

SECTION A — THE BASICS — deals with the essentials of reading: understanding the reading process; reading interactively; developing concepts; improving reading speed and judging an appropriate speed for one's purpose; developing strategies for handling difficult vocabulary and terminology, and taking responsibility for monitoring one's own progress. These basics continue to be practised throughout the course.

SECTION B — READING FOR A PURPOSE. In this section all the reading is for a specified purpose, for example, to prepare for a tutorial or test. In achieving this purpose, students practise the following skills: locating sources (including skimming and scanning); identifying the main points and following the development of a writer's argument; note-taking and summary writing; synthesizing information; evaluating what one reads; reading critically; and interpreting graphic information.

SECTION C — FURTHER PRACTICE — is intended for self-study and provides further practice in the skills and strategies covered in the first two sections.

The second book — *Write to learn* — provides the course materials for SPN155 — writing for academic purposes. It builds on the reading course, enabling students to become 'informed writers'. It presents writing as a process, and also has three sections.

SECTION A — PRELIMINARIES — considers what happens to people's ideas as they write, and looks at writing as a process of intellectual development. Consideration is also given to the audience for whom a student writes: students learn about lecturers' expectations of their writing, and analyse problems which lecturers encounter in students' writing.

SECTION B — THE WRITING PROCESS — takes the students through what is an interrelated and cyclical process. It covers: establishing one's purpose by means of analysing essay questions; gathering and organising ideas and information; drafting and revising; writing up one's argument; expressing ideas accurately; referring to sources; editing one's draft; using an academic style; and presenting a final, polished version of the essay.

The third book — *Write to Improve* — provides the language improvement element of the courses. It is used from the beginning of the year, throughout both courses, and is designed to help students get maximum benefit from the feedback they receive from lecturers. It contains a marking key which is used by lecturers. Students are able to refer to a guide to the marking key which provides a detailed explanation of errors, and exercises to practise the correct form. An answer key is provided so that students can correct the exercises. In addition the book provides a marking scale for the assessment of essays; questions for self-assessment of summaries and essays; exercises in evaluating essays; and exercises to assist students to use the guide to the marking key.

Evaluation of the courses

Evaluation is an integral part of our courses: weekly staff meetings are held in which the progress of the courses is discussed and criticized; each class (of which there are roughly 25) elects a representative. A monthly meeting is held in which class representatives discuss the course with SPEN lecturers.

In addition, we are currently engaged in an extensive evaluation of our courses by an external evaluator. We have had the good fortune to obtain the services of Mr David Agar of Wits University Academic Support Programme as our evaluator. The evaluation will be completed in 1990, and at that time we shall be able to report more fully on the EAP courses at Unibo with the confidence that what we have to say is based on sound research.

References

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CONTEXTUALISING LANGUAGE AND STUDY SKILLS

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I often receive visits or inquiries from staff at other tertiary institutions who have been given the brief of setting up an Academic Support Programme or equivalent structure. This is usually the result of the realisation by the institution concerned (or some of its members) that students are not succeeding. Students are identified as having learning problems which are typically perceived as being related to language and study skills, and the most common response is to offer courses in these two areas. Often an applied linguist/ESL specialist or, in some instances, a member of the English department, is entrusted with this task. The first response is often, then, to offer a course in study skills and/or English language to students identified through some or other mechanism as being in need of assistance with academic skills.

Recently, we had a visit from a lecturer at another university who had been entrusted with setting up and running study skills courses for large numbers of first-year students on this particular campus. Many of the students involved were second language (L2) speakers of English and came from disadvantaged educational backgrounds. This lecturer, who had one assistant, had to begin these courses the following week, teaching study skills to groups of up to sixty students at a time, from a variety of different subject areas. What I hope to demonstrate in the remainder of this paper is that this approach to academic support is not the most productive. In order to do so, I will trace the history of the ASP at Wits and periodise the different phases of its development. The description of the three phases as outlined below should not be interpreted as having occurred in linear sequence but rather as conceptual periods informed by varying understandings of student learning problems, appropriate andragogical and methodological responses, and the broader university context.

