Discourse genres in the transition between the classroom and the workplace: A comparative study of Language Practice at a university of technology

By

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Discourse genres in the transition between the classroom and the workplace: A comparative study of Language Practice at a university of technology

Thesis submitted in completion of the requirements of the degree of Master of Language Practice, Department of Media, Language and Communication, Faculty of Arts and Design, Durban University of Technology

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Declaration

I, Nonkanyiso Siphephile Khanyile, declare that this study, titled "Discourse genres in the transition between the classroom and the workplace: A comparative study of Language Practice at a university of technology", is my own work. It was submitted at the department of Media, Language and Communication, Language Practice for the degree of Master of Language Practice at the Durban University of Technology. This research project has never been submitted by me nor anyone else for a degree or an assignment in this institution or in any other institution. Moreover, I declare that I received the obligatory permission and consent to conduct this investigation.

___30 October 2021_

Nonkanyiso Siphephile Khanyile   Date

Abstract

In the study, the transition between classroom and workplace discourse is explored using the activity theory construct. The investigation is situated in the city of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. This study provided new insights into the transition between classroom and workplace communication contexts and highlighted the importance of communication for employees in organisations.

Based on semi-structured interviews representing twelve Language Practice graduates in organisations and the GLDY 101-103 instructor, common themes among responses during data analysis were identified. The method for the data analysis was the thematic data analysis, which is flexible in nature and allows for interpretation and discussion of the data provided by sampled individuals.

The findings disclose that to a certain degree, an alignment exists between communication skills learned in a higher education institution and communication skills required in the workplace. As Language Practice graduates acclimatise to the communication context in their organisations, they employ techniques learned in General Language Dynamics 101-103 to identify, analyse and solve communication complications that arise. However, the findings also reveal that as new employees in the context of workplace communication, graduates face difficulties adjusting, which affect the way they communicate with their colleagues and superiors.

The study includes suggestions on what course instructors, students and graduates should focus upon in the classroom and workplace based on the expectations and experiences shared by participants as well as recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Discourse, communication practices, activity theory, genres, workplace communication.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to God, whom I thank for giving me the strength to push through the darkest of times during the course of completing this dissertation; my mother for being my support system, and my son for being my inspiration.

Acknowledgements

Contents

List of abbreviations and acronyms

DUT   Durban University of Technology

LP   Language Practice

GLDY   General Language Dynamics

AT   Activity Theory

CHAT   Cultural Historical Activity Theory

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1   Introduction

In this chapter, background information to the research helps to provide a context for the study. The research problem, research questions and significance of the study are also documented, followed by the overview of the research methodology and an outline of each of the chapters that follow.

1.2   Background of the study

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) campus, wherein the National Diploma in Language Practice (LP) course is taught in the Department of Media, Language and Communication, is situated in Durban. The programme comes with a variety of modules designed to help students communicate effectively in different contexts. One of the subjects is the General Language Dynamics (GLDY) course that is a core or compulsory course taught from level one (first year) up to level four, which is the Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) level. Language Practice students obtain a National Diploma qualification after they have completed their third year of study and are eligible to apply for employment based on their qualifications. What sets GLDY apart from other subjects when it comes to communication acquisition is that it unpacks the dynamics of day-to-day language and communication in different contexts.

For instance, in their first year of study, students are introduced to different aspects of communication activities, listening skills, verbal and non-verbal communication, communication channels, and the ways in which people use language in organisations and communication in general. In the second level, students are introduced to the philosophies of effective language communication, language application in different contexts, general language practices, language, media, management styles, writing in different contexts, and technical and organisational language. In level three, students are taught communication in the workplace context, advanced written and verbal communication, discourse analysis, general language practices, the use of electronic data-gathering measures, and access to libraries and information

literacies for research purposes. Such a combination of topics is meant to provide students with a strong language foundation to apply in different communication contexts without difficulty.

