



**Multiple Voices: Exploring Fluid identities in the
Advanced Programme English Experience**

Jessamy Kromhout

Student Number: 204008115

Supervisor: Dr Eileen Scheckle

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master in Education
Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University,
January 2017.

DEPARTMENT OF ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION
EXAMINATION SECTION
SUMMERSTARND NORTH CAMPUS
PO Box 77000
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Port Elizabeth
6031

Enquiries: Postgraduate Examination Officer

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

NAME: Jessamy Kromhout

STUDENT NUMBER: 204008115

QUALIFICATION: Masters in Education

TITLE OF PROJECT: Multiple Voices: Exploring Fluid Identities in the Advanced
Programme English Experience

DECLARATION:

In accordance with Rule G5.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned treatise/
dissertation/ thesis is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for
assessment to another University or for another qualification.

SIGNATURE: J. Kromhout

DATE: 23 MARCH 2017

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the people,
who have supported and inspired me
on my literary and teaching journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) (Grant 93296) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrive at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

ABSTRACT

This study is focused on Advanced Programme English (AP English), which is an additional subject registered through the Independent Examinations Board. The subject is aimed at grades ten to twelve and it is dedicated to the study of English literature. This study explores the AP English experience from the learner perspective, thus it highlights the potential opportunities of learner participation in AP English. In a traditional school context, emphasis is placed on assessment. As a response to this achievement driven focus, this study instead seeks to understand the social context of AP English, and the way in which the AP English experience has been integrated into the learners' lives.

The focus of this study is to understand the AP English perspective through the lens of identity, and the way in which identity permeates all experiences of AP English as a whole. The construction of identity is explored through the activities of reading and writing. These are integral to the AP English experience.

By incorporating a number of different perspectives from educational and literary spheres to make sense of the AP English experience, this study broadens conceptualisations of the learner perspective. It also complements traditional conceptualisations of education by including commentary from a diverse range of voices.

This study characterises AP English as an alternative space that has the potential to provide a sense of belonging for its learners. The AP English social context offers learners the opportunity to construct their identities in relation to the literature they study, and to their classmates. This meaningful learner engagement may provide learners with the space and freedom to construct their identities in an authentic, self-reflexive manner.

Various theories on identity support how AP English can provide a platform for learners to inhabit multiple voices or perspectives. By using literature as a reference point, learners have the opportunity to make sense of themselves through a multiplicity of perspectives.

This study therefore provides insight into the way AP English might facilitate a flexible approach to conceptualising identity, which is often overlooked in the education context, thus this study advocates the AP English experience as an important aspect of identity construction.

On a larger scale, it places the learner perspective at the forefront, and in this way offers an alternative conceptualisation to traditional, assessment focused schooling methods.

Key words: AP English, learner perspectives, identity, multiple voices, alternative spaces.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE.....	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF ANNEXURES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW OF STUDY	1
1.2 BACKGROUND	5
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	7
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY.....	8
1.5 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH.....	9

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION	11
2.2 IDENTITY	13
2.2.1 An Overview of Identity	13
2.2.2 An Overview of Gee’s Perspectives	15
2.2.2.1 <i>The Nature and Institutional Perspectives</i>	16
2.2.2.2 <i>The Affinity Perspective</i>	17
2.2.2.3 <i>The Discursive Perspective</i>	18
2.2.3 Multiple Voices.....	19
2.2.3.1 <i>An Introduction to the Concept of Multiple Voices</i>	19
2.2.3.2 <i>Heteroglossia</i>	21
2.2.3.3 <i>Hybridity</i>	24

2.3	CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH READING.....	26
2.3.1	An Overview of Identity and Reading.....	27
2.3.2	Writers Writing about Reading.....	29
2.3.3	“Rivers of Reading”.....	31
2.4	CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH WRITING	35
2.4.1	Writing and its Social Context.....	35
2.4.1.1	<i>A Multi-Layered View of Language</i>	35
2.4.1.2	<i>Writing and the Classroom</i>	37
2.4.2	Discourses of Writing	39
2.4.2.1	<i>A Social Practices Discourse of Writing and a Socio-Political Discourse of Writing</i>	39
2.4.2.2	<i>The Heterogeneous Nature of Writing</i>	42
2.4.3	The Self and Writing.....	48
2.4.3.1	<i>The Self, Writing and Position</i>	49
2.4.3.2	<i>Writing as an Act of Discovery</i>	50
2.4.3.3	<i>“The Elusive Self” in Writing</i>	51
2.4.3.4	<i>“Speaking in Tongues”</i>	52
2.4.3.5	<i>“Embodied”</i>	53
2.4.3.6	<i>Conclusion</i>	53

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1	INTRODUCTION	55
3.2	UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY.....	56
3.3	RESEARCH DESIGN	57
3.3.1	A Qualitative Research Design.....	57
3.3.2	Case Study	58
3.4	DATA SOURCES.....	60
3.4.1	An Overview of the Data Sources	60

3.4.2	Selecting Data Sources for Analysis.....	60
3.5	METHODS FOR GENERATING DATA.....	63
3.5.1	Focus Groups as a Data Generating Response	63
3.5.1.1	<i>Background to Focus Group</i>	64
3.5.1.2	<i>Characteristics of Focus Groups in this Qualitative Study</i>	64
3.5.2	Focus Group Topic	66
3.5.3	Writing as Data-Generating Response.....	69
3.5.3.1	<i>Reflective Writing</i>	70
3.5.3.2	<i>Writing for Assessment</i>	71
3.6	ROLE OF RESEARCHER	73
3.6.1	The Subjective Role of the Researcher	73
3.6.2	Voice	75
3.6.3	Relationship with Participants	76
3.6.4	Researcher and the Focus Group	77
3.7	THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ETHICAL APPROACH.....	78
3.7.1	Ethics, Research and the Educational Context	78
3.7.2	Permission and Informed Consent	79
3.7.3	Deception	80
3.8	CONCLUSION.....	80

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1	INTRODUCTION	81
4.2	FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ANALYSIS	82
4.2.1	Introduction.....	82
4.2.2	The Concept of Time	85
4.2.3	Language.....	87
4.2.4	A Hybrid Language.....	90
4.2.5	Performing One’s Literary Identity in Different Spaces.....	94

4.2.6	Positioning of Identity.....	96
4.2.7	The Self and Literature	100
4.2.8	Conclusion	104
4.3	FOCUS GROUP WRITING AND WRITING FOR ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS..	106
4.3.1	Introduction.....	106
4.3.2	The Elusive Self in Writing	109
4.3.3	Finding a Voice.....	112
4.3.4	Dust and Words.....	113
4.3.5	“Deep-Diving the Words” - Jeanette Winterson.....	114
4.3.6	Opening the Casket.....	116
4.3.7	Conclusion	120
4.4	CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION AND WRITING FOR ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION.....	120

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

REFERENCES.....	126
------------------------	------------

LIST OF ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM.....	132
ANNEXURE B: EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT CONSENT FORM	133
ANNEXURE C: PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM	134
ANNEXURE D: LEARNER AND PARENT PERMISSION FORM.....	135

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: A Study of the Advanced Programme English Experience Through the Lens of Identity	12
Figure 3.1: Handout for reflective writing on AP English experience	67

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter begins with an overview, which serves to highlight the motivation for conducting this study. It also provides a summary of the specific research focus, and in doing so it gives one a sense of the unique approach that has been adopted for this study. Following on from this is information regarding the background to the study in relation to the specific educational context. The research question is also established. There is also a discussion about the significance of the study and how it contributes to the field of educational literary studies. Finally, the methodological approach for this study is established.

1.1 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

This study emerged out of a desire to explore learners' perspectives in the educational sphere. The school environment is often a restrictive one for both learners and teachers. As a result, learners' perspectives can be neglected in the race for teachers to complete the syllabus, set and mark assessments and fulfill any of the other countless obligations that are required. However, I was fortunate enough to discover the subject, Advanced Programme (AP) English. At the beginning of 2014 I began teaching the subject in the high school where I currently teach. This subject is dedicated to the study of English literature, and it is aimed at grades ten to twelve. As a teacher of this subject, I believe that AP English can provide the opportunity to step away from the often restrictive nature of school life, and therefore the subject holds many exciting possibilities in the educational sphere.

The very nature of the subject suggests an alternative experience for both teachers of the subject and for learners. It can take place after school hours, membership is voluntary and classes are often smaller, informal and intimate, which makes this a unique space for learners and teachers. The all-embracing focus on literature is also refreshing and inspiring, as this environment can encourage an enthusiastic approach in learners as they immerse themselves in all aspects of literature, be it novels, films, plays or poetry. A primary focus of this subject in relation to learning outcomes is intertextuality, and the way in which the studied literature shares common themes. This is different from the requirements of English Home Language in state and private schools, where the focus is on analysing texts in isolation. Another possible feature of this subject is the community environment that it fosters. Many people enjoy the solitary act of reading: however, the experience of AP English is primarily a social activity,

which can provide a sense of belonging where special bonds are formed, as a group of learners share opinions and feelings related to the studied literature.

The positive experience that I had and continue to have as a teacher of this subject sparked my curiosity to explore this unique environment in greater depth. I also realised that much of the value of this subject lay outside of the usual assessment constraints, and rather could be identified in the participants' lived experiences of the AP English experience. As a result, I decided to don my researcher's cap, and endeavour to pay special attention to my AP English learners' perspectives on this subject.

The particular focus for this study is the concept of "multiple voices", which evokes Bakhtin's concept of a "dialogic rather than monologic" approach (Ryan, 2007, p. 120). As a result, this study diverges from the singular voice of education that emphasises the importance of achievement in relation to academic results and other aspects of school life. The word, singular, is used throughout this study. Its meaning in this particular context evokes a Bakhtinian approach and denotes an authoritarian uniformity with little space for difference or multiple voices. Instead of this singular voice, this study attempts to inhabit the perspectives of the AP English learners. In doing so, the assessment-driven emphasis is diluted, and the lived AP English experience is the primary focus. Therefore, this study does not focus on the achievements of the learners, as is often the case in the AP English classroom, but rather focuses on the learners' personal experiences of the subject. To appreciate this particular viewpoint, the experience of AP English for learners is understood as fitting into the greater life-long reading experiences of the AP English learner. For this purpose, the concept of "Rivers of Reading" (Cliff Hodges, 2012) illustrates how literature has the function of accommodating one's forever changing identity. Sumara (1998, p. 205) eloquently suggests that "[a]s the fictional text is interpreted by the reader, the reader is, at the same time, interpreted". The way in which the learners respond to the studied literature says much about their sense of self. Furthermore, this sense of self is not static but, as "Rivers of Reading" suggests, it is multiple (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110), fluid (Sumara, 1998) and continually constructed (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 415). This means that through the act of reading "readers produce new knowledge about themselves that continues to function alongside existing knowledge" (Sumara, 1998, p. 205). Thus, by reading, one takes in new knowledge that accommodates a more layered, slightly different conceptualization of self.

Importantly, the act of reading in the context of this study is not a solitary act. Instead, the AP English classroom environment is a space where a sense of belonging can be created. Gee (2001) articulates four intersecting perspectives on identity, which provide an interpretative model to explore why learners actively choose to be members of the AP English class. This influences the construction of their identities. The diagram entitled “A study of the AP English experience through the lens of identity”, which I created, shows both how identity is the centre of the AP English experience, and the way in which it permeates all experiences of AP English as a whole. This diagram can be found on page eleven in the literature review. In order to construct these identities, learners are required to take on many different perspectives or expressed in another way, voices, be it the voices from the studied literature, the voices of their classmates or from elsewhere. Nyikos & Hashimoto (1997, p. 509, citing Pugh, 1996) refer to the ability to occupy multiple perspectives or voices as a “frame of mind”. This is the primary focus of my study. In taking on these voices, the learners can inhabit “an astonishing flexibility” in relation to the conceptualisations of their identities (Goffman, 1981, as cited in Samuelson, 2009, p. 53). As Zadie Smith (2008, Dec 5) states, “I believe that a flexibility of voice leads to a flexibility in all things” in that one is able to assimilate many different views or perspectives, and in doing so, construct one’s identity in a meaningful way that resists a singular understanding of self. This frame of mind can therefore affect aspects of one’s life. It also shows how the learners have authentically engaged with their experience of AP English. This authentic engagement allows for a deeper, more layered understanding of one’s sense of self. Thus, it is not only this study as a whole that functions outside of the parameters of a singular, assessment-driven focus, but also the learners, who are capable of drawing on multiple perspectives.

The inspiration for the concept of “multiple voices” is fittingly drawn from T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* which was one of the studied poems in the learners’ AP English syllabus in this particular study. In a lecture on *The Waste Land*, the lecturer, Nick Mount eloquently describes the arduous challenge of reading and trying to comprehend the poem. He describes the poem as

a collection of fragments. There are five parts in the poem. The connections between these parts are far from apparent. And within those parts there are many smaller fragments. The fragments are not just Eliot’s. There are images, quotations, entire lines that are taken from other writers, dozens of other writers. There are over 60 different allusions in *The Waste Land* to over forty different

writers in a half dozen different languages. Past, present, modern, ancient, Western, Eastern.

(Mount, 2009, January 15)

Therefore, in this poem there is no singular voice of the poet that gives the reader coherent meaning. Mount states that there are “many views, many stories, each reflecting and refracting the other” (2009, January, 15). This study resonates deeply with T.S. Eliot’s poem, because as stated, this poem was one of the AP English studied texts, and as such, the learners drew meaning from it. Furthermore, the AP English space is characterised by multiple learner voices, each relating and working off each other: therefore, it embodies the form of the poem itself. Each learner’s voice itself is characterised by multiple voices because each learner draws on different references to express their AP English experiences, and thus, their identity. As in the image of a babushka doll, this study reveals layers of meaning and different frames of reference.

For the purpose of this study, I have conceptualised the term “literary identity” which refers to the various ways in which the participants have integrated literature, with a special focus on AP English, into their lives. Thus, these AP English learners acquire this literary identity through the ability to speak in multiple voices by drawing from different areas that relate to the AP English experience such as literature, the words of other people from the AP English class and beyond, as well as past experiences relating to literature. The AP English learners then demonstrate these multiple voices in a number of different ways such as making intertextual references when reading, through the acts of writing and conversation, as well as in other artistic expressions such as art. This evokes the idea of “Rivers of Reading”, because AP English fits into the learners’ life-long relationship with literature.

This study is borne out of a unique learning environment, and as such it deviates from more mainstream educational studies. The nature of any research study includes multiple theoretical perspectives in order to make sense of the particular subject of focus. However, this study does not only include perspectives from the educational sphere, but also includes the literary voices from the studied literature in the AP English class. The way in which T.S. Eliot is an inspiration for this study is one such example. Furthermore, this study includes the perspectives of famous writers, such as Jeanette Winterson and Zadie Smith. I have found these writers’ reflections on reading and writing to not only be pertinent to this research, but also in the AP English classroom. As a teacher, I have drawn on Winterson and Smith to help the learners and me

make sense of our lived experience of literature. As such, the confluence of different voices broadens the body of knowledge in this study, and shows how perspectives “do not *exclude* each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291). It illustrates that one particular view is “no longer conceived as a sacrosanct and solitary embodiment of meaning and truth” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 370). Instead, these different perspectives, be they educational or literary reflect off one another, and converge to create slightly different, more layered conceptualisations. This study, therefore, aligns different perspectives and in doing so, gives one a greater understanding of the AP English learners’ perspectives. By including alternative voices, it also opens up possibilities as to what education should encompass. To limit the scope of theory to a school-based environment would also limit learners, teachers and researchers. By incorporating alternative voices, this study complements traditional conceptualisations of education by including commentary from a diverse range of voices.

The following section provides necessary background information relating to the subject, AP English.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Advanced Programme English, or AP English, is a high school subject, aimed at learners from grades ten to twelve, that is registered through the Independent Examinations Board (IEB). The subject is a relatively new one in South Africa and it was first implemented in 2011. At the beginning of 2014 I began teaching AP English at the school where I currently teach. The subject provides

an opportunity to extend top English learners. Learners must display greater knowledge and depth of insight than is required for English Home Language. It is not just for those learners who are planning on pursuing an English course at tertiary level, but for learners who realise this may be their last chance to immerse themselves in literature.

(IEB, 2013, p. 4 -5)

The learning outcomes include:

Learning Outcome 1: Establishing connections between different genres, texts, trends and contexts

Learning Outcome 2: Structuring arguments and insights in a coherent manner using accurate textual references.

Learning Outcome 3: Using cognitive skills to design critical judgements

(IEB, 2008. p.5)

The syllabus is structured around the three essays that are assessed for the final grade twelve examination. One is required to study two texts from two of the three genres, which include novels, film and plays. These texts are to be studied under a specified theme. Previous themes have included: power and powerlessness, and revolution and rebellion. The theme at present is the danger of a single story. There is also a study on schools of poetry, in which two schools of poetry are to be studied. Lastly there is a focus on a philosophical reflection of one's own reading history, which includes an examination of four novels or collection of short stories outside of the prescribed literature syllabus for AP English and the English Home Language syllabus. The syllabus includes an extensive list of novels, films, plays and schools of poetry from which one can choose, and this gives teachers and learners a degree of freedom, but also sets necessary boundaries. Assessment is completed internally by the AP English teacher throughout the period of time when teaching the subject, but the final grade twelve examination is marked externally by markers from the IEB.

There are various reasons why the nature of this subject is a distinctive one, thus making it a unique teaching and learning experience. Some of these distinctive factors are that it is an additional subject chosen by the learners and classes take place after normal school hours. The subject matter is intellectually stimulating and challenging, because learners are encouraged to self-study. Mature insight and intertextuality is also encouraged in the learners and the learning environment is a casual and intimate, yet focused space, where normal disciplinary school rules may not be as vigorously endorsed. It is fair to say that the success of the subject rests on the mutual love of literature that both teacher and learners can share.

The following section discusses the research question in this study.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of research is to gain “more insight” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 6). This purpose resonates with my particular motivations in this study, as I am intrigued by the AP English learner experience, and thus have a desire to know more about it. There is an idea that

[a]ll research starts from a research problem ... The best sociological research, however, starts from problems which are also puzzles. A puzzle is not just a lack of information, but a gap in our understanding ... Puzzle-solving research tries to contribute to our understanding of why events happen as they do, rather than simply accepting them at their face value.

(Giddens, 1979, as cited in Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 6)

The gap in understanding in this study lies in the general dearth of research that has been conducted in relation to AP English in South Africa. Furthermore, this gap focuses on the way in which learners experience AP English in its social context. As a result, the research question asks: *To what extent do AP English learners incorporate the literature they encounter into their lived experiences?*

My motivation for this study lies in the desire to gain insight into how the AP English experience is understood through learner perspectives. This research question resonates with the overview of this study. AP English is part of a wider, life-long relationship with literature (Cliff Hodges, 2012) that recognises identity as being in a state of flux. It speaks to the learners’ lived experiences as this study seeks to understand the AP English experience from a learner perspective, as opposed to an assessment-focused approach. These learner perspectives are often characterised by a multiplicity of voices as the learners construct their literary identities (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 415). Therefore, this research question seeks to understand the way in which the AP English experience of the studied literature resonates with the learners’ construction of their identities.

As the research question has been established, the following section discusses the significance of this study, and how it contributes to the field of educational literary studies.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

The primary focus of this study – Multiple Voices: Fluid identities in relation to the AP English experience - is a relevant one owing to a number of factors. The first factor is the subject's distinctive nature. The subject allows for an alternative learning space to mainstream education, as it provides the possibility of opportunities to really engage with the literature. This engagement gives learners the ability to conceptualize their identities in different ways by taking on multiple voices. This study explores how AP English offers a different learning experience from main stream education, and this adds relevancy as it contributes to theories of education in a South African context, and beyond. This study also attempts to honour the learners' perspectives of their lived AP English experience, and as such, diverges from the assessment-driven focus that often characterises the educational sphere.

The second factor which adds to the relevance of this subject is that AP English is a fairly new subject in the South African schooling context. It was first implemented in schools in 2011 where fifteen schools were invited to be part of a pilot project, and then, in 2012, the subject was fully implemented, where 502 candidates from 48 schools, including two state schools, wrote the final examination (IEB, 2013, p. 4 -5). Owing to this relatively recent introduction of the subject, little research has thus far been done around the potential affordances of learner participation in AP English.

The third factor to be taken into account is the specific context in which this research takes place. The data for this study was drawn from a single sex (all young women), government school. The school is a traditional, affluent one, which encourages its learners to achieve in various areas - be it academic, sporting or cultural. The context of the school adds to this research because it frames the classroom experience. This resonates with the suggestion in the overview of this study that AP English can offer an alternative space from the achievement-driven focus, which is emphasised at a school such as this one.

Wilmot (2016, p. 3, citing Christie, 2008) refers to the term “historically privileged schools” in a South African context. The school where this study is based is a state school, but in many respects, functions in the same way as an independent school. It is characterised as a ‘prestigious’ school that has “skilled academic staff, excellent facilities and effective management and leadership structures” (Wilmot, 2016, p. 3). This specific context is a contributory factor that influences the learners' identities in this particular study. The

participants' particular contributions to this study are therefore not replicable, but some of the themes may speak to a wider context. This particular aspect will be further discussed in the findings, which are described in chapter four of this study. Thus, the three above-mentioned factors contribute to the significance of this study, and its particular relevance shapes one's understanding of the learner perspective of AP English.

1.5 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The methodological approach in this study is qualitative owing to the subjective nature of the research question, which explores how learners incorporate the literature into their lived experiences. This study, as established, is focused on perspectives and subjectivities. Identity is the lens through which the AP English context is explored, and is characterised as fluid (Sumara, 1998) and multiple (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009) and is constructed in a social context (Moje & Luke, 2009). As such, this study attempts to describe and understand, rather than explain or predict human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, as cited in de Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2001). In this way, this study seeks to understand the AP English context from a learner perspective.

The study incorporates Constructionist and Postmodernist paradigms that focus on the way in which the researcher and participants construct meaning (Patton, 2015, p. 122). This study can therefore be defined as a “constructionist qualitative inquiry that honours *the idea of multiple realities*” (Patton, 2015, p. 122). The incorporation of data-generating approaches that resonate with the AP English lived experiences is the particular methodological approach. In this way, it attempts to inhabit the learners' perspectives and hence the methodological approaches that have been incorporated in this study resonate with the subjective, fluid and complex nature of identity. Another particular aspect of this study is the way in which my own voice as a researcher is presented in this study. The methodological approach in this study includes a reflection on the many voices I have taken on in this study.

In this introduction, I have attempted to provide the reader with an understanding of what this study entails. The entire study is divided into five different sections, including this introduction, the literature review, the methodological approach, the findings and the conclusions. The literature review focuses on the relevant literature pertaining to the study's particular research focus. The methodological chapter refers to the overall methodology and specific methods used to gather data and understand the particular context of this study. The chapter on the findings

is an analysis of the data generated in this research, and the conclusion ties together the themes in this study, and provides concluding comments on the overall impact of this study. The following chapter is the literature review. The focus of the chapter is a discussion relating to the relevant literature in relation to the primary focus of this study, which is to gain fuller understanding of how the AP English experience can be understood through the lens of identity.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

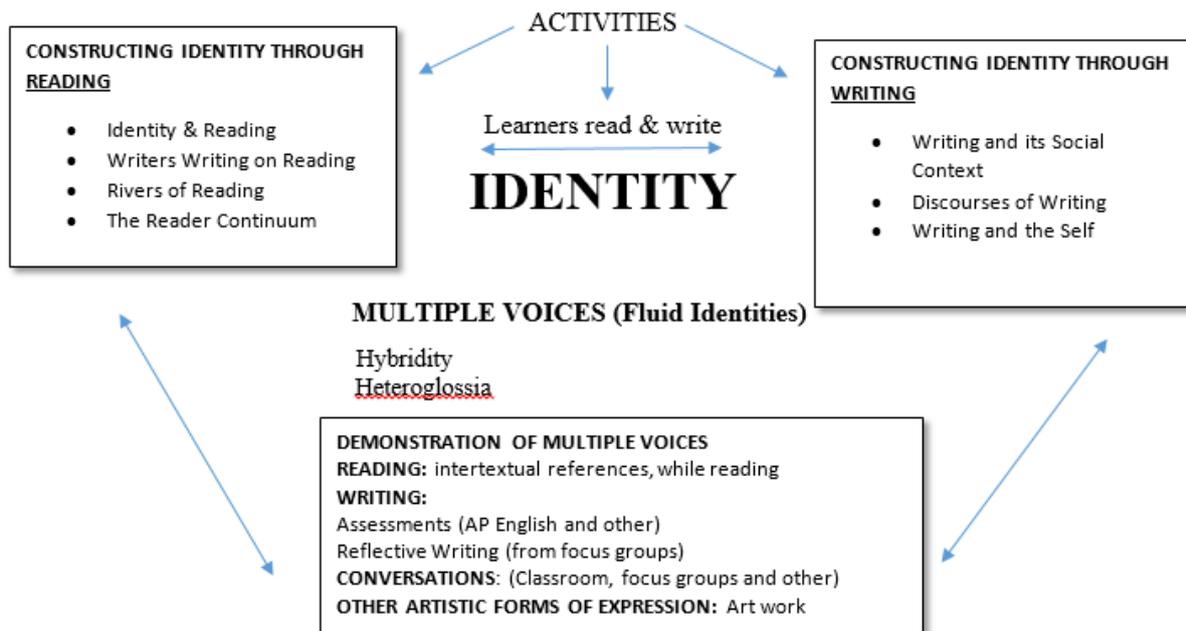
2.1 INTRODUCTION

The introductory chapter provided an overview of the study, thereby highlighting the motivation for conducting this study. It also provided a summary of the specific research focus, and gave a sense of the unique approach that has been adopted for this study. Following this was background relating to the subject, AP English. A discussion about the significance of the study and how it contributes to the field of educational literary studies was also included.

This purpose of this chapter is to refer to relevant literature that provides insight and context in relation to the primary focus of this study, which is the way in which AP English learners take on multiple voices. Through the lens of identity, the learners' perspectives of the AP English experience are explored. The literature review is divided into three main sections which include identity, constructing identity through reading and constructing identity through writing.

The diagram I have created, entitled “A study of the AP English experience through the lens of identity” (Figure 1, p. 11) places identity at the centre of the AP English experience, and indicates the way in which identity permeates all experiences of AP English as a whole. This diagram (see the following page) and the concepts that inspired its creation are discussed as follows.

Figure 1.1: A Study of the Advanced Programme English Experience Through the Lens of Identity



The diagram and its concepts can be explained as follows. At the outset, this literature review provides an overview of identity in relation to its fluid (Sumara, 1998, p. 204) and multiple nature (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009, p. 110). Identity is then discussed through Gee’s four intersecting perspectives (2001, p. 99) which is an interpretative model for understanding identity. Following this is a discussion around the nature of multiple voices in relation to Bakhtin concepts: this discussion is divided into three subsections that include an introductory discussion about multiple voices, as well as an overview of the concepts of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981) and hybridity (Bakhtin, 1981). Throughout this section, identity will be analysed in light of the AP English experience.

The literature review then explores *reading* and *writing*, two activities integral to the AP English experience. Identity is constructed through the actions of reading and writing (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 415). This idea that identity is constructed “in and through language” (Sarup, 1996, as cited in McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110) supports this perspective on identity.

The construction of identity through reading is discussed in four approaches. Firstly, there is the subjective nature of the reading process (Sumara, 1998,). “Writers writing on reading” provides some interesting insights into the reading process from the perspective of authors. “Rivers of Reading” (Cliff Hodges, 2012: 10) discusses how literature accommodates the

forever changing nature of identity. Finally, the idea of a reading continuum refers to two different approaches to reading, as conceptualized by Zadie Smith (2009, p. 42).

Writing and its social context are explored through a multi-layered view of writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 222), as well as through the way the classroom context shapes the writing process. Discourses of writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 234) is another topic discussed in relation to AP English. An exploratory analysis about how the concept of the self is present in writing comprises the last section of this chapter, as indicated in the findings chapter of this study

This literature review serves to explore the way identity is understood in relation to the AP English experience through the activities of reading and writing. The first section of this chapter is an exploration of identity.

2.2 IDENTITY

This section is divided into three subsections which include an overview of identity, Gee's four perspectives on identity and the concept of multiple voices in relation to identity.

2.2.1 An Overview of Identity

A good working definition of identity is a flexible one that accommodates its shifting nature. "A singular, totalizing identity" (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110) prevents the development of new thoughts and ideas on identity, while the understanding of identity as "complex, multiple 'selves' embedded within social, cultural and historical contexts" (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110) gives space for various interpretations of identity and also acknowledges the multiple influences to which identity is subject. As a result, it can be understood as fluid, and composed of multiple selves. This view is supported in that "identity is not something that is finally achieved; it is continually created with ever-shifting circumstances" (Sumara, 1998, p. 204) as it is "produced, generated, developed, or narrated over time" (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 415). In a school context, this is significant because this understanding of identity "contradicts common beliefs about subjectivity" (Sumara, 1998, p. 204) such as that a teacher's role is to uncover a learner's 'true' identity. Instead, identity can be viewed as fluid, and hence defined by its ability to change. Therefore, there is no singular, authentic identity to be uncovered for any individual. Rather, teachers should be encouraged to explore the "multiple selves" (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110) that exist in their learners (and themselves).

As this study is located within an educational realm, the following statement illustrates how meaningful the social aspect is to the foundations of identity and learning: “Learning, doing, being, and our very existence itself as individuals, are entirely social phenomena as the meanings of our lives are always social” (Curtin & Hall, 2013, p. 110). This emphasises the importance of interaction in the learning process, because one makes sense of oneself in relation to others. The social element of learning helps to facilitate *real learning* that is meaningful as opposed to “committing information to memory in isolation” (Curtin & Hall, 2013, p. 110), which often has little impact on the learner. Actions “are meaningless if not experienced, read, and understood in their social context” (Curtin & Hall, 2013, p. 110) and this study aims to explore the particular social aspects that influence the learners’ experience of AP English, which is discussed later in this literature review (see 2.3.1.2. Writing and the classroom).

