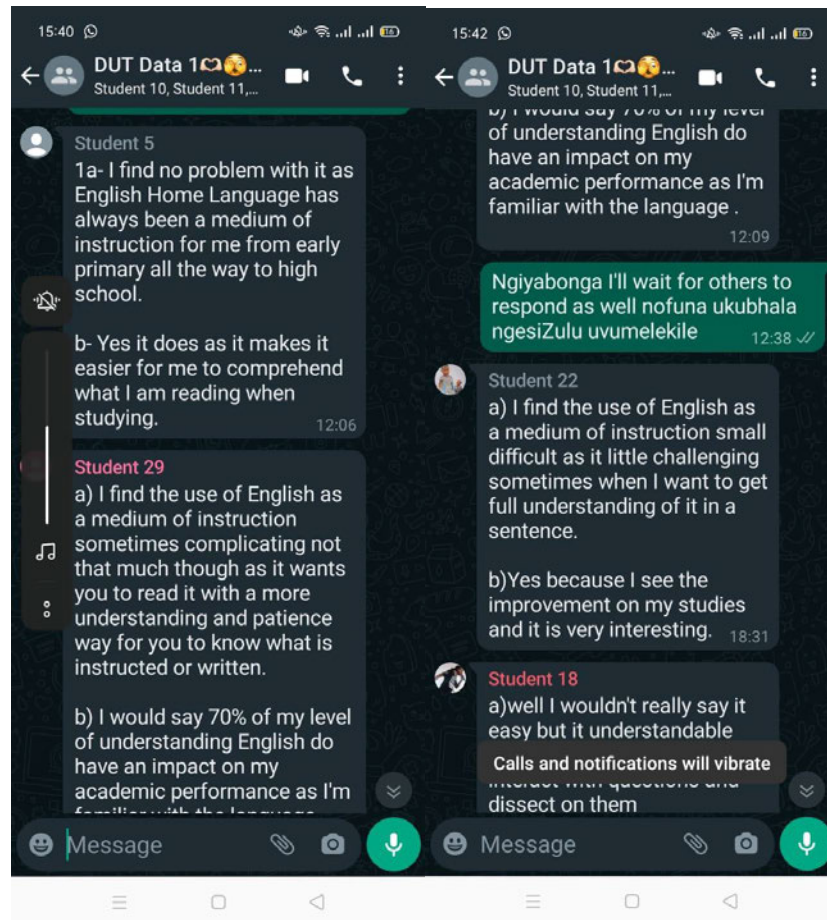
Ikhophi lencwadi yolwazi kufanelwe inikezwe ababambi