In South African workplace communication contexts, employers spend large sums of money on workshops and training programmes to enable their employees to become competent communicators. This is common in organisations because poor communication rates highly on the list of skills requiring improvement in the workplace (Makhathini 2016: 57). Often, a gap exists between how communication is learned and how it is or should be applied when students enter the workplace as employees. Some of those being retrained might be trained professionals who completed communication-related course while at university. Makhathini (2016: 57) adds that not much has been done to develop communication skills appropriate for the workplace. The extent to which Makhathini's views apply to South African universities' teaching of communication emphasises the ongoing need to reflect on the relevance of South African universities' curricula (Barkhuizen, 2013: 17).

According to Makhathini (2016: 57), communication is a skill that mostly features as a deficit in education surveys. It is important, therefore, to consider ways in which communication genres are taught in General Language Dynamics (GLDY) 101-103, in the Language Practice (LP) programme, and more specifically, whether the courses sufficiently introduce students to workplace communication genres, such as the composition of application letters, emails, memorandums, correspondence, meeting minutes, proposals, reports, grievances, press releases, brochures, records, portfolios, and newsletters, to name a few. These are the communication genres every language student needs to acquire before graduating.

The problem is that the communication skills learnt at the higher education level in South Africa may not sufficiently prepare students for the workplace. Given the view of communication scholars, there is the likelihood that Language Practice graduates are employed to be Language Practitioners

having not learnt what it takes to practice language. For example, Besar (2018: 54) states the following:

> Students who are taught by the process of acquisition rather than participation will not be able to access a body of knowledge that would otherwise be available to them through a learning experience enriched by real world social and material interactions.

The implication is that students lack adequate working environment exposure; yet, they are expected to share their expertise as employees in that context. Given the foregoing arguments, the aim of this study is to investigate the communication practices of eleven Language Practice graduates working in organizations in order to find out whether the communication practice principles they learned as Language Practice students at the DUT are relevant to them in their workplaces. The organisations include local courts under the eThekwini Metro District, retail shops, a primary school, a cinema, call centres, a media house and a higher education institution. Activity theory, which helps in understanding the ways in which humans act within the settings to which they are accustomed, will be used as an analytic lens for this study.

1.3   Research problem

The workplace communication context is gradually changing for numerous reasons, such as the emergence of innovative technologies, cultural diversity and other language-related occurrences. Communication studies are designed to prepare students for such shifts and equip them with skills to solve problems that may arise in the workplace communication context. To fully prepare students towards successful communication practices, communication studies scholars are expected to identify these problems, analyse them, and generate feasible solutions for students to be adequately and well equipped for complex workplace communication practices.

Ideally, communication studies would be designed to create communication experiences that match those of the workplace context and students' expectations of workplace communication activities. The complexity of the

workplace context demands employees who are flexible and can adapt to change easily. Employers need employees who have skills that set them apart from the ordinary person, and university communication programmes are expected to produce students with such skills.

The workplace and the classroom are very different environments. However, studies have revealed that workplace communication practices do not match the communication principles learned in the classroom (see Besar 2018: 54). This difference hinders students' adequate preparation for workplace communication expectations. The fact that lecturers teach standard principles to apply when communicating does not do justice to communication studies because communication practices in different organisations are not the same. Concerning workplace communication in meetings, Marra (2008: 63) states that textbooks used for studying communication lack focus on the context in which communication takes place and do not resemble multifaceted situations of the workplace. Communication skills taught at university may overly simplify the complex situations of workplace communication activities.

Furthermore, different linguistic demands in the workplace and classroom are not covered in the classroom learning situation (Bremer 2010: 123). Writing in the workplace serves a different purpose to writing in the classroom. Writing in the workplace is meant to convey the message in terms of the prevailing context at the time the message is written. Hence, there is a focus on teaching writing in a way that will facilitate students writing properly in the workplace. However, it appears that most students study to score good examination marks rather than study to understand the fundamentals of the content and the different contexts that may influence communication. In this regard, Paretti's (2008: 491) observations on situated learning hold that no matter how much lecturers try to imitate the real world, the content remains academic.