McKinney and Giorgis refer to the interactive nature of identity, which contributes to its fluid state, in that,

[d]epending on the setting we can take on different identities, yet the relational nature of identity suggests that there are relationships between various selves and with groups.

(2009, p. 110)

This resonates with the view that identity can be seen as shifting, because it suggests that identity changes according to setting. There is also a connection between our various selves and the groups with whom we associate. Through this process the act of positioning takes place, which refers to the idea that

[w]ho we are is shaped by various contexts and our perceptions of self within those contexts and by how we are perceived and positioned by ‘others’.

(McKinney & Giorgis, 2002, p.110).

The word, positioning, suggests that individuals operate in relation to one another, and as a result they are positioned and take up positions out of choice. This idea is further elaborated on as “[s]ocial life is an ongoing discussion in which people seek to make their perspective and their story plausible and convincing” (Ryan, 2007, p. 69). People attempt to position themselves advantageously to demonstrate the credibility of their particular perspective.

A post structuralism research paradigm recognises identity positions. Britzman (1994, as cited in Sumara, 1998, p. 204) argues that “[a] poststructuralist approach to identity ... is concerned with tracing identity as subjected to the constraints of social structure”. In this view, social structures often restrict identity. Critical Language Awareness (CLA) supports this belief in that it focuses on the relationship between identity and power, and analyses the way in which social relations reflect how “different interests are served” (Janks, 2001, p. 111). Therefore, “[s]eeing identity not as an essence, but as positioning, helps us to focus on the social construction of that positioning, on the politics of power” (Toohey, 2000, as cited in van Enk, Dagenais, & Toohey, 2005, p. 499). According to Patton (2015, p. 126), “the purpose of language is to communicate the social construction of the dominant members of the group using language”. Gee (2001) posits a theory (see below) in order to explore how these different interests may be served through the lens of identity. The following subsection will illustrate how identity can be located in four intersecting perspectives that are based on positioning oneself in relation to power.

2.2.2 An Overview of Gee’s Perspectives

The four perspectives on identity constitute an interpretative model for understanding identity (Gee, 2001, p. 99). The word, perspective, is a meaningful one, because it suggests understanding the world through a human lens, as opposed to an objective stance. This recognises the subjective nature of studying our own identity, and asks how one positions oneself in our world. This also means that one is self-reflexive and aware of one’s own perspective, as is seen in Gee’s own studies where he uses examples from his own life to back up his four perspectives.

These four perspectives on identity resonate with the idea of identity as being multiple, as these are not exclusive categories but as perspectives, they tend to overlap and inform each other, as Gee suggests. The four include nature, institutional, discursive and affinity perspectives which are all at play in a given context: however, “we can still ask, for a given time or place, which strands predominate and why” (Gee, 2001, p. 101). An appreciation of how these four perspectives manifest themselves in different ways throughout history is evident because “[d]ifferent societies, and different historical periods, have tended to foreground one or other of these perspectives on identity (Gee, 2001, p. 101). Thus, it is important to understand firstly that the authority that each of these four perspectives has is dependent on the particular context, and secondly how these perspectives play out in relation to one another. This relates to the way

in which each of these perspectives is characterised by power (Gee, 2001, p. 100). These perspectives are “woven together” in “complex and important ways” (Gee, 2001, p. 101) which shows that identity is made up of multiple components, operating with varying degrees of emphasis at different times.

2.2.2.1 *The Nature and Institutional Perspectives*

The first perspective is referred to as the nature perspective and is defined as “a state that I am in, not anything that I have done or accomplished” (Gee, 2001, p. 101): it is a state “developed from forces in nature” (Gee, 2001, p. 100). An example of this would be one’s gender or age, which “unfolds outside my control or the control of society” (Gee, 2001, p. 101). One can refer to the nature perspective as aspects that one did not choose, and that are viewed differently, depending on the social context.

The three other perspectives exist and are produced within a social context, and thus are different from the nature perspective, which is developed in nature, but is only understood within a social context. The institutional perspective is “authorized by authorities within institutions” (Gee, 2001, p. 100) and refers to a position, such as a professor, which is subject to “laws, rules, traditions, or principles” as well as “rights and responsibilities” (Gee, 2001, p. 102). This position views one as a subject, which can be disempowering. It can also provide agency, given a certain position, because it allows one to exercise authority.

The institutional perspective is tied to place, as institutions are situated in a place and thus contextualise and shape the environment in which the institution is situated. Place can refer to the specific country in which this study is located, which in the case of this study, is South Africa. In post-Apartheid South Africa,

the geographical location of the schools children attend is not neutral. These locations are shaped and coloured by histories of class, race and culture
(Dixon, 2013, as cited in Mills & Comber 2013, p. 414)

and an awareness of the various power structures that dominate schools is necessary. Schools are also characterised by the traditional role of discipline and therefore,

[u]sing a Foucauldian approach to the visual gaze and the organisation of space within the school as a disciplinary institution, Dixon demonstrates that literacy instruction involves the regulation of bodies in time and place; that meaning-

making potential can be seriously curtailed where the authorized curriculum leaves little space for children to learn and focus instead on the display of outcomes.

(Dixon, 2013, as cited in Mills & Comber, 2013, p. 414)

The above quote refers to the implications of literary instruction in relation to place. AP English is situated within a school context, and the way in which it provides an alternative educational space to the traditionally restrictive one will be explored later in the following subsection of this literature review (2.1.3.3) with reference to “third space” (Moje, 2013).

2.2.2.2 *The Affinity Perspective*

The affinity perspective, also known as A-identities, is indicative of a freedom to choose one’s identity. The affinity perspective requires an “allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices that provide each of the group’s members the requisite experiences” (Gee, 2001, p. 105). This affinity perspective is based on the deliberate act of joining another group to gain membership, and participating in the shared experiences of that particular group. One gains this identity through belonging to a group, and practising certain activities. There is, however, an overlap with the Institutional perspective, as “institutionally created A-identities, whether orchestrated by businesses, schools, or other institutions, are ‘institutionally sanctioned’” (Gee, 2001, p. 107). One cannot ignore the institutional aspect of the affinity perspective, which can be simultaneously “a calling and an imposition” (Gee, 2001, p. 103). The overlap here shows how there is the institutional sense of an obligation, but also the freedom to choose. Whether one would view this particular overlap of perspectives as a calling or an imposition or both is dependent on the context.

Language also plays an important role in terms of relating to the affinity perspective. Language is conceptualised as “an identity kit that signals we are members of a particular group” (Gee, 1990, as cited in Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p 47). With reference to this particular study, the incorporation of various words and lines into the learners’ language can signify that he or she is a member of the AP English group, whether consciously or unconsciously. Using language in this way also suggests the need to be recognised, which correlates with the discursive perspective, which is the last perspective to be discussed. The nature, institutional and affinity perspectives would be meaningless if there was no one to witness these perspectives of identity. In this case, the discursive perspective forms the bedrock for the other perspectives, as this one is based on recognition.

2.2.2.3 *The Discursive Perspective*

The discursive perspective is centred on the need for others to recognise one in a particular way (Gee, 2001, p. 103). One cannot any longer count on institutions or traditional authority to underwrite one's identity (Gee, 2001, p. 112). The famous John Donne line, "no man is an island", rings true here, as the affirmation that comes from the very human activity of communication, as well as acknowledgement from fellow human-beings, is a necessary aspect of life. This recognition is gained through "discourse" (Gee, 2001, p.109). Recognition refers to how others respond to one's identity. Discourse is defined as a

socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and 'artefacts', of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting which can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group.

(Gee, 1996, as cited in Ivanič, 2004, p. 224)

Thus, through the expression of discourse one gains a particular recognition.

Post structuralism is also concerned with how identity is subject to "the practises of discourse" and as "discursive boundaries shift, so, too, do identities and the lived experiences that name them" (Britzman, 1994 as cited in Sumara, 1998, p. 204). Another conceptualisation of discourse is "language-in-use" because it can be considered

both the product and manifestation not of a timeless linguistic system, but of particular social conditions, class-structures, and power relations that alter the course of history.

(Abrams, 1993, p. 262)

Thus, discourse is inextricably tied to the human condition, and the discourse one uses is not an objective, neutral language, but rather laden with meaning in relation to its context and power. Furthermore, it can be argued that identity is constructed "in and through language" (Sarup, 1996, in McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110) which means that understanding how the AP English learners use language is essential to an understanding of their identities. In addition,

we write and speak our stories as a way of constructing our lives and claiming identities. Thus, identity and language are linked through personal narratives and life stories, through identity performances.

(Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 112)

In this way, it is evident that identity is fluid, and that it is constructed through narrative and performances. Through these narratives and performances one gains recognition.

In conclusion, I have discussed Gee's four intersecting perspectives on identity and how they are relevant to the AP English context. The following section explores the ways in which one can express multiple voices.

2.2.3 Multiple Voices

This subsection provides an introduction to the concept of multiple voices. The concepts of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428) and hybridity (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 429) are also discussed. This subsection is important, as it resonates with the primary focus of this study, which is an exploration of the multiple voices that exist in the AP English context. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss this aspect in the identity section of the literature review, as the activities of reading and writing are clarified by this discussion.

2.2.3.1 *An Introduction to the Concept of Multiple Voices*

In this subsection I will explore how multiple voices exist within the AP English context. These multiple voices are apparent in various forms of the AP English learner's expression which include talking and writing, both inside and outside the AP English context.

As established, identity is constructed "in and through language" (Sarup, 1996, as cited in McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110). Bakhtin (1981, p. 430) refers to language as "any communication system employing signs that are ordered in a particular manner". He categorises language into two forces that either unify or divide. The centripetal forces of language "serve to unify and centralize" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 270). This centripetal force lies in common unitary languages, which are known as "systems of linguistic norms" that people share (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 270). There are different types of languages such as a social language, which is "a discourse peculiar to a specific stratum of society within a given system at a given time" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 430). Languages are context specific, and in the case of the AP English learners there is a generational language that they use. According to Bakhtin,

[i]n any given historical moment of verbal-ideological life, each generation at each social level has its own language; moreover, every age group has as a matter of fact its own language, its own vocabulary, its own particular accentual system, that in their turn, vary depending on social level, academic institution (the

language of the cadet, the high school student, the trade school student are all different languages).

(1981, p. 290)

Language is, therefore, subject to a person's specific context. In addition, there is another more powerful unifying language known as the language of the poetic genre, which is referred to by Bakhtin as "the one language of truth" (1981, p. 271). This language is "singular" and exists in a "world outside of which nothing else exists and nothing else is needed" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 286). It carries "a mythological feeling for the authority of language and a faith in the unmediated transformation into a seamless unity of the entire sense" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 369). The language of the poetic genre, therefore, contains much influence, as there is a promise, within the language, that one will feel unified with the 'true' meaning of the language.

In contrast, there is the concept of the voice which is the vessel through which language is spoken. The voice "is the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness. A voice will always have a will or desire behind it, its own timbre and overtones" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 434).

This voice provides context and gives a new meaning to the unitary languages. As a result, "stratification" occurs which "destroys unity" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 433). This is known as a centrifugal force. This ties up with the idea of identities as multiple and changing, as Bakhtin (1981, p. 431) suggests that language itself is divided, and therefore identity is split because of the way language is used: "The only un-preconditioned world was Eden, and since its Fall we have all spoken about the world in someone else's words". Furthermore, Bakhtin describes the concept of a unitary language as a fallacy. A singular, unitary language only exists as concept, and when spoken the unifying meaning is lost. Smith gives an example of the split nature of language. She refers to someone taking on a different accent with specific reference to Shaw's *Pygmalion*. She states, "[y]ou could be forgiven for thinking that voice adaptation was our original sin" (2008, Dec 5). An awareness that one can embody two aspects at once can be viewed as being an almost sinful quality, because there is an expectation that one should remain loyal to a singular voice, a singular way of being.

Therefore, there is no unitary language, as the original meaning is lost in the speaker's own intentions. Various factors influence the nature of one's voice because

[e]ach utterance, furthermore, whether in actual life or as represented in literature, owes its precise inflection or meaning to attendant factors – the relation of its speaker to an actual or anticipated listener, and the relation of its utterance to the prior utterances to which it is, (explicitly or implicitly) a response, as well as the specific, social situation in which it is both spoken and interpreted.

(Abrams, 1993, p. 231)

One's perceived audience, what was said in the past and the specific context in which something is expressed all influence the meaning of what one says. In the case of this study, the AP English learners take on various unitary languages, but their own voices change the meaning of that unitary language to accommodate the purpose of the speaker.

The following subsection will explore the idea of multiple voices in relation to the concept of heteroglossia.

2.2.3.2 *Heteroglossia*

The concept of Heteroglossia refers to the idea that the context in which language is used will always be specific and that in different circumstances the words spoken would have different meanings. As a result of the divided nature of language, Bakhtin suggests that

every day represents another socio-ideological semantic 'state of affairs', another vocabulary, another accentual system, with its own slogans, its own ways of assigning blame and praise.

(1981, p. 291)

Therefore, although the language we use can be repeated, the meaning behind it, when repeated, will always be different. This resonates with the view of identity as multiple (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110), fluid (Sumara, 1998, p. 204) and continually constructed (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 415). Hence if the language one uses continually changes, so too, will one's identity.

Heteroglossia is "where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428) in language, and the concept illustrates the tensions between "centralization and decentralization" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). As a result, refraction occurs, which refers to the two intentions governing one's speech: "the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324). This is known as "double-voiced discourse"

which means “two voices, two meanings, and two expressions” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324). There is, therefore, no one central meaning in the language we use. How we choose to express ourselves is made up of various influences, as

[h]ow anything anyone thinks or says is, in reality, composed of bits and pieces of language that have been voiced elsewhere, in other conversations or texts, bits and pieces that have circulated and recirculated inside the workings of various texts, social groups, and institutions. For Bakhtin, what one means is always a product of both the meanings words have ‘picked up’ as they circulate in history and society and one’s own individual ‘take’ or slant’ on these words (at a given time or place).

(Bakhtin, 1986, as cited in Gee, 2009, p. 114)

Thus, the language we use is composed of more than one meaning. It is a site for unitary language and the individual’s intention. The individual’s intention adds significance to what is being said because

[t]o study the word as such, ignoring the impulse that reaches out beyond it, is just as senseless as to study psychological experience outside the context of that real life toward which it was directed and by which it is determined.

(Bakhtin, 1981, p. 292).

This idea suggests that the words expressed by a person can only be understood because of the intention behind them. Furthermore, the psychological experience only begins to make sense once the context of the experience is recognised. This resonates with the primary aim of this study, which is to explore the way in which the learners take on multiple voices, and the meanings they associate with these voices.

Jeanette Winterson comments on this idea by referring to the deep and lasting effect that strong texts have on us. She states that,

[t]he critic Christopher Ricks, in his essay on Victorian thinkers, points out how often people misquote their favourite texts; the misquote subtly shifting the meaning to one which better reflects the reality of the speaker.

(1995, p. 26)

This misquoting of literary texts is evident in the AP English class, where learners incorporate the texts into their own language to express their opinions. The concept of “ventriloquation” illustrates how “a speaker speaks through the voice of another for the purpose of social or

interactional positioning” (Wertsch, 1991 & Wortham, 2001, as cited in Samuelson, 2009, p. 52). In this way, speakers take on another voice in order to make one’s perspective and story “plausible and convincing” (Ryan, 2007, p. 69). In relation to the AP English classroom, learners refer to the literature to prove their opinions. Ventriloquation allows for speakers to “reveal aspects of their ideology, beliefs, opinions, views and attitudes” (Wortham, 2001, as cited in Samuelson, 2009, p. 53). The voices one chooses to adopt inform and support one’s position.

In terms of this study, language derived from the studied literature contains elements of Bakhtin’s poetic genre because it serves to unify the group, and the learners use it to gain a sense of recognition and to position themselves in relation to others, which relates to Gee’s discursive perspective as discussed in 2.1.2.3. The language of the poetic genre serves to guarantee “a certain maximum of mutual understanding and crystalizing into a real, although still relative, unity” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 270). However, many studied texts are a “site for the dialogic interaction of multiple voices, or modes of discourse” (Abrams, 1993, p. 231) such as T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, which is one of the studied poems in the AP English syllabus. *The Waste Land* is a good example of intertextuality or drawing on multiple voices, which Abrams describes as follows:

[t]he term intertextuality, popularized especially by Julia Kristeva, is used to signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text is inseparably inter-involved with other texts, whether by its open or covert citations and *allusions*, or by its assimilation of the formal and substantive features of an earlier text or texts, or simply by its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are ‘always ready’ in place and constitute the discourses into which we are born.

(1993, p. 285)

The Waste Land is an example of open citations or allusions as T.S. Eliot incorporates many different views into his poem. The studied literature in the AP English context holds the group together as a shared experience, but in its nature it has multiple meanings. This is established by Bakhtin, who states that,

[l]iterary language – both spoken and written – although it is unitary not only its shared, abstract linguistic markers but also in its form of conceptualizing these literary markers, it is self stratified and heteroglot in its aspect as an expressive system, that is, in the forms that carry its meaning.

(1981, p. 288)

This shows how “centripetal and centrifugal forces collide” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428) by simultaneously centralizing and decentralizing the AP English literary language.

The following subsection explores another conceptualisation of multiple voices, known as hybridity.

2.2.3.3 *Hybridity*

Hybrid is another term for referring to the overlap of various languages. It refers to the mixing of “different linguistic consciousnesses” (Bakhtin, 1981: 429). This ties up with the idea of double-voicedness, where there is more than one intended meaning. Furthermore, Bakhtin argues that “unintentional, unconscious hybridization is one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages” (Bakhtin, 1981: 358) because often language transforms and grows without our conscious realization.

Further theories on hybridity extend the concept beyond language, so that hybridity “refers either to identities or to contexts, spaces, and cultures” (Moje, 2013, p. 360). In addition, Moje (2013, p. 36) refers to Homi Bhabha in her reference to hybridity, which is defined as when

two or more ways of knowing in the world come into the contact and members of both (or more) worlds are forced to construct new ways of knowing the world – and new identities – as they navigate the ‘in-between’.

(Bhabha 1994, as cited in Moje, 2013, p. 360)

This ‘in-between’ space defies the singular voice that often dominates the educational sphere, and rather affirms different ways of knowing the world where new meaning is constructed. The concept of “Third Space” (Moje, 2013) resonates with hybridity as it is described as, “the place where different practises collide, where identities are recognised and people are positioned, and where possibilities of new ideas reside” (Moje, 2013, p. 361). This space allows for “what seem to be oppositional categories” which “can actually work together to generate new knowledge, new Discourses and new forms of literacy” (Moje, 2013, p. 362). The third space is rich with possibility as it is

a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation, where official and unofficial, formal and informal spaces become permeable and create the potential for new kinds of learning.

(Mills & Comber, 2013, p. 413)

In relation to the AP English context, a more formal, academic language based on assessment and interpretation of literature often mixes with the generational language (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 290) of the learners. This blending of languages has the possibility of easing conflict between the teacher's language, which is characterised as formal and academic and the student's vernacular (Cremin & Maybin, 2013, p. 284). This heteroglot and hybrid space can be viewed as liberating because "languages do not *exclude* each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291) Furthermore, language "no longer conceived as a sacrosanct and solitary embodiment of meaning and truth, becomes merely one of many possible ways to hypothesize meaning" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 370).

This way of viewing language is "flexible and more tolerant of being mixed with other discourses", which resonates with the purpose of this study, which explores the AP English learners' flexibility in taking on multiple voices, and is "dialogic rather than monologic" (Ryan, 2007, p. 120). In this way, there can be the "intensification and internationalization of speech diversity that are counterpoised to the previously reigning stable systems" (Bakhtin, 371, p. 1981), which is indicative of a break from traditional, mainstream educational thought and contexts.

At present, there is an interest in everyday language, and a steering away from "timeless works of great literature, produced by exceptional individuals" (Cremin & Maybin, 2013, p. 275). Everyday language can be rich with possibility, as the

more vernacular creativity appears to be collaboratively constructed, responsive to previous texts and practices and bound up with the construction of relationships and identity.

(Swan, Pope & Carter, 2011 as cited in Cremin & Maybin, 2013, p. 275)

In terms of the AP English class, learners - instead of being apprehensive of the literature -refer to the literature in their own words and in relation to one another. This flexibility in language has been recognised as "clearly important for aesthetic, developmental, educational, and wider functions" (Cremin & Maybin, 2013, p. 285). A study such as this one opens up the possibilities of learning, because it recognises the important role that AP English can play in schooling, where meaning is collaboratively constructed. Cremin and Maybin conclude by stating that

[a]dditionally, the framing of literacy and language and the varied conceptualisations and values afforded creativity internationally, both in policy and practice, create challenges for the profession. In many countries, high stake assessment has arguably led to an instrumental approach to teaching and learning literacy. Such an approach views literacy as a body of skills to be taught and tested, and fails to recognise it as a highly complex, socio-cultural practice. This not only side-lines the open-ended, playful and generative nature of language, but also reinforces the place of English at the margins of debate about arts education, despite the perception that language creativity is positioned at the intersection of play and art.

(2013, p. 286)

A subject such as AP is fundamental in its alternative nature, because the policy and practice of the subject can create a space for teachers and learners to enjoy aspects of the subject that fall outside of the rigours of assessment. This subject also provides a platform for a shift towards embracing multiple voices in the educational context. This shift is rich in possibility, and acknowledges learner perspectives.

This subsection has explored the concept of multiple voices in relation to the AP English experience. An introduction to the concept of multiple voices, and the concepts of heteroglossia and hybridity was provided. The activities of reading and writing in the AP English context are informed by this discussion.

This section has provided an overview of identity that lays the foundations for interpreting the AP English experience from the learners' perspectives. The following section will explore the construction of identity in relation to reading in the AP English context.

2.3 CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH READING

This section refers specifically to the process of reading. Reading is an integral part of the AP English experience, because learners are required to read and analyze various literature texts inside and outside the classroom. The particular focus of this section is on the relationship between the reader's identity and reading. This section is divided into a number of topics which include an overview of identity and reading that explores the subjective nature of reading (Sumara, 1998, p. 205). The relationship between the text and the reader is discussed, as well as the term, "Literary Events" (Moje, Dillon, O'Brien, 2010, p. 166). I will also explore a reconceptualization of the word, "text" (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166), which resonates with the AP English context.

A subsection on writers writing about reading explores how fiction writers perceive the reading process. Following this is an exploration of the concept, “Rivers of Reading” (Cliff Hodges, 2012, p. 10) which refers to the way in which literature accommodates one’s forever changing identity. Lastly, there is a discussion about the term, reading continuum (Smith, 2009, p. 42) in light of Zadie Smith’s views on the reading process: this discussion suggests that there are different ways to conceptualize the reading experience.

All of these subsections bring about a richer, more layered understanding of how the identities are constructed through the reading.

2.3.1 An Overview of Identity and Reading

Sumara draws on Rosenblatt to link identity and reading explicitly. The reading experience can be interpreted as a “transaction between reader and text” (Sumara, 1998, p. 205). Reading is an act of meaning-making as the meaning is not found in the text or the reader but rather in the reader’s active engagement with the text. This is reiterated in that the process of reading a poem is viewed as “an event in time” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 12). It is

not an object or an ideal entity. It happens during a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text. The reader brings to the text his past experience and present personality.

(Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 12)

For the purposes of this research, one can argue that Rosenblatt’s notion of the poem extends to all forms of art, specifically literature in this case, be it novels, drama or film. One of the meanings of the word, ‘compenetration’, is a mutual interfusion, which suggests a two-way process: i.e. the literature affects the reader, and the reader brings the literature ‘to life’ through their subjective interpretation of the literature. The poem, owing to its often shortened form, is a condensation of meaning, and thus, the process of bringing it to life, through their engagement with it, often appears intensified.

In the reading process, “the reader’s role is an active, not a passive one” (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 49). The reader interprets the literature and undergoes a change, which makes sense in light of identity seen as both fluid (Sumara, 1998, p. 204) and multiple (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110). The self is actively engaged in meaning-making. Moreover, the self is subject to change, as “readers produce new knowledge about themselves that continues to function alongside

existing knowledge” (Sumara, 1998, p. 205). Therefore, “[a]s the fictional text is interpreted by the reader, the reader is at the same time interpreted” (Sumara 1998, p. 205). Thus, we can read our own identities as a fiction, because “the identities we continue to shape are no less fictitious than the characters about whom we read” (Sumara 1998, p. 205). This fictitious nature of identity is indicative of its fluid, ephemeral nature.

However, the act of reading is not only about the relationship between the reader and the text, but is also specific to a particular context. A context is defined as “an event, a place, a social group, a realm of knowledge, or a moment in time” (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166). The AP English class is based on reading and interpreting of literature as a group. This experience can be referred to as “Literacy Events” (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166). These events are “situated in relationships with other people” (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166). Literacy events are referred to as,

acts or moments that involve reading, writing, speaking, and performing many kinds of texts, but these acts or moments are situated in specific social, cultural, historical, and institutional contexts and are engaged in for specific purposes relative to those contexts.

(Barton, 1994, as cited in Moje, et al., 2010, p.165)

Therefore, the specific context of AP English is of particular interest in this study, as this influences the learners and the way in which they relate to one another as part of the process of interpreting the studied literature.

Furthermore, a more flexible definition of the word, “texts” opens up new ways of interpreting a text’s function in the AP English context. Texts are more than “linguistic, print-based artefacts” (Moje, et al., 2010: 166): they are “social constructions” (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166). Thus, the definition of what constitutes a text is broadened to include,

[t]alk, as well as talk about talk, nonverbal reinforcements of spoken and written language, written artefacts, and the activities and role regulations that frame all of these become the texts that those who study language socialization attempt to study.

(Heath, 1994, as cited in Moje, et al., 2010, p. 167)

Thus, the meaning of the word, text, allows not only the traditional words on the page to be viewed as constructed forms of meaning, but that individuals and relationships, become sites of meaning-making that are open to interpretation. According to Abrams (1993, p. 285), “[i]n

Kristeva's formulation, accordingly, any text is in fact an 'intertext' – the site of an intersection of numberless texts". The AP English experience can be understood as one text, and within that text, there are multiple texts such as the studied literature, the discussions, the writing and the engagements of learners and teachers too. All the texts intersect with one another, and in this way, they all are reflections of each other. Therefore, "[t]exts are "cultural tools for establishing belongingness, identity and ways of knowing" (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 167). Thus all the texts in the AP English experience are focused around the construction of identity.

The following section explores writers' reflections on the process of reading.

2.3.2 Writers Writing about Reading

Authors, themselves, can provide illuminating thoughts on the reading process. This study will make reference to the well-known fiction writers, Zadie Smith and Jeanette Winterson. Smith is best known for her novels, *White Teeth*, *NW* and the newly released *Swing Time*, while Winterson is best known for her novels, *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, *Written on the Body* and *Why be Happy When You Could be Normal?* These writers move beyond the world of fiction by commenting on reading processes. They are interested in how their craft, which is writing, influences the reader. It is fitting to incorporate their views as they are producers of literature, and therefore very real agents in the link between reading and identity. This opens up the conversation in this study, and as such is "dialogic rather than monologic" (Ryan, 2007, p. 120) in that it incorporates other views outside of the educational sphere. These writers are self-reflexive and in this way give consideration to their own reading experiences, as well how their writing might be interpreted by the reader. This provides for a direct engagement with the major role players in this interplay between identity and reading. As writers, they are aware that their writing has a "destination" (Smith, 2009, p.43), i.e. the reader. As writers, the source of the literature comes from them, but does not remain with them, as it is interpreted by their readers (Sumara, 1998, p. 205).

Zadie Smith expands on the way in which a meaningful reading experience alters our perceptions of the world:

[a] great piece of fiction can demand that you acknowledge the reality of its wildest proposition, no matter how alien it may be to you. It can also force you to concede the radical otherness lurking within things that appear most familiar... Great styles [of writing] represent the interface of "world" and "I", and

the very notion of such an interface being different in kind and quality from your own is where the power of fiction resides.

(2007, Jan 13)

Great writing gives one the chance to view the world from a different angle. The self is altered through the reading experience as the reader then perceives the world differently and this “contributes to one’s evolving sense of self” (Sumara 1998, p. 206). One sees the world through new eyes, and one’s perception is adjusted. Thus, through the act of reading the readers’ sense of self is readjusted and changed, as they see the world in a different light.

Chambers argues against the idea that we can objectively critique literature. He states that

criticism is autobiographical. Whatever the critic’s particular bent or specialist preference – linguistic, structuralist, feminist, political, psychoanalytical, and so on – the basis is the reader’s own experience of the text. Without that there is nothing. Nothing to work on, nothing of interest.

(1996, p. 22)

This view of literary criticism as autobiographical ties up with Smith’s idea that various literature engagements will affect identity to varying degrees. A poor piece of literature, according to Smith, does little to change one’s sense of self (2007, Jan 13): this echoes Chambers’ point that criticism stems from the “experience of the text” (1996, p. 22). If the reader is unengaged with the literary text, there will be no readjustment of self, “nothing of interest” (Chambers, 1996, p. 22). The real interest in the link between identity and reading lies with the way in which literature can affect identity on a deeper level, which is the focus of this particular study.

Jeanette Winterson also discusses the link between identity and reading. She suggests that,

[a]rt is a way into other realities, other personalities. When I let myself be affected by a book, I let myself into new customs and new desires. This book does not reproduce me, it re-defines me, pushing at my boundaries, shatters the palings that guard my heart. Some texts work along the borders of our minds and alter what already exists. They could not do this if they merely reflected what already exists.