qhaza. Incwadi yolwazi Kanye nefomu lemvumo fanele kulumushwe kuyiswe kulimi olukhulunywa abahlali balolocwaningo isb: isiZulu.

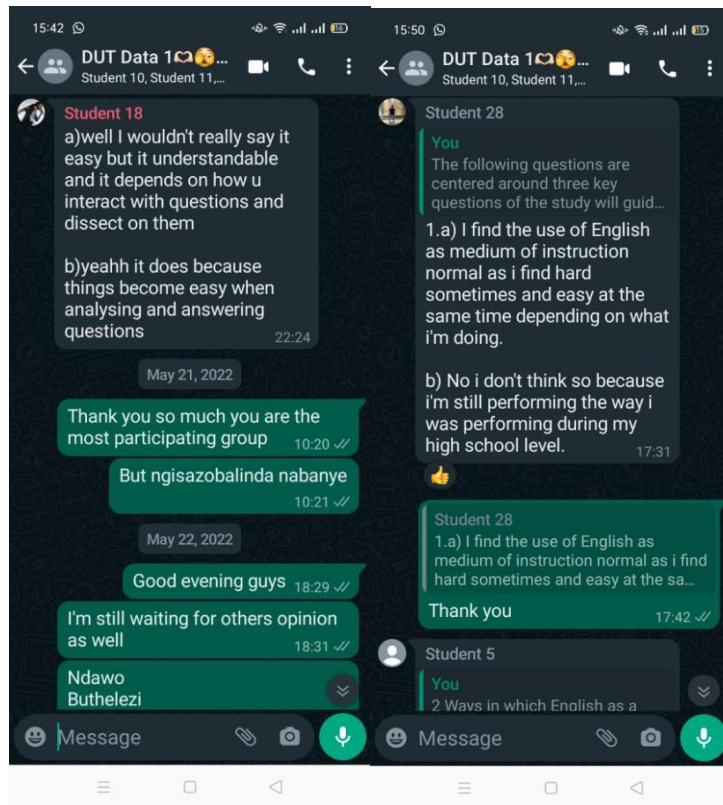
Appendix C: WhatsApp Conversation with