In fact, the situation sketched above by way of introduction, resembles closely the inception of ASP at Wits. These re-

marks should not therefore be interpreted as critical comments but as a description of an educational response to a perceived problem in tertiary education. In what has been called Phase 1 (Hunter: 1989), the ASP at Wits looked somewhat different to what it does today. The ASP was a small inter-faculty unit set up in essence to assist the 'new' students entering the university. The students in question came largely from one particular section of the South African educational system — the Department of Education and Training (DET).

These students have been described by a number of terms — 'deprived', 'disadvantaged', more recently as 'underprepared'. The causes of the disadvantage are manifold and have been frequently described. It will suffice to reiterate some of them: students have been subjected to a severely under-resourced system, taught by underqualified teachers in schools where facilities are extremely poor and the nature of their school education has not prepared them for university study. Furthermore, although English is the medium of instruction in these schools from at least the higher primary stage, teachers themselves are often not proficient enough in the language to teach adequately in it, while pupils frequently do not achieve a level of proficiency sufficient to enable them to cope with the demands of academic study. Students from the 'Coloured' and 'Indian' Affairs schools are often not adequately prepared for university study, but the degree of underpreparedness tends to be significantly less. It must be mentioned that, from the outset, significant numbers of white first language (L1) speakers of English have attended ASP, particularly subject-specific support. It would appear that white schooling in many instances is also not preparing pupils appropriately for university study. This was the situation in 1980 and is still essentially the situation that prevails today. Although the target population remains unchanged, I will show how the responses to the problem and the definition of the problem have shifted.

Phase 1

In Phase 1 of ASP, the courses offered were skills based. The identification of the skills that needed to be taught to students was based on the assumption that because of their prior educational experiences, students lacked certain skills that are essential for academic success. Courses were therefore offered in study skills and English language, in logical reasoning, critical thinking and in conceptual skills. These courses were not directly related to the subject areas students were studying but can be defined as discrete and decontextualised. Tutors based in the central ASP taught these courses to students from different faculties and departments. Courses were, in the main, voluntary, supplementary, concurrent and non-credit-bearing. In other words, students were not obliged to attend ASP or if there was some form of faculty compulsion this was rarely enforced. ASP was taken in addition to the existing curriculum for which the student was currently enrolled and as the primary aim was to supplement the skills students lacked, thereby enabling them to pass their credit courses, was not given credit. Some subject support was offered in the early years, i.e. support related to specific subject areas and this mostly took the same form, i.e. voluntary, supplementary and concurrent. The problems that this model poses will be discussed below. From the outset, subject support was conceived of as being something other

than 'extra lessons'. The emphasis in subject support tutorials which were run by senior students or in some instances by lecturers in the department concerned, was on the skills required rather than on the contents of the subject. Being concurrent, all forms of support were closely tied to the existing curriculum. In other words, they did not so much attempt to 'bridge' the gap between school and university by providing a foundation of what was perceived to be 'missing' but rather 'supported' students with skills needed in existing courses. This was no doubt one of the reasons for the change in the programme's name from 'Bridging' to 'Academic Support'.

The sorts of problems that arose with this model of ASP can be summarised as follows. (This is not meant to imply that this type of ASP is totally unsuccessful. On the contrary, many students were helped by it, and it was also an essential learning phase for those starting out in ASP which was a completely novel concept in tertiary education in South Africa at that stage.) The main drawback of this approach was that students were not necessarily transferring the skills acquired in the study and other skills courses to their credit courses, largely because of the decontextualised and extremely general nature of the skills taught. As has been pointed out, while it is possible, for example, to train students to take notes in a variety of different ways, one may merely be training unsuccessful students to perform the same activities as successful ones without their necessarily knowing what the constituents of success are. Recent research has however shown that the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful student is often not so much the technique used but the former's awareness of why...he/she used the particular technique (Cloete & Shochet: 1986). At Wits, the conceptual skills course for Arts Faculty students using the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment programme was found not to work well with this category of student. Problems experienced were the inappropriate levels of the tasks; their distance from academic work; the lack of observable transfer of skills to academic work; the need for experienced tutors to help students 'bridge the gap' from the decontextualised exercises to 'real' academic tasks (Slonimsky & Turton: 1985).