Bremer (2010: 122) adds that as much as there is enough research on language use in the workplace, the line between research and pedagogy with respect to familiarising students with the nature of workplace practices is still weak. In this study, the focus will be on understanding how Language Practice

graduates are able to apply what they have learnt in the classroom in their workplace contexts. This study is important because understanding what constitutes workplace communication in the South African context, especially as it relates to examining how employees apply their classroom knowledge in the workplace, will not only increase general communication skills but also improve employee relationships because communication is central to positive employee relationships in the workplace.

1.4   Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to understand or ascertain whether communication learnt in the classroom is applicable to workplace communication activities.

1.5   Research objectives

- To study the significance of GLDY in preparing students for communication practices in the workplace context.
- To investigate aspects of workplace communication that the teaching of GLDY has not satisfactorily addressed.

1.6   Research questions

- How significant is GLDY in preparing students for communication practices in the workplace context?
- What are the aspects of workplace communication that the teaching of GLDY has not satisfactorily addressed?

1.7   Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the boundaries and limitations a researcher sets for his/her study. Theofanis and Fountouki (2019: 157) state that researchers have control over what they choose or do not choose to include in their studies.

The organisations that participated in this study include organisations in the eThekwini Metro District wherein Language Practice graduates from the DUT are employed. Individuals who obtained their qualifications at other institutions in the organisations targeted for this study are not part of this study because their qualifications and skills do not align with the current study's objectives.

1.8　Research methodology

This study draws on an interpretivist theoretical position, which states that data is extracted from individuals who share similar worldviews with the researcher. Like most qualitative research, the present study is influenced by the interpretivism paradigm. A qualitative research methodology is employed in this study because it enables the collection of data from individuals who will share their experiences as well as their perspectives on the topic.

The population targeted for this study includes organisations in the eThekwini Metro District wherein Language Practice graduates are employed. From this population, twelve individuals, including the GLDY 101-103 lecturer at the DUT, will be included in the sample. Semi-structured interviews are the data collection procedures chosen for this study. To ensure trustworthiness and meet ethical considerations prior to and during interviewing sessions, letter of information, consent letter, and gatekeeper letters were distributed to individuals and organisations targeted for this study (see Appendices A, B, C1 and C2).

1.9　Significance of the study

Communication plays a crucial role in the economies of the world (Kong 2014: 91), and it is a tool used to build and sustain relationships among professionals within and outside their fields. Scholars have conducted numerous studies in the field of communication to emphasise its importance in the world of work. For instance, Hargie (2016: 15) states that research has shown that crises exist in the workplace because of negative leadership communication in organisations. In other words, leaders' positive communication results in harmonious relationships in organisations, which leads to increased productivity and profit gains. The opposite is also true: Poor communication leads to decreased productivity and profit gains.

Elving (2005: 130) also recognises the importance of communication to successfully introduce change in the workplace. In the South African context, Le Roux (2010: 1) discusses how organisational communication practitioners

can improve their contributions towards the advancement of the workplace. However, language and communication scholars around the globe who have conducted various research in the field of language and communication have not yet examined in depth how communication taught in the classroom prepares students or employees adequately for communication in the workplace context.

Most scholars are concerned about the ways in which communication is applied in fields other than communication. For instance, Emuze and James (2013: 44) conducted a study on communication challenges caused by language and cultural diversity in the South African construction industry and state that communication plays a key role in productivity. The current study highlights important issues, for example, it is necessary to consider diversity and in contemporary South African workplaces. This study investigates the communication practices of individuals who are referred to as Language Practitioners in language and communication fields. The study highlights issues that are fundamental to organisational communication as they apply to how communication principles are taught in classrooms and applied in the workplace.