(1995, p. 26)

Here one can see how literature has the potential to change the way that readers think. because they can be introduced to a new ways of thinking and feeling that have to be accommodated

into their identities. A good book then pushes at the boundaries of one's identity and agitates the protective barriers that limit one's sense of self. Change is never easy, as

[o]ur unconscious attitude to art is complex. We want it and We don't want it, often simultaneously, and at the same time a book is working intravenously we are working to immunise ourselves against it.

(Winterson, 1995, p. 27).

Reading can thus be viewed as a dangerous activity! It challenges one's preconceptions. One simultaneously encourages and resists this change. Sumara confirms this role of literature as follows:

[t]his view contradicts the notion that literature provides vicarious experience or that literature merely provides entertainment, escape, or moral lessons for the reader. While all these may be the case, in considering the relationship between the reader's identity and the reader's knowledge, the act of reading ought to be considered an important site for the contestation and negotiation of already slippery and shifting identities.

(1998, p. 206)

The view of identities as slippery and shifting is an important conceptualisation of learners' identities within the AP English context. One can offer the argument that it is incorrect to separate "entertainment, escape, or moral lessons" (Sumara, 1998: 206) from identity as entertainment, escape and moral lessons are also reflections of one's identity. After all, as Sumara himself states, "interpretations of literature means interpretations of self" (1998, p. 205). Entertainment, escape and moral lessons are other forms of interpretations and other motivations to engage with literature.

In conclusion, this subsection has explored the way in which reading affects identity. The following section will extend this idea further in exploring the relationship between one's journey through life, and how literature continuously fits into our conceptualizations of self.

2.3.3 "Rivers of Reading"

The act of reading can be interpreted as "an event in time" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 12). However, when one looks beyond that moment, it is evident that one's entire life is made up of events in time in relation to reading. The reading experience, therefore, is an accumulation over time, and as we read and experience life in general, identity is subject to change. This process can be

referred to as “Reading Journeys or Rivers of Reading” (Cliff Hodges, 2012, p 10). The words, ‘journey’ and ‘rivers’ suggests movement and the idea that time is passing. In this way, reading experiences are “the accumulation of a lifetime” (Winterson, 1993, p. 89), which resonates with the focus group topic that is referred to in the following chapters of this study.

Cliff Hodges (2012, p. 10) describes Rivers of Reading as reflecting on “special moments or key reading experiences through which they (the participants, in this case) felt their readership might have been shaped”. One “could thus begin to get a sense of their reading histories as trajectories” (Cliff Hodges, 2012, p. 10). Consequently, the reading experience is viewed, within this research, as a layered, personal path where the individual has various encounters with literature, and that these encounters will presumably continue onwards beyond the school setting of AP English.

This journey may become more meaningful when one reflects on past experiences. Sumara (1998: 205) elaborates via Greene (1995) and Egan (1997) that “[t]hinking about thinking...is dependent upon an ability to incorporate various layers of interpreted memory into new experiences in relation to what is remembered”. When one reads one brings to the text one’s past experience and present personality (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 12). This suggests that each person’s reading journey is different as “the person’s trajectory and narrativization are individual” (Gee, 2001, p. 111). Trajectory suggests a stretch of time, which resonates with the imagery associated with the length of a river. The narrativization gives voice to one’s individual journey. Rivers of Reading can, thus, be interpreted as a personal voyage that is individual for each person, as the narrative of one’s own life intersperses with the narratives of the stories or literature with which we engage through the journey of one’s lifetime.

This reading journey, in a similar vein to identity, is not necessarily linear and unbroken, but “characterised by discontinuities and disjunctions (Mishler, 1999, as cited by, Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110). This idea is further expanded upon in McKinney & Giorgis:

Bakhtin (1981) theorized that individuals engage in internal dialogue (resulting from voices encountered in the past) that may aid in the process of constructing and reconstructing ourselves as we struggle to make meaning of experiences and actions.

(2009, p.110)

One's reading journey, as with one's identity, is a process of constructing and reconstructing as one makes sense of the "past, present and projected (Sumara, 1999, p. 206) and the "ongoing reinterpretation of past events and projections of future events" (Sumara, 1999, p. 206). Bakhtin describes the process of meaning-making as a struggle, because one is continually adapting to a changing self and world, and reconciling this with past experiences. In light of this, the acting of reading can be viewed as a positive experience because it can be "treated as a resource, as an experience from which one could draw lessons or on which one could reflect" (Brandt, 2001, as cited in McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 166). In this way, reading can become an anchor or a means of igniting reflection, as our own life narratives weave with the stories we read, and thus reading can accommodate our forever-changing identities. In conclusion, the special relationship between identity and reading is the primary focus of this study and the AP English experience forms part of this life-long journey with literature.

The following subsection discusses two ways of approaching the reading process, thereby helping to develop a more layered understanding of how the reader reads.

2.3.4 The Reading Continuum

This subsection is inspired by Zadie Smith once again and her book is aptly titled: "Changing My Mind". Smith, herself, has multiple identities in relation to literature: she is a writer, a reader and an academic. In this book, Smith has the inclination and the confidence to change her mind about a range of topics.

Smith's particular essay entitled "Rereading Barthes and Nabokov" discusses how she approaches reading from two different perspectives, which for the purposes of this study, is understood as constituting a reading continuum. She looks at the process of reading from the perspective of both a *reader* and a *writer*. The reader has power and freedom to interpret the literature however she pleases, while the writer has "the tendency to feel humbled before the act of writing" (Smith, 2009, p. 43), and believes in "an expression of consciousness" (Smith, 2009, p. 44) that is communicated by the author. For this reason, the reader reads with enthusiasm, claiming meaning where it suits her. On the other hand, when the writer reads she is more reticent as to where the meaning of the text lies, respectful that the meaning of the text does not lie in the reader's perspective of the text, but the author's perspective. Both ways of analysing literature suggest a construction of identity: the former is a purposeful and confident

claiming of meaning in the reading process, while the latter suggests a sensitivity and a reticence to claim full ownership of what the literature truly means.

In relation to this study, it would be incorrect to place any individual in one category, as that would be limiting. Identities, as established, are fluid and changing: therefore, these two oppositional identities of *reader* and *writer* can form a continuum along which the learner may be located. The learners may change their stance, and shift from one side of the continuum to another, and therefore, may respond in varying degrees at different times.

Smith draws her inspiration for the distinction between a reader and writer approach to reading by referring to Roland Barthes and Vladimir Nabokov. Smith refers to Barthes, who once famously stated in *The Death of the Author* that, “[t]he birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (2009, p. 42). The author’s intentions disappear within the reader, who uses the studied literature as a means to further her own meaning-making process. This approach to literature ties in with the motivation to foreground the “actor or agent in literate and social practices” (Moje & Luke., 2009, p.416), and in this case, the reader’s interpretation of the literature is privileged.

In Smith’s essay, she skilfully uses the metaphor of comparing the act of occupying a house to one’s approach to studying literature. She refers to a reader’s approach to reading as “[t]hey have always walked into books boldly, without knocking or bothering too much about the owner” (Smith, 2009, p. 43). Smith refers to the effect that a Barthes-like approach can have on one as “blissed out, picking her way through a riot of potential meanings, constructing a text playfully, without limits” (Smith, 2009, p. 48). From Barthes’ point of view readers can claim particular parts they like about the text as their own, and then broaden the text by placing it in whatever context they see fit.

Nabokov holds a contrasting view. He respects the text, as he believes meaning is inherent in the text. *Meaning*, for Nabokov, is not located in the reader, but rather in the writer, who sees writing as an “intentional, directional act, an expression of individual consciousness” (Smith, 2009, p. 44). For the writer’s identity, meaning is to be located in the text, and not in the reader’s sense of self. Thus, Barthes and Nabokov are at opposite ends of the continuum, as Barthes gives free reign to the reader to interpret as he pleases, while Nabokov believes that it is the reader’s responsibility to access the writer’s intended meaning.

Smith acknowledges both arguments, and for the purpose of this study, the continuum is an appropriate model to interpret the AP English learners' interpretations of literature. The continuum also resonates with the idea of multiple, shifting identities as learners' experiences of literature can fluctuate along the continuum.

In conclusion, this section on constructing the self through reading has explored various aspects of the reading process in relation to the AP English experience. I have attempted to navigate the complexities of constructing identity in relation to reading. The focus for this study will now turn towards the activity of writing, and the way in which learners construct their identities through the writing process.

2.4 CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH WRITING

Having established conceptualisations of identity, and then explored the relationship between identity and reading, this section explores another aspect of the AP English experience, which is writing. Writing is an integral aspect of the AP English experience, whether it be writing for assessment or learners' own informal, reflective writing in relation to the subject.

The first point of focus is a multi-layered view of writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 222). This grounds ideas about writing in a particular framework. From there, the classroom environment and its impact on the writing process is also explored. The concept, discourses of writing, is discussed, and finally, a discussion of the relationship between the self and writing concludes this literature review.

2.4.1 Writing and its Social Context

The relationship between writing and its social context forms a very important part of the AP English experience. A multi-layered view of language (Ivanič, 2004, p. 221) and the way in which the classroom environment affects the process of writing are the two ways in which the social context is explored.

2.4.1.1 *A Multi-Layered View of Language*

One of my intentions in this study is to offer “a more comprehensive and integrated view of the nature of writing and learning to write” that steps away from traditional ideas of writing as “asocial conceptualisations of literacy as autonomous, decontextualized skills located in the individual” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 221). Once writing is contextualised, one can unpack how it is

learnt and understood in a social context. Morris (2007, p. 69). states that writing “means many things to many people” and therefore “if our underlying conceptualisations of writing differ, then those differences may also become apparent in written products and in the processes used to produce those outcomes”. Writing is subject to a variety of influences. Just as identity is subject to a variety of influences (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110), so is the writing process.

A multi-layered view of language (Ivanič, 2004, p. 222) is a useful conceptualisation that shows how texts (in this case, only the writing product) do not exist in isolation, but are embedded within various layers of meaning. At the centre of this view of language is the “text” which “consists only of the linguistic substance of language”, while the second layer refers to “the mental process of meaning-making” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). The link between text and mental processes is emphasised because “the existence of the texts is implicit in the study of their production and reception” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224): therefore, there can be no text without an author and a reader. And as previously stated in 2.2.1 (An overview of identity and reading), the process of reading can be described as “an event in time” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 12).

The third layer refers to the event surrounding the writing, which includes

the observable characteristics of the immediate social context in which language is being used, including the purposes for language use, the social interaction, the particulars of time and place.

(Ivanič, 2004, p. 224)

Regarding this particular study, writing for assessment and reflective writing are two examples of how writing is based on an event. The fourth layer is the “social view of language” which is “supported by the cultural context within which language use is taking place, and the patterns of privileging and relations of power among them” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). The social view of language acknowledges how writing is shaped by context and power relations. The role of discourses of writing is discussed further on in this literature review (2.3.2), and provides a useful way to unpack the different perceptions of writing.

The following subsection explores the relationship between the processes of writing and the classroom environment.

2.4.1.2 *Writing and the Classroom*

This subsection will explore the way in which the classroom context affects the learner's writing process. As established, learners' writing within an AP English context can be situated within the multi-layered view of writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 222). This view of writing suggests that writing does not exist in isolation. AP English provides "classroom contexts that foster the development of higher levels of literacy" (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand & Gamoran, 2003, p. 685). The manner in which learners acquire the skills to write in a way that is appropriate for the requirements of higher level literacy is of particular interest to this study. AP English generally has the following expectation of its learners, i.e.

successful participation reflected in the ability to talk and write effectively about what has been read or experienced, mustering arguments and appropriate evidence to support an individual view.

(Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 685)

The use of the word, *mustering*, suggests that learners have to collect their thoughts, which will then be expressed in a singular individual view. This relates to the concept of talking and writing about literature as a "literary performance" (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 686), which refers to the way in which learners perform or enact their understanding of literature. Previous theory revolving around learners' understandings of literature suggests that, "[s]tudents either did or did not comprehend a text and were either able or not able to transcribe their thoughts effectively" (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 687). This simple view of understanding has developed into a much more complex idea that resonates with the idea of identity as being fluid (Sumara, 1998, p. 204) and multiple (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110). Literacy tasks (in this specific case, writing) are no longer viewed

as simple processes of transcription and decoding but, rather, as extended processes of composition and comprehension, during which the understandings of readers and writers develop and change.

(Applebee, et al., 2003, p 687)

This suggests that the learning process is not limited to a moment in time, but rather is characterised as a continuous process. It also suggests that feelings and opinions of the learners are subject to change as their understandings of the work of literature changes. Learners' writing is an expression of higher level literacy (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 685) and involves "the recursive, complex cognitive and linguistic processes that writers engage in as they

struggle with both content and form” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 687). In this way, writing is no longer merely a “text” but is a product of mental processes (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). The word, “struggle” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 687) also indicates that the act of meaning-making through writing is not necessarily an easy process. The emphasis is also on “the ever-changing nature of a reader’s or writer’s understanding of a text” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 690), an idea similar to that of “Rivers of Reading” (Cliff Hodges, 2012, p. 10) and to the notion of constructing and reconstructing oneself in relation to literature (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110). The term, “envisionment building” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 690) is particularly appropriate in this case, as it refers to the idea that a learner’s understanding of “a text at any time was a mixture of understandings, questions, hypotheses, and connections to previous knowledge and experiences” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 691). Thus, the writing process rests to a large extent on a learner’s personal reading history and how he or she has perceived and adapted the literature to accommodate his or hers forever changing identity.

Within the context of writing for higher level literacy “the importance of discussion-based approaches in teaching for in-depth understanding” (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999, as cited in Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 686) resonates with this study. Discussion in an AP English classroom has the possibility of being rich and rewarding owing to many factors such as the informal, relaxed environment and the engagement with literature on an in-depth and inter-textual level. The classroom environment is inextricably bound up with the writing process. This suggests the combining of social processes, learning and development which is termed a “sociocognitive view of language and literacy learning” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 688). This approach focuses on the importance of “the exchange of ideas” and “discussion” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 687), which is so closely linked to the lived experience of AP English. In terms of teaching, this approach encourages “calling on a wide range of students, responding positively to what students say, or asking higher-order questions” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 689), which is indicative of full classroom interaction, and a positive and stimulating classroom environment. Therefore, the classroom environment evokes Bakhtin’s notion of “dialogic interaction as essential to such discussion” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 689) and as such encourages the concept of multiple voices through talking and writing, which is the research focus of this study.

Following on from this, the next section explores the concept of discourses of writing in relation to a social practices discourse of writing and a socio-political discourse of writing, and also the heterogenous nature of writing.

2.4.2 Discourses of Writing

This particular aspect of the literature review will focus on how the AP English learners' writing for assessment falls within certain discourses of writing. The first two discourses are a social practices discourse of writing and a socio-political discourse of writing. The purpose of these discourses is to analyse the way in which other, school-bound discourses shape and influence the writing process.

The reflective writing for the focus group also falls within these discourses, but it does not share the academic rigour required in a formal assessment setting, and as such there is not the intense pressure and constraints that come from more prescriptive discourses of writing.

2.4.2.1 A Social Practices Discourse of Writing and a Socio-Political Discourse of Writing

As established, writing is not an autonomous act, but rather is learnt through a social context. Therefore “the ways in which people talk about writing and learning to write, and the actions they take as learners, teachers and assessors” are “instantiations of discourses and learning to write” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 221). Particularly relevant in this case is Gee’s definition of discourse which he describes as

[a] socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and ‘artefacts’, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting which can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group.

(1996, as cited in Ivanič, 2004, p. 224)

This definition of discourse illustrates how people use language and other means to indicate that they are members of a specific group. Thus, Ivanič (2004, p. 224) proposes that individuals, specifically learners, participate in various discourses that “positions people who talk about or teach writing in these ways, identifying them with others who think, speak, write and act from within the same discourse”. Writing is “shaped by interests, epistemologies and power relations” and has “consequences for identity, and are open to contestation and change” (Ivanič,

2004, p. 222). Writing, like identity, does not exist in isolation, but rather is subject to various influences, and therefore subject to change. Furthermore, this study probes the nature of writing. It explores how writing in the AP English educational realm is traditionally separated into various discourses. Yet, despite the imposition of these discourses, the participants' writing can speak back to their identity and personal lived experience.

It is evident that “writers need to master a range of skills” (Dornbrack & Dixon, 2014, p. 1). Being able to write suggests being skilled in “knowing the complex requirements of genres” (Dornbrack & Dixon, 2014, p. 1). Thus, a “critical literacy approach may include investigating what counts as ‘writing’ in specific social contexts” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 239). This section of the literature review will explore this. Writing in and of itself is never neutral or written with objectivity, because

[d]ecisions made by those in powerful positions influence or even dictate the discursal and generic resources that a writer can draw on and make use of. Hence writers are not entirely free to choose how to represent the world, how to represent themselves, what social role to take, and how to address their readers when they write.

(Ivanič, 2004, p. 238)

What is evident is that one is not free to write as one pleases: especially in an educational context, writing is subject to a number of constraints that then shape the way in which identity is represented in writing. As a result, Ivanič (2004, p. 234) refers to two types of discourses: a social practices discourse of writing and a socio-political discourse of writing, share similar themes, and therefore can be used together to analyse how other prescriptive discourses of writing are used in relation to power, social and cultural context, as well as identity. These discourses provide a means of unpacking how writing is often restricted by the expectations relating to other prescriptive discourses of writing.

Interestingly, a socio-political discourse of writing is not characterised by assessment criteria, as assessment is a problematic tool that often is based on criteria set by those who have power. Ivanič states that,

[t]he notion of assessment is antithetical to this discourse, since any judgement as to what counts as a good writing is critically scrutinised for the relations of power which underpin it, and to identify in whose interests the assessment is being made.

(2004, p. 239)

A social practices discourse does not value assessment criteria as it aims to include a broader understanding of writing, and as such

this view of writing encompasses writing in all social and cultural contexts, rather than privileging the type of writing associated with education and other formal contexts.

(Ivanič, 2004, p. 234)

In this way, the writing for the focus group occupies an interesting space in that it is not subject to traditional academic rigours, although in the world of education, learners certainly do feel the need to meet certain expectations.

A social practices discourse rests on “literacy in people’s everyday lives rather than from linguistic or educational theory” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 234) which speaks back to Bakhtin (1981, p. 428), who articulates the idea that language is heteroglossic and has multiple meanings. The everyday context gives language, specifically writing, new meaning, as it becomes part of the lived experience, as opposed to an autonomous, objective act. Furthermore, a social practices discourse of writing recognises how the social context influences the writing process in that

[t]heories of learning developed within the study of ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger, 1998) are relevant to this discourse: people learn by apprenticeship, by ‘peripheral participation’ in literacy events, and by taking on the identity of community membership who use literacy in particular ways.

(Ivanič, 2004, p 235)

AP English is an example of a community of practice as learners take on the various customs related to the AP English experience. The concept of “Literacy Events” (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166) as established in 2.2.1, (an *overview* of identity and reading) resonates with a community of practice, where the social aspects of reading are emphasised. A sense of belonging also plays a key role in the act of writing, because

[i]dentification is a key concept for this sort of learning: people are likely to begin to participate in particular practices to the extent that they engage themselves with the values, beliefs, goals and activities of those that engage in those practices.

(Ivanič, 2004, p. 235)

As previously established, AP English can be understood as an example of Gee's affinity perspective (2001, p. 105). The participants actively choose to be a member of the AP English class. The recognition that they receive from being part of this class also influences how they write, and this relates to the discursive perspective (Gee, 2001, p.103). Writing is one of the ways of demonstrating their membership of AP English, whether it be for assessment or demonstrated in other circumstances. In this case, the participants' writing is a facet of their identity and is also perceived within the realm of certain power structures. As such, a socio-political discourse of writing

is based on the belief that writing, like all languages, is shaped by social forces and relations of power, contributes to shaping social forces which will operate in the future, and that writing has consequences for the identity of the writer who is represented in the writing

(Ivanič, 2004, pp. 237 - 238).

Thus, a socio-political discourse of writing is focused on how writing relates to identity and power, and the way in which prescriptive discourses of writing intersperse with one another or limit the writing process as a form of power.

2.4.2.2 *The Heterogeneous Nature of Writing*

A social practices discourse of writing and a socio-political discourse of writing show how other discourses of writing intersect with one another in a heterogeneous way. I will now explore the way in which writing is conceptualised in a school environment and the way these discourses overlap.

2.4.2.2.1 An Overview

This study aims to show how writing is not fixed as one mode of discourse, and that in the case of this study, the participants' AP English writing is in nature heterogeneous. In relation to writing, heterogeneous means that "human agents are continuously recombining and transforming discursial resources as they deploy them for their own purposes" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). The concept of third space and hybridity has been established earlier (see 2.1.3.3). The AP English writing that will be analysed in this study occupies a third space (Moje, 2013, p. 361) as it is "discoursally hybrid, drawing on two or more discourses" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). By viewing writing through this unconventional lens, one can investigate how AP English

learners call on various discourses of writing in relation to assessment or reflective writing, and how the discourses may hinder or promote their writing in terms of assessment.

Firstly, it is correct to state that discourses of writing intersect with one another, because

“actual texts and events may be heterogeneous, drawing on two or more discourses in complex interanimation with one another” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 226). A socio-political discourse of writing challenges the conceptualisations of writing known as ‘Study Skills’ and ‘Academic Socialisation’ (Ivanič, 2004, p. 222). ‘Study Skills’

is a conceptualisation of literacy based on the belief that there is a body of knowledge and a set of skills for academic literacy which can be taught independently of context.

(Ivanič, 2004, p. 222)

This approach to writing ignores the value that the context surrounding writing might provide in analysing how and why it was written. Another conceptualisation, known as Academic Socialisation suggests “there are different literacies in different contexts, so that students need to learn the specific characteristics of academic writing” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 222).

As mentioned earlier, a socio-political discourse of writing suggests that writing cannot be understood separately from context, and that the heterogeneous nature of writing suggests that different types of discourses of writing overlap with one another, and therefore, competing discourses of writing may be visible in one text. Ivanič (2004, p. 226) points out that “actual texts and events may be heterogeneous, drawing on two or more discourses in complex interaction with one another”. In addition to the two other discourses already mentioned, Ivanič refers to four different discourses of writing, which include skills, genre, process and creativity discourses of writing. One can argue that all four of these discourses of writing interplay with one another in the writings of the AP English participants. These discourses of writing will be discussed in the following subsections.

2.4.2.2.2 A Skills Discourse of Writing

A skills discourse of writing relies on the “fundamental belief that writing consists of applying knowledge of a set of linguistic patterns and rules for sound-symbol relationship and sentence construction” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). This discourse of writing values the nuts and bolts of language usage, and as such advocates that “learning to write consists of learning a set of

linguistic skills” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 227). In this discourse of writing “what counts as good writing is determined by the correctness of the letter, word, sentence, and text formation” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). The assimilation and comprehension of a skills discourse of writing can be problematic, as learners often struggle to use correct language to explain their intended meaning. As a result, the writers’ arguments are not as clear as they intend them to be. In the AP English context, the teachers may think that their learners’ writing lacks the linguistic dexterity that is required at AP English level. The assumption that a learner has acquired these skills is also problematic, as often learners have not fully acquired a skills discourse of writing. Learners’ writings are then hindered as they struggle to express themselves using a set of linguistic tools.

2.4.2.2.3 A Genre Discourse of Writing

A genre discourse of writing focuses on how “texts vary linguistically according to their purpose and context” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 232). AP English has a particular context and the writing must serve a particular purpose, as seen in a genre discourse of writing. In this case, “[g]ood writing is not just correct writing, but writing which is linguistically appropriate to the purpose it is serving” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 233) and “learners need to learn the linguistic characteristics of different text-types in order to be able to reproduce them appropriately to serve specific purposes in specific contexts” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). The genre discourse of writing relating to AP English can be understood through the subject’s particular focus, the learning outcomes and the marking rubric. AP English provides

an opportunity to extend top English learners. Learners must display greater knowledge and depth of insight than is required for English Home Language. It is not just for those learners who are planning on pursuing an English course at tertiary level, but for learners who realise this may be their last chance to immerse themselves in literature.

(IEB, 2013, p. 4 -5)

The genre discourse of writing for AP English clearly focuses on ‘extending’ learners, and offers learners the opportunity to ‘immerse’ themselves in literature. The learning outcomes also frame the context and purpose of AP English writing. AP English teachers are required to focus on the following outcomes, when teaching the syllabus.

Learning Outcome 1: Establishing connections between different genres, texts, trends and contexts. Learning Outcome 2: Structuring arguments and insights in a coherent manner using accurate textual references. Learning Outcome 3: Using cognitive skills to design critical judgements.

(IEB, 2008. p.5)

These learning outcomes illustrate how the genre of AP English assessment writing encourages intertextuality, as well as a focused, clear argumentative voice.

A marking rubric is used as a marking guideline for the three assessed essays that are set in the final grade twelve examination. Teachers are also expected to use this rubric throughout the two to three-year duration of teaching the subject, and when they assess the essays they have internally set. Discourses of writing evaluate the possibilities and limitations of the AP English rubric. An example of this marking rubric for the first essay question based on novels, plays and films includes statements such as:

[d]emonstrate sophisticated insight and convincingly Assert and justify own opinions with accurate and thorough substantiation; structure ideas and arguments in a sustained, persuasive and creative way, adopting a clear, personal style with a powerful, authentic voice.

(IEB, 2008. p.5)

It would be fair to argue that these kinds of statements might intimidate AP English learners. The expectations in this rubric are also laden with its own problematic power structures, as the marking rubric is suggestive of a very high standard.

An achievement-focused approach highlights the traditional, singular view of education. Success is dependent on the mark AP English learners receive for their final grade twelve examination. There are anxieties associated with writing, because

[a]lthough, reading was treated as a resource, as an experience from which one could draw lessons or on which one could reflect, writing was treated more wholly as a performance and as a responsibility, more revealing, riskier, and fraught with consequences.

(Brandt, 2001, as cited in Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 166)

In a traditional educational setting, the learner's perceived worth lies in that final result. Therefore, "[t]he language of this classroom assessment becomes the language through which students evaluate their own reading and writing" (International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English, 1994, as cited in Samuelson, 2009, p. 54). Furthermore, "whilst argumentative reasoning is emphasised, there is little work that addresses the methods teachers use to develop students' argumentative writing" (Samuelson, 2014, p. 1). This can be problematic, as there is a disconnect between teachers' expectations and the reality of the learners' writing.

A sense of self belief in one's ability to write well can also affect the quality of a learner's writing, as

students' self-efficacy beliefs – the judgements that students hold about their capabilities to successfully perform academic tasks – are strong predictors of performance across academic areas.

(Pajares, Johnson & Usher, 2007, p. 105)

Therefore, the extent to which one believes in one's ability to write has the possibility of affecting how well the learner will perform. This self-belief is cultivated in the classroom. However, if one operates within a social practises discourse of writing and a socio-political discourse of writing then the value of AP English does not lie only in this final result.

2.4.2.2.4 A Process Discourse of Writing

A fixation on the final end product of writing naturally led to a reaction, i.e. the process discourse of writing, which "shifted attention from the product to the processes of writing, and was concerned with processes in the mind" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 231). Unfortunately, in reality, AP English examiners assess the three essays written for the final grade twelve examination and thus the "practical processes of planning, drafting and revising writing" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 231) are perhaps not considered. Furthermore, it can be debated "whether this aspect of writing can be assessed" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 231). In terms of assessment, it is evident that "[s]tudents will be judged on their product regardless of the process they utilised to achieve it" (Delpit, 1988, as cited in Dornbrack & Dixon, 2014: 287). From my own experience in the AP English classroom, this focus on assessment creates anxiety in the learners. It would be fair to say that this anxiety is not limited to my classroom space, as I think most AP English learners would feel this anxiety as all learners are subject to the same assessment procedures. Regarding, AP

English, it makes logistical sense to assess only the final three essays. However, a study such as this one explores the implications of AP English on the learners, and their experiences of the subject outside of the examination result. A process discourse of writing places value on the cognitive steps a learner takes in order to reach the final result, but often does not pay attention to how the social context shapes the process. Therefore,

process approaches have little to say about the ways meanings are socially constructed, they fail to consider the forces outside the individual which help guide purposes, establish relationships, and ultimately shape writing.

(Hyland, 2003, as cited in Dornbrack & Dixon, 2014, p 2)

Thus, the shortcomings in the implementation of a process writing approach include the fact that often the process is not taken into account in the final assessment, and furthermore, that the process, itself, is often not viewed through the social context in which it was produced.

2.4.2.2.5 A Creativity Discourse of Writing

A creativity discourse of writing is also evident in AP English writing. Although, the focus is on writing analytical literary essays for assessment, there is an element of creativity and of developing one's own voice. The focus group writing was also strongly guided by the creativity discourse of writing in that the participants felt the pressure to write in an original, creative manner. This discourse of writing is often encouraged by teachers, who are passionate about literature, as

many teachers of writing are also teachers of literature, and they have learnt as students of literature to appreciate the writing of a wide range of novelists, poets, dramatists and essayists, so it is not surprising that beliefs and values from this domain carry over into the teaching of writing.

(Ivanič, 2004, p. 229)

It therefore makes sense that AP English teachers may encourage the creativity discourse of writing as “[t]hese approaches to the teaching of writing involve treating learner writers as ‘authors’” where teachers set “the task of writing an ‘essay’ or ‘composition’” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 229). Learners are often perceived as ‘authors’, who have the ability to construct a really good piece of writing through “its content and style rather than its linguistic form” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 229). In this discourse,

‘meaning’ is central, with the writer engaged in meaning-making, and so it is concerned with mental processes as well as with characteristics of the texts.