A report on the English language bridging programme (Blight: 1981) highlights some of the problems experienced with the language courses:

There is often tension between wanting subject-related language teaching materials and having a diversity of subjects represented in a group. Then there are many subject areas about which we have little knowledge. On the other hand we sometimes notice a lack of interest if we use material of a general nature or of relevance to only a proportion of our students.

English language courses soon attempted to follow the English for Specific Purposes approach to course design and to relate language to the purposes it would be used for in specific subject areas, but this was not an easy task. Although it made pedagogical sense (and might also overcome student resistance to a 'language course') to teach, for example, writing a definition, expressing cause and effect relationships, paragraph structure and essay writing, within the context of a particular subject, it proved impractical and ineffective. Overloaded language tutors often had to prepare material relevant to four or five different subject areas and consult with subject specialists to ensure that the language materials accurately

reflected the concerns of the discipline. Small numbers of students and erratic attendance compounded the tutors' problem: student resistance was not so easily overcome and language tutors had difficulty with the conceptual demands of the subjects. Interesting (and I believe more productive) variations on this approach have appeared in Phase 2 of ASP (see below). Another problem was a degree of 'consumer resistance' to courses perceived as being exclusively for one section of the student population and which might therefore stigmatise them in some way. Moreover, the relevance of skills courses was not immediately evident to students and this resulted in motivational problems. Other problems faced by the ASP included erratic attendance due to the voluntary nature of the support tutorials, and student overload due to their concurrent, supplementary nature. Weaker students were paradoxically carrying a heavier load than their colleagues as they could be attending up to four or five additional tutorials each week.

In summing up the main characteristics of Phase 1 of ASP at Wits in terms of both its underlying theoretical bases and their pedagogical implementation, it is possible to isolate the following traits: the model can be called a 'deprivationist' one — students are seen to lack skills, not because of inherent deficiencies, but rather because of the poor schooling system to which they have been exposed and the extent of socio-economic disadvantage. There is a core of staff based in the central unit who offer decontextualised skills support; a few departments have subject specialists who run ASP tutorials; support is primarily concurrent, voluntary, supplementary and non-credit. These courses tend to lack face-validity and students are often unable to transfer skills to subject areas. Finally, the setting up of a separate unit to 'compensate for' the students' lacks, runs the risk of peripheralising the institution's response to these students. While the ASP from its inception saw helping to 'change the university' (Glennie: 1980) as one of its goals, its structural position did not facilitate this. Lecturers in departments are not subject to much pressure to reassess either their teaching or the contents of their curricula and can continue to focus on research which remains the most highly rewarded academic activity.

Phase 2

As stated, this periodisation of the development of ASP into different phases is not strictly chronological and linear but primarily conceptual. Phase 1 ASP continued well into the mid-80's and continues today. Phase 2 can be described as a gradual shift away from Phase 1 type tutorial support towards a model in which skills-based support becomes more integrated with the subject support the student is receiving and with the student's curriculum as a whole. These developments are paralleled by a shift in focus from an understanding of the student as locus of the problem to a clearer realisation of the nature of the problems posed by existing university structures, curricula and teaching. ASP then attempts to look at the student within the broader context in which learning is (or is not) taking place and becomes involved in what may be called 'staff sensitisation'. As will become apparent, the shift towards Phase 2 does not mean less work for the ASP but rather a different sort of involvement, for departments 'on their own' are not able to respond adequately to student learning needs. I must stress that Phase 2 is not a homogeneous approach to a clearly identified problem but should

rather be seen as a number of differing responses to a problem which is in the process of being understood and where constant interaction between the ASP, students and lecturers in departments is part of the clarification process.

One important influence on the support programme and on the university itself has without doubt been the rapid increase in students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and a growing awareness of the extent, severity and complexity of the problem. With a relatively small group of students requiring assistance, it was feasible to hand the 'problem' over to the ASP and expect it to be 'solved'. As student numbers increased, and for the first time in some departments L2 speakers from DET schools outnumbered L1 speakers, there was a realisation that sending students to study skills courses and even providing an extra weekly subject-specific tutorial were not adequate responses. The department would have to examine its teaching programme, its contents and the skills required of students. What has been called the 'clinic' model of ASP would no longer suffice (Shochet & Cloete: 1986).