The focus of this study is therefore on the applicability of the communication principles learnt in the classroom to the workplace context. The findings may help course-content planners because the data generated from the graduates who have completed GLDY may mirror some vital aspects of the course that need to be integrated in the course content. The integration may ensure the module is more relevant to the communication needs of the workplace. An attempt is also made to ascertain if the communication problems that arise in the workplace communication context are covered in the communication studies' syllabus, which has not been the focus of most workplace communication researchers. For instance, most studies focus on one setting over another. Finally, the findings for this study may serve to increase students' awareness about what is expected of them when they enter the workplace.

1.10   Summary of the chapters

Chapter one

In chapter one, the background of the study, research problem, objectives and questions, as well as the significance of the study, are stated.

Chapter two

In this chapter, an in-depth discussion of the relevant literature for the study is provided. The discussion draws on literature about discourse, communication practices, and workplace communication as well as classroom and workplace genres. The theoretical framework (the activity theory) for the study is discussed in this chapter.

Chapter three

The methodology for the study, which consists of the population, sampling, and data collection procedures as well as analysis techniques for the data collected is discussed in this chapter. The ethical considerations pertaining to the study are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter four

In chapter four, a detailed analysis of the data collected from subjects drawn for the study is provided and the data collected is interpreted.

Chapter five

The recommendations of the study, implications of the findings, limitations of the study and conclusions are the focus of this chapter.

1.11   Conclusion

In this chapter, elements of the current study and focus of the four chapters that follow was introduced. The chapters that follow include a literature review and document the methodology, data collection and analysis, and recommendations and conclusion. In the next chapter, an in-depth discussion of the literature reviewed for the current study is provided.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

In this chapter, activity theory, which is used as an analytic lens in this study, is discussed. This is followed by discussion of constructs such as discourse, genre and the elements relevant to this investigation.

2.2   Activity theory

Activity theory (AT), according to Mills (2017: 1), also known as cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) or sociocultural activity theory (SCAT), is a concept used to study human practices and behaviour as processes of development (Spais 2011: 9). Activity theory is a construct for understanding the ways in which humans act within the settings to which they are accustomed. According to Kain and Wardle (2005:130), researchers use AT to study any form of human activity, for example, how students learn at a university, how employees work in a particular organisation, or even something as minor as how people acquire their groceries.

Paretti (2008:492) states that AT is a framework that is used to study the ways in which students learn communication in the classroom along with the difficulties they face when transitioning from the classroom into the workplace. In this study, AT is used as a lens to investigate communication activities in the classroom when acquiring genres and the workplace when communicating using genres such as memos and reports.

AT is a helpful construct when it comes to understanding different aspects of a situation and how people use their tools, language and genres (Kain and Wardle 2005: 130). Hashim and Jones (2002: 5) break down the aspects of AT based on Vygotsky and his students, Leont'ev and Engerstroms' notions. Vygotsky and Leont'ev's notion of AT's aspects include the subject (the person), the object (the intended activity) and the tool (the device that is used to carry out an activity). Engerstrom's aspects of AT serve as a modification of Vygotsky and Leont'ev's notion. These aspects include rules (sets of

conditions), division of labour (distribution of work among subjects), and the community (the society involved in an activity).

Karasavvidis (2009: 438) states that when using AT in the field of education, the *subject* refers to the teacher; the *objects* refer to the students and what is being learned; the *mediation* refers to learning tools and materials; *rules* refer to educational laws, curriculum and school rules; and the *community* refers to everyone in the learning and teaching process, including teachers, students, administration staff, and parents. These are the elements that are usually investigated when AT is employed as a theoretical framework in a study.

Jonassen and Rorher-Murphy (1999: 62) agree that when scrutinising any human activity, it is crucial to investigate who is involved in the communication process, their goals and purposes, the tools used to produce the product, the rules that govern the process, and the ultimate desired outcome. These are some of the elements of AT. According to Mills (2017: 2), scholars who use AT usually select components that are only suitable for their study. Therefore, in this study, AT will be used as a lens to study relationships between the subject, the object, and the outcome.