(Ivanič, 2004, p. 229)

It is suggested that teachers should encourage their learners by exposing them to good examples of writing, giving them plenty of opportunities to write and giving them feedback on their writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 230). The hope would be that AP English teachers would fulfil these responsibilities. However, the teacher may not do so or learners may not engage with the opportunities afforded them.

In conclusion, it is evident that a social practices discourse of writing and a socio-political discourse of writing are useful means to understand how other prescriptive discourses of writing influence the writing process. The intersection of the skills, genre, process and creativity discourses of writing in the AP English writing illustrates how writing is influenced and shaped by certain expectations. In conclusion, by using a social practices discourse of writing and a socio-political discourse of writing, the learner’s context is given primary attention. This resonates with this study, as an understanding of the AP English context is particularly necessary in order to engage with AP English learner perspectives.

The following subsection explores how the self is revealed in writing.

2.4.3 The Self and Writing

The focus of this study is to understand the AP English learner perspective through the lens of identity with a focus on reading and writing. This subsection explores the complex relationship between the self and the act of writing.

Here I will draw on the concept of *identity*, as well as the concept of the *self*. For the purpose of clarity, definitions of these concepts are provided. They have slightly different meanings, but the meanings also inevitably overlap. Identity is understood as fluid (Sumara, 1998, p. 204) and multiple (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110) and is constructed (Sarup, 1996, as cited in McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110) in a social context (Curtin & Hall, 2013, p. 110). The self refers to an aspect of identity that is highlighted when speakers make their presence apparent (Pelias, 2011, p. 659), whether it be through talking or writing or any other mode of expression. In doing so they position themselves in relation to others (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2002, p. 110).

This subsection is structured into a number of smaller ideas that address the tensions that exist between the self and writing. This gives an overview of the many complexities that emerge when one reflects on how self plays itself out in the writing process. In this section, I want to explore some of the thought processes that occur when one writes, together with some of the challenges that may emerge, especially in light of writing in an AP English context.

The subsections include a discussion about the self, writing and position. Writing as an act of discovery is also unpacked. The difficulty of truthfully describing one's experience of the world is explored in a subsection entitled "The Elusive Self in Writing" (Smith, 2007, Jan 13). The final two subsections, "Speaking in Tongues" and "Embodied" discuss how one can seek to overcome the difficulties that one experiences in the writing process.

2.4.3.1 *The Self, Writing and Position*

Pelias (2011, p. 659) explores the various ways in which the self is revealed in the act of writing. Through the act of writing "the self commands attention even when the self is not seemingly central to the discussion". The suggestion is that the self is always visible to some extent in writing. Through the act of writing one asserts a self and insists that one matters (Pelias, 2011, p. 659). Thus through the act of writing, the writers reveal their sense of self and leave a mark (Pelias, 2011, p. 660).

The act of speaking is another form of expression that can also be viewed as an assertion of self, but it differs from the act of writing. One view of writing shows its link to speech in that writing is "a way of giving permanence to speech" (Morris, 2009, p. 70). Perhaps it is the permanent nature of writing, committing pen to page, that makes writing so problematic for many people, especially in a school context. There appears to be more at stake when one writes. Through the act of writing, one brings a sense of self into existence. In this way, the writers can learn more about themselves, in that

[w]hen writing *into* a subject, writers discover what they know through writing. It is a process of using language to look at, lean into and lend oneself to an experience under consideration. This 'linguaging' unearths the writer's articulate presence. It positions, marks a place, a material stance in the world. In short, linguaging matters.

(Pelias, 2011, p. 660)

The way in which writers choose to represent themselves has consequences, as the language that one chooses to use has implications. Therefore, a “critical approach recognises that language produces us as particular kinds of human subjects and the words are not innocent, but work to position us” (Lesnick, 2007, p. 227). Through the act of writing in a social world, one’s words inevitably position one. This act of positioning suggests that

[s]ubject positions also shape and reflect how people construct themselves or are identified by others. The constructs of identity/ties and subjectivity/ties are important to literacy and language research because the ways young people use literacy and language can influence how they are positioned as well as their access to further literacy and language learning.

(Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166)

Therefore, the way in which a learner uses language has various implications, and as a result, it may position the learner in a positive or negative manner. A subject such as AP English provides a space for learners to create a literary identity. The performance of this literary identity is evident in the language one uses. This language usage may have perceived advantages in terms of positioning oneself. These perceived advantages will be explored in chapter four, where the Findings of the research are outlined.

2.4.3.2 Writing as an Act of Discovery

Returning to Pelias’s conceptualisations about the self and writing, there is also the idea that “writers discover what they know through writing” (2011, p. 660). Through writing one is able to give substance to the abstract nature of thoughts. Writing can offer a tangible release from the confusion: “the act of burning through the fog in your mind” (Goldberg, 1986, as cited in Pelias, 2011, p. 660). It can also provide a space for “the unfolding of a realization, the satisfying of a need to bring to the surface the inner realities of the psyche” (Rosenthal, 1987, as cited in Pelias, 2011, p. 660). Interestingly, the lyric poem can be viewed as recording “the process of the speaker’s realization” (Geiger, 1967, as cited in Pelias, 2011, p. 152) and poetry forms a substantial part of the AP English syllabus. Learners share an aspect of the poet’s realization in their own understanding of the studied poems. Through the act of writing, the writer is giving the reader new insight into the writer’s mind:

In short, personal realizations tell writers how they might see themselves, how they might make sense of experiences. When sharing their insights, they invite readers to acknowledge their perspectives and perhaps to identify with them.

(Pelias, 2011, p. 660)

However, this act of self-discovery often leads to problems in the writing such as when writers are trying to explain their full, intended meaning in writing: this is discussed in the following subsection.

2.4.3.3 *“The Elusive Self” in Writing*

Smith wrestles with the difficulty of accurately representing what is in one’s mind on paper. She refers to the self as “elusive” and “multifaceted” (2007, Jan 13). Her ideas are aimed at the work of novelists. However, these difficulties that novelists encounter also speak to the predicament of the AP English writer. Whatever form writing takes, the self is always present, especially when the subject matter that one is writing about has been a meaningful one. This echoes Chambers’ idea - presented in writers writing about reading - in this literature review (see 2.2.2). If the reader is unengaged with the literary text, there will be no readjustment of self, i.e. “nothing of interest” (Chambers, 1996, p. 22). In the same way if the writer is unengaged, there might be little representation of self.

In the case of the AP English context, learners often have so much to write, and they have engaged with the literature, but they struggle to present it coherently. Smith expresses this concern with trying to represent the truest version of the self in writing. Point five in her essay is entitled, “Writing as self-betrayal” and she goes on to explain the difficulties of expressing one’s self fully, as follows:

[w]hen we write, similarly, we have the idea of a total revelation of truth, but cannot realise it. And so instead, each writer asks himself which serviceable truths he can live with, which alliances are strong enough to hold. The answers to those questions separate experimentalists from so-called ‘realists’, comics from tragedians, even poets from novelists. In what form, asks the writer, can I most truthfully describe the world as it is experienced by this particular self? And so it is from that starting point that each individual writer goes on to make their individual compromise with the self, which is always a compromise with truth as far as the self can know it. That is why the most common feeling, upon re-reading one’s own work, is Prufrock’s: “That is not it all ... that is not what I meant, at all...” Writing feel like self-betrayal, like failure.

(2007, Jan 13)

Smith's ideas about the self and writing certainly echo the predicament that many AP English learners feel. It can feel like an impossibility to express the complexity of one's thoughts, particularly in light of the idea of the self being fluid and multiple. How does one pin down a self that is not only vast, but also continually changing? As Smith concludes, "[i]t is impossible to convey all the truth of all our existence" (2007).

In the case of the AP English learners, unlike novelists or poets for example, they have three hours to write three essays, the essay being the only form of writing available to them. Often, this process can be a daunting and overwhelming one for learners. A common reaction after writing an assessment is an air of exasperation, because the learners could not quite convey their intended meaning. The words escaped them, and that is why Smith refers to the act of writing as self-betrayal.

2.4.3.4 "Speaking in Tongues"

In light of this daunting challenge for the AP English writers, Smith's lecture entitled "Speaking in Tongues" fittingly provides *another perspective* on this topic, which in itself, resonates with the title of this study: multiple voices. This lecture was presented on a separate occasion from Smith's comments referred to in the above subsection. In a sense, this can be interpreted as Smith's response to her own concerns raised in the earlier subsection.

In this lecture, she refers to embracing multiple truths and perspectives, and in this way, instead of being at a loss for words, these voices give expression to the elusive self. She argues for the case of the self (or the writer) being able to speak in many voices in a manner that echoes Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia (1981, p. 428). She believes that the novelist (and other people) is capable of a "flexibility of voice" (2008, Dec 5) which allows the self to embody many different perspectives. This is a reaction to the totalizing force of a singular voice that leaves little space for difference or multiple voices. The consequence is that one meaning is diffused, as the writer articulates a sense of self by writing from different perspectives and with different voices.

Smith's plurality of truth (2008, Dec 5) resonates with the way in which the AP English participants draw on multiple truths through the reinterpretation of the studied literature into their lived experiences, as well as by drawing on classmates' ideas, together with past reflections on literature engagements.

Thus, pinning down “the elusive, multifaceted self” (2007) in writing is a problem that AP English participants may face. However, in the learners’ own lives and also in some instances in their own writing, they demonstrate the capacity to articulate *a deeper, more layered version of self* that can occupy the flexible position of assuming many voices, many positions, many perspectives. This is not an essential self or the process of excavating or moulding an existing self, but instead, it involves the learner creating and taking advantage of conditions that facilitate these “needed identity transformations” (Sumara, 1998. p. 204). Thus, there is no singular, essential self. Instead, the studied literature gives AP English learners other perspectives, other voices, other ways to articulate “the elusive, multifaceted self” (2007).

The last subsection of this literature review discusses another concept that is a means of giving voice to the abstract nature of thoughts through the practice of writing.

2.4.3.5 “Embodied”

Another way to access multiple truths that has not been mentioned in this literature review is through the concept known as “Embodied” (Pelias, 2011, p. 663). This concept refers to the writer placing value on the body as a metaphor in writing. This approach to writing is integrated into the focus group discussion topic, which will be explained in more detail in the methodology chapter (see 3.4.2 Focus group topic below). “Embodied” focuses on coaxing

the body from the shadows of academe and consciously integrating it into the process and production of knowledge requires that we view knowledge in the context from which it is generated.

(Spry, 2001, as cited by Pelias, 2001, p. 663)

In this way, abstract thoughts are given a tangible quality and this kind of writing attempts to overcome the often problematic “*mind/body split*” (Pelias, 2001, p. 663). Thus, “the body provides flesh to sterile, distant, cognitive accounts” (Pelias, 2001, p. 663) in an effort to “provide a more complete picture of human experience” (Pelias, 2001, p. 663). This metaphor of the body is conceptualised in the AP English reflective writing and helps to contextualise the abstract nature of thoughts.

2.4.3.6 Conclusion

My overall intention in this literature review was to explore the AP English experience through the lens of identity. Identity has been established as being both in flux and multiple, and it is

constructed in a social context. The activities of reading and writing which are integral to AP English have been discussed in light of identity construction. Therefore, this literature review has attempted to provide a basis for an understanding of the AP English experience. In the following chapter, I discuss the methodological approaches I have employed in this research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the various literature sources pertaining to this study. This discussion provided a basis to an understanding of the AP English experience through the lens of identity, with a particular focus on the activities of reading and writing. This chapter refers to the overall methodology and specific methods used to understand learners' engagements in the AP English programme. This chapter has five sections which include the underlying philosophy, research design, data sources, methods for generating data, and the role of the researcher, as well as the importance of an ethical approach to this study.

A study such as this one, which is grounded in subjectivities and perspectives, is a challenging one to navigate, especially in terms of methodology. The primary aim of this study is to generate data that reflect learners' perspectives of AP English. As established in the previous chapter, identity is understood as fluid (Sumara, 1998, p. 204) and multiple (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110) and is constructed (Sarup, 1996, as cited in McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110) in a social context (Curtin & Hall, 2013, p. 110). Furthermore, this study explores the concept of multiple voices and the way in which the participants draw on different references to express their AP English experiences. The very nature of this study is thus difficult to capture or interpret, because identity is always in a state of flux and therefore has an ephemeral, elusive quality. As Bakhtin points out in relation to speech: "every day represents another socio-ideological semantic 'state of affairs'" (1981, p. 291). Thus, the data generated for this study, from the participants' focus group discussion and their writing for assessment and reflection, are specific to that moment time, and as such, the participants' feelings and opinions are subject to change. This resonates with the concept of "Rivers of Reading" (Cliff Hodges, 2012, p. 10) that views the AP English experience as only one part of their greater reading journey. The participants are not only expressing their experiences of AP English in this study, but rather "the accumulation of a lifetime" (Winterson, 1993, p. 89) which relates to the focus group topic that will be discussed at a later stage in this chapter. For these reasons, the methodological approach in this study is a rather challenging one that attempts to describe and understand rather than explain or predict human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, as cited in de Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2001, p. 65). The methodology for this study is sensitive to the

specific complexities of this research focus, and as such, tries to honour the participatory growth of the participants by incorporating methodological approaches that align with the intricacies of identity.

3.2 UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY

In order to fully understand one's research focus, the researcher is required to explore the nature of reality which forms the bedrock of a study, and all other theories, analyses and practices flow from this understanding. One's perspective of reality determines the methodological approaches one uses, and therefore, it is essential that they are in alignment with each other. Ontological and epistemological perspectives both refer to the nature of reality. The former refers to how "the researcher believes the research question could be answered most truthfully, and thus his or her assumption of how reality should be viewed" (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 309). An epistemological perspective on the other hand is defined as "theories of knowledge or perception" (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 309). For the purpose of this study, the principles and rules by which reality should be known fall within the overlapping paradigms of Constructionism and Postmodernism. A paradigm is a

framework, viewpoint or worldview based on people's philosophies and assumptions about the social world and the nature of knowledge, and how the researcher views and interprets material about reality and guides the consequent action to be taken.

(Babbie, 2007, as cited in de Vos, Strydom, H, Fouché, CB & Delpport, CSL, 2011, p. 513)

Constructionism and Postmodernism are both appropriate perspectives of reality to incorporate in this study. Owing to the nature of this study, reality is viewed as "subjective and can only be *constructed* through the empathetic understanding of the research participant's meaning of his or her life world (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 309). As such, it is important that the researcher recognises that they cannot be "objective" (Patton, 2015, p. 122). As a researcher, one is required to recognise that there is no objective truth that can be accessed, but rather that the participants and the researcher construct their own personal meaning (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 311). Constructionist and Postmodernist paradigms align with the research focus of this study, as reality is understood to be a subjective experience and identity is characterised by flux and continually constructed. A constructionist approach reinforces the research focus, as "[e]ach person who participates in the study provides a different view on the topic being

investigated” (Patton, 2015: 122). This study therefore acknowledges different perspectives, as “[q]ualitative research frequently illustrates the complexity of multiple realities” (Patton, 2015: 122). This resonates with the primary focus of this study which focuses on multiple perspectives. Postmodernism aligns with this as

there is not a truth that exists apart from the ideological interests of humans, discontinuity of knowledge is the norm, and a permanent pluralism of cultures is the only real truth that humans must continually face.

(Turner, 1998, as cited in Patton, 2015, p. 126)

Postmodernism, therefore, distrusts singular perspectives, and rather embraces the lack of linear meaning in a world that is teeming with multiple perspectives. Thus, in this section I have attempted to navigate the underlying philosophy of this study. The following discussion explores the particular research design that has been employed.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The definition of a research design is often “ambiguous” (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 307), and therefore it necessary to define what a research design entails for this particular study. A research design refers to “all those decisions a researcher makes in planning the study” (Fouché, & Schurink, W. 2011, p. 307) and the methodological approach serves to outline the motivations for the decisions made in conducting the study. For this reason, this study’s research design is characterised by a qualitative design, as opposed to a quantitative design. As established in the underlying philosophy there is no objective truth that can be accessed (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 311) and thus this study is concerned with describing and understanding human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, as cited in de Vos., et al, 2001).

The following sections discuss how a qualitative research design aligns with the specific research focus. There is also a discussion about how this research methodology constitutes a case study approach.

3.3.1 A Qualitative Research Design

This study recognises that individuals are continually constructing their realities as “constructionist qualitative inquiry honours *the idea of multiple realities*” (Patton, 2015, p. 122). This type of inquiry resonates strongly with the research focus of multiple voices. Patton recommends three approaches in a qualitative study that honour multiple realities (Patton,

2015, pp. 122 - 123). Firstly, the researcher is not expected to be objective, but rather explores their own biases (Patton, 2015, p.122). Secondly, a social constructionist view of reality (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 309) aligns with a qualitative paradigm as this view is focused on eliciting “participant accounts of meaning, experience and perceptions” (Fouché & Delpont, 2001, p. 65). This suggests that alongside the researcher’s perspectives, there are also all the perspectives of the participants. As such, this type of research “frequently illustrates the complexity of multiple realities” (Patton, 2015, p.122). Thirdly, this study follows the methods of qualitative researchers in that the research design was developed along the way (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 309). Therefore, there were no specific, formulaic steps in conducting this research design, but rather there was a desire to incorporate methods appropriate for the specific context of this study. Patton reinforces this idea by advocating “flexible guidelines” (Patton, 2015, p.123). He goes on to state that “qualitative methodologies tend to be malleable... There is not a set procedure that must be followed” (2015, p. 123). Therefore, by recognising one’s own subjectivity as a researcher, as well as the varying perspectives of the participants, and by incorporating a flexible approach to design, this study attempts to align itself with a qualitative approach. The following section discusses the nature of the case study and the way in which this falls in line with a qualitative approach too.

3.3.2 Case Study

This study is placed in the research genre of a case study. Case studies are commonly used where qualitative research methodologies are being employed (Yazan, 2015, p. 134). For the purpose of this research, as a case study this study aligns with its research focus which is an exploration of the AP English learner perspective.

A case study is characterised as a “bounded unit” (Corbett-Whittier & Hamilton, 2013, p. 11), as it is specific to a group of people. I conducted this case study across three classes of grade ten, eleven and twelve AP English classes. This study is also located within a specific school community, and it focuses on the “interactions, communications, relationships and practices between the case and the wider world and vice versa” (Corbett-Whittier & Hamilton, 2013, p. 11). As such, this study resonates with the greater South African educational context, as well as the implementation and running of Advanced Programme English in South African schools. However, the participants’ particular contributions to this study are not replicable, although some themes may resonate and speak to a wider context.

Conducting a case study allows researchers to

immerse themselves in the activities of a single person or a small number of people in order to obtain an intimate familiarity with their social worlds and to look for patterns in the research participants' lives, words and actions in the context of the case as a whole.

(Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 320)

As previously stated in the outline of the philosophy underlying this study, I have a shared history with the AP English participants. Thus, this research stems from a sincere interest in the “participants' lives, words and actions” (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 320) in the AP English classes.

I also realised that the methods I used to conduct this research should resonate with the AP English experience by being a natural extension of the learners' practices in the AP English context. Therefore, because

researchers want to explore people's understandings, or to influence them, it makes sense to employ methods which actively encourage the examination of these social processes in action.

(Kitzinger, 1994, p. 117)

As such, the data generated for this study came from two modes of expression that are integral to the AP English experience: *speaking* and *writing*. Qualitative research supports this approach as it “produces descriptive data in the participant's own written or spoken words” (Fouché & Delport, 2011, p. 65) and “thus involves identifying the participant's beliefs and values that underlie the phenomena” (Fouché & Delport, 2011, p. 65). Therefore, through analysing the participants' discussions and writing, one can explore the beliefs and values that the participants have in relation to the AP English experience.

Therefore, I have discussed how a case study is an appropriate method to conduct the research for this particular study. The following sub-section will discuss the ways in which the data was generated for this study.

3.4 DATA SOURCES

This section provides an overview of the data sources for this study. It explains the motivations for the selection of particular data sources for analysis. There is also a discussion pertaining to the trustworthiness, authenticity and quality of the data sources.

3.4.1 An Overview of the Data Sources

A variety of methods (both inside and outside the classroom) were used to try to access learner perspectives on the AP English experience. Therefore, the research focus aligns with the methodological approach in that as a researcher one is required to

[r]eflect on what it is you are trying to find out or explore (research questions), then identify who/what can help you do this and then give the best ways to gain this information/understanding, given the practical limitations of your work.

(Hamilton & Corebett-Whittier, 2013, p. 111).

This study attempts to explore the AP English experience, and therefore, the methods I have used provide me with the data I need to explore my research focus (Maxwell, 2013). The research was generated in a number of ways, which included participant focus groups, participants' reflective written responses to the focus group topic and participants' assessments and examinations, i.e. essays written for termly marks. The following subsections explain the process of selecting data, and the reliability of the sources.

3.4.2 Selecting Data Sources for Analysis

As previously stated, the data that were generated for this study came from the grade ten, eleven and twelve AP English classes. I therefore had three lengthy focus group discussions, as well as reflective writing, in response to the focus group topic for each group, and their numerous essays that they had written for assessment. Generating a lot of data is common in a qualitative study. As a result, one needs to reduce the data in order to make sense of it (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014: p. 116). Sifting through all this data was a challenge, and I realized that the act of choosing what data to include and what data to leave out reflects my choices as a researcher, and will also influence this research as a whole.

Firstly, I decided only to focus on the grade twelve focus group discussions, as they had come to the end of their high school career and AP English experience. They had written their final AP English examination, and were thus free from the constraints of assessment. They were in

a particularly reflective state of mind, and as the first AP English class at the school, they felt a degree of pride and a sense of the novelty in what they had achieved. Their discussion was rich with meaning, and their specific vantage point, having completed AP English, meant that they could talk and write about it from some kind of distance, which I think was to their advantage.

The other two focus groups, the grade elevens and tens, also benefitted from the process, but their focus discussions took place the following year during the school term. It didn't feel appropriate to bring them together at the end of the previous school year, because they had not finished AP English as the grade twelves had. As a result, the grade tens and elevens did not have the benefit of having finished AP English, but they enjoyed the process of reflecting through discussing and writing nonetheless.

As stated, I also had much writing to sift through. As the grade twelve focus group was so rich in meaning, I decided to focus mainly on the specific reflective writing that they did immediately before the focus group discussion, as this was an extension of their discussion. The intention behind the reflective writing was to give the participants a space to reflect on their personal experiences of the subject. I wanted them to have the opportunity to write and speak about their experiences. I also hoped that the reflective writing process would give them a basis from which the discussion group could go forward. Choosing to use the grade twelve reflections made sense because the grade twelve focus group discussion naturally flowed from this reflective writing process. Therefore, their reflections and writing naturally aligned with one another and shared similar themes. The concept of data reduction supports this view as it "is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014: p. 116).

I also decided to incorporate the writing for assessment as a method of collecting data. Although this writing for assessment is an entirely different mode of expression from the reflective discussion and reflective writing, I felt that writing for assessment plays such an integral part of the AP English experience, that it would be fitting to include some of their writing for assessment. I chose two specific participants' writing for assessment from the grade eleven and the grade twelve classes' essays.

In conclusion, the data that I have chosen to use, whether it be from discussion or writing is a small quantity in contrast to the vast amount of data that were generated for the study. I wanted

to give all my AP English classes a chance to participate in this study, and I think giving them all the opportunity to speak and write allowed me to see AP English as a whole, and to also see the different learner experiences of AP English within different grades. Finally, I decided, in I think a distinctly qualitative manner, to choose quality over quantity. I really tried to pay special attention and explore the complexities and nuances of the data I did finally choose to incorporate for analysis. This is further reiterated in that “the richness of in-depth research rather than on a broad measurable overview in relation to performance” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 94) has been my approach to the selection of data sources for analysis in this study. The following subsection discusses the trustworthiness, authenticity and quality of these sources.

3.4.3 Trustworthiness, Authenticity and Quality

This subsection explores the trustworthiness, authenticity and quality of the data sources. The focus group allowed for reflection outside of class time, while the participants’ writings for assessment were produced with the focus on the assessment topic in mind. This means that I was drawing on data sources that emerged out of different contexts and with different aims. I also chose to balance discussion with writing, as discussion is a communal activity where ideas are shared, while writing, although influenced and produced in a social context, is an individual activity. In this way, the individual voices from the writing were balanced with the free flow of ideas in the discussion. I aimed to incorporate data from different sources in an attempt to gain a broad view of the learner perspective of AP English. I also tried to include multiple learner perspectives in an attempt to “capture the complexity of relationships, beliefs and attitudes within a bounded unit, using different forms of data collection and which is likely to explore more than one perspective” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 10). Using different perspectives allows one to “[f]ocus on collecting rich data – capturing the complexity of the case” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 11).

Incorporating three different methods to collect data relates to the concept of triangulation (Fielding & Fielding, 1986, as cited in Maxwell, 2013, p.128). Triangulation refers to “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods” (Maxwell, 2013, p.128). The concept of triangulation is a method one can use to ensure validity. However, using three data sources does not necessarily mean that validity is ensured. Validity refers to “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation or any other sort of account” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 122). Owing to the

nature of this study, which focuses on identity in a constant state of flux, validity cannot necessarily be established. This view is supported because

[e]ach moment of our lives, each thing we say, is equally true and false. It is true, because at the very moment we are saying it that is the only reality, and it is false because the next moment another reality will take its place.

(Simic, 2000, as cited in Patton, 2015, p. 123)

This view emphasises the constructed, ever-changing nature of reality, and therefore, it is difficult to pin down or quantify. Instead, the focus in this study was instead on “trustworthiness, authenticity and quality” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 122). Trustworthiness refers to the ethical relationship between the participants and me, and an assurance that I have presented their contributions in a manner that is reflective of their original contributions. Patton (2015, p.73) supports this view as “[j]udgements about the significance of the findings are thus inevitably connected to the researcher’s credibility, competence, thoroughness and integrity”. Thus, the researcher has a responsibility to make choices that best reflect a thoughtful approach towards the data. I have focused on authenticity by attempting to capture the particular voices of the participants and the AP English atmosphere. Finally, as previously stated, I have not analyzed vast amounts of data, but rather paid special attention to the data I did choose to include in this study. These data are rich in meaning and complexity, and therefore indicative of quality. Therefore, this study focused on trustworthiness, authenticity and quality. A discussion about the various data sources will follow. This includes the focus groups as a data generating response, the focus group topic and the participants’ writing as a data-generating response.

3.5 METHODS FOR GENERATING DATA

This section provides an analysis of the three ways in which data were generated for this study. The value of focus groups, reflective writing and writing for assessment as means of generating data are discussed. There is also an explanation as to the nature of the focus group discussion topic.

3.5.1 Focus Groups as a Data Generating Response

The following subsections provide background information on the nature of the particular focus group that was analyzed for this study, as well as the value of focus groups.

3.5.1.1 *Background to Focus Group*

The focus group discussion that I analyzed for this study was made up of six grade twelve AP English learners from the AP English class I taught. The discussion group took place after final grade twelve examinations on a Saturday morning in the school library. This was an effective time as the participants were able to reflect on the past two years of completing AP English. It was also outside of normal AP English class hours, and the stress of final examinations was coming to an end, including the final AP English examination. The library is an appropriate space to conduct the focus group, as it is pleasant literary space, owing to the presence of library books, and the sense of calm and comfort the space provides. It is also outside of the classroom, where AP English takes place, and thus provided distance from the rigours associated with the subject, and therefore, the classroom.

Focus groups can be conducted in a variety of different contexts. However, in the case of this study, I had already formed a strong relationship with the participants, and so this focus group discussion had a rich history behind it. I had taught this group AP English for two years. The participants were also familiar with each other, and comfortable in each others' presence. They were clearly happy to spend time together in a context that was both familiar to them, and also different, because it was a space for reflection and it was framed by this research.

3.5.1.2 *Characteristics of Focus Groups in this Qualitative Study*

Focus groups are a meaningful way to generate data in a qualitative study: this method speaks to the fundamental social aspect of the human condition. This means that “simply to exist as a normal human being requires interaction with other people” (Gawande, 2002, as cited in Patton, 2015, p. 475). Therefore, the idea of a focus group resonates with the nature of a qualitative study, which is focused on perspectives and subjectivities in a social context. Focus groups are “are a means of better understanding how people feel or think about an issue” (Greef, 2011, p. 360). In this case, the issue was the AP English experience. A focus group has similarities with an interview but it goes beyond this idea because “participants get to hear each other’s responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say” (Patton, 2015, p. 475). Focus groups, therefore, may be a rich, generative space for discussion and debate. The participants who are selected have “certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group” (Greef, 2011, p. 361). In relation to this study, these participants were naturally AP English learners from my

class. The researcher has the responsibility to create “a tolerant environment in the focus group that encourages participants to share perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns” (Greef, 2011, p. 361). Therefore, the researcher is required to emphasise that the focus group should be an accepting environment.

The encouragement of shared ideas between participants relates and differs from everyday discussion. A focus group is different from everyday discussion, as there is a specific subject of focus. In the context of the particular focus group of this study, a space was created where the participants were encouraged to reflect on their experience of AP English. The participants were encouraged to engage with one another, although given their shared history, this was an easy task for them. A focus group also reflects everyday communication. It represents

[e]veryday forms of communication such as anecdotes, jokes or loose word association may tell us as *much*, if not more *more*, about what people ‘know’. In this sense focus groups ‘reach the parts that other methods cannot reach’ – revealing dimensions of understanding that often remain untapped by the more conventional one-to-one interview or questionnaire.

(Kitzinger, 1994, p.109).