In essence, the shift from Phase 1 to Phase 2 involves the movement away from discrete skills courses to a more integrated approach in which skills, processes and contents are seen as inextricably linked. Although the ASP still offers general study skills courses, they are fewer in number and this is the case with English language tutorials too, mainly due to the ESL credit course for Arts students (see below). Courses in critical thinking and conceptual skills have fallen away. Quantitative skills are taught but in relation to a specific first-year course of the same name. The bulk of support remains supplementary, concurrent and voluntary but the emphasis has shifted to subject support, with the consequent integration of skills with subject contents. A greater number of subject support tutors have been appointed and are housed in their respective departments or faculties. In a few instances, departmental lecturers have taken on responsibility for ASP in their department. Increasingly, a small group of study skills and language tutors from the 'core' ASP is involved in tutor-training functions — either training ASP subject support tutors in skills which tutors then integrate into the demands of the subject or responding to requests from mainstream departments for assistance and guidance in dealing with the needs of educationally disadvantaged students. ASP has undergone a degree of decentralisation into the faculties and departments with a resultant shift in the role of the 'central core' which is tending to play more of a 'consultancy' role. It must be stressed that the Phase 1 to Phase 2 shift can only be seen in terms of trends and tendencies. It would be extremely premature to talk of a university in which Phase 2 support is the dominant approach. Many departments are operating with Phase 1 type support, some offer no support at all, while others have regressed from a situation in which support was being offered to a no support situation. While it is impossible to enumerate all the factors which play a role in departments and faculties deciding for particular support options, I shall in the remainder of this paper, refer to those factors which seem particularly salient.

One response to the problems posed by Phase 1 support has been the introduction of credit-bearing courses in some areas. Three of the historically white English medium universities now offer what may be called 'English for Academic Purposes' credit courses. These tend to involve the institution

more widely, and are no longer the sole responsibility of the ASP. However, as they are a response to some of the problems of Phase 1 support, they deserve mention and are also of interest in that they indicate the limitations of the university's response to institutional change issues.

The credit course option

Conceptually, an aspect of Phase 2 involves the implementation of credit courses as a response to the problems encountered in Phase 1. To a couple of departments, the problems inherent in Phase 1 support were obvious from the outset. From the early '80s, the Chemistry and Physics departments decided, given the special difficulties experienced with the traditional first-year course by students who did not have adequate scientific conceptual frameworks, in conjunction with the non-likelihood of the transference of skills from general study skills courses to subject specific ones, not to opt for the supplementary model of ASP but instead choose what has been called the slow-stream credit approach (Bradley & Stanton: 1986). Designed specifically with educationally disadvantaged students in mind, these courses were innovative in that issues of curriculum development were tackled head-on. Students spend two years doing a first-year Chemistry and/or Physics course which is not just a traditional first-year course spread over two years. Skills are taught within the context of the specific needs of the discipline.

In 1986, the English Second Language (ESL) credit course was started in the Arts Faculty at Wits and housed within the Department of Linguistics. Although this innovation arose directly out of the experience of ASP and was felt to be a solution to many of the problems of Phase 1 language and study skills ASP, it now functions independently of the ASP. It was hoped that the problems posed by the lack of accreditation would be resolved, attendance would be regularised, student perception of the course's status would improve and these factors would all facilitate acquisition of the vital skills. This was an affirmative response by the Faculty to the needs of educationally disadvantaged students, which implied that the Faculty did not necessarily expect students to have the requisite level of academic language proficiency on entry. The rationale for such a course was that students would acquire the relevant language and study skills and then be able to transfer them to the various subject areas. It is not yet clear whether the approach chosen has gone some way to resolving the transferability and generalisability of skills issues raised in this paper. Clarence (1987) reports that in the first year of the Language, Learning and Logic course at the University of Natal (PMB), students were successfully taught how to complete truth tables. The end of the year exams, however, showed no improvement in students' ability to structure logical arguments in essays.