Students at DUT

Average group

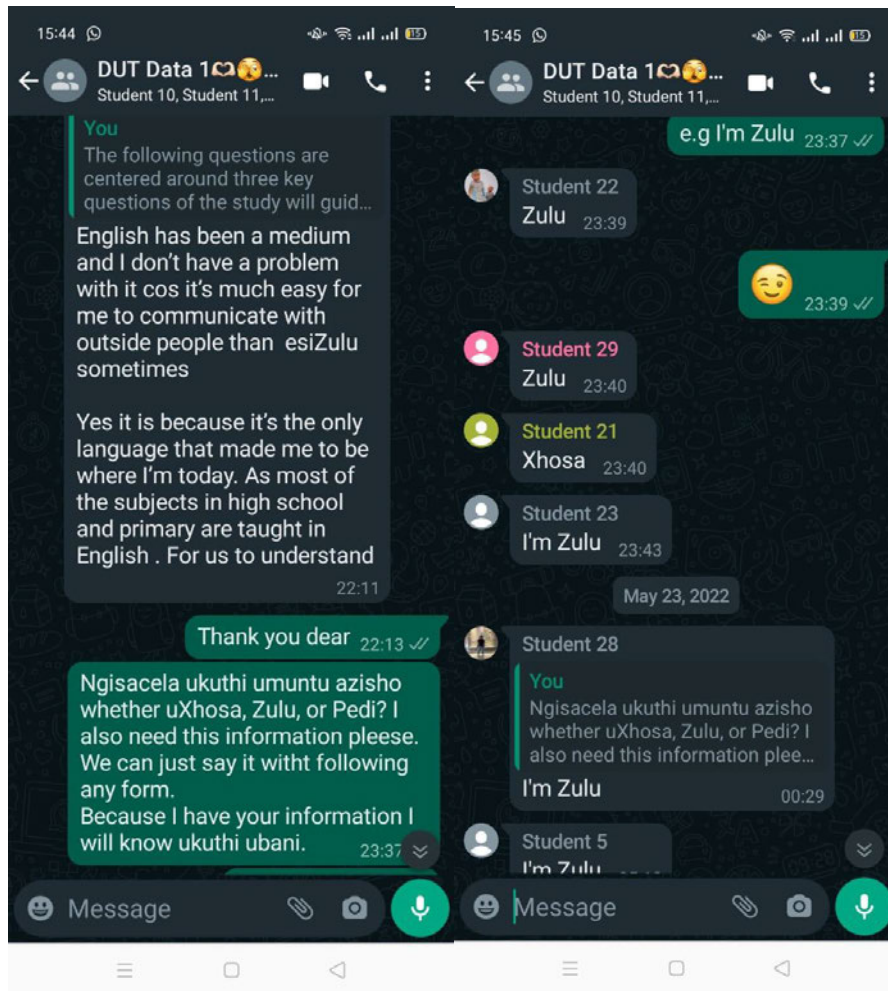


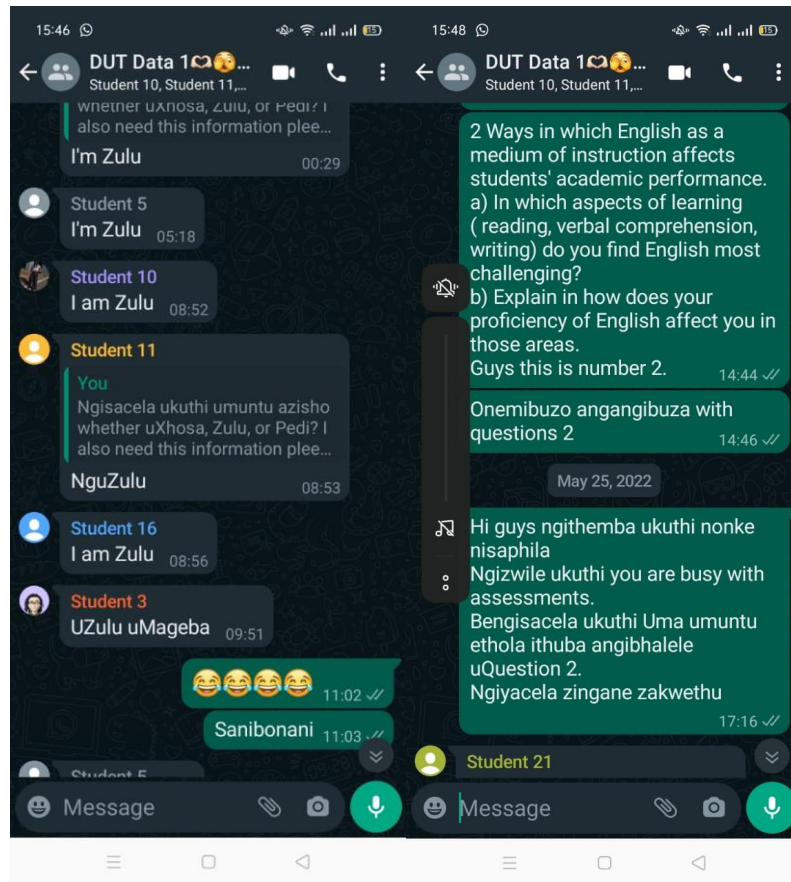