The focus group has the potential to be a rich space of natural communication, which resonates with the purpose of this research, which is to capture the perspectives of the participants in a naturalistic environment that reflects the AP English context. Patton (2015, p. 475) supports this view as “our perspectives are formed and sustained in social groups”. However, in this environment one should also expect that the participants will disagree with one another. This kind of “conflict” can be a fertile space for the development of opinions and new ideas. Participants’ development of their ideas resonates with the ideas of identity and positioning established in the literature review (see 2.1.1 An overview of identity). As Ryan states, “[s]ocial life is an ongoing discussion in which people seek to make their perspective and their story plausible and convincing” (2007, p. 69). A special strength of a focus group is that it can “highlight diverse perspectives”: moreover “focus groups should be homogenous in terms of background and not attitudes” (Patton, 2015, p. 477). In the context of this study, the participants had the same background. They were learners at a specific school and members of an AP English class, but their opinions often differed. As a result, focus groups can be a rich site for study as, “[g]roup work is invaluable in enabling people to articulate experiences in ways which break away from the clichés of dominant cultural constructions” (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 112). Diverse opinions in a group may mean that participants “are forced to explain the

reasoning behind their thinking just as much when they give the ‘right’ answer as when they give the wrong one” (Kitzinger, 1994, p.113). Beyer believes this type of debate encourages critical thinking, which

contains two elements: (a) a frame of mind that allows examination of multiple viewpoints and (b) a number of specific mental operations, such as determining reliability of a source, distinguishing relevance, detecting bias, identifying assumptions, and recognizing inconsistencies and fallacies.

(1985, as cited in Nyikos, & Hashimoto, 1997, p. 509)

Critical thinking resonates with the idea proposed in this study that the AP English learner has the capacity to embody multiple voices. This relates to “dialogical thinking” (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997, p. 509), which resonates with Bakhtin’s ideas that are explored in the literature review of this study. This fosters “the ability to see any issue from many points of view and realise that people can address an issue constructively without necessarily agreeing with one another” (Pugh, 1996, as cited in Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997, p. 509). A focus group creates an environment, where participants can think critically about what they say and what others say. This environment allows its participants to probe one another’s words and motivations. This encourages participants to develop and test out their opinions in a space that values their input. It also allows one’s perspective to be broadened in that

[d]uring joint social-interaction activities, cognitive development emerges through accommodation of new ideas or points of view into one’s own present cognitive framework.

(Nyikos & Hashimot, 1997, p. 509)

This openness to different types of viewpoints can also have the potential to expose “the discussion of otherwise ‘taboo’ topics” (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 111). As a result, the participants may feel supported and comfortable enough to confront often controversial topics. Therefore, focus groups resonate with the purpose of this study, as they provide a space for multiple voices to be expressed. A discussion about the particular focus group topic for the focus groups in this study will follow.

3.5.2 Focus Group Topic

Focus groups are “group discussions organized to explore a specific set of issues” (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 103). The group “is ‘focused’ in the sense that it involves some kind of collective

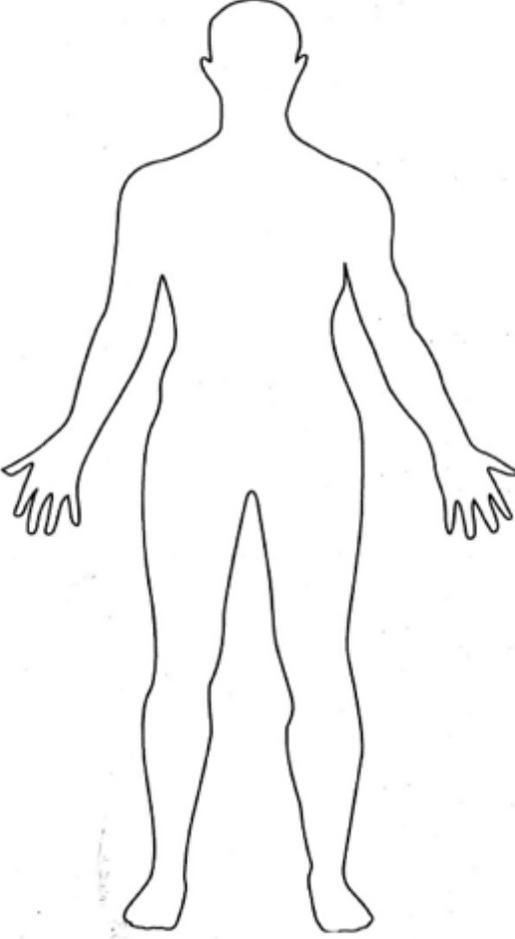
activity” (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 103). As a result, the focus group for this particular study had a particular topic that the participants would respond to in the form of a written component and a discussion afterwards. Figure 2 on the following page contains the reflective writing prompt that was given to the participants to respond to in writing before the focus group discussion.

Figure 3.1: Handout for reflective writing on AP English experience

*Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights;
the accumulations of a lifetime gather there.”*
- Jeanette Winterson

Consider your experiences of the Advanced Programme English subject (studied literature, own reading, your written work, discussion inside and outside the classroom, classroom atmosphere and just about anything you associate with the subject!).

Relate these experiences to the human body. Incorporate the body as a metaphor to describe your various experiences of the subject. You can draw or write about these experiences.



The participants were allowed to respond to the topic through writing or drawing. They were given roughly 45 minutes to find a space and write. The participants then joined the group again, and were invited to discuss their responses.

The incorporation of the body was intended to be a useful metaphor for participants to use to anchor their experiences. This related to Pelias's concept of "Embodied" (2011, p. 663) as discussed earlier in the literature review (see 2.3.3.5 "Embodied"). The metaphor of the body resonates with the Jeanette Winterson quote that was the basis of the topic. By incorporating the act of writing with the body, participants could use the body as a metaphor to describe their experiences of AP English.

The diagram of the body and the encouragement to write or draw gave the participants choices of various mediums to describe their experiences. Busch supports the use of various modes of expression as she states that,

[t]he switch in mode of representation from word to image helps to deconstruct internalized categories, to reflect upon embodied practices and to generate narratives that are less bound to genre expectations.

(2010, p. 286)

This option to draw resonates with the focus of this study, which is multiple voices. Having more than one mode of expression opened up the possibilities of expression for participants. However, the participants generally did not choose to draw, as this was not a practice that they commonly associated with AP English. Scheckle (2014, p. 178) supports this view, because the participants choosing to write over drawing suggests "the dominance of *prose writing* as a school writing practice". She goes on to say that, "[t]o be seen as a good student required some demonstration and accomplishment in this practice, so learners take up prose writing in efforts to become members of the dominant Discourse" (2014, p. 179). Therefore, the participants chose to write, as this was a practice that had much value in the AP English context. Thus, having discussed my motivations behind the focus group topic, the following section will explore how the participants' various pieces of written work forms part of the data for this study.

3.5.3 Writing as Data-Generating Response

Data was not only collected through the focus group discussion, but also in the form of the participants' written responses to the focus group and their writing for assessment. Focus groups are not necessarily the best way to gain diverse views as “[t]hose who realize that their viewpoint is in the minority many not be inclined to speak up and risk negative reactions” (Patton, 2015, p. 487). Therefore, writing which is an individual act in a social context may generate other views that a focus group cannot provide for. These are two different contexts in which to write in order to “develop a complex and holistic view of social phenomena” (Fouché & Delport, 2011, p. 65). In the context of this study, the AP English learners are taught and assessed through writing and thus it is important that the tools of data collection resonate with the actual AP English context.

Writing in the AP English context has been discussed at length in the literature review. In the subsection on writing and the self (see 2.3.3), the idea that “writers discover what they know through writing” (Pelias, 2011, p. 660) is explored. For this reason, writing is an appropriate method to understand the AP English learner perspective. Writing, in this study, has been established as an activity that exists and is influenced by a social context. In relation to this study

the social processes of the classroom create the context within which individuals develop the cognitive and linguistic processes – the tools for comprehension and understanding – associated with literacy.

(Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 688)

Therefore, the writing from the focus group and writing for assessment are reflections of the classroom environment.

However, writing for the focus group or for assessment took place in two separate events, which relates to a multi-layered view of writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 222). The events are described as

the observable characteristics of the immediate social context in which language is being used, including the purposes for language use, the social interaction, the particulars of time and place.

(Ivanič, 2004, p. 224)

It is important that the writing for this study comes from two different events. The writing for assessment deserves attention, because it forms such a major component of the AP English experience. The writing for reflection, which took place outside of the classroom context, gave the participants time to reflect in an environment that was not related to the stress of assessment. Therefore, these two forms of writing contribute towards a holistic understanding of the AP English experience. The following subsections will discuss the characteristics of reflective writing and writing for assessment in a qualitative study.

3.5.3.1 Reflective Writing

The participants' reflective writing took place before the focus group discussion in response to the focus group topic. As previously stated, writing is an integral part of the AP English experience, but this reflective writing was not subject to the rigorous demands of academic assessment. It took place in a more informal environment, and there were no set expectations for the format of the writing.

This type of reflective writing can be described as having a flexible structure, which is “empowering the individual but still with a research focus” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 103). It empowered the participants, because it gave the participants a sense of agency in that the focus was on their reflections and the topic allowed for a variety of interpretations. The focus group topic, which relates to the primary research focus, anchored the participants' writing by giving them a topic to focus on.

An appropriate term for reflective writing is “external memory” (Altrichter & Holly, 2005, p. 24). This resonates so deeply with this study, which attempts to inhabit the participants' perspectives. Reflective writing, therefore, provides a space for one to *reflect on one's own thought processes*. Part of this process is self-reflexive, and “Sartre's ‘intellectual’ comes forth here: ‘the mind watches itself’” (Altrichter & Holly, 2005, p. 27). The ability of the mind to reflect on its own thought processes is suggestive of a split self. Therefore, there is no essential, single self: this resonates with the view of self as multiple that is established in the literature review (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 110). This self-reflexive process is evident in the following chapter, which is the findings, where the participants reflect on their thought processes in their writing. Scheckle (2014, p. 98) recognises the way in which writing facilitates “internal dialogues” as one asks and answers questions through the practice of writing. This type of writing also has its roots in man's origins, as

[f]rom the very beginning of European culture, texts have been written with the aim of increasing, self-understanding, becoming aware of self delusions, and articulating and reducing pain.

(Werder, 1986, as cited in Altrichter & Holly, 2005, p. 24)

These reasons for writing resonate with the ideas that was expanded on in a section of the literature review, entitled the self and writing (see 2.3.3). Writing can enable one to find clarity and overcome misconceptions. On the other hand, writing can also articulate and ease pain, and these themes are explored in the following chapter, in particular in the sections entitled, “Deep-diving the words” (4.2.5) and “Opening the casket” (4.2.6).

A famous example of reflective writing in the form of a diary entry is Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* (Altrichter & Holly, 2005, p. 24). This title, *Confessions*, also echoes the way in which writing, particularly reflective writing, can reveal aspects of self. Reflective writing “is a process for generating new perspectives and making connections” (Altrichter & Holly, 2005, p. 28), and therefore, is an appropriate method for generating data in this study, as it has the possibility of helping to construct new perspectives and voices for the participants.

Reflective writing is a means of capturing “the narratives or stories of the people at the centre of the research” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 102). This resonates with conceptualisations of identity in the literature review as “identity and language are linked through personal narratives and life stories, through identity performances” (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 112). In addition, reflective writing “can be a way of understanding the inner world of the individual” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 102) and thus is an effective way to understand the perspectives of the AP English learners. Reflective writing, therefore, is means of “understanding of the lived experiences of the participant” and explores “how they respond to events and interactions” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 103): it thus provides insight into the particular focus of this study. The following subsections discuss the characteristics of writing for assessment as a data source for qualitative study.

3.5.3.2 Writing for Assessment

Writing for assessment is not a typical data source for a qualitative study, but in the case of this particular study it is appropriate to incorporate the participants’ writing, as it forms such an integral part of the AP English experience. Assessment comprises three essay topics. Each

topic is based on a quote or poem and this is used as a hook or angle from which the learner can then base his or her argument. An example of an assessment topic is as follows.

This question expects you to refer to at least THREE poems from EACH school of poetry that you have studied i.e. SIX poems in total. You should also refer to the poem below.

Dear Reader

I am trying to pry open your casket
with this burning snowflake.

I'll give up my sleep for you.
This freezing sleet keeps coming down
and I can barely see.

If this trick works we can rub our hands
together, maybe

start a little fire
with our identification papers.
I don't know but I keep working, working

half hating you,
half eaten by the moon.

By James Tate

Using the above poem as a point of departure, consider whether the poets and the poems you have studied in the AP English course have succeeded in reaching you and in some way “pry(ing) open your casket”.

Discuss to what extent you have identified with the poems you have studied, and the reasons as to why you do or do not identify with the poems.

Writing in the AP English context has a number of different characteristics that have been discussed in the literature review in the section entitled, “Constructing Identity through Writing” (see 2.3). The classroom environment affects the writing process (Applebee, et al.,

2003, p. 685). Furthermore, writing always takes place in relation to a particular event (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224), which, in this case, was writing for assessment. This type of writing is also influenced by a number of discourses on writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224).

However, the writing for assessment as a data source was analysed through the specific research focus of this study. The participants' writings were viewed through the lens of identity, and the way in which the participants took on multiple voices to express their literary identities. Therefore, the AP English marking is not used as a means of analysis, but rather the analysis tries to understand learner perspectives. This is explored in the findings, (see chapter four).

Writing for assessment is also an effective data source, as the participants were not writing with the research in mind, but with the assessment topic as their primary focus. The extent to which the focus of this study, i.e. multiple voices, resonated with the assessment topics is also of particular interest, and this is explored in the following section (see 4.2 Focus Group Writing and Writing for Assessment Analysis). The way in which the participants incorporate intertextuality in their writing for assessment further resonates with the primary focus of this research, which is an exploration of the concept, multiple voices.

In conclusion, the various methods for generating data have been discussed, as well as the way in which each one complements the other. These various methods for generating data contribute towards giving a fuller understanding of the AP English learners' perspectives. The following subsection will focus on the role of the researcher in this study.

3.6 ROLE OF RESEARCHER

I have discovered that the role of the researcher is an incredibly nuanced and complex one that deserves attention. Therefore, the following section is my attempt at navigating my own role as a researcher. I will explore the subjective role of the researcher, the concept of voice, my relationship with the participants and my role in the focus group discussion.

3.6.1 The Subjective Role of the Researcher

The role of a researcher in a qualitative study is a complex, and often contradictory one. Cresswell (2007, as cited in Fouché & Delport, 2011, p. 65) states that researchers must endeavour to “keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from literature”.

Therefore, it is important that the researcher looks at the research from the perspective of the learners, rather than the researcher's own perspective. The primary focus of this study is to explore learner perspectives, and thus, this idea is of particular relevance. At the same time, "[t]he researchers' interpretation cannot be separated from their own background, history, context and prior understandings" (Cresswell, 2007, as cited in Fouché & Delpont, 2011, p. 65). As a result, researchers need to be aware of their own subjectivity, and how this influences the study. This is supported by Patton, who states "[t]he perspective that the researcher brings to a qualitative inquiry is part of the context for the findings. You as a human being are the instrument of qualitative methods" (2015, p. 73). As such, the researcher is required to balance her own perspectives with the perspectives of the participants.

One of the main concerns relating to my subjectivity in this research is my role as a teacher. In Louise M. Rosenblatt's book, entitled "Literature as Exploration" she discusses, from the outset, the role of the teacher, specifically the English teacher. Rosenblatt states that English teachers

affect the student's sense of human personality and human society. More directly than most teachers they foster general ideas or theories about human nature and conduct, definite moral attitudes, and habitual responses to people and situations.

(1983, p. 4)

I am aware of the way in which my own role as a teacher colours my own interpretations of this research, as well as the participants' contributions. Having spent roughly two years teaching these participants, we have come to know each other very well. In addition, the very nature of the subject, AP English, which is a stepping away from the rules of normal school life, means that the space allows for a strong degree of familiarity.

However, this familiarity does not necessarily act as a disadvantage, because as Maxwell (2013, p. 24). points out "researchers often make a sharp separation between the research and the rest of their lives." This research emerged out of my experience of life, and as such, it would senseless, to try and separate my experience of AP English from the research aspect. Maxwell argues that this practice of separating qualitative research from one's life experience can be harmful because "it creates the illusion that research takes place in a sterile, 'objective' environment" (2013, p. 24). As stated throughout this research, the primary focus is on the subjective nature of existence, and therefore, I do not pretend to be objective in this study.

3.6.2 Voice

My relationship with the participants as their teacher allows me to “claim insider status” (Pelias, 662, p. 2011) because as the participants’ teacher, I “share cultural membership with the group under investigation” (Pelias, 662, p. 2011). Having formed this relationship with the participants, I thought that this was a fertile space to expand and explore the learner experience of AP English. The concept of a researcher’s voice emerging from the study, is a noticeable way of perceiving the researcher’s subjective stance. The researcher’s voice is described as

the writer coming through the words, the sense that a real person is speaking to us and cares about the message. It is the heart and soul of the writing, the magic, the wit, the feeling, the life and breath. When the writer is engaged personally with the topic, he/she imparts a personal tone and flavor to the piece that is unmistakably his/hers alone. And it is that individual something – different from the mark of all other writers – that we call Voice.

(Education Northwest, 2011, as cited in Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p.102).

This study has been particularly meaningful for me, and as such, I have tried to bring across the sense that I honour the participatory growth of the AP English learners. I have tried to evoke the experience of the AP English class, and to convey the very real way that the participants have left a lasting impression on me. Through this approach, perhaps, I have attempted to cultivate a voice. However, the concept of a voice in a qualitative study is a complex one, as often this voice can be reduced to a tension between first person versus third person (Patton, 2015, p.73). The first person “acknowledges the humanity of both self and others and implies relationship, mutuality and genuine dialogue” (Patton, 2015, p.73). The third person indicates that the work is about procedures and not people. It suggests that the researcher is trying “to project a sense of objectivity, control, and authority” (Patton, 2015, p. 72). This tension is difficult to navigate, although Patton suggests that the quality of “self-awareness” (2015, p. 73) can help researchers recognise their own perspective in the study. To have a sense of self-awareness requires that the researcher recognises that choosing a perspective means choosing a voice, and that this will have implications for the research. There are a number of different voices that one can choose, ranging from “the didactic voice of the teacher” to “the narrative voice of the storyteller” to “the excited voice of discovery” (Patton, 2015, pp. 73 - 74). Having all these different voices resonates with the concept of multiple voices, which is the focus of this study. As a researcher, I have seen the way in which the participants embody multiple voices that are often varying and contradictory. In my own position as a researcher, it naturally

follows that I will also have a multiplicity of voices. In this manuscript itself, I have a number of different voices, but I think the specific tension for me has been between “the personal voice of the autoethnographer” and “the detachment of the outsider’s voice” (Patton, 2015, p. 74). As previously stated, this is also evident in the tension between personal and detached which also plays out between the teacher, who has a relationship with the participants, and the researcher, who tries to be neutral and distanced. I am also aware of the voice of the learner that exists in me, and the needs and concerns that I felt when I attended school. Although years have passed, this learner voice is still evident in the way it contributes towards my perception of the schooling experience.

However, I do not think it is necessarily a fault in this research that there is a degree of tension between these voices. I’m not adopting a singular voice in this research, which suggests that I’m aware that no one voice can do justice to the complexities of myself and the participants. Patton states that,

[a] credible, authoritative, authentic, and trustworthy voice engages the reader through rich description, thoughtful sequencing, appropriate use of quotes, and contextual clarity, so that the reader joins the inquirer in the search for meaning.
(2015, p. 73)

As a result, I have attempted to some extent to be all these things. Some of these ideas have already been discussed in relation to the data, as it is important to have authenticity, trustworthiness and quality (see 3.3.3). Also, as stated in the introduction of this study (see 1.3. Research Question) the definition of research is to “gain more insight” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 6). This insight is gained through the reader joining the inquirer in the search for meaning (Patton, 2015). Part of this insight also comes from the researcher looking inward in a process of “self-awareness” (2015, p. 73). Therefore, I am aware - at least to some extent - of the choices I have made in this study in terms of voice and how this might influence the meaning of the study. From here, I will discuss my relationship with the participants.

3.6.3 Relationship with Participants

In a qualitative study that relies so heavily on participator contribution, it is necessary to treat the participants with respect and sincerity. Gabrielle Cliff Hodges (2005, p. 9) acknowledges the importance of the research beyond the researcher’s goal in that she “was keen that whatever the research involved would be of intrinsic interest to the participants and make a contribution

towards their learning”. Owing to the participants’ interest in AP English, they were keen to participate in the research aspect. It provided a chance for the focus group to reflect and express their views, and the emphasis was on this process being of value to them too. Cliff Hodges (2005, p. 12) also “did not want them (the participants in her research project) to feel that when their work became data it was no longer interesting in and of itself; as it always was”. As stated, the personal interest in AP English motivated this study, and as such, the participants’ opinions were always of interest to me even before I decided to commence with this research. Furthermore, for this type of qualitative study to be successful, the researcher “needs access to, and the confidence of, participants” (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 321). As the AP English teacher, I believe that I formed strong bonds with the participants as we shared many hours together in the AP English context. The relaxed and informal, yet intimate environment had two implications. Firstly, I formed strong bonds with the learners in my AP English classes, and from this, the second implication emerged, which was the idea for a research study.

3.6.4 Researcher and the Focus Group

In relation to the focus group discussion, I decided not to participate in the discussion as I wanted to take on the role of researcher, as opposed to teacher. This non-participatory stance “tends to lend scope for more structured and measured observations as you observe from the outside looking in” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 99). I wanted to watch the conversation unfold, as opposed to contribute to it. Samuelson is aware that learners often take on their teacher’s voices, in that, “they may invoke these voices in the ongoing task of building and maintaining social identity” (Samuelson, 2009, p. 54). I allowed the learners’ voices “to take over when sharing narratives” (Serafini., Bean., & Readence, 2004, p. 485). As a result, I had the chance to listen to the participants’ contributions, which “lets teachers learn from students, rather than assume the role of transmitting knowledge to students” (Serafini, et al., 2004, p. 485). The participants in the focus group discussions, especially the grade twelve group, were happy to voice their opinions without my influence. I was also happy not to offer my opinions in that particular situation, as their feelings and opinions, were not influenced by my active contributions to the discussion, at that present moment. However, I am aware that the participants’ contributions may have been influenced by comments I had made in the past.

In conclusion, I have attempted to navigate my role as researcher in this study. In the following section I will explore the importance of an ethical approach in this study.

3.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ETHICAL APPROACH

This section has three sub-sections, which include ethics, research and the educational context. The second sub-section focuses on permission and informed consent, while the last sub-section focuses on the concept of deception.

3.7.1 Ethics, Research and the Educational Context

The researcher should not only be guided by the correct ethical procedure to conduct research, but one's

motivation to work in an ethical manner should be driven by something more than rules and legislation, such as the values and norms that make researchers search for a just approach to everything they do in a research context.

(Morris, 2006, as cited in Strydom, 2011, p. 127)

Given the personal relationship I have with the participants, this sincere desire to behave ethically is vitally important for this particular study. As stated in the previous section on the role of the researcher, the dual role of researcher and teacher can create a tension between the two (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 65). However, because this research is in the field of education, it is important that “we can never lose sight that we are educators first and our responsibility is to our students” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p 65). In the previous section, Cliff Hodges (2005, p 12) refers to the idea that she wanted her students to feel that the role that they played in her study was meaningful to her on a personal level too. In the case of my particular participants, I think that they were aware that I had always had a passion for AP English, and that this study was a natural extension of my interest. I also tried to create a space in the focus group discussion that indicated that the purpose was not only for research, but that it also provided an opportunity for them to reflect in a way that they might not have done otherwise. Patton recognises the enjoyable aspect of focus groups as “[t]hey draw on our human tendencies as social animals to enjoy interacting with one another” (2015, p. 478) In this way, I tried to incorporate methods of data collection that can act as an extension of the AP English lived experience.

Following from this is the idea that “researchers should weigh the risks against the importance and possible benefits of the specific research project” (Babbie, 2007, in Strydom, 2011, p. 127). Therefore, through conducting this research there should be no harm to participants. As such, participants “should be thoroughly informed beforehand about the potential impact of the

investigation” (Strydom, 2011, p. 127). As a researcher and teacher, I tried to be clear and transparent about what the research involved, and I also tried to make the focus groups a positive, learning experience for the participants. It is also important that voluntary participation is emphasised, because “[e]ven if participants are told that their participation is voluntary, they might still think that they are somehow obliged to participate” (Strydom, 2011, p. 117). In conducting this research, there was no pressure to participate, although I made it clear that I fully appreciated their participation. The fear that participants’ non-participation in the research may affect their academic results is also a concern in the educational sphere (Babbie, 2007, as cited in Strydom, 2011, p. 117). As a teacher, I never made the link between the participants’ academic results and the study. I think the participants were aware that their contribution to the research was simply a reflective process for them. I am also happy to allow the participants to read through this study once it has been completed, as I feel that it may be of interest to them, and perhaps, provide insight into how I interpreted their contributions. I am also happy to share this research with the school, where this study was conducted, as well as with AP English teachers or an AP English course designer, as they might have an interest in this study.

3.7.2 Permission and Informed Consent

Permission to conduct the research is also required in that one “may need to get clearances for entry to schools or similar institutions from a number of groups and individuals” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 67). All relevant documentation in this regard can be found in the appendixes at the end of this study. Permission to conduct this research was requested and given from the Education Department, the Independent Examinations Board and from the university where this study was undertaken. The ethics clearance reference number is H15-EDU-ERE-O14, which can be found in the back of this study in the appendices on page 134. Permission was also required from learners, who are the participants, and their parents. It is imperative to have written consent from the participants for this study as “[w]ritten informed consent becomes a necessary condition rather than a luxury or an impediment (Hakim, 2000, as cited in Strydom, 2011, p. 117). Furthermore, there is “a duty to obtain voluntary consent from those you are studying, or in the case of minors, from both the participants and their parents or guardians” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 71). Regarding this research, a consent form was signed by both parents and learners. Informed consent means that

[e]mphasis must be placed on accurate and complete information, so that subjects will fully comprehend the details of the investigation and consequently be able to make a voluntary, thoroughly reasoned decision about their possible participation.

(Strydom, 2011, p. 117)

Therefore, the parents and learners were given the correct information about this research in an effort to be transparent. They were aware that they were both free to withdraw consent at any time, with no penalty or repercussions. Both parents and learners were made aware that the names of the learners, the teacher and the school will not be used in this research. They were made aware of the aims of this research and that there would be no danger involved.

3.7.3 Deception

Another important aspect to be aware of is that researchers do not withhold information. This is known as deception, which “occurs when the researcher intentionally misleads subjects by way of written or verbal instructions, the actions of other people, or certain aspects of the setting” (Neuman, 2003, as cited in Strydom, 2011, p. 117). At no time did I withhold information from the participants and they were fully aware that their responses may be used in this research. At all times, I tried to be transparent, so that the participants were fully aware of any aspect of the research that related to them. Thus, this section serves to highlight and discuss the importance of adopting an ethical approach in a variety of aspects in the study.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Having discussed various aspects of the methodological approach used in this study, I have realised the importance of aligning the research focus with the methodology. The methodological approach in this case is a qualitative one that resonates with the subjectivities of the participants. Therefore, my own engagement with methodology has required that I do not make quick decisions, but rather reflect on my own role as a researcher and also the extent to which the data-generating methods align with the AP English experience. The following chapter provides an analysis of the data sources for this study, and these findings rest on incorporating a qualitative approach for this investigation.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter referred to the overall methodology and specific methods used to understand learners' engagements in the Advanced Programme English programme. The data were generated in three ways, which included the participant focus group discussion and the participants' writing, consisting of both personal reflective responses on AP English and participants' assessments and examinations, i.e. essays written for termly marks.

In the methodological approach, I divided the data into two sections, i.e. the participants' discussions and their writing. The focus group discussion naturally followed on from the reflective writing as both were completed in a set period time. In addition, references by the participants to the focus group topic were made in their reflective writing and in the discussion. Therefore, similar themes emerge in the discussion and the reflective writing, but I decided to separate writing from discussion, as I feel that they are different modes of expression and as such my interpretations of the participants' approaches to discussion and to the writing differ from one another.

I have chosen to give the participants different names, as I feel that direct reference to their actual names makes this analysis too personal. Instead, I have named the participants. The names I have chosen are references to famous female literary characters. This process of naming shows how I have interpreted the participants' particular outlooks and attitude to the discussion and their writing. The names include: Emma, Anaïs, Patti, Elizabeth, Scout, Anna, Virginia and Matilda.

Emma, Anaïs, Patti, Elizabeth, Scout and Anna were present at the focus group discussion. For the analysis on focus group writing and writing for assessment, the writing I chose to incorporate came from Anaïs, Anna, Virginia and Matilda. The writing, whether it be reflective or for assessment of Anaïs, Anna, Virginia and Matilda, really resonated with me. Matilda was not part of the grade twelve group, but her writing was so powerful and personal that I thought it was appropriate to incorporate as an important focus for the writing analysis.

As stated in the section detailing the significance of this study in chapter one (No. 1.4), the specific school in which the data for this study was collected is a prestigious, all-girls state school and is perceived as historically privileged. In my view, a schooling environment such as this one has allowed the AP English learners to enjoy the intellectual challenge of engagement with the literature. Their reflections, I believe, are partly a result of a privileged environment. Their depth of insight and their chosen subject matter in these findings is also indicative of a learning-centred environment.

The school is achievement-driven, but in that environment, there are spaces where learners connect with one another. These spaces can provide the learners with meanings that are located outside of the achievement-driven culture. This is the purpose of this study – to understand the experiences of AP English from a learner perspective.

It is important to note that the data generated for this study are particular to the context of this research. As such, the findings that are presented in this chapter cannot be replicated, but some of themes in this study may speak to a wider context.

The first section of this chapter is an analysis of the participant focus group, which is followed by an analysis of the participants' writing. A concluding section provides commentary on the participants' discussion and writing as a whole.