The awarding of credit is one strategy that is often proposed as a response to the sorts of problems that Phase 1 support raises. While it is possible to set up a language and study skills based credit course without too much difficulty, largely I believe because of the widespread perception that students' problems are 'language problems', the type of curriculum development required in starting courses such as those in Chemistry and Physics at Wits has not been imitated. A further question to ponder is that raised by Clarence (1987):

Although EAP is part of the formal curriculum, it nevertheless remains on the periphery of the university structures.

In the absence of other channels it is all too easy for the university as a whole and for individual academics to sidestep current challenges, to direct the 'problem students' to an EAP course and then, from a comfortable distance, criticise it for not fulfilling roles which, in part at least, belong elsewhere.

Language and study skills

The ASP's particular contribution arises from its history of involvement with student learning and the knowledge and experiences acquired in this process. It is this history and knowledge that the ASP is able to impart to staff in academic departments and transmit to ASP tutors, more especially those based in departments. The central ASP thus becomes a resource of accumulated skills to be drawn on.

Before describing some areas of ASP involvement, I would like to look briefly at some of the literature on bilingual education originating primarily in North America, in terms of how it can help us understand the issues we are dealing with and develop a response to them. In considering the relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement, Cummins (1984) suggests that we consider two intersecting continua. A horizontal continuum relates to the range of contextual support available for expressing or receiving meaning. The extremes of this are described in terms of 'context-embedded' versus 'context-reduced' communication. In the former, the participants can actively negotiate meaning and this usually occurs in a face-to-face situation where the language is supported by a wide range of meaningful paralinguistic and situational cues. This type of communication is more typical of the everyday world outside the classroom, while many of the typical linguistic demands of the classroom reflect communicative activities which are closer to the context-reduced end of the continuum. Reading or writing an academic text would be communicative behaviours situated on the far-right of the continuum. Context-reduced communication relies on linguistic cues to meaning and the successful interpretation of the message will depend heavily on knowledge of the language itself. The vertical continuum addresses the developmental aspects of communicative proficiency in terms of the degree of active cognitive involvement in the task, in other words, the amount of information that must be processed simultaneously by the individual in order to carry out the activity. The upper parts of this continuum consist of communicative tasks and activities in which the linguistic tools have become largely automatised and thus require little active cognitive involvement. At the other end are tasks in which the communicative tools are not automatised and thus require active cognitive involvement. Persuading someone that your point of view is correct and writing an essay are examples of quadrant B and D skills respectively.

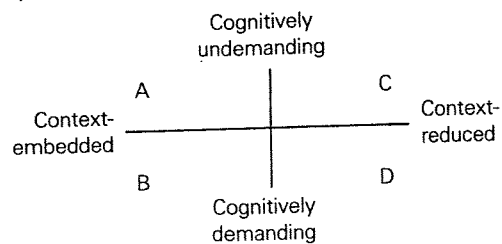


Figure 1. Range of contextual support and degree of cognitive involvement in communicative activities

Skills that fall into quadrant A are classified as basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and are context-embedded and cognitively undemanding. Quadrant D skills on the other hand are cognitively demanding and context-reduced and proficiency in this area has been labelled CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency). This type of proficiency is characterised by the typical academic reading and writing tasks where the student has to rely solely on the written word for meaning. This conceptualisation of language proficiency helps us to understand why, for example, although many of our students appear proficient in oral, face-to-face interactions, they struggle with written assignments and academic reading. In other words, our students may be proficient in BICS but not necessarily so in CALP. We should be aware of this distinction and not confound different types of proficiency. In pedagogical terms, the message is that we may need to teach CALP type skills more explicitly to DET students as most available information indicates that these skills are not being taught in DET schools either in the L1 or the L2. The question then for ASPs is how to teach the skills — separate skills courses or an integrated approach? In terms of the framework outlined above, it should be clear that teaching language skills in the context within which they will be used will assist both with reducing the disembedded nature of the language and with reducing the cognitive demands of the task. This approach is felt to be potentially more powerful than the discrete skills approach in which students still need to make the transfer to the specific subject areas.