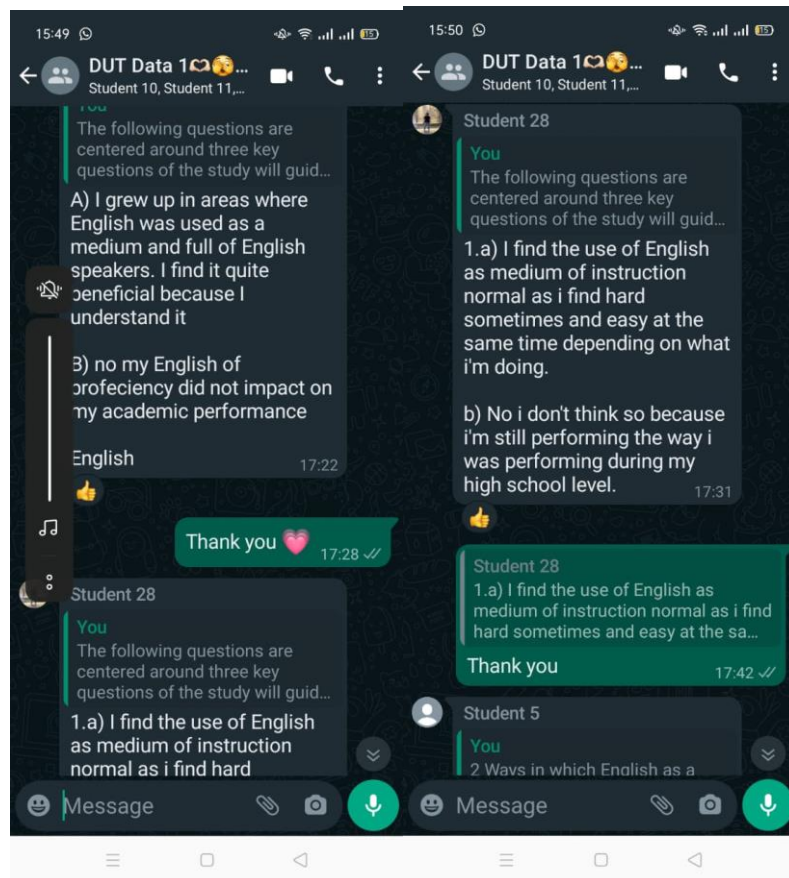


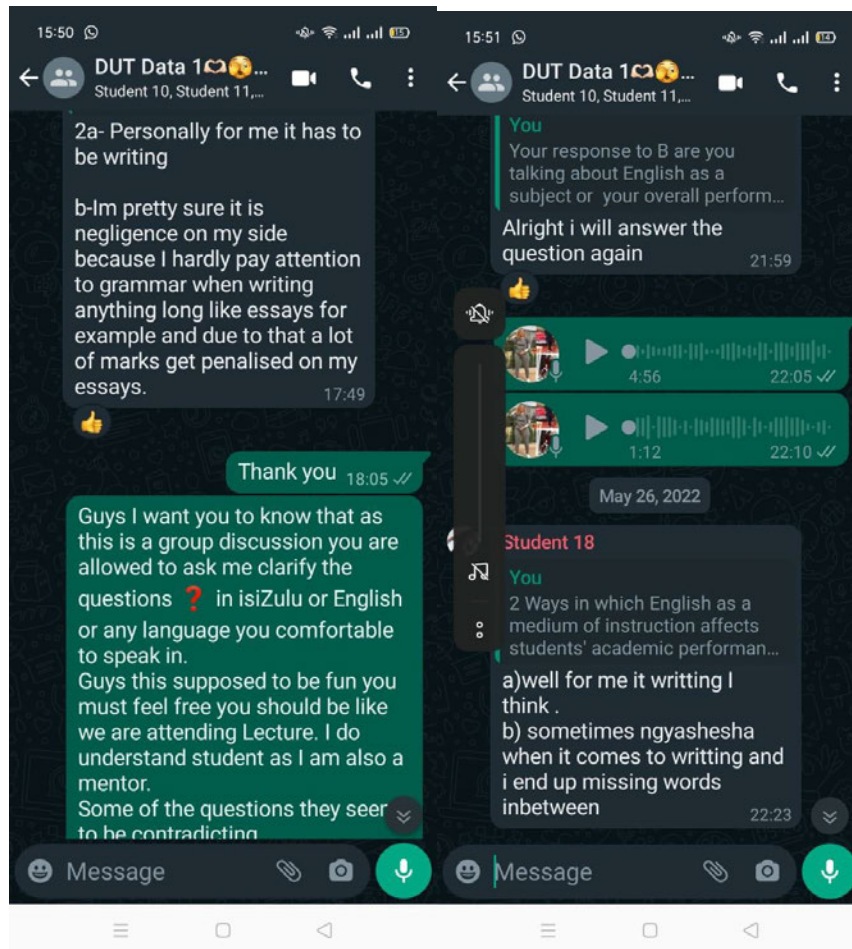