4.2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ANALYSIS

4.2.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is on identity in relation to the concept of multiple voices. As a result, I will endeavour to weave the various voices in this focus group discussion together to create a “coherent whole” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 113) so that the focus group is viewed as a text, that is “a social construction, something that is agreed upon by persons acting and interacting in social settings” (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166). Texts are “cultural tools for establishing belongingness, identity and ways of knowing” (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166). Thus, this focus group becomes an act of textualising (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, as cited in, Moje, 2010, p. 165), and represents how the participants choose to construct (Moje, 2009, p. 415) and perform (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 112) their identities: and this is what is of particular interest in this study.

Furthermore, this discussion group focuses on three main themes that are woven together by language, which is the vehicle through which all the themes are expressed by the participants. The term, “Rivers of Reading” (Cliff Hodges, 2012, p. 10) resonates in this focus group, as it shows how the participants see AP English as part of their reading journey or journey with literature. “Rivers of Reading”, which is evident in the participants’ reflections in this focus group acts as an anchor, as the participants’ own life narratives weave together with their AP English experiences. Literature can, thus, accommodate our forever-changing identities. “Rivers of Reading” blends the concepts of identity, literature and time together, while simultaneously the concepts of identity, literature and time play out against one another, as the participants make meaning from their AP English experiences. The participants also position themselves in relation to their past and future selves; in relation to literature (AP English syllabus and other literature) as well as to other people. A post-structuralist paradigm illustrates how the participants’ different interests are served in relation to language and power (Britzman, 1994, as cited in Sumara, 1998, p. 204). Gee’s four perspectives on identity (2001, p. 99) provide an appropriate way to interpret how the participants’ position themselves in relation to others. Lastly, Bakhtin’s ideas of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428) and hybridity (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 358) are discernible in the discussion as the participants’ speech is an amalgamation of various influences, which contributes to a dynamic third space (Moje, 2013, p. 361) that serves as an alternative to main stream education. Within this third space, the participants position themselves as knowledgeable about literature by shading their literary references with their own personal meanings. They are speaking double-voiced (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324) which means “two voices, two meanings, and two expressions” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324). In this way, the participants claim their identities by positioning themselves (Lesnick, 2007, p. 227) and using language to serve their particular intentions. As a result, the focus group is a generative space of reflection that offers an alternative educational space that is rich in meaning and significance.

It is important to note that this analysis of the focus group discussion is not presented in terms of the linear format of the discussion. The discussion, itself, is not linear, because although there was an initial starting point and rounding off at the end, the themes that emerged were scattered throughout and so their discussion did not follow a systematic or sequential movement forward. The participants introduced new ideas; elaborated on these ideas, and then revisited or even dared to challenge the ideas, so that the conversation progressed organically where participants chose to speak and be part of the free flow of conversation. As a result, I

have presented the discussion in fragments, which build on each other and reflect the themes of the analysis. These fragments can be viewed as my analysis of the focus group discussion. In this way, this analysis is “describing and understanding rather than explaining or predicting human behaviour” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, as cited in de Vos., et al, 2001, p. 65) and follows a thematic progression. Furthermore, the analysis explores the dynamics that are presented in the actual discussion, as well as how the discussion reveals their experiences of AP English within the two years that they completed the subject. The focus topic allowed for a variety of different responses as it stated in the topic that they could include whatever related to AP English. In this way, the focus topic echoes the theme of heteroglossia and hybridity, as the participants were encouraged to discuss a variety of responses, which allowed for the scope of AP English to extend well beyond the classroom. Their understanding of literature is applied via a variety of contexts.

I have chosen to refer to a “literary identity” throughout this analysis. “Rivers of Reading” recognises that AP English is part of their wider reading journey. The concept of “Rivers of Reading” recognises that many elements make up a person’s reading journey. These elements are evident in various different engagements with reading, and accumulate as one’s life progresses. As a result, the focus for this discussion is on their two-year journey with AP English, but participants’ often incorporate their perspectives and experiences of literature from inside and outside the AP English classroom: these then extend into reflections of the past and aspirations for the future. The focus group is a site of rich reflection that provides a space for the participants to weave together their thoughts. AP English has added to their reading journey, and thus a literary identity refers to the various ways in which the participants have integrated literature, with a special focus on AP English, into their lives.

The setting for this focus group discussion was the library: this proved a fitting choice, as it is a distinctly literary space that is outside of the classroom. The participants also sat together in a circle when they conducted their discussion and this gave a sense of belonging and community. The setting thus contributed to the participants’ relaxed attitudes. They also exhibited a playful sense of humour, which gave the setting an informal atmosphere that is different from the traditional schooling system. I decided not to join the discussion, as I didn’t want my teacher’s voice to influence their discussion in that present moment, although I am aware that they could have perhaps called on my voice from past experiences, where they heard me speak. Samuelson points out that learners often take on their teacher’s voices, in that, “they

may invoke these voices in the ongoing task of building and maintaining social identity” (Samuelson, 2009, p. 54), as stated in the previous chapter (3.5 the role of the researcher).

4.2.2 The Concept of Time

The following instances refer specifically to the concept of time, and how the participants show an awareness of time in relation to their identities and AP English.

Reconciling Time

“But all the clocks in the city began to whirr and chime: ‘O let not Time deceive you, You cannot conquer time” (n.d.). These lines from the poet, W.H. Auden, refer to the power that the ticking clock, and therefore time, has over us. Time, which is characterised by flux, ironically, anchored this focus group. It was a fitting occasion to bring the group together: final grade twelve examinations were drawing to an end, and so the participants were in a particularly reflective state of mind, as their time at high school was drawing to an end. Thus, ironically, this analysis begins with a reference to the end of the discussion. In line with this idea of time, Bakhtin recognises that speech itself cannot be replicated, as time moves forward, and thus our words are subject to a different context and different intentions. He refers to speech in that “every day represents another socio-ideological semantic ‘state of affairs” (1981, p. 291) and as such this focus group discussion cannot be replicated. As the discussion was drawing to a close, the general consensus from the participants was that they did not want the discussion to end. This is indicated as follows: “Please don’t... no” “Don’t say we’re done...” “I don’t’ wanna leave.” “This can go on...” “I don’t wanna go home to an empty house.” “At least you have people there.” The participants were aware that the discussion was drawing to a close, and as a result, they wanted to recapture the moment of the focus group, and also their experiences of AP English. Speech, itself, cannot be replicated, and thus, their identities which are constructed through language are also subject to change. One cannot repeat the past. The evitable tick of the clock marches on...

“I just don’t think I was a person before high school” (Patti)

Identities are inextricably bound to time because identities “are always in process, constructed across time” (Mckinney, 2009, p. 110) and furthermore, “identity is always the product of interpretative work done around the continual fusing of past, present, and projected senses of self” (Sumara. 1998, p. 206). Patti amusingly commented that, “I just don’t think I was a person

before high school” by which she means that she has matured and developed in her ability to think about herself and the world around her. This relates to the idea of “Rivers of Reading” and how this focus group allowed the participants to reflect on their development. Furthermore, “Rivers of Reading” also extends to other life experiences outside of literature that shape and determine the role literature plays in their lives.

Interestingly, the participants’ choice of books to read become markers for their developing literary identities. Anaïs made a delightful reference to reading the *Twilight* series in the context of her junior school experiences. She states,

Come on, we all read them in grade six. And then we weren’t allowed to even show that we were reading them so we’d have to take the covers off the books so that the grade six teachers didn’t know we were reading

Breaking Dawn.

Books become important signifiers of meaning, and in this case, having a book in one’s possession, and furthermore choosing to read a particular book, can be an act of defiance. Emma refers to how her taste in books has developed over time. She states, “I always used to be that person that loved the young adult section” in reference to enjoying the *Twilight series*. The participants appear to have created a distinction between what they perceive to be low and high literature. As they reflect on the past, they categorise what they did read as low literature, while when the participants look to their future selves and there is the overwhelming suggestion from various participants that they intend to read to a greater extent, specifically what they understand as, high literature. Patti comments that, “I do agree that I’ve read stuff, or I’ve attempted to read stuff...” and then she states, “I wouldn’t have read normally if I hadn’t taken this two-year course. Like, with all my good intentions, I tried to read *Anna Karenina* but then trials came...” Anna refers to how her reading journey has progressed. She states that, “I mean, modern classics – I didn’t...I didn’t know about them. Whereas now, I’ve got an interest.” Anna refers to the way in which AP English has encouraged her to read modern classics. Furthermore, Elizabeth comments that, “It’s nice to know you *want* to read more.” She also lovingly refers to the books in their object form. She states, “So I’ve got this big Jane Austen and I’ve got *The Book Thief*, and I’ve got a couple others that are lined up on my bookshelf waiting to be read.” Patti refers to actively choosing books that challenge her. She states,

I mean, Elizabeth gave me some money for a book voucher for my birthday and I wondered what to buy. So I bought *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and I haven't finished it yet, but it's brilliant. I don't think I would have wanted something that would have challenged me so much because, like I wanted something that I could remember and that I could read again...something like that

Patti is referring to the way in which AP English has encouraged her to read books that are perceived to be more complex. In this way, novels have become a part of their lives, whether they be hiding the cover of the book in grade six or proudly putting it on display on their bookshelf at home. In addition, the references to titles of books and authors show how the participants want to demonstrate that they are well-read, or at least, have a good knowledge of books. The titles of novels give their speech a weightiness, and simultaneously show their knowledge and also the extent to which they want to know more about literature.

4.2.3 Language

The following instances will show how the participants grapple with language and also attempt to use words to demonstrate their literary identities.

Lacking Originality

At the beginning of the discussion, I asked the participants how they had found the process of writing a response to the focus topic. Emma mentioned the expectation to write and speak in a way that indicated originality and novelty.

So what I was trying to do was...try to do that unexpected thing...but sometimes when you do the unexpected thing, it's *the* expected thing. So, especially for a topic like this you kinda, you don't wanna to be clichéd but there's such a big chance that you just might come across as clichéd, even though you don't want to.

This drive to speak in a fresh way ties up with Bakhtin's idea that our language is never our own because when we speak, our meaning is divided and double-voiced. Bakhtin states that, "[t]he only un-preconditioned world was Eden, and since its Fall we have all spoken about the world in someone else's words" (Bakhtin 1981, p. 431): this illustrates how what we speak reflects an imitation of what we have heard. Emma touches on the notion of producing work

that is fresh and novel, which is always an expectation, specifically in the writing field of the subject, English. Ironically, teachers expect original work, and yet, Bakhtin points out that when we express ourselves, we are always using the voices we have heard before. An interesting discussion about the nature of originality ensued:

Patti: But there's a thing that there's like no original thought and everything is just everyone feels that anyway...

Participants: (Agreeing with speaker)

Patti: Some things are just expressed better in some ways...

Anaïs: But then how do you write, like how do you find the will to write...
(mumbles)...just for me it's like well...

Patti: Well I don't get that far, no?

Evident here is the interplay between recognising that nothing is original, and also the pressure to somehow speak and write in a way that shows novelty and freshness. It also shows that the participants are aware of how they come across when they express themselves, and that the language they use is a reflection of their identity. Emma tellingly stated in relation to the metaphor of the body in the focus group topic that, "Words are almost like our backbone" which shows her and perhaps the group's dependency on and recognition of the power of words.

"Holding my own..." (Anaïs)

Following from this fear of sounding original, Anaïs expressed a fear of having her knowledge of literature doubted in the future. She stated,

I'm trying to read all these classics just to say I'm Familiar with literature so I can at least in a discussion at least hold my own with people who are literate like, I'm going to varsity, I wanna maybe be part of the English Department ... be known as someone who knows what she's saying.

This desire to *hold one's own* or *know what one's saying* illustrates Anaïs need to affirm her literary identity in light of her future contexts. The idea of literary identity, as someone who

has a good knowledge of literature is evident from early in the discussion. Emma stated, “in my vocabulary ‘Add English’ has now become a *verb*”. She goes on to say, “Because, like, in paper two when you’re writing poetry essays or literature essays, you find your ... I have this thought that goes into my mind: ‘Do not Add English this!’” Emma referred to the verb, Add English, in joking fashion, and this breaks the ice for the focus group, as all the participants had more than likely heard the term before and are aware of what the term meant to them, so it united the group by allowing them to feel connected.

However, what does Emma mean when she refers to Add English as a verb? She goes on to explain that AP English has encouraged her to find multiple meanings in literature and also to make connections between different literature texts. Intertextuality is one of the primary focuses of the AP English syllabus, as it is learning outcome one, which “establishes connections between different genres, texts, trends and contexts” (IEB, 2008. p.5). In the case of their discussion, it is a way for the participants to demonstrate that they are members of the AP English class. Emma stated, “I actually love the way we’ve learnt how to inter-textualise everything.” She goes on to point out how literature has a lasting effect for her that has meaning across time. She stated,

Because I mean, it’s opened my eyes to the classics and they actually...underneath all the weird language and the old English there was a message that even you can relate to today. And it can still be related to things and situations that happen to us today because classics are classics for a reason. I mean, they are...they basically transcend time. That’s the way they were written and that was their purpose.

Anna recognises how a single word can have multiple meanings. She states, “such a wide array, where one word could actually mean...”, and Emma mentions that, “Everything’s connected to religion or politics”. Patti refers to having ‘a broader spectrum’, while Elizabeth summed up the interconnectedness between subjects in the humanities. She stated,

Even like music and drama and art and everything...it’s all something written by someone reacting to something that’s happening. No matter like what form it’s in, it’s still a creative like outlet for people to express themselves or speak about something that’s happened.

Emma's understanding of the word, Ad English, demonstrates her capacity to integrate the skills she associates with the AP English class in other contexts. From this, we see how AP English infiltrates various aspects of the participants' lives. Abrams explains that, "[i]n Kristeva's formulation, accordingly, any text is in fact an 'intertext' – the site of an intersection of numberless texts" (Abrams, 1993, p. 285). The participants, in this case, have become aware of the multiplicity of meanings that literature can evoke, as all texts relate to each other, and to other aspects of their lives. This has the potential to be a transformative space, as the participants construct meaning for themselves by making connections.

The context in which Emma initially brought up the idea of Ad English as a verb was when she was writing English Home Language assessments and examinations. For the participants, there is a clear distinction between AP English and English Home Language as school subjects. Gee's perspectives of identity are particularly appropriate to incorporate here. Firstly, the institutional perspective is evident. Emma, and the other participants, are learners at a school. As a result, they are subject to "laws, rules, traditions, or principles" (Gee, 2001, p. 102) of the school. One of these regulatory powers is the completing of assessments and examinations. However, within this space of assessments and examinations, Emma is able to affirm her affinity perspective, by referring to the skills she has learnt in the AP English class in a traditional schooling setting of assessment and examination. This AP English membership allows her to gain authority in an institutional setting. Furthermore, it also shows the discursive perspective, which relates to being recognised in a particular way. Through the language she uses, her discourse and dialogue, Emma is able to position herself as a person of authority and knowledge. The power of the discursive perspective lies in that "[I]t is only because other people treat, talk about, and interact" (Gee, 2001, p. 103) with the participants as members of the AP English class that proves they are members. The participants need to be witnessed in order to establish their identities. She also expressed her understanding of Ad English as a verb with particular delight, as she enjoys using her skills in a different setting.

4.2.4 A Hybrid Language

The following two instances will show how the participants intersperse their own language with literary quotes. This will show how the participants create new meanings by incorporating literary quotes with their own intentions.

"That little quote is everywhere..." (Anaïs)

Bakhtin's double-voiced discourse is evident in the discussion specifically when Elizabeth and Anaïs acknowledged a line from the novel, *Saturday* by Ian McEwan that is in the AP English syllabus. Elizabeth refers to the line, unsure of what it is precisely, "it's either too much or too little binding". The reference to binding in the novel refers to the connections between people. Anaïs then states, "that little quote is everywhere", while Elizabeth comments that, "It's just floated into our normal everyday lives." The acknowledgement of how the language they use is scattered with literary references shows how the literature from the AP English syllabus has made some kind of meaningful impact. In light of the theme of time, Anna acknowledged how they have changed and developed from junior school – "we just keep learning, we keep experiencing" and then she states, "We keep going up and up and up until the day we die. But, you know ... You know, 'cause we're all going to die." This reference to death connects with the poem, *Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley that was studied in AP English. Anna even recalls the day that she learnt about the poem, and her writing, "we're all gonna die" at the end of the poem in her notes. The message in the poem is a very serious and sombre one, as it speaks to the power that death has over every human being, even if one is an arrogant, power-hungry Egyptian ruler, as is the case in this particular poem. On reflection, I think that the poem, itself, could be considered an example of Bakhtin's dialogic interaction (1993, p. 231) because there are multiple voices contrasting with one another in the poem. However, in the context of the focus group and AP English as a whole, the literature forms a basis from which the participants can find common ground. They share the experience of learning about the literature together, which ties in with the idea of a "literacy event" (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166). The participants' understanding of the poem is imbued with a double-voiced discourse (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324), because they are able to laugh about it, and share the inside joke. This inside joke signifies that the participants are members of a group, which relates to Gee's affinity perspective (Gee, 2001, p. 105). The quotes from the participants relating to literature serve to bring unity as a centripetal force (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272) as they are lines which all the participants generally know. The centrifugal forces (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272) serve to decentralize the original meaning of the poetry, which lies in the particular slant or context in which the participants choose to speak the words related to literature.

In conclusion, Patti mentions a line from the author, Leo Tolstoy, that she came across in the Literary Society, which is a society she attends. This society is offered after school hours at the school they attend and focuses on a love of reading and writing. Her mention of the society

also shows how she incorporates experiences outside of AP English into her realm of a literary identity. She stated that,

And I have a quote that, that ma'am gave me from Lit Club actually. It was like, you know, 'He saw her as if she were the Sun, and as if she were the Sun, he saw her even without looking.' Or something like that. And I hung that on my wall and I really like it.

This quote has been incorporated into her life, and shows how she has made meaning of it for herself.

"A Handful of Dust..." (Patti)

The integration of quotes into the participants' lives is an indication that they have found the literature to be meaningful or at least that it left some kind of impact on them. However, the participants choose to integrate quotes beyond conversation and into other aspects of their lives. Elizabeth referred to the poem, "anyone lived in a pretty how town" by e.e. cummings. She states that,

I used it in every flipping exam because it was my favourite and I could really read deep into it, and I felt like I could just work with everything, just... and when you find something like that that you really like and identify with, it's just so nice to know

For Elizabeth, as indicated above, she uses quotes in a more traditional setting such as when writing her AP English exam. The participants also choose various circumstances in which to perform their identities. Quoting lines from poems or referring to poems is an indication that the participants are members of the AP English class, which is indicative of Gee's affinity and discursive perspectives (Gee, 2001, p. 99), in that they use language in an attempt to be recognised as a member of the AP English class, which affirms their literary identity.

Anna attempted to position herself in relation to the studied literature by stating how the poems they have studied in AP English "feel like they stand as people..." "We've identified with them, We've met them. We've greeted them. Like, they're not just as they exist – they're so much more than that". Anna's words also resonate with a question in the grade twelve trial

examination, which required the participants to respond to the following unseen poem using the poems they had studied. What follows is that particular section of the examination.

Response

*We recognise poems
when they come to us**

Don MacLennan

Do we?
I'm not so sure,
but I hope so.
More likely, perhaps,
they recognise us,
smile a greeting
and agree to stay.
Like today: this sky,
this sun, this garden,
these words

By Harry Owen

* The quotation from Don MacLennan comes from his poem, *At a Poetry Reading*.

Anna sees the poems as living beings, and makes an indirect reference to the poem above. In this way, the participants, the poems and their assessments can be viewed as texts, which all influence each other, as “Derridean perspectives imply that the *self* is a text and is shaped by the play of multiple texts” (Moje, et al., 2010: 167). The participants and the poems are sites of meaning, and we see how Elizabeth and Anna both refer to poems as living entities that they have come to know and with which they identify.

Another example of incorporating AP English experiences in different circumstances is when Patti reflected on how AP English had affected her in the art class. She states that, “I wished I’d used ‘A handful of dust’ as a title like this thing that I did with hourglasses and skulls turning in to fish and stuff ... that was cool.” Her reference to “A handful of dust” relates to a line from T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, which was part of the AP English syllabus. The line from the poem is “I will show you fear in a handful of dust”. Her description of her artwork

shows it to be especially abstract, and shows how comfortable she feels with using multiple images or ideas. Patti also refers to the poem, *Ozymandias*, and how she integrated it into her artwork. She refers to her love affair with the poem and in this way she positions herself in relation to the poem by emphasizing how much she appreciates it. She then goes on to say that,

And um, but I had an artwork that was almost also Subconsciously more based on *Ozymandias*, well I suppose now when I look back and reflect, I'm like – that's what I called this artwork, it's *Ozymandias*. It's like the skull, and there's mountains, and there's this dude walking into the mountains but there's like no hope forwards or backwards, and there's just like ... emptiness.

Patti has taken a well-known poem, *Ozymandias* which refers to the inevitability of death and used it in her artwork. Bakhtin's term, generational language (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 430) also ties in with the language she uses here, as she uses the word, "dude", and also the verbal crutch of the youth, which is the frequent use of the word, "like." Naturally, the word, "like" is littered throughout the discussion. The generational language serves to unify the participants as they are part of a particular generation of people, but it also serves to decentralize the meaning found in *Ozymandias*, a literary text of the poetic genre. In the same way, the literary language centralizes meaning, but decentralizes the meaning found in the use of generational language. This is an example of Bakhtin's idea of Hybridity, which refers to "the mixing, within a single concrete utterance, of two or more different linguistic consciousnesses, often widely separated in time and space" (Bakhtin, 1981: 429). As a result, this manner of mixing different languages has the possibility of creating a dynamic space that allows for new meaning, such as Patti's artwork or her ability to talk about poetry in a way that makes sense to her.

4.2.5 Performing One's Literary Identity in Different Spaces

The following two instances show how the participants perform their literary identity in alternative spaces to the classroom to demonstrate their newfound knowledge and skill.

'Fear' in the household...

Delightful anecdotes from the participants relating to using literary quotes in alternative spaces to the classroom indicate how they enjoy 'trying on' the new found literary language in different contexts. The domestic space proved to be of endless amusement. It also shows the hybridity (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 358) of language, as the participants incorporate literature, but also

use their own generational language. Emma referred to her use of T.S. Eliot and how she used it “for arguments and discussions” which shows how she believes the language to be one of authority. She states, “I did this to my mom, I don’t know what we were doing. I was trying to persuade her of something and I just said, ‘I will show you fear...’ “it just sounds so much better when you’re trying to persuade someone ... just like BAM!” Anna also recognised how poetry is interspersed with our everyday lives when she referred, not to her use of literature, but instead to her brother’s comments at the dinner table: “My brother, we were just sitting at a dinner table and I mentioned *Tyger* and he started sprouting it out his mouth! My brother is a water polo player” It is evident that her brother is not the type to refer to literature, and yet she noticed the way in which literature is interspersed into his life.

In the bookstore...

Scout related a humorous anecdote of having to choose a book as a gift for an award she received at the annual school prize giving. Scout seized the opportunity to affirm her literary identity by choosing *Ulysses* by James Joyce. This suggested her desire to read perceived high literature, as the book forms an important part of the Western literary canon, and is known for being incredibly dense, complicated and difficult to read. The book was also seen by others on the night of the prize giving. In this way, the institutional, affinity and discursive perspectives are all at play. The prize-giving is a traditional event organised by the school which reflects the institutional aspect. Scout’s book choice re-established her as an AP English class member, and confirmed her literate identity, which reflects her membership status in relation to the affinity perspective. At the same time, the people who acknowledge the book will then recognise this identity, which relates to the discursive perspective. During the focus group discussion, she re-told a delightful anecdote relating to buying the book in a bookstore. This relates to the performative and narrative quality of identity construction in that,

[a]s individuals, we write and speak our stories as a way of constructing lives and claiming identities. Thus, identity and language are linked through personal narratives and life stories, through identity performances.

(Mckinney and Giorgis, 2009, p. 112)

The discussion is as follows:

Scout: *Ulysses*...

Participants: (Continue laughing)

Scout: I was like, if the school's going to give me a book, they're going to give me *Ulysses*...

Elizabeth: I also like...I love it. I really love it. Did you tell them what (unclear) said?

Scout: Oh, the guy, as he handed me the book, he shook my hand and I was about to walk off but he caught my arm and he pulled me back and he said...he looked at me in the eye and he's like, "I read this book in college." And then he tapped it, he was like, "I hated every..."

Participants: (Burst out laughing)

Scout: On stage! And I was like, "I have to go!" He was like, "I *hated* it!"

Participants: (Continue to laugh)

Scout: He was like, "Ya, so...good luck!" And then he let me go.

Bookstores also become interesting sites to re-establish one's literary identity, because through browsing through the store and buying books one actively pursues a passion for reading and book collecting.

4.2.6 Positioning of Identity

In the following instances the participants' reflections are indicative of tensions between claiming a literary authority and reticence or uncertainty in doing so.

"It's like we almost have an advantage over them..." (Emma)

Smith (2009, p. 43) refers to the *once* provocative idea of Roland Barthes – "A text's unity lies not its origins but in its destination": this certainly rings true in this focus group discussion. As established, the participants are unafraid to incorporate the literature from the AP English syllabus into their own lives. They use their AP English identity as a kind of privilege that gives them skills that leads them to believe that they are able to analyze literature from the English Home Language syllabus with ease. Patti mentions that it's easier to analyze the unseen

poem in paper two, as she has a “broader spectrum” and this brings up the topic of having studied William Blake’s poem, *London* in AP English class, and additionally having to study it in English Home Language. Some of the participants were given the opportunity by their English Home Language teacher to teach the poem to their class. The participants who had this opportunity excitedly seized the chance. Teaching the poem as a form of performance allowed the participants to demonstrate their knowledge, and claim their AP English class member status, as well as their literary identity. In this way, the participants want recognition, which ties up with the affinity and discursive perspectives in an institutional setting. In teaching the poem they had studied in AP English, the participants were positioning themselves in relation to those who did not take AP English, by suggesting that AP students are more knowledgeable. Courtney goes as far to say, “Then again, the whole thing I ‘Add English it’ to the other people because they won’t understand it” to which Elizabeth then refers to another AP English class member, Virginia, who is absent from the discussion, and her interpretation of the poem as “apocalyptic”. Elizabeth then intimates that the rest of the class did not understand the intended meaning behind the word. Emma then goes onto say how much there is still to know regarding literature, but that they are closer to having an understanding than everyday people, who are not members of the AP English class. She states,

We’re just by the threshold. Yes, there’s *so* much more out there and there’s *so* much more we can still learn. And I mean, it’s just going to get bigger and bigger. We can go down the never-ending corridor, but it’s like we almost have an advantage over them. We’re closer to achieving that goal, whereas, like, I would say, take a random person from my class and they would just read the poem, do the questions, okay that’s all I need to know about it.

Emma takes on an elitist perspective, in that she believes that AP English has given her an advantage over others. Emma also states in relation to William Blake’s poem, *The Tyger* that was studied in AP English, that, “People know about *The Tyger*, but they don’t *know The Tyger* ... they don’t know it the way we do.” She then goes on to state that, “We’ve got the deeper, more intellectual meaning.” Interestingly, the conversation takes a turn in that this elitist position is questioned. Kitinger (1994, p.111) points out that focus groups can become sites for discussing controversial topics (see 3.4.1.2 Characteristics of Focus Groups in this Qualitative Study) as there is safety in numbers, as well as a healthy exchange of ideas. Anaïs responds to this degree of elitism by stating that, “And I don’t think that’s a good way to go

about things because everyone on their own level has their own kind of opinion about it.” She goes on to say:

I think that the amount of time we’ve studied it doesn’t necessarily mean that we *know* more about it. I think it’s more of an individual thing ... ya, that sense of entitlement is just what scares me a bit.

Patti responds to Anaïs’ reluctance to be confident about her knowledge of literature. She states,

when you open yourself up to be affected by literature or art or by a film or by a play or by something like that you are already stepping one step more forward than someone who, you know, would rather just, you know, chill...

Patti suggests that their position of authority lies in the fact that they have an openness to literature that everyday people do not have. Patti and Scout then add the following question and comments:

Patti: Do you not understand more than someone who just completely disregards art, though?

Scout: Ya, but that’s ‘cause they don’t like it. We love it. This is...it’s what... We chose Add English. They didn’t choose it. They didn’t *want* it. We *want* it...

Scout brings up a valid point that ties in with Gee’s affinity perspective which is characterised by choice. He states that, “It would seem that an affinity group is something that one must actively choose to join” (Gee, 2001, p. 106). This idea of “choice” seems to bring a degree of clarity to the debate. Diversity in a group may mean that participants “are forced to explain the reasoning behind their thinking just as much when they give the ‘right’ answer as when they give the wrong one” (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 113): this has the potential to help participants develop and test out their opinions in a space that values their input.

“A stepping stone, a launching pad” (Scout)

This reticence to claim a superior understanding of literature crops up at another point in the discussion. Scout brings up a new idea to challenge the participants' general sense of elitism. She states,

I think Add English was, was a stepping stone, a launching pad. We know nothing about literature. And I feel like it's been two years and great, but we're at the front door, we're like on the threshold of the front door, not even through the front door, I mean, I'm hungry now. I'm absolutely starving.