In the context of this study, the subjects are Language Practice graduates in the workplace. The object refers to the genre-related tasks given to students in the classroom, that is, written assignments and communication activities using different genres in the workplace such as memos and reports. The outcomes in this study refer to the goals and purposes of the individuals involved in the communication activity. In this regard, the adoption of AT will enable examination of the interactions of Language Practice graduates in the workplace as well as how communication is acquired in the context of the classroom.

Goodnough (2018: 2184) discusses contradictions as another component of activity systems that exist in between the other elements of the activity system. Contradictions cannot be scrutinised as individual components, but they arise when the other elements are being observed. This means the existence of

contradictions in the activity is dependent on the other six activity systems such as the object, subject, tools, rules, division of labour and the community; therefore, contradictions cannot be studied in isolation.

Barmeyer and Mayer (2020: 641) state that workplace activity is undergoing paradigm shifts due to transformations and cultural diversities in the workplace context. In the current study, these paradigm shifts form part of the contradictions in workplace activity is assumed. For instance, the introduction of complex technologies in the workplace could be regarded as transformation but may bring strain and anxiety in workplace communication activity. Therefore, actors in the workplace communication activity need to be well equipped to prepare themselves for such transformations. This can be achieved through teaching students different workplace communication dynamics that will help them in the workplace context.

This perspective on AT will enable examination of the steppingstones students go through in classroom activities when acquiring genres. Difficulties both new and old employees face when communicating using genres in the workplace are addressed as contradictions within the activity systems of these two contexts, a focus that may bring about change with respect to how stakeholders view communication practices in these settings. In this regard, Dayton (2008: 2) employed AT as a framework for workplace research, focusing on editing. According to Dayton (2008: 2), editing is an action in an activity, and it depends on the activity system to exist. Furthermore, tools and rules that govern the existence of editing in an activity system inspire changes that allow the edited content to achieve the desired technical and quality outcome.

Fisher (2019: 245) provides a new perspective on contradictions, which he refers to as double binds, stating that students face difficulties when using genres with which they are already familiar and outcomes seem inadequate and inappropriate. This notion on contradictions in the activity system pertains to this study as it allows investigation of the degree of adequacy and appropriateness when students acquire genres in the classroom activity. One

cannot help but wonder what happens when students as employees transition their genre skills and knowledge into an unfamiliar activity system, in this context, the workplace.

AT plays a significant role in investigating communication complexities in the real world of work. Flood (2017:131) used AT as an explorative tool when investigating challenges faced at higher education institutions, stating that AT is now widely used internationally across different fields such as human-computer interactions, the social sciences, education research, and organisational studies, to name a few. Furthermore, Spais (2011:15) used AT as an analytic tool to summarise findings for a study that investigated promotional activities in a marketing department. His conclusions were that AT can also serve as a theoretical foundation to determine elements of importance during a promotional campaign. The current study used AT as a theoretical framework to facilitate the structure of the study.

2.3   Discourse in the classroom and the workplace

The study of genres is based primarily on discourse as a point of departure. Thus, in this study, discourse as a communicative practice is investigated by studying how individuals interact using genres across two settings, namely, the classroom and the workplace. *Discourse* refers to written and spoken communication practices occurring in academic and professional settings. According to Wodak and Meyer (2016: 5), discourse is a written and spoken language or a "social practice" that shapes the society as much as the practice is shaped by society. Discourse is regarded as an infusion of other "stuff" that is language related.

The elements of discourse include actions, interactions, ways of thinking and believing, valuing, symbols, tools, and objects to create a society (Gee 2005: 21). In this study, discourse is considered as a context that incorporates other aspects of language as well. These aspects include elements that consider how students acquire genres at the university level and how they apply their genre knowledge in the workplace context as employees.

Paltridge (2012: 2) agrees that discourse is concerned with the ways in which language is used and the relationships between language and other factors and the social situations in which language is used. Similarly, Kern, Lingnau and Paul (2014: 209) state that language shapes the context, but the context also shapes language. Hence, communication in the classroom and workplace are likely to be shaped by the prevailing context. This raises concerns about whether the nature of communication students are exposed to in the classroom is appropriate in the workplace. Looking at how discourse influences genres students are taught in the classroom in terms of their applicability in the workplace is therefore necessary.