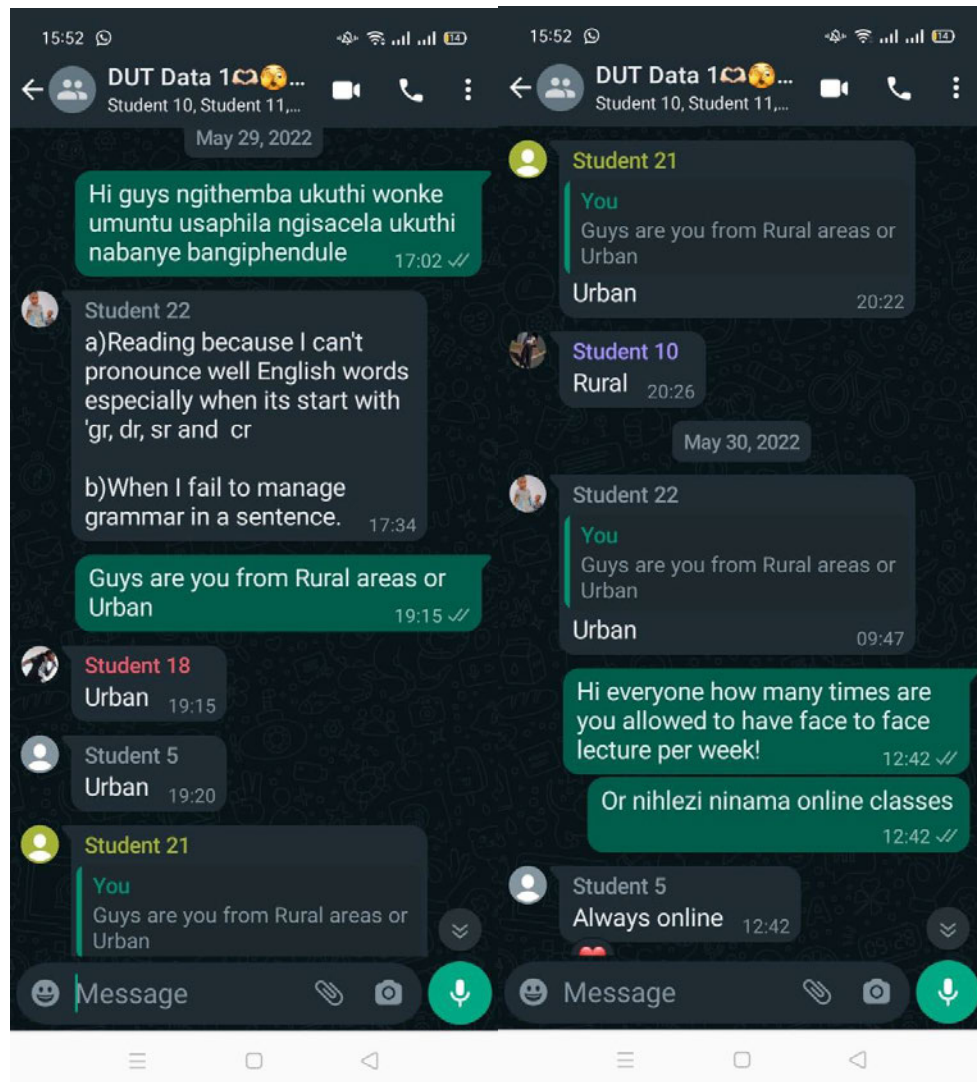


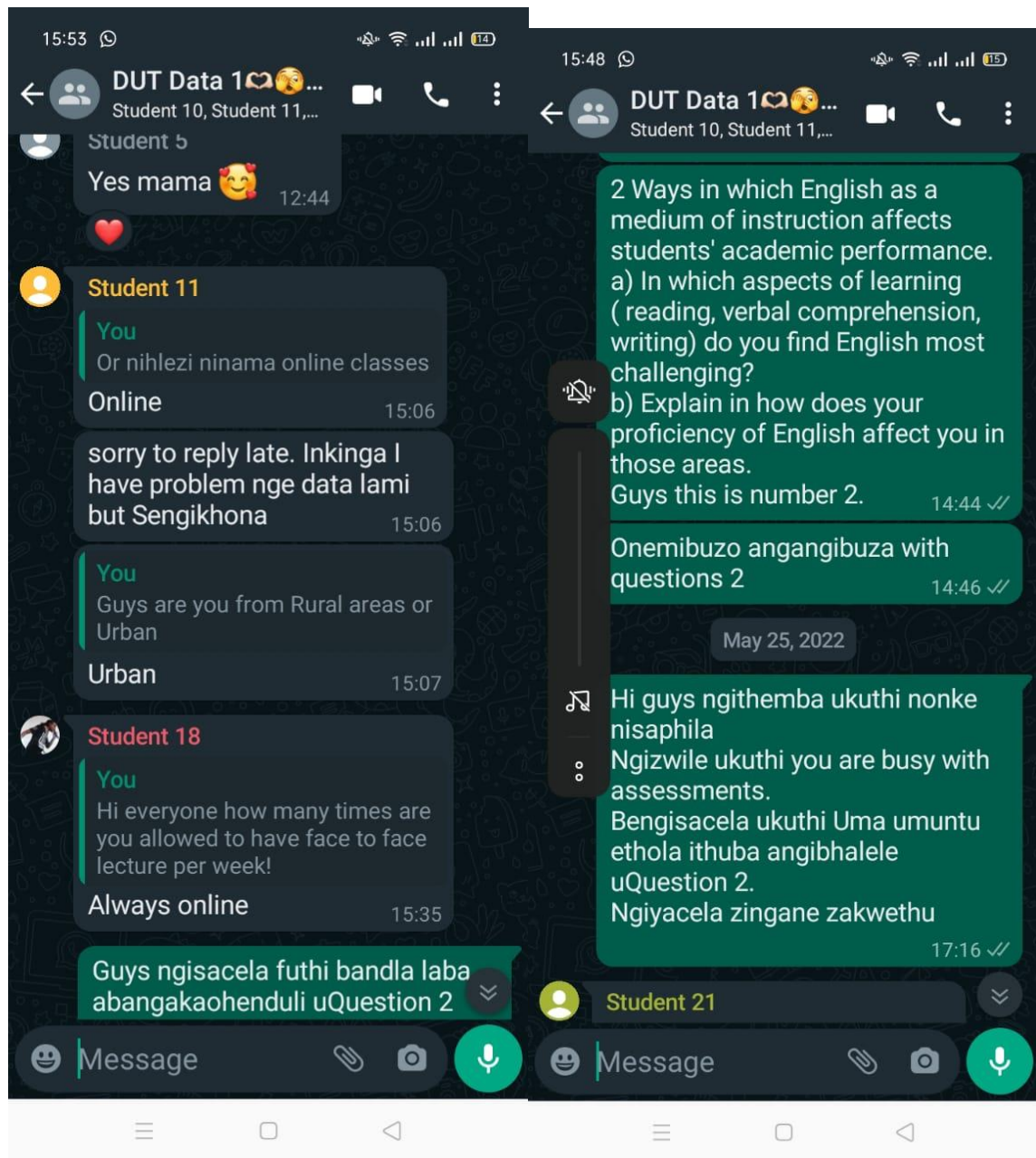


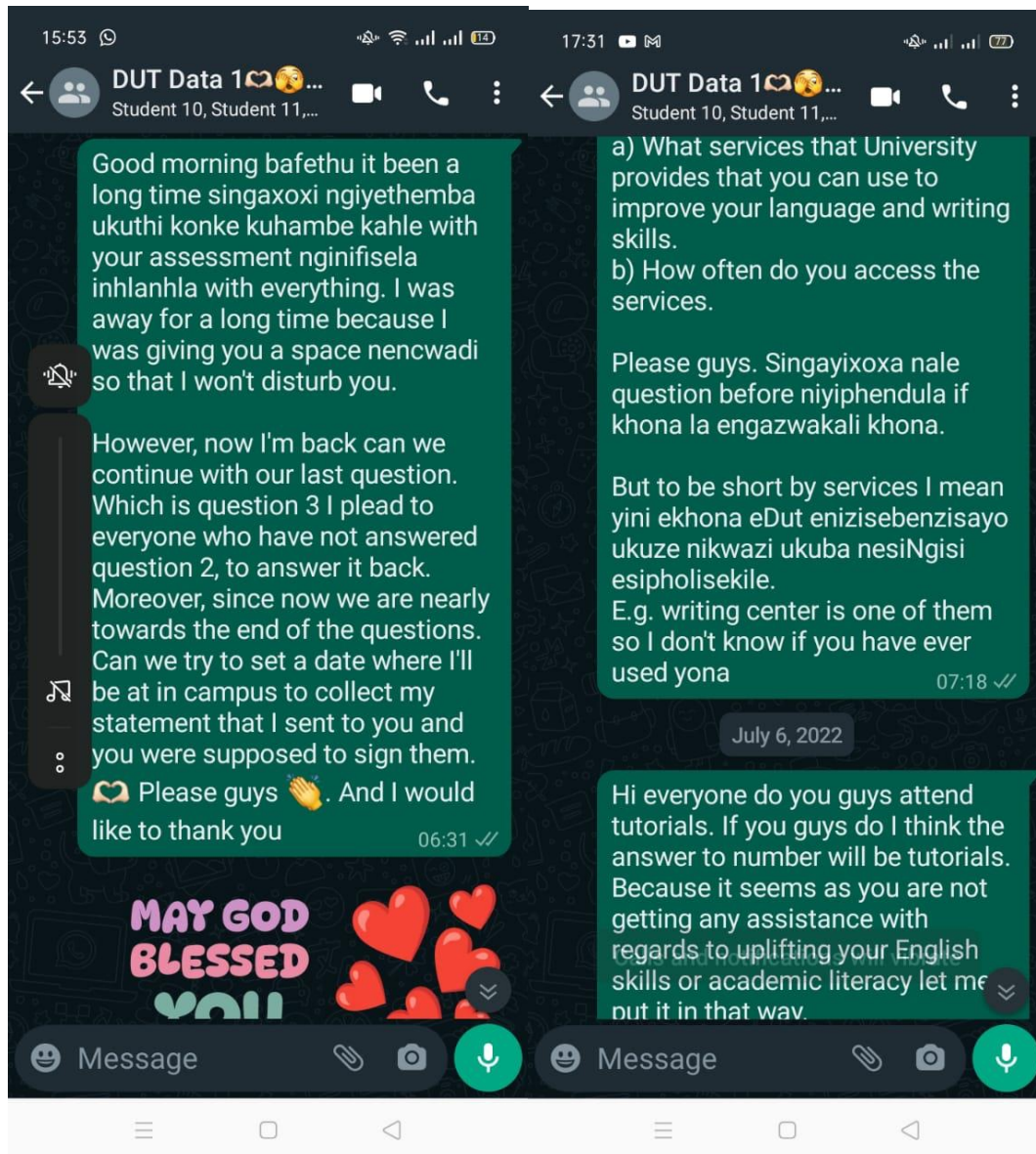


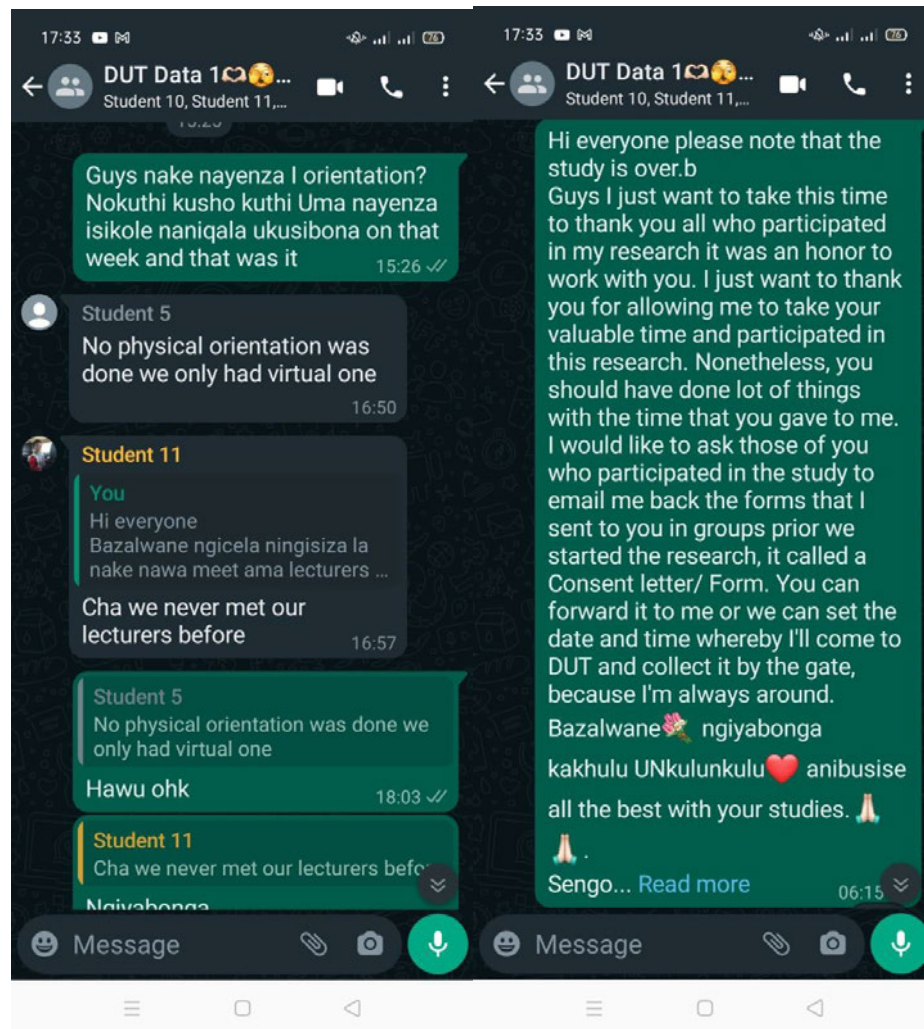












At risk-students