Scout appears to have a respect for the perceived magnitude of literature, and shows that she feels as if she has a long way to go. This evokes Zadie Smith's reflections on the two types of readers (2009, p. 42). Coincidentally, Scout incorporates the use of a metaphor similar to that used by Smith. They both use the metaphor of a house. Smith suggests,

After all, you can storm the house of a novel like Barthes, rearranging the furniture as you choose, or you can enter on your knees, like the pilgrim Nabokov thought you were, and try to figure out the cunning design of place...
(Smith, 2009, p. 44)

Scout's response is characterised by a kind of reticence. She is afraid to "storm the house" and rather realizes how much there is still to explore. As established, other participants are quite happy to "storm the house", and in a Barthes-like fashion claim the literature as their own in various different spaces. Anaïs expresses a similar reticence, but hers expresses the difficulty of defining how literature has affected her in response to the focus group topic:

Like, we're like, for the impact on ourselves...for me it's not...I...It's more like I exist, and then literature is a separate thing. And then there's a separate body and I exist in two parts, 'cause I have this literature body beside me and I have my own body, and when I merge them it kind of makes sense. But, until you merge them you never really know. And the literature body is kind of like this mysterious thing that you don't really know because even though you've studied it, it's someone else teaching it to you. And someone else teaching you these ideas. These ideas aren't your own, and you only discover them in a personal sense when you write about them...that's kind like merging yourself with the literature, which is a separate reference point almost.

Anaïs' reticence to describe the impact that literature has on her ties up with Smith's interpretation of Nabokov. For Nabokov, "texts had their unity (their truest reality) in him" (Smith, 2009, p. 51). (Here "him" refers to the author, Nabokov.) Anaïs appears to find it difficult to access literature, which is "this mysterious thing", but she does refer to writing as a means of accessing what the meaning is for her. Smith concludes her essay, where she contrasts a Barthes-like and a Nabokov-like manner of approaching reading, by stating that, "Maybe every author needs to keep faith with Nabokov, and every reader with Barthes" (Smith, 2009, p. 57). For the *readers* of the group, it might be easy to make authoritative claims over literature, while someone such as Anaïs, who sees herself as a *writer*, might look at the situation from a different angle, and therefore she struggles to believe that the meaning of literature can be accessed so easily. Smith (2009, p 57) argues that for the writer, as with Nabokov, some intended meaning must lie with the author, for why would one ever write, if according to Barthes, meaning lies solely with the reader?

4.2.7 The Self and Literature

The following two impressions show how the participants wrestle with a sense of self that is reflected in the studied literature. It shows how they use literature to access another, perhaps deeper version, of who they are.

A true reflection... (Anaïs)

Anaïs explores the idea that the impact of literature may lie outside of the academic results one receives in AP English. In this way, she maturely sees beyond the expectations of the traditional schooling system and identifies with the literature on another more personal level. She states that,

given a situation, and they're (the learner) able to take, say, a poem and integrate it into part of their lives, and if you can do that, then great. And it might not show in your school marks, but it shows you something else.

Jeanette Winterson is also aware of how art can affect one on a deeper level. She states that, "[o]ur unconscious attitude to art is complex" (Winterson, 27, p. 1995). Patti and Anaïs both recognise the power of art on a subconscious level, which relates to Winterson's mention of the unconscious. They stated the following.

Patti: And um, but I had an artwork that was almost also subconsciously more based on *Ozymandias*

Anaïs: But see, that's what's really cool though. It *is* subconscious and even though we've read it and even though we've studied it in class, on a personal level, you never really understand.

Anaïs then goes on to say how

Okay, I know it had an impact on me because, well, for me at least personally, when I write essays for like paper three or normal English, for some reason there's always T.S. Eliot there. Like, in the past three exams, it's just T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* just pops up. And I can't say that it's going to happen before the exam. Like, I don't say to myself, 'Look, I'm going to use this line' when in Add English we want to, we kind of say we'll learn this poem, and I'm going to try and use this link and learn these links beforehand just to help us remember. But for me that kind of remembering isn't really a true reflection of how we've interpreted it, because we're trying to remember and not necessarily think about it. And trying to, personally, when we're looking at another poem. So, 'normal' English papers are easier for me because I tend to kind of just sit down, get time, and just write about it, leave just an hour to two to write about one thing ... and the little verse, and let it just kind of sink in, which is separate from the stress of having to make it up or having to be marked on how you link up the poems ... kind of thing ...

Anaïs is attempting to find an authentic space to express how literature has affected her. She also does want the process to be purposeful, but rather occur organically without the anxiety associated with examinations. Emma also recognises the power that a few words of literature can have, just as Anaïs refers to focusing on "a little verse". Emma states that, "It can just be a single line. And that could just mean a completely different thing to someone than it would to someone else." It is fair to say that the approach to AP English is a challenging one as

intertextuality is encouraged: an excellent knowledge of all the studied texts is also a requisite. As a result, perhaps the real meaning that participants gain from the class, such as the power of a single line, is more meaningful than the wide spectrum the participants are expected to know for assessment purposes.

We want it and we don't want it, often simultaneously, and at the same time a book is working intravenously we are working to immunise ourselves against it.

(Winterson, 1995, p. 26)

Another powerful aspect of one's relationship with literature is that it has the potential to challenge one in a way that makes one feel uncomfortable. Anna refers to the film, *Revolutionary Road* that was studied as part of the AP English syllabus. The character of April, a 1950's housewife, who has aspirations to leave middle-class American suburbia, struck a chord with many participants, such as when she descends into deeper feelings of isolation and entrapment, and as a result takes her own life by performing a home abortion on herself. Anna recognises that literature can affect one on a deeper, uncomfortable level. She states,

And for example, *Revolutionary Road*, now at first I didn't really like it because it felt far too familiar to me. I could associate myself with April and I know what she felt like, which was scary. Because you're forced to see something, realize that you identify with it, and realize that you feel that way, and that is a part of you.

Anna is able to identify with the character of April and as a result, she recognises that she has the potential to think and act in a similar fashion to the character. This ties in with Zadie Smith's idea - established in the literature review - about how literature changes our sense of self. She states,

A great piece of fiction can demand that you acknowledge the reality of its wildest proposition, no matter how alien it may be to you. It can also force you to concede the radical otherness lurking within things that appear most familiar.

(Smith, 2007, Jan 13)

Anna goes on to say how the literature required her to reflect on a deeper, uncomfortable level. She states that,

Like, there was a lot of...of heavy stuff. Like *Waste Land*. But ya, other than that...like that's why like on my thing that I wrote here, "The hands felt the grit of ideas that didn't want to be dealt with or confronted. Like me with *Revolutionary Road*. I felt trapped and I felt suffocated, whereas the thought of comfort was no longer there anymore. But then the other hand grasps hope. It's the hope of a sunflower, the hope of the little black boy, that there *is* hope in all that darkness, which is kind of a valid.

Despite, the negative associations of the poem, *The Waste Land*, and the film, *Revolutionary Road*, Anna does make reference to more positive aspects of the literature which include her references to the Romantic poetry that was studied, which includes the poems, *Sunflower* and *the little black boy*.

Winterson suggests how exploring art opens up new identities for the reader:

Art is a way into other realities, other personalities. When I let myself be affected by a book, I let myself into new customs and new desires.

(1995, p. 26)

Anna echoes these sentiments here.

We watched it last year, and when I was in that stage of my life I felt like I was April, which was scary. I left the class, I felt uncomfortable, because I'd now seen a side of myself that I never would have ever thought of that being a real life...a real thing. So the fact that necessarily fictional characters, fictional beings, *are* real life. And they *are* a part of you.

Sumara (1994, p. 205) refers to this 'fictional' idea of life in that, "the identities we continue to shape are no less fictitious than the characters whom we read" which suggests that Anna realises how fictional characters can impact on her life just as much as her so-called reality. This links to the idea that the focus group, the literature and the participants are all texts (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166), which in turn, suggests that they are all sites of meaning-making that can be accessed, and that influence each other. Emma also recognises the extent to which the film, *The Last King of Scotland*, also part of the AP English syllabus, affected her. She refers to the main character, Nicholas Garrigan, and states that,

I...I understood his...his, like the suffocating of his family and wanting to become a doctor and him just like wanting to go out into the world and, you know, experience it.

She identifies with the particular character in the film, although in Emma's following comments, she illustrates that wanting to explore the world can have its consequences. She states,

But I was kind of...I was kind of like I related to him and he was also a warning to me. Like if...if I had gone along the same path as he did, something like that could also happen to me. If I wanted to just go and be free and just, you know, disregard everything, my life would probably be in danger and I would make one or two too many bad decisions that would lead me to somewhere I can't get away from.

In this way, through her experience of watching the film, Emma sees characters making mistakes that perhaps she will not have to make, as she learns from the consequences of the character's actions.

4.2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, as stated previously, the focus group constitutes a generative space of reflection, which offers an alternative educational space that is rich with meaning and significance.

Emma affirms the connections she has made with literature and people. She states that,

we've come into contact with people we wouldn't have normally have. But now we've got such a close bond, like the matric group of AP English...like, it's sad because we are all dispersing but now we have this...we all have this connection, a connection with AP English, a connection with a love for literature and a love for poetry, a love for you...

Relating back to the theme time, she reflects on the trajectory of her own life. She states,

that's something we're never going to forget. It's something that's added to our lives and kind of also helped us...I don't know about you guys...helped us navigate in high school, for example, and what life throws at you. And the

experiences we have to experience and go through. And without that, like it would have been completely different. We'd all have very different lives.

Patti also recognises the way in which AP English is part of her life journey, and that it is related to other aspects. She also makes a reference to the focus topic quote from Jeannette Winterson (1993, p. 89), when she refers to the “accumulation of a life time” She states,

And I think that's also...it adds another dimension. It's not just experiencing something like this, but experiencing Add English and then doing Art, Visual Art, as a subject and then being involved in theatre outside, and then having such a decent friend group, and then like going to Grahamstown's festival...so, it's been like...it's been an accumulation of a lifetime that I've gathered.

Elizabeth acknowledges that AP English provides a safe space of belonging, and that this space is not necessarily only experienced within AP English class time. She states that,

It's always just been really nice knowing that we could like not only just for Add English be ourselves and share our opinions and what not, but like between lessons, during the school days or after school, just popping into your classroom

Lastly, Anna affirms that the AP English space was a positive one that allowed for freedom and connection.

One thing I liked about our Add English classes, as they were, was when we stepped into a class and the door closed, in my mind, all other time stopped and we were all present in a place where nothing you said was wrong, nothing you said was possibly right, it was *words*. And we were all able to connect whether...I mean for example the grade elevens – I don't know them at all, yet I feel that I know them now because I was able to hear their ideas. I was able to hear what they thought, which is not something one's gonna accomplish with normal people in a normal classroom setting. So in AP English we've been able to share pieces of ourselves, of our minds, our interpretations, with other people. And through *that*, we've learnt more about ourselves.

Anna's concluding statement, “we've learnt more about ourselves” is an appropriate way to draw this analysis to an end. Through processes akin to Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428) and hybridity (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 358), the participants were able to incorporate the studied literature into their own lived experiences. The discussion also gave

them the space to reflect on their own reading journeys and the different ways in which the literature resonated with them. The discussion provided them with the opportunity to wrestle with complex ideas, such as the extent to which studying literature in their environment has given them any advantage over others.

There is a tension in this respect. Firstly, there is perhaps a sense of elitism among the participants, which is evident in their desire to perform their literary identities and receive recognition. However, alongside this is the confidence to speak in multiple voices, to make references to the literature and to each other. This suggests that they are engaging with the experience of AP English on a deeper level. Being part of group such as AP English gives one a sense of authority on matters of literature, but it also provides one with the opportunity to authentically engage with the AP English experience. A continual balancing of these two aspects is perhaps required, as in our use of language is a desire to be recognised. This resonates with Gee's discursive and affinity perspectives that are discussed in the literature review (2.1.2.3 & 2.1.2.4).

Lastly, AP English gave this group a sense of belonging, a comfort with one another, that was evident not only in their words, but also in their relaxed body language and the playful way in which they used humour.

As a result, this focus group discussion was a meaningful way to conclude their experiences of AP English and high school as a whole, and had they not taken AP English as a subject, they would not have had this specific opportunity and their individual reading journeys would have been very different. Therefore, this study is an attempt to honour the participants' participatory growth in the context of AP English in a way that traditional education often overlooks.

4.3 FOCUS GROUP WRITING AND WRITING FOR ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS

4.3.1 Introduction

This section concentrates on the written components of the AP English participants. The written components comprise extracts from essays for assessment and the written responses to the focus group topic. I have chosen to combine the two sets of writing in my analysis as this resonates with the socio-political discourse of writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 234) that resists the hierarchical nature of categorising writing. In this way the different forms of writing take on a

quality of “dialogization” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291) which indicates an awareness of “competing definitions for the same things” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 427). Therefore, the forms of writing “do not *exclude* each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291). Common themes can be found in both sets of writing. Thus, this section is dialogic rather than monologic” (Ryan, 2007, p. 120) as it is a generative space for creating new meaning.

There was a tremendous amount of written data that I could have used for this study. I involved grade ten, eleven and twelve AP English learners in this study, and they wrote a number of essays for assessment over the time period of this study. There was also a fair amount of reflective writing generated from the focus groups. What a researcher chooses to include or exclude from the analysis is indicative of the researcher’s authority and decision to take the analysis in a certain direction. As I was reading through the participants’ writing, I had the overwhelming feeling that I was stepping into “teacher-mode” again, and looking at their writing through the eyes of a critical teacher, who is marking according to the AP English rubric. I also had the fear that this analysis would begin to read like a literary essay that one would write for AP English, where various references are made to prove an argument. As a result, I have tried to explore my role as a researcher, which is discussed in the following paragraph. I have also carefully chosen the participants’ writing that I have included in this analysis: perhaps also, I have not included as much writing as I originally imagined I would. This is because, unlike what happens with the free flow and witty banter of the discussion group, I have interpreted the participants’ writing as internalised with a greater sense of permanence (Morris, 2007, p. 69), i.e. where there is the feeling that more is at stake when one commits words to paper (Brandt, 2001, as cited in McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 166). I steered clear of analysing their writing through the critical AP English assessor’s eyes, as I rather wanted to see how the participants chose to represent themselves in their writing, and in this way, honour their participation in AP English and this study.

I feel that it is necessary and appropriate, in my specific position, as teacher, researcher and writer, to carefully reflect on my own voice as a writer in this instance, especially considering that this analysis is based solely on their writing. As established in the literature review, the manner in which the self is presented in writing can be complex and problematic in terms of positioning oneself (see 2.3.3.1 The self, writing and positioning). My relationship with the participants allows me to “claim insider status” (Pelias, 2011, p. 662) because as the

participants' teacher, I "share cultural membership with the group under investigation" (Pelias, 2011, p. 662). However, this 'insider status' requires that I treat the participants' contributions with care, allowing their voices to speak through me. I approach the writing of this section in a similar vein to Zadie Smith, who, in her introduction to her lecture entitled, "Speaking in Tongues" rejects the idea of a totalizing singular voice by stating that she will speak in the voices of a varied set of people, whom she lists at the beginning of her speech. I, too, will try to conduct my "orchestra of voices" (2008, Dec 5). Smith proposes that this is a necessary characteristic for all people - not just novelists (2008, Dec 5). There is some surety that she would include teachers and researchers in that realm of multi-voiced people too, as researchers and teachers are often required to listen to the voices of others in their roles. The particular voices whom I will call on, are in my case, the participants. Hence, in this analysis, I endeavour to create a confluence of their multiple voices.

However, for the sake of meaning and clarity, this piece of writing has to encompass certain themes. These themes speak to my own double-voiced discourse (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 434). I cannot accurately present these participants' voices, because my own intention – "a voice always has a will or desire behind it" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 434) - which is to create meaning by bringing these participants' voices together thematically, will colour the meaning that these participants originally intended. Importantly though, even the studied literature represents a multiplicity of meanings, and thus, there is no original meaning one can represent.

Nevertheless, I hope that the participants' voices will be present in the thematic journey of this analysis. This analysis is characterised by transition that moves through stages, where the participants' writing initially focuses on tentatively locating their sense of self in their writing. It then makes a transition to the participants' incorporating of the studied literature and the metaphor of the body into their writing, and finally there is the establishment of a deeper, more layered sense of self. This is not an essential self or the process of excavating or moulding an existing self, but rather the learner creating and taking advantage of conditions that facilitate these "needed identity transformations" (Sumara, 1998, p. 204). This idea was established in the literature review (2.3.35 "Speaking in Tongues"). This deeper sense of self also resonates with the concept of "Rivers of Reading" (Cliff Hodges, 2012, p. 10) and the idea that literature accommodates one's forever-changing sense of self. The thematic structure illustrates how the participants' writing moves from an abstract concept to a worded tapestry that is tangible and specific to the context of the writer.

In an effort to explain this deeper sense of self, I draw from Jeannette Winterson, who eloquently describes the healing powers of literature in its ability to speak for us, when we ourselves cannot find the words. She refers to the way in which the words from literature speak for us and help us to create meaning. This resonates with the way in which the participants gain a greater understanding of themselves through literature. She states,

I believe in fiction and the power of stories because that way we speak in tongues. We are not silenced. All of us, when in deep trauma, find we hesitate, we stammer; there are long pauses in our speech. The thing is stuck. We get our language back through the language of others. We can turn to the poem. We can open the book. Somebody has been there for us and deep-dived the words.

(Winterson, 2012, p. 9)

The idea of “deep-diving” suggests that writers dig deep within themselves to find the words to express what others cannot. This theme is elaborated through the fire imagery that is evoked in the latter part of this analysis, as well as Winterson’s idea of poetry being a “tough language” (Winterson, 2012, p. 40) that represents inner struggle. I think it is also important to state that I have introduced the participants to Winterson’s writing in the classroom, and for many of them her powerful prose struck a chord. Therefore, this relationship I have with participants is one based within the world of literature, and the participants’ writings reflect s their individual reading journeys comprised of so many influences, AP English being one of them.

In addition, I have presented the participants’ writing in extracts, which build on each other and reveal the themes of the analyses. Winterson reflects on the act of piecing together meaning with bits and pieces. She states that, “It is probably why I write as I do – collecting the scraps, uncertain of continuous narrative. What does Eliot say? ‘*These fragments I have shored against my ruin...*’” (Winterson, 2012, p. 40). Piecing the participants’ writings together is an act of making meaning and building up, and as one reads this analysis so the writing becomes deeper and more layered.

4.3.2 The Elusive Self in Writing

Because writing is essentially an extension of one’s self (Anaïs)

The intention of the focus group was to give the participants the opportunity to reflect on their reading trajectory or Rivers of Reading in relation to AP English in a variety of different ways. I gave the participants a discussion topic (see the Methodology chapter, point 3) that would

hopefully give them the space to write or draw freely and that would allow them to respond to the topic in an authentic manner. The focus group discussion topic incorporated the following quote as a point of departure:

“Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there.”

(Winterson, 1993, p. 89).

This quote resonates with the term, Embodied (Pelias, 2001, p. 663) and the incorporation of the body as a metaphor into writing. The intention behind the quote was to hopefully give the participants the chance to anchor their thoughts through the more tangible nature of the body. However, as Zadie Smith points out, the self in writing is often elusive and difficult to pin down (2007, Jan 13). In the following quote, Anaïs quite simply states the connection between the self and the writing process. She writes:

Because writing is essentially an extension of one’s self

Therefore, Anaïs realises that this business of writing is a reflection of herself. In an attempt to locate her sense of self and a meaning behind her writing, Anaïs refers to a previous writing experience. She mentions her creative essay writing for her English Home Language trial examination and the difficulty of reconciling her sense of self with the effect that literature has on her. Anaïs’ thoughts from a previous writing experience give voice to her writing in this instance.

In my trial exam I wrote about how I struggled to define myself and the impact that literature was having on me

Anaïs is self-reflective in this process, as she uses writing to reflect on her struggle to write. In this way, the concept of “Rivers of Reading” becomes a “Rivers of Writing”, where Anaïs’ relationship with writing becomes as relevant to her as her relationship with reading. In this way, she takes on the identity of a writer, which resonates with the the creativity discourse of writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 229) where the learner is often viewed as an “author” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 229). In Anaïs’ hesitancy to state the effect that literature has had on her, there’s a sense that she is aware of the pressure to produce writing of a high calibre. The reflective writing also takes on characteristics of the process discourse of writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 231), as the learners

have a sense that this writing, although it will be read by me, the teacher and researcher, is outside of the pressure of writing for assessment, and therefore, this reflective writing allows them to experience the process of coherent thoughts coming to mind. What provides comfort though is the awareness that it not necessarily her voice that is speaking, but the voices from the literature she has studied.

but all the while I was conscious that it was there, because there was just this constant stream of poetry that kept flowing onto the page, and I was comforted by the fact that other people's thoughts were the same as mine, in some instances

Moving from the reflective writing, Matilda's writing for an examination refers directly to the poem, *The Second Coming* by W.B. Yeats and she expresses how the poetry gave form to her thoughts.

"The Second Coming" by Yeats spoke my thoughts with the line, "the worst are filled with passionate intensity while the best lack all conviction".

In her own reflection of the focus group topic, Matilda refers to how the words from literature and her classmates impacts on her. Interestingly, she does not suggest that one form of words, i.e. the literature source or her classmate's is better than the other.

Class has sort of become a place where you can share your opinions and thoughts freely. The atmosphere can be incredible because everyone's minds are popping and crackling with different interpretations and views. AP English ensures that you become more open minded and a better listener. The words of others, whether they are famous poets or a fellow classmates, really grows your mind.

Matilda's description of the classroom environment shows how the learning context intersects with the writing process (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 689). The sharing of ideas in class gives the learners the confidence to call on various voices in their own writing.

Anaïs goes on to refer to a body of literature which she can access, and incorporates the idea from Winterson's quote, "the accumulations of a lifetime gather there." (Winterson, 1993, p. 89). Anaïs also shows an awareness that there is a gradual building of literary knowledge that

influences her understanding of herself, which ties in with the idea that her writing can be understood as “a text (which) at any time was a mixture of understandings, questions, hypotheses, and connections to previous knowledge and experiences” (Applebee, et al., 2003, p. 691).

Although it (literature) does impact us, I see it more as a sort of reference point, as if I existed in two parts – two bodies: One that is the physical me, and a self that stands beside me, which is an accumulation of ideas, built up of different novels and poetry.

Virginia reaches for a more layered meaning by incorporating the body as a metaphor in her writing. She refers to the classroom discussion, which echoes Smith’s reference to an “orchestra of voices” (2008, Dec 5) in the classroom this time, and the way in which it stimulated her own thoughts. AP English writing for assessment also does not give learners the opportunity to write about their personal experiences of AP English, and this reflective writing lets them write about the AP English experience as a whole, not only the studied literature. The connection between ears and hands shows how she learns to make sense of the experience for herself. She refers to this as an act of creation, absorbing through the ears and then using the hands through the act of writing.

Our class discussions could be my ears, as a clichéd example, but they would also be my hands. Hearing how others interpret and discuss things stimulates my mind and sometimes fuels the need to write it down or write down a completely different idea that was ignited by their words. By extension, all of our words, mine and theirs, are my hands – what I use to make my mark on the world and to shape it. It’s also like learning a new piece of music – you teach yourself bit by bit, show each finger what to do and gain experience by working at it by yourself and by looking at others, and eventually you can create music.

In a manner that echoes Bakhtin, Virginia shows how the creation of her own writing is a result of her words and ideas intersecting with the ideas of others (1981, p. 291).

4.3.3 Finding a Voice

Add-English became my voice (Virginia)

Virginia also recognises how she is piecing together the different aspects of the studied literature which adds to her greater understanding. She refers to finding her, Add-English voice, which resonates so strongly with this study. This speaks to the concept of a literary identity, and for Virginia it is formed by taking in literature through the eyes (reading), and using her mouth to speak with a new voice that is imbued with confidence.

Literature as a whole is both the eyes and the mouth. It widens our perspective by allowing us to see the different parts and fit them together to be a whole image that always changes, and it gives us the knowledge and courage to speak out. My own reading has also been my mind – my refuge – and Ad-English became my voice; it allowed me to become comfortable enough to actively voice my opinions and thoughts.

Virginia's writing resonates with the idea that she is constructing her identity by using literature to express her own voice, because "during and following engagements with literary fictions, readers produce new knowledge about themselves" (Sumara, 1998, p. 205). Virginia, therefore acknowledges the role that literature has played in the construction of her own being.

4.3.4 Dust and Words

The following pieces of writing refer to the poem, *Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley. This poem resonates with the themes of this analysis, because it speaks to the ephemeral nature of human existence, and through the participants' writing they give a tangible quality to this ephemerality. The title of this section, *Dust and Words*, shows how Virginia and Matilda bring the inevitable emptiness and futility of existence to life through their words. They have interspersed their writing with references to the poem and their own interpretations, and their writing, unlike the reflective writing which is often tentative and a reflection on the AP English experience as a whole, this writing is focused on their understanding of the studied literature.

"Ozymandias" has us confront the inevitability of time. The once great statue of a once powerful pharaoh lies alone in the desert, broken. It is "trunkless," lacking its core and power and its "shattered visage" is a mockery of what it once was. Shelley makes it impersonal by having the statue described through a person who has heard it from someone who has seen it, yet emotive through his excellent use of imagery. "Barren" and "broad" and "bare" shows how the pharaoh's legacy and empire have faded. (Virginia)

Percy Shelley's poem "Ozymandias", has made me realise how in the end, after death, nothing actually matters. All that was left of the great Ozymandias was a "shattered visage" and it was a "colossal wreck". Having power is not eternal as empires rise and fall and eventually you are forgotten. I identified with this poem as it put my life and smaller worries into perspective. I realized that it is okay to not always achieve because that achievement's importance has an expiration date. (Matilda)

Matilda's understanding of the poem helps her to fathom her own life in relation to big concepts such as time and power. In this way, the poem accommodates the conception that she has of herself, and helps her to construct meaning.

Her writing also resonates with the AP English learning outcomes to some extent, which parallel both a social practices discourse of writing and a socio-political discourse of writing (Ivanič, 2004, p. 234), in that, unlike the practice in traditional English teaching, here literature texts are not taught in isolation. Learners are encouraged to analyse literature in context, and the extent to which common themes can be identified and explored. Furthermore, AP English learners are encouraged to think for themselves and work out clear opinions on the studied literature. The AP English themes for studying novels, plays and film have included the following: power and powerlessness, rebellion and revolution, and at present, the danger of a single story. To some extent, these themes speak to the characteristics of a socio-political discourse of writing in that

the view of learning to write within this discourse is that it should include developing a critical awareness of why particular discourses and genres are shaped the way they are.

(Ivanič, 2004: 238)

What is evident from the writing about *Ozymandias* of Virginia and Matilda is that they are aware of the way in which the poet speaks to issues of power and authority in society.

4.3.5 "Deep-Diving the Words" - Jeanette Winterson

Broaden the Horizon and a Feeling Too Familiar (Anna)

Below is the writing of Anna. I have put together a number of her ideas emanating from the discussion group that she had written as these speak to each other and one can see the

integration of the self into the studied literature as well as the use of the body as a metaphor. I have bolded and underlined strong, expressive words that Anna uses, as these words define her emotional experience in a powerful, often tangible manner. In addition, I have underlined the references to specific studied literature. Bolding and underlining adds to the visual effect of reading her writing, as one can see how her writing is littered with references that speak to her own experience. Anna's writing, in this case, has layers of meaning and seeing the writing pieced together gives one a sense of her voice.

*The brain was the main source of idea with AP English. Often **clouded** but at the most times open. The words of others expand it broaden the horizon to create an idea.*

*The fingers however **grasped** the hope. The hope of **the sunflower** for a new day. The hope of **the little black boy** to be **loved**.*

*The feet however kept you **grounded** to your sense of reality. Reality is of which the world we perceive around us. As in AP English classes. The door would close and we would be **locked in a time loop**. Time would stop and yet we'd be present in this limbo where we debated the facts of life through poetry and reading and film.*

*The experiences of your life accumulate on your skin. They **breath** with you, flow in your blood stream and come out of your mouth as a whole collective of perceptions of the world.*

*The hands felt the **grit of ideas** that didn't want to be dealt with or confronted by.*

*"Revolutionary Road" was a feeling too familiar to me. **Trapped, suffocated**. I was forced to confront the side of myself that does feel like that. That part that feels like its drowning.*

Winterson refers to the power of art when she states that, "True art, when it happens to us, challenges the 'I' that we are" (1995, p. 15). What is apparent from Anna's writing is that she has discussed the emotional affect that AP English had on her through the powerful metaphors relating to the body. Words such as grit, trapped, suffocated, clouded and drowning all suggest that her sense of self or "I" is being challenged and disturbed by the literature.

4.3.6 Opening the Casket

Coincidentally, the participant, Matilda and the writer, Winterson, both incorporate the image of a fire as a metaphor in their writing in various instances. This analysis of the participants has thus made a transition from tentative to a much deeper, more intense space and as such, the image of fire, as a passionate, powerful and destructive element seems to be appropriate. Matilda states in her reflective writing that,

AP English sparks a fire in you again... AP English can sometimes be a warm and comforting fire that therefore warms and comforts my soul. However AP English can also be a raging fire that disturbs and burns my soul to the crisp.

Fire, in this case, has negative and positive attributes, and Matilda's picture of the human body had been coloured in strong oranges, reds and yellows, which resonate with her metaphor. Winterson reflects on her own relationship with fire, where she states that,

I remember a journalist calling once, and remarking on the blazing fire in the red library. "Is that for effect?" she said. I told her that in England one has to keep warm somehow and she asked why I couldn't afford what she called "real heat". Although there are clear differences between myself and D.H. Lawrence, I share with him the suspicion that there is something immoral about central heating. The surest way to put Lawrence into a rage was to sit him by a radiator, and Richard Aldington tells of how Lawrence preferred to lurk in the hall than subject his virility to anonymous heat. I have been lighting my own fire since I was a tiny girl and I hope to do so on the day I die. There is no comfort to be had from a radiator and no-one I recall has yet had a vision while staring into the white enamel.