Some examples

An integrated approach: ASP and Engineering

A key aspect of Phase 2 support is increased Faculty and/or departmental involvement. The Wits Integrated Study Programme for Engineering (WISPE) is a joint venture of the ASP and the Faculty of Engineering. The ASP pays for a full-time coordinator and one part-time post, while the Faculty pays for a number of part-time tutors. As of this year (1989), the programme is housed in the new Engineering building. What is unique to this programme in terms of the history of ASP at Wits is its holistic approach to curriculum development. In order to tackle the problem of massive first-year failure rates, particularly among DET students, it was felt that the concurrent, voluntary, supplementary model outlined above was not adequate. A further problem that needed to be addressed, was the discrepancy between the first and second year Engineering curricula. While students might pass first year with intensive subject support in Physics, Maths and a couple of other courses, nothing prepared them for the Engineering content and pace of the second year. From discussions with the Faculty, it also transpired that L2 students had language problems which needed to be addressed if they were to become competent engineers. Given the above factors, it was decided to restructure over three years the first two years of what is a four-year curriculum (Kotecha & Rutherford: 1987). Students are invited to join the programme on the basis of their April test results. About twenty places are offered each year, chiefly to students from DET schools. They then retain two credit courses — Physics 1 and Maths 1 — and are offered a language and communication course as well as several other courses which are specially designed to prepare them for the courses they will do the following year. All of these courses are non-credit-bearing but compulsory. In

the second year of the programme, students complete the remaining first-year courses, do preparatory courses for the second-year mainstream courses and continue with language and communication. In the third year of WISPE, students do second-year Engineering courses specific to their chosen branch and receive additional assistance with them, while continuing with language and communication. Next year, in 1990, the first group of students to have gone through WISPE will rejoin the mainstream and enter third year. Initial results are encouraging, student participation is good, and the retention rates are reasonable.

I would like to make a few general remarks about the programme and its approach. The subject-specific tutors on the programme are all drawn from the Faculty of Engineering and are either staff or senior students. In a small way, ideas about ASP and methods of assisting students are thus being infused into the Faculty. The language and communication course is highly contextualised within the students' subject areas — it is science and engineering related in all respects. It was soon realised that any attempt to teach 'language' or 'English' to Engineering students would be resisted. The course is prepared and taught jointly by a language tutor and a scientist who is particularly interested in science education. This seems to be a most productive form of team-teaching which could be implemented elsewhere. Students do project work based on science and engineering topics and are taught study skills relevant to their courses. This approach appears to meet with a high degree of student acceptance.

Variations on team-teaching

(a) Zoology and study skills

A subject support ASP tutor (Zoology) and a study skills tutor ('core' staff) collaborate on integrating relevant study skills into the Zoology I ASP. Students attend two additional ASP tutorials per week and one practical session. This approach involves occasional team-teaching, some sessions being taken solely by the study skills tutor and some, more recently, by the Zoology tutor who, over a period of a couple of years, has acquired the ability to integrate the skills (Mashishi & Still: 1987). Cognitive skills such as previewing, prediction, inferring, with particular emphasis on reading, and metacognitive skills such as self-assessment, planning and self-management are thus being applied to Zoology content and students are shown how to use these skills in relationship to their textbooks, practical work, lecture note-taking and essay and exam writing.

(b) The history department

A variation on the above approach. There is no full-time ASP subject tutor in History — the work is shared by departmental staff and some senior students. The department is keen to take more responsibility for ASP but feels ill-equipped in terms of relevant skills. History I now has more L2 speakers of English than L1 speakers and it was this development which largely prompted the department to approach the central ASP for assistance. A study skills tutor was approached to provide a course for the History students in addition to the subject support they were receiving. It soon became apparent that the study skills could best be taught by being closely related to the students' actual needs in History. Students requested the study skills tutor to assist them with their essays and