AT, which is the analytic lens in this study, emphasises the importance of identifying the relationships between the individuals involved in the communication process as well as their goals and purposes. This, according to Gee (2001), pertains to discourse in the form of studying "who's and what's", with "who's" referring to identification of the individuals involved in a discourse and "what's" referring to the social activity that speech aims to construct. Gee's (2001) notion applies to this study because it also investigates the "who's" (the students in the classroom and employees) and "what's" (classroom and workplace genres as well as the goals and purposes of the individuals using them). Thus, graduates as subjects, their object or objectives and goals, and the tools they use to fulfil their communicative purposes when the activity of communication occurs in the workplace context are investigated. These concepts assist with examining the factors contributing towards a successful communication process in the workplace.

Classroom discourse, also known as academic discourse, refers to written and spoken communications taking place in an academic context. Wang, Pan, Miller, and Cortina (2014: 115) define the term "classroom discourse" as a medium through which teaching, and learning take place. This means that classroom discourse is concerned with how language is used in the classroom during the teaching and learning course when acquiring communication skills.

Heller and Morek (2014: 174) view academic discourse as an occurrence that is based on "interactional sociolinguistics, ethnomethodological conversation analysis" and "ideologies of linguistic and social appropriateness" according to Kern et al. (2015: 207). From this point of view, academic discourse is rooted in how individuals interact using language within their societies to understand the contexts of the world in which they live. Thus, in this study, classroom discourse is investigated to ascertain whether graduates and employees apply communication principles learned when they enter the workplace communication context.

Wang et al. (2014: 115) state that classroom discourse bears fruitful results if it is positioned properly in the classroom, and according to Heller and Morek (2014: 174), academic discourse helps students to excel in academic writing across different modules. From this perspective, when genre learning is positioned appropriately, it enables students to be prepared for different communication activities outside the classroom adequately.

To ensure that classroom discourse bears fruitful results, Rumpenapp (2016: 16) discusses classroom discourse and student identity. He emphases the importance of teachers recognising students' identities, the relationships between the students and instructors, their respective roles, and the way they interpret the teaching and learning process to make fruitful pedagogical decisions. Within this context, the AT system emphasises the importance of identifying the individuals involved in a communication activity and their goals and purposes for communicating. Thus, this study goes beyond recognising the number of people involved in a discourse; it is also concerned with what those communicating do, the skills they possess, their attributes and the challenges they face.

Workplace discourse refers to oral and written communications taking place in different working environments. Workplace discourse is also known as corporate discourse, workplace talk, or workplace communication. Koester (2010: 3) defines workplace discourse as a variety of written and spoken

communications in different occupational settings such as factories, offices, hospitals, government offices and so forth.

Koester (2010: 12) states that perspectives on workplace discourse suggest that interactions differ depending on who is involved in the communication process in the workplace. Hence, any kind of work-related communication occurring within or outside the work premises, formal or informal, once-off or recurring, with people of the same department or outside the department is considered workplace discourse. This viewpoint on workplace discourse fits this investigation best because the AT system, which is the chosen theoretical framework for this study, also encourages scrutinising individuals involved in an activity. Considering this, workplace discourse is about how people, "organisational actors" according to Lam, Cheng, and Kong (2014: 68), work around communication in the workplace.

Chen, Lam and Kong (2019: 28), in a study on interpersonal skills in the workplace, discovered that not much has been done to develop the English language through the improvement of interpersonal skills such as self-assurance, knowledge to achieve great results, people's skills, etiquettes of the workplace, and professionalism, among other skills. When studying human activity, one does not only study obvious aspects such as the number of individuals involved in a discourse, but one also investigates the attributes of those involved in the activity.