(Winterson 1995, p. 162)

As an artist, Winterson is, indeed, attracted to the elemental nature of fire, and this brings her closer to an authentic, real engagement with her sense of self and her writing. Perhaps the effect of AP English can be compared to the intensity of a real fire, while the singular, one dimensional voice of education has the effect of the white enamel in that it dulls the senses and leaves one unmoved. The fire crackles and burns, and leaves its mark on our sense of self: this metaphor of the fire is expanded on in Matilda's essay for assessment below.

In this essay, Matilda skilfully weaves her own experience of mental illness with the studied literature and the unseen poem, "Dear Reader" which forms part of the poetry question for that

particular assessment. In the learners' responses they are required to refer to two schools of poetry they have studied in AP English. I have bolded and italicised where she has quoted from the unseen poem and the prescribed literature. I have also bolded and underlined where she has expressed her theme of mental illness. In this way, it is evident that Matilda is "deep diving the words" (Winterson, 2012, p. 9), as one can see how she has created a worded tapestry that refers to the studied literature. The literature helps her find the words to articulate her own condition, which can be challenging to bring to life on the page, as it is often difficult to comprehend the abstract concept of Blake's "mind-forged manacles" that cause us "deep trauma" (Winterson, 2012, p. 9).

The idea in this poem of opening one's casket also lends itself to Winterson's concept of "deep diving" (2012, p. 9) as it refers to the deeper emotional aspects of one's identity, i.e. "identification papers".

It is necessary to mention that a number of these studied poems refer to the ephemeral nature of life and look at a breakdown of meaning for the self and the poet. Romanticism and Modernism are the two schools of poetry that were studied. Matilda even goes as far as to mention T.S. Eliot's concept of reaching a higher level of peace and an "escape from personality" (Smith, 2007).

Although Matilda refers to abstract concepts, she is able to express these concepts in an accessible manner, that can make sense to her and the reader.

The unseen poem that was part of the poetry essay question reads as follows:

Dear Reader

I am trying to pry open your casket
with this burning snowflake.

I'll give up my sleep for you.
This freezing sleet keeps coming down
and I can barely see.

If this trick works we can rub our hands
together, maybe

start a little fire
with our identification papers.
I don't know but I keep working, working

half hating you,
half eaten by the moon.

By James Tate

Extracts of Matilda's response:

Poems are designed to by poets "to pry open your casket"

*"The Sunflower" by William Blake was like **a blow to the chest** when I realised how much I related to the sunflower who is weary of time and "who countest the steps of the sun". When I am **depressed** the days seem **to slow down and blur into a hazy numbness. Life begins to feel too long.** I become the "pale virgin shrouded in snow" **who simply wants life to be over. Depression** feels like a blanket of snow suffocating you and the "freezing sleet keeps coming down and I can barely see."*

*"London" by William Blake made me realise that I am not the first to feel this way as even during the days of the industrial revolution, people were oppressed with their own "mind-forged manacles". **Mental illness is exactly this; chains in your mind restraining you from truly living** and their poems were written to free people from the freezing snow, much like James Tate's poem explains. I believe Blake must have been on **empath** because as he walks through the "chart'd streets" he sees the "marks of weakness, marks of woe". I can identify with this as I am also **an empath** and it becomes very hard to not only see, **but feel the pain of others.***

*"The Garden" by Ezra Pound touched me deeply as I identified with the upper-class woman that Pound describes as having "a sort of emotional anaemia." Although I feel very passionately, when I am **depressed** I feel like this woman. I too feel like "a skein of loose silk" **being blown by the winds of life's challenges and hardships.** The actual garden in the poem is trapped by fencing and its plants are cut into a specific shape that is not its natural wild wish. I can identify with this, because **I am often very frustrated by the lack of control I have over my own life and I see my parents fencing me up***

and cutting me into a shape they approve of. I then also identify with the “filthy unkillable infants of the very poor” as I am still strong and I am part of the next generation who “shall inherit the Earth.”

“The Second Coming” by Yeats spoke my thoughts with the line, “the worst are filled with passionate intensity while the best lack all conviction”. It **frustrates** me when I see people **who feed off hurting others**, while everyone else lacks the conviction to speak out. Perhaps, then, they all become “the worst”. I also identify with **the twisted dark imagery in this poem and I personally view the beast and chaos to the mental illness that plagues my life. I often become lost like “the falcon (who) cannot hear the falconer.”**

“The Wasteland” by T.S. Eliot is the poem that **truly clenched my soul**. Every month becomes “the cruellest month” for me and **I often struggle to wake up** and “pry open (my) casket” in the mornings. When I am **depressed, I start to become comfortable in this state** like the line, **“winter kept us warm”**. **My mind will shout and then scream at me**. “Hurry up please it’s time; HURRY UP PLEASE IT’S TIME!” I have joined “a crowd (that) flowed under London Bridge” where Eliot writes, “I did not know death had undone so many.” **In my case, the death is emotional. I know I need to find that peace that surpasses all understanding but I have not yet found, “Shantih”**.

I have identified with the above poems as they **“(kept) working, working” on my mind** until I realised the snowflakes covering me are burning. The words of these poems, by relating to them, “start(ed) a little fire” within me. Although “half eaten” by life, I am still here and “I’m trying to give up my sleep”.

This essay illustrates how Matilda is able to weave her own life experiences with the studied literature. Her writing is an example of Bakhtin’s “double-voiced discourse” as this discourse “serves two speakers at the same time and simultaneously expresses two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324). The characters, in this case, are the poets’ voices scattered throughout her essay, while her own personal concerns about mental illness echo the author’s voice. Perhaps, this essay is fine example of the benefits of AP English, as the studied literature has the potential to give a voice to the lived reality of learners.

4.3.7 Conclusion

“A language powerful enough to say how it is” (Winterson, 2012, p. 40).

I believe that through the participants’ writing one can see how the abstract nature of emotions has been given a tangible quality. The participants have developed, to quote Virginia, an “Add-English voice” and as such, they have learnt to use the words of others, be it literature or their classmates, or anyone or anything that accommodates their literary identities, to make sense of their “elusive, multifaceted self” (2007). In closing, this is not an easy task, and Jeanette Winterson (2012, p. 40) sums up this demanding role for the writer, by making reference to T.S. Eliot. She states,

I had no one to help me, but the T.S. Eliot helped me. So when people say that poetry is a luxury, or an option, or for the educated middle classes, or that it shouldn’t be read at school because it is irrelevant, or any of the strange and stupid things that are said about poetry and its place in our lives, I suspect that the people doing the saying have had things pretty easy. A tough life needs a tough language. And that is what poetry is. That is what literature offers – a language powerful enough to say how it is. It isn’t a hiding place. It’s a finding place.

In conclusion, I think the AP English experience resonates with Winterson’s affirmation that poetry has a place in our schools. The singular voice of education restricts the learner’s concept of self, while a subject such as AP English allowed the participants to express themselves through their writing in a way that other aspects of school do not permit. This analysis has shown how with tentative beginnings there is a transition to a stronger sense of self in that the participants have “an astonishing flexibility” (Goffman, 1981, as cited in Samuelson, 2009, p. 53) in their writing, because they are able to embody multiple voices. For Matilda, this flexibility in writing leads to a flexibility in dealing with mental illness. Therefore, as Zadie Smith states, “I believe that a flexibility of voice leads to a flexibility in all things” (2008, Dec 5).

4.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION AND WRITING FOR ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION

It is evident that there are a number of similar themes in the focus group discussion and the participants’ writing such as the overarching intertextual literary references that resonate with

Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428) and hybridity (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 358). There is the sense that the participants in both sets of analysis are striving to construct a literary identity by integrating the studied literature into their lived experiences. In addition, they also see the AP English experience as a place offering refuge and belonging (Moje, et al., 2010, p. 166), which I think satisfies a very important aspect of their high school experience. Thus, by analysing their discussion and their writing, I am attempting to honour their AP English experience as a whole, and I recognise that the discussion and writing do not exist in isolation, but stem from the same context of the AP English experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In Zadie Smith's lecture, "Speaking in Tongues" she refers to the reactions people receive if they alter their accent from the one with which they were born. She states,

[w]hoever trades in one voice for another takes on in Britain a queerly tragic dimension. They have betrayed that puzzling dictum "To thy own self be true", so often approvingly quoted as if it represented the wisdom of Shakespeare rather than the hot air of Polonius.

(2008, Dec 5)

Smith illustrates how challenging it can be for one to inhabit more than one voice. In the context of this study, multiple voices refer to new perspectives. Altering one's accent has a similar effect. Accents are subject to geography and social aspects, and they are specific to particular groups of people in particular places. When one takes on a new accent, there is a commonly held opinion that one is betraying one's birthplace, one's origins. As Smith states, "[w]e feel that our voices are who we are" and "[v]oices are meant to be unchanging and singular". Her reference to Shakespeare is also of particular interest, and she sets the record straight later in her lecture, when she suggests that a Shakespearian character may have said, "To thy own self be true" but Shakespeare, himself, given the broad spectrum that he wrote about, would have said that one should be *true to one's many selves* (2008, Dec 5).

This idea of many selves or multiple voices has been a fitting theme for this study in a number of respects. Firstly, as a researcher, I have acknowledged my own multiplicity and the way in which I have chosen to adopt various voices in relation to this study. The role of the researcher is a tricky one to negotiate, but as the researcher attempts to reflect on her own perspectives, this should lead her to recognise the importance of being authentic, trustworthy and flexible. Secondly, this study has included a number of different voices from the literary and educational spheres, which has broadened the body of knowledge included in this study, and therefore, broadened one's understanding of the AP English learners' perspectives. And then, this study has also attempted to honour the perspectives of the participants, recognizing that in the AP English space, each participant is capable of embodying various perspectives or voices.

The participants' ability to embody these perspectives resonates with the original research question: *To what extent do AP English learners incorporate the literature they encounter into*

their lived experiences? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to describe what kind of space in the context of this study facilitates learner engagement with literature. This space has been described as a “community of practice” where the learners take on the identity of community membership by using literacy in particular ways (Ivanič, 2004). Being a member of the AP English class has given them the opportunity to respond to literature in different ways: and through this process they have constructed their identities. As outlined in chapter one, the following refers to some of the aspects that indicate how the subject provides a different type of engagement: class membership is voluntary; the subject can take place after normal school hours; classes are usually smaller and more intimate; and the sole focus on literature and its intertextual nature. In this way, learners are able to engage with literature on a more personal level. Furthermore, the AP English learners have taken on the literature in a social context which has provided a sense of belonging. Flores-Gonzalez (2002, as cited in Serafini, et al., 2004, p. 487) states that it is the responsibility of schools to “make each student count, and make them feel they are somebody and not invisible”. The AP English space, which has the possibility of being a relaxed, informal yet stimulating environment, can provide just that sense of being valued.

I still have not answered the research question: *To what extent do AP English learners incorporate the literature they encounter into their lived experiences?* Perhaps the next aspect that needs to be referred to is the process by which the learners incorporate the literature into their lived experiences. To answer this, it is necessary to return to the diagram I created, which is in chapter two of the literature review. The AP English experience was explored through the lens of identity, as identity permeates all aspects of AP English as a whole. Identity is characterised as being fluid, multiple and continually under construction in a social context. This concept of identity helped me to understand the way in which learners construct their identities through the activities of reading and writing. By recognising the subjective nature of the reading experience, and the way in which writing is influenced by social context, I was able to understand the AP English context to a greater extent.

Therefore, I will now endeavour to answer the question: *To what extent do AP English learners incorporate the literature they encounter into their lived experiences?* The learners in this particular study have indeed taken up the literature in their lives. The bottom block in my diagram refers to how the learners demonstrate their multiple voices, as the AP English social context offers them the opportunity to construct their identities in relation to both the literature

they study and to their classmates. In this case study, a qualitative design was aligned with the focus of this study, as data was generated through the methods of speaking (focus group discussion) and writing (reflective and assessment writing). Through my analysis of the participants' speaking and writing it is evident that the AP English experience has given them a more layered, deeper understanding of themselves. This meaningful engagement with the AP English experience has provided learners with the space and freedom to construct their identities in an authentic, self-reflexive manner. Thus this study has steered away from an assessment-based approach and rather inhabited the learner perspective.

Learner perspectives in this study were naturally varied. The focus group discussion illustrated how the AP English experience formed part of the learners' literary identities. It also illustrated the way in which they had integrated the literature into their relaxed, colloquial language. This shows how their experience of the literature in the AP English context was meaningful for them. The participants' writing illustrated how they sought to understand and conceptualise a sense of self on the page in relation to their experience of the literature in the AP English context. Through the writing process, the participants demonstrated a deeper, more layered sense of self. The AP English experience, therefore, contributed to the rich tapestry of their life-long journey with literature. By incorporating the literature into their lived experiences, the learners demonstrated the ability to inhabit multiple perspectives.

Being able to see the world from a variety of perspectives, and having the freedom to express these perspectives, lies at the heart of a genuine love of literature. These lovers have a deep-seated desire to see the world differently. A new novel, poem, play or film holds the possibility of seeing the world in a new way; to embody a different perspective; to be refreshed, disturbed or inspired. This, in turn, creates "an astonishing flexibility" (Goffman, 1981, as cited in Samuelson, 2009, p. 53) and gives people the words to express themselves in a variety of ways. Therefore, to speak in multiple voices is not "the loss of our very souls" (Smith, 2008, Dec 5), but rather a layering of the soul.

The ability to take on multiple voices has various implications. Firstly, it widens the conceptualisation of oneself. Teenagers are often in that heightened phase of trying to figure out both themselves and their world. For this reason, alternative conceptualizations of identity are especially important to these teenage respondents as they construct their identities in relation to the AP English experience in an authentic and self-reflexive manner.

The other implication of taking on multiple voices is that it gives one a very good chance of connecting with others. High school should not only promote an achievement-driven culture that focuses on the learners' outcomes in their assessments. Young people should be equipped with the skills to communicate, to empathise, and to recognise that a narrow singular perspective may cause more harm than good. Embracing these perspectives, and using literature as their platform gives young people a very good chance of being "flexible in all things" (Smith, 2008, Dec 5). This resonates with the current AP English theme in the syllabus: The danger of a single story. The AP English environment in this study reflects this theme as it can create a rich, generative space that allows learners to inhabit various perspectives by using the literature as a reference point.

In conclusion, this study has sought to understand the AP English learner perspective in a flexible manner that broadly incorporates various perspectives. This approach has illustrated the way in which the learner experience should not be limited to a single perspective. Adopting the viewpoint, across various contexts, that the embodiment of a multiplicity of voices is a positive attribute, has many exciting possibilities to offer the world of education. In this way, we need no longer live in a "waste land", but we are able to occupy a rich and generative space that gives people the freedom to construct their identities through multiple perspectives.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M. (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms Sixth Edition*. Harcourt Brace Publishers: Florida.
- Altrichter, H., & Holly, M. (2005). Research Diaries. In Somekh, B., & Lewin, C. (Eds.), *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. (Part II, Chapter 2, 24 – 31) Sage Publications: London.
- Applebee, A., Langer, J., Nystrand, M., & Gamoran, A. (2003). Discussion-Based Approaches to Developing Understanding: Classroom Instruction and Student Performance in Middle and High School English. *American Educational Research*, 40 (3), 685 – 730. doi: 10.3102/00023812040003685
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*. University of Texas Press: Austin and London.
- Bertram, C., & Christiansen, I. (2014). *Understanding research: An introduction to reading research*. Van Schaik Publishers: Pretoria.
- Busch, B. (2015). School language profiles: valorizing linguistic resources in heteroglossic situations in South Africa. *Language and Education*, 24(4), 283 – 293. doi: 10.1080/09500781003678
- Chambers, A. (1996). *Tell me Children, reading and talk*. Pembroke Publishers Limited: Canada.
- Cliff Hodges, G. (2012). Research and the teaching of English: Spaces where reading histories meet. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 18 (1), 7-25. Retrieved from <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/files/2012v111art1.pdf>
- Cremin, T & Maybin, J. (2013). Children's and Teachers' Creativity In and Through Language. In Hall, K., Cremin, T., Comber, B., & Moll, L (Eds.), *International Handbook of Research of Children's Literacy, Learning and Culture* (Chapter 20, pp 275 – 290). Wiley-Blackwell: UK.

- Curtin, A., & Hall, K. (2013). Literacy as Shared Consciousness. A Neurocultural Analysis. In Hall, K., Cremin, T., Comber, B., & Moll, L (Eds.), *International Handbook of Research of Children's Literacy, Learning and Culture* (Chapter 9, pp 108 – 120). Wiley-Blackwell: UK.
- De Vos, A., Strydom, H., Fouché., & Delpont, C. (2011). Building a scientific base for the helping professions. *Research at Grass Roots for the social sciences and human service professions, 4th Edition*. (Section E, chapter 30, pp. 507 – 513). Van Schaik Publishers: Pretoria.
- Dornbrack, J., & Dixon, K. (2014). Towards a more explicit teaching pedagogy: The complexity of teaching argumentative writing. *Reading & Writing 5(1), Art. #40, 8*. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/rw.v5i1.40>
- Egan, K. (1997). *The educated mind: How cognitive tools shape our understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fouché, C., & Delpont, C. (2011). Introduction to the research process. In de Vos, A., Strydom, H., Fouché., & Delpont, C. *Research at Grass Roots for the social sciences and human service professions 4th Edition*. (Section A, chapter 4, pp. 61 – 76) Van Schaik Publishers: Pretoria.
- Fouché, C., & Schurink, W. (2011). Qualitative research designs. In de Vos, A., Strydom, H., Fouché., & Delpont, C. *Research at Grass Roots for the social sciences and human service professions, 4th Edition*. (Section C, chapter 10, pp. 142 – 157). Van Schaik Publishers: Pretoria.
- Gee, J. (2001). Identity as an Analytic Lens for Research in Education. *American Educational Research Association, 25, 99 -125*. Retrieved from <http://jstor.org/stable/1167322>
- Greef, M. (2011). Information collection: interviewing. In de Vos, A., Strydom, H., Fouché., & Delpont, C. *Research at Grass Roots for the social sciences and human service professions Fourth Edition*. (Section D, chapter 21, pp. 341 – 374) Van Schaik Publishers: Pretoria.

- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Hamilton, L & Corbett-Whittier, Connie. (2013). *Using Case Study in Education Research*. Sage Publications: London.
- IEB. (2008). *Curriculum Statement Grades 10 -12 (General)*. Retrieved from www.ieb.co.za/School/nscCurriculum/advanced%20programme%20english.pdf
- IEB. (2013). *Advanced Programme English National User Group Conference 2013*. Retrieved from www.ieb.co.za/School/advancedprogrammecourses.php
- Ivanič, R. (2004). Discourses of Writing and Learning to Write. *Language and Education*, 18(3), 220 – 244. doi: 0950-0782/04/03 220- 26
- Janks, H. (2001). Critical Language Awareness: Curriculum 2005 meets TRC. *South African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 19(3-4), 241 – 252. doi: 10.2989/16073610109486290
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness*. 16(1), 103 – 121. Blackwell Publishers: Oxford.
- Lesnick, A. (2006). Forms of engagement: the ethical significance of literacy teaching. *Ethics and Education*, 1(1), 29 – 45. doi: 10.1080/17449640600584953
- Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach, Third Edition*. Sage Publications: California.
- McKinney, M., & Giorgis, C. (2009). Narrating and Performing Identity: Literary Specialists' Writing Identities. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 41, 104 – 149. doi: 10.1080/10862960802673604
- Mills, K., & Comber, B. (2013). Space, Place and Power: The Spatial Turn in Literacy Research. Navigating. In Hall, K., Cremin, T., Comber, B., & Moll, L (Eds.), *International Handbook of Children's Literacy, Learning and Culture*. (Chapter 30, pp. 413 – 423). Wiley-Blackwell: UK.

- Moje, E. B. (2013). Hybrid Literacies in a Post-hybrid World: Making a Case for Navigating. In Hall, K., Cremin, T., Comber, B., & Moll, L (Eds.), *International Handbook of Research of Children's Literacy, Learning and Culture* (Chapter 26, pp 359 – 372). Wiley-Blackwell: UK.
- Moje, E.B., & Luke, A. (2009). Literacy and Identity: Examining the Metaphors in History and Contemporary Research. (B. Davies & B. Street, consulting eds.). *Reading Research Quarterly* 44(4), 415 – 437. doi: 10/1598/RRQ.44.4.7
- Moje, E.B., Dillon, D., & O'Brien. (2010). Re-examining Roles of Learner, Text, and Context in Secondary Literature. *The Journal of Educational Research* 93(3), 165 – 180. doi: 10.1080 / 00220670009598705
- Morris, Claire. (2007). "I'll keep going until it sounds right": An assessment of students' conceptualisations of composing processes. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* 6(1), 69 – 96. Retrieved from <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/2007v6n1art4.pdf>
- Mount, N. (2009, January 15). *The Waste Land*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JO8rElddgrl>
- Nyikos, M., & Hashimot, R. (1997). Constructivist Theory Applied to Collaborative Learning in Teacher Education: In Search of ZPD. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81(4), 506 – 517. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.stable/328893>
- Pajares, F., Johnson, M., & Usher, E. (2007). Sources of Writing Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Elementary, Middle, and High School. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 42(1), 104 – 120. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40171749>
- Patton, M., Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods Fourth Edition*. Sage publications: United States of America
- Pelias, R. (2011). Writing into Position Strategies for Composition and Evaluation. In Denzin, N & Lincoln, Y (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Chapter 40, pp 659 – 668). Sage Publications: United States of America.

- poets.org. As I Walked Out One Evening.* (Date unknown). Retrieved 15 December 2016. From <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/i-walked-out-one-evening>
- Rosenblatt, M. (1978). *The Reader, The Text, The Poem.* Southern Illinois University Press: United States of America.
- Rosenblatt, M. (1983). *Literature as Exploration.* The Modern Language Association of America: New York.
- Ryan, M. (2007). *Literary Theory: A Practical Introduction.* Second Edition. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford.
- Samuelson, B. (2009). Ventriloquation in Discussions of Student Writing: Examples from a High School English Class. *Research in the Teaching of English, 44(1), 52 – 88.* Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27784349>
- Scheckle, E. (2014). *Reading Identities: A Case Study of Grade 8 Learners' Interactions in a Reading Club.* Unpublished PhD, Rhodes University: Eastern Cape.
- Serafini, F., Bean, T., & Readence, J. (2004). Reconceptualising Adolescent Identity. *Reading Research Quarterly, 39 (4), 482 – 489.* doi: 10/1598/RRQ.39.4.8
- Smith, Z. (2007, January 13). *Fail Better.* Retrieved from <http://faculty.sunydutchess.edu/oneill/failbetter.html>
- Smith, Z. (2008, December 5). *Speaking in Tongues.* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <https://soundcloud.com/nybooks/zadie-smith-speaking-in-tongues>
- Smith, Z. (2009). *Changing My Mind Occasional Essays.* The Penguin Press: New York.
- Strydom, H. (2011). Ethical aspects of research in the social sciences and human service professions. In de Vos, A., Strydom, H., Fouché., & Delport, C. *Research at Grass Roots for the social sciences and human service professions Fourth Edition.* (Section B, chapter 8, pp. 113 – 129). Van Schaik Publishers: Pretoria.
- Sumara, D. (1998). Fictionalizing Acts: Reading and the Making of Identity. *Theory into Practice, 37 (3), 203 – 210.* Retrieved from JSTOR database.

- van Enk, A., Daegenais, D., & Toohey, K. (2005). A Socio-cultural Perspective on School-based Literacy Research: Some Emerging Considerations. *Language and Education, 19* (6), 496 – 512. doi: 0950 – 0782/05/06 496 – 17
- Wilmot, D. (2016, February). *The state of and key challenges facing all-girls' independent schools in a transforming South African society*. Paper presented at the First Global Forum on Girls' Education, New York.
- Winterson, J. (1993). *Written on the Body*. Vintage: Great Britain.
- Winterson, J. (1995). *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*. Vintage International: United States.
- Winterson, J. (2012). *Why be happy when you could be normal?* Vintage: Great Britain
- Yazan, B. (2015). Three Approaches to Case Study Methods in Education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The Qualitative Report, 20* (2), 134 – 152. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu./tqr/vol20/iss2/12>

ANNEXURE A: UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM



• PO Box 77000 • Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
• Port Elizabeth • 6031 • South Africa • www.nmmu.ac.za

Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee (Human)
Tel: +27 (0)41 504-2235

Ref: [H15-EDU-ERE-014 /Approval]

Contact person: Mrs U Spies

8 September 2015

Prof N de Lange
Faculty: Education
South Campus

Dear Prof De Lange

DIALOGIC ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN LOCAL AND UNIVERSITY COMMUNITIES: ENABLING AGENCY TOWARDS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION

PRP: Prof N de Lange
PI: Prof N de Lange

Your above-entitled application served at Research Ethics Committee (Human) for approval.

The ethics clearance reference number is **H15-EDU-ERE-014** and is valid for three years. Please inform the REC-H, via your faculty representative, if any changes (particularly in the methodology) occur during this time. An annual affirmation to the effect that the protocols in use are still those for which approval was granted, will be required from you. You will be reminded timeously of this responsibility, and will receive the necessary documentation well in advance of any deadline.

We wish you well with the project. Please inform your co-investigators of the outcome, and convey our best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Prof C Cilliers
Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee (Human)

cc: Department of Research Capacity Development
Faculty Officer: Education

ANNEXURE B: EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT CONSENT FORM

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE**



PORT ELIZABETH DISTRICT OFFICE

Private Bag X3915, Sutton Rd, Sidwell, Port Elizabeth
(041) 403 4445 / 0818941298 / 0866552800
E-Mail pedro.vanvuuren@edu.ecprov.gov.za
Acting CES – IDS&G

TO: PROF. ANDRE DU PLESSIS
CC: THE ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR – MR. N. LUKWE
RE: PERMISSION GRANTED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SELECTED SCHOOLS
DATE: 16 JUNE 2015

Dear Prof Du Plessis

Warm Greetings

Permission is hereby granted to conduct research at the selected schools. The schools are as follows:



The research however must be based on the following premises:

1. This letter is given to the selected schools
2. The principal will be consulted in all of this
3. All current policies/prescripts of the DoE will be honoured iro of leave; school hours etc.
4. There will be a minimal disturbance iro teaching and learning
5. This will in no way distract from the current programme of the school and its concomitant programme with the DoE.

Thank You

Pedro J van Vuuren
Acting CES – IDS&G
E-Mail: pedro.vanvuuren@edu.ecprov.gov.za
Cell: 0818941298
Office: 041-403445
Fax: 0866552800

ANNEXURE C: PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM: MASTER'S RESEARCH AT [REDACTED] HIGH SCHOOL

Ethics clearance number: H15-EDU-ERE-014

I, [REDACTED] Principal of [REDACTED] High School

give permission for Jessamy Kromhout to conduct her Master's research project focused on learner involvement in the AP English class during 2015.

I have read the information letter, and acknowledge that:

- The aims and methods have been explained to me.
- This is research towards Jessamy Kromhout's Master's degree and there is no guarantee of learners' AP English marks improving.
- Learners, with their parents' consent, are free to be tape-recorded in class time and discussion groups. Their assessments and personal written responses can be recorded too.
- I understand that the findings will be used for research purposes and may be reported in journals but no actual names of the school, teachers or learners will be used.

The parents, learners and I are free to withdraw our consent at any time, in which event our participation in the research project will immediately cease and any information from us will not be used.

Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: 12 October 2015

ANNEXURE D: LEARNER AND PARENT PERMISSION FORM

Ethics clearance reference number: H15-EDU-ERE-014

October 2015

Dear Learners and Parents / Guardians

RESEARCH IN ADVANCED PROGRAMME ENGLISH WITH GRADE TEN, ELEVEN AND TWELVE LEARNERS

My name is Jessamy Kromhout. I am an English teacher at [REDACTED] and I teach the Advanced Programme English class. I am registered for a Master's degree in education. The degree will focus on researching learner involvement in the Advanced Programme English class at [REDACTED]. This research will be supervised by Dr Eileen Scheckle at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

This letter aims to explain the way in which research will be conducted. Through this research I hope to better understand why learners chose to enroll in the AP English course and what experiences of literacy have informed this choice.

For the purposes of this research I would like to explore learners' experiences of the subject, Advanced Programme English such as:

- learners' literacy backgrounds and motivations for joining AP English
- learners' experiences of the impact and significance of AP English in their lives

I will invite learners to reflect on their learning and would like to use the following:

- tape-recordings of classroom discussion
- learners' assessments and examinations i.e. essays written for termly marks
- learners' discussion groups (outside of stipulated class time)
- learners' personal written responses on AP English

This research will take place in normal AP English class hours, as well as other prearranged sessions that are suitable for the learners. Participation in the AP English class will continue whether you and your daughter agree to participate or not.

The study will take place from October 2015 to November 2016.

I need permission from learners and their parents for me to undertake this research. The names of the learners, the teacher and the school will not be used in my work.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. My contact number is 071 347 5016 and my email address is jessamyk@cghs.co.za.

I would appreciate it if you could complete the attached form and return it to me as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Jessamy Kromhout
English Educator

CONSENT FORM: RESEARCH AT [REDACTED] HIGH SCHOOL

I have read the information letter to the learners and their parents or guardians, and I understand that the researcher is focused on learner involvement in the AP English class.

I agree that:

- I understand the aims of this research and there will be no danger involved.
- **As a learner**, my comments both spoken and written can be used by Jessamy Kromhout.
- **As a parent** or guardian, I allow my daughter to participate in this research.
- I understand that the findings will be used for research purposes for a study and may be reported in journals but no actual names of the school, teachers or learners will be used.
- I am free to withdraw my consent at any time.

I parent / guardian of _____ (learner's name) of [REDACTED] High School give permission for my daughter/grandchild/stepchild/family member to be tape-recorded by Jessamy Kromhout at school from October 2015 to November 2016. I also give permission for Jessamy Kromhout to record written responses.

Signature Parent: _____

Signature Learner: _____

Date: _____