tutorials and for help with difficult readings. Thus reading skills were taught using students' prescribed work and time was spent discussing the specific essay topics and how to approach them. Students working in small groups discussed how they would go about answering particular essay topics and then practised writing introductions setting out their main arguments. The need for contextualisation became clearer as the course progressed. Students responded well to the tutor's integration of the history content with the study skills. This meant that the tutor's task became, in a sense, more onerous as he had to become acquainted not only with the content of the syllabuses but with the particular approach demanded by the History department. This he did through talking to lecturers, attending lectures and carefully examining the History curriculum. A successful meeting was held between the History department staff and the ASP 'core' at the end of 1988 and it was decided to continue the collaborative venture. History department staff received feedback from the ASP as to the learning problems that the students from DET schools were experiencing and found it a useful encounter. Some modifications to the History course were made on the basis of this discussion. Unfortunately, the study skills tutor is only able to assist a relatively small number of students from the History department but it is hoped that this process of sharing insights with the department will continue.

Staff training workshops

These are being run for ASP subject tutors who wish to develop their knowledge of how students learn and how to teach language and study skills. With the wide range of subjects being offered by the ASP, it is impossible to make these subjects specific but it is hoped that the tutors will be able to apply the skills to their own subjects. Tutors are already reporting interesting applications in their own domains. For example, in Botany ASP, where essay writing is a central component of the course, a process approach to writing has been adopted this year and students are responding well.

The consultancy model

In this approach the seeds of what might be Phase 3 of ASP can be glimpsed. The central ASP becomes a consultant to a department as a whole. The department itself may perceive its request to ASP as arising out of a need to assist ASP students specifically or to improve the quality of learning and teaching for all students. There is a realisation on the part of the department that skills are best taught in the context of the discipline but this is combined with an awareness that lecturers do not automatically possess the necessary teaching skills.

(a) The law faculty

The Law Faculty requested a workshop on ASP for its staff who were going to be running an internal support programme, mainly for LLB students. The core staff of the ASP ran a two-hour session for the department on current learning theories and key concepts in study skills. Staff raised many of the problems they had encountered in working with students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and ASP staff were able to respond with suggestions and advice. It was stressed that departmental staff are best placed to offer support but they need to reflect on the kinds of learning demands their courses are making on the students. Due to

the lack of time it was only possible to run one such session and no follow-up has been possible. This is one of the limitations of such an approach: for it to be successful or to allow its success to be assessed, the contact between the ASP and the department needs to be both prolonged and fairly intensive. ASP staff need to audit lectures, examine samples of student writing, interview students and staff, and assess the demands the course is making on the student, both implicitly and explicitly. This level of intensity could only be attained with one or two departments per year; and is simply not possible with more, given the other demands made on the ASP.

(b) The history of art workshop

The History of Art department has very few students who fit into the 'traditional' disadvantaged categories. However, many students are admitted on lower matric ratings than the rest of the Arts Faculty students and appear to struggle with the demands made on them by the course. They therefore fall into the general 'underprepared' category. The department approached the ASP with a request for input on ways of improving teaching in the light of the sorts of problems students were perceived to be experiencing. Three mornings were set aside for the workshops which were run by language and study skills tutors from the ASP. All the lecturers from the department attended and participated actively. The first session was spent on outlining current theories of learning and the major concepts of the study skills programme. Day 2 was based on a lecture simulation given by a member of the department. A problem particular to the department is that students in lectures have not only to listen and take notes but also to look at slides which convey information on the period or artist under discussion and integrate this information into their notes as well. All participants in the workshop attempted to take notes and reflect on the processes involved. This proved to be a most useful exercise, leading to discussion of the skills and processes that students would need to possess and master in order to perform the task successfully. The final session was spent on writing processes.

The department reported increased awareness of the variables involved in the 'teaching itself, and not just the content'. Interestingly, staff wondered whether they should take on responsibility for the type of workshop run by the ASP but said they had felt the need for the sort of facilitation the ASP provided. It was a great challenge for the ASP to respond to a department's request for assistance. However, the concerns voiced above regarding the 'consultancy' to the Law Faculty, would apply here as well.