Workplace discourse is a part of every working person's daily life that helps to create and sustain professional relationships using language (Cheng et al. 2019: 28). Communication is a crucial aspect in any profession in the global economy of the 21st century (Kong 2014: 91) and is becoming a priority in language acquisition (Lam et al., 2014:68). These perspectives suggest that for an establishment to maintain a smooth communication environment, impeccable communication practices that are effective for that workplace are required. Furthermore, maintaining flawless communication practices in the workplace is not as easy as it sounds. What poses challenges is that instructors cannot teach communication skills for the evolving communication

contexts in organisation; rather, they can only teach standard principles to apply when graduates enter the workplace.

Communication in the workplace is a delicate subject, and it can easily be influenced either positively or negatively. When communication in the workplace is challenged, it is usually by factors that are not language related. According to Kong (2014: 92) and Lam et al. (2014: 68), there are diversity and changes in workplace discourse that are influenced by outside factors such as advancements in technology, globalisation, intercultural influences, multilingualism, and the emergence of small and home offices. Similarly, Cheng et al. (2019: 28) suggest that it is not only the previously mentioned factors that negatively influence communication in the workplace, but also the "interpersonal aspect of workplace interaction" has a negative impact on how individuals interact in the workplace and may result in financial loss if not addressed.

The issues mentioned above are critical to effective communication in the workplace, but as asserted by Kong (2014: 91), there has not been significant interest in workplace discourse, especially targeting workplaces that use English as a medium of instruction. Similarly, Lam et al. (2014: 69) state that not much has been done to align research and pedagogy that will result in an improved alignment between workplace discourse and how students are prepared for the workplace in classrooms. This may be the case in the South African context around the eThekwini Metropolitan District. Hence, in this study, attempts are made to investigate how communication taught in the classroom is relevant to workplace situations.

2.4   Writing in the classroom

Writing is an important aspect of communication. If writing is not properly located in the teaching of communication, it reflects not only on the subject, but also on all other subjects. According to Hutchins (2015: 265), when students write poorly, it reflects on the ways in which writing instructions are presented. For instance, if the directives on genre-related tasks in the

classroom are not concise and are designed in a way that does not enable students to grasp academic writing, it reflects in their responses. Thus, Parreti (2008: 491) suggested that "the ways in which lecturers and students work together around communication tasks play a substantial part in assisting students to develop transferable communication skills". This implies that the ways in which communication is taught plays a role in determining whether the students will apply what they have learnt when they transition into the workplace as employees.

Writing is a vital part of people's everyday lives, and it is the most difficult skill to acquire at the university level and in other aspects of life (Magogwe and Nkateng, 2016: 1). Hence, Almacioglu and Okan (2018: 71) and Sladolsev (2015: 444) suggest that instructors should recognise their students' genre of writing skills in the classroom, and writing should be properly located to best benefit students' academic needs. This should include writing that enhances students' academic competence, linguistic knowledge, independent thinking, discourse competence and development of genre awareness instead of memorization (Almacioglu and Okan 2018: 72). The current study takes into consideration the issue of properly locating genre learning in GLDY to best benefit the students' current qualifications and later in their lives.

Read and Michaud (2015: 432) focus on genre learning in the classroom, and their observations are that it is not the same as genre learning in the workplace. The purposes of learning genres in these two settings are different and so are the processes. Read and Michaud believe that learning genres in the classroom confuse genre learning in the workplace because learning genre in the workplace is "strictly instrumental": it is used to accomplish certain workplace goals. On the other hand, learning genre in the classroom is academic, and it may not be possible for students to learn genres by mimicking academic genres in workplace situations. This highlights the need to investigate whether genre learning in the classroom has relevance in the workplace.

Genres as communication instruments may be written or spoken. The instruments used for communication purposes in professional and scholarly settings include emails, memos, correspondences, and so forth. In earlier studies, Trosborg (2000: 7) defined *genres* as "the media through which scholars and scientist communicate…". This definition perceives genres as a platform on which individuals with the same scholarly