Phase 3 envisaged

What will Phase 3 of ASP look like? I have already sketched out an embryonic form it might take — the 'consultancy' offered to the History of Art department which perhaps belongs more in Phase 2 but does stretch beyond the bounds of ASP, when the latter is defined as dealing with a distinct group of students. In Phase 3, the central ASP will shrink or remain static, while subject support, provided either by the central ASP or by the departments themselves will expand. It will continue to fulfill a consultancy/advisory role and to train tutors (its own and others) in learning skills. We may see more

integrated programmes, along the lines of WISPE, either run jointly with the ASP or solely by departments. The central ASP's training and consultancy function will increase, provided enough appropriately qualified people can be found. Phase 3 will involve major structural and curricular reform, with faculties taking greater responsibility for support provision. Junior colleges are very much in vogue at present. Wits' Science Faculty is planning to start one in 1991. Students will be able to proceed to the second year of the degree via a two-year preparatory college where content and skills will be taught in an integrated way. The faculty hopes to employ experienced ASP tutors in the college. The challenge that faces the junior college is to learn from the history of ASP and take the issue of curriculum design extremely seriously. Lecturers need to scrutinise their disciplines and identify the key concepts, skills and processes used. This is perhaps an area where the ASP can help.

However, as I have attempted to show, the provision of support is very unevenly distributed among faculties. This is largely due to the unique response of each faculty and its particular history. Within faculties, some departments have responded more than others. So while in some areas we may be entering Phase 3, in others, Phase 1 has hardly begun. Whether the ASP can meet this challenge alone is doubtful. It will respond to requests and provide assistance wherever possible but it is the university as a whole which now has to respond.

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THE WITS ENGLISH LANGUAGE CREDIT COURSE

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The Department of Linguistics runs a credit course in English language studies in the Faculty of Arts. The course is offered to students who use 'English as second language', and it is so

named. It leads students through a process of advanced language development for academic purposes, based on a theoretical study of language variation in dialect and register. This paper describes the course aims and content for developing students' English proficiency and sociolinguistic awareness. It relates the course planning and design to current preoccupations of language teachers, and illustrates theoretical and practical evaluation. After looking at the syllabus, I shall make a theoretical analysis of the course content and processes and consider a justification for the explicit teaching of an immediate constituent, grammar, among other issues.

This theoretical analysis is based on a survey of research which appeared during 1987, in applied linguistics relevant to language teaching. In this survey, current 'preoccupations of language teachers' are summarised by Brumfit and Mitchell (1988: 141) in five areas: (a) the role of grammar in language learning; (b) making sense of language, the role of pragmatics; (c) second language acquisition/learning; (d) learners, learner preferences and learning styles; and (e) the communicative classroom.

Rather than emphasising a single prescriptive grammar, however, we accept that variability is a characteristic of all languages, and particularly of English, and not simply the binary distinction between 'standard' and 'non-standard' English. Quirk (1985: 16) identifies five major types of variation according to region, social group, field of discourse, medium (spoken or written), and attitude (on a scale of formality). For speakers of English as a second or foreign language, there is also 'variation according to interference' from the other language, and the resultant features may become so widespread and stable in a community that they constitute an independent variety of English, or a New English.

Discussion of dialect sometimes leads to expressions of concern that the language will fall apart, and that people from different regions will become mutually unintelligible. In the context of so much variability, however, Quirk (1985: 18) notes that 'The degree of acceptance of a single standard of English throughout the world, across a multiplicity of political and social systems, is a truly remarkable phenomenon'. He suggests that this extraordinary uniformity

... seems actually to be increasing under the impact of closer world communication and the spread of identical material and non-material culture. The uniformity is especially close in neutral or formal styles of written English on subject matter not of obviously localized interest.

In requiring Standard English, the University teachers are choosing not an elitist British (or even South African) variety. Their students will be learning those features of the language which are shared by others who use formal styles of written English. At the same time, those features of the students' own variety of English must receive respect especially when the language is used informally and for topics of localized interest.

Halliday (1964: 87), in a simpler analysis, suggests that language varies along two axes, dialect and register. For example, my dialect entails those features of my speech which show where I come from (my regional and social identity), so dialect is generally characteristic of the user. Register entails those features of any particular utterance which show what I am talking about (and to whom), so register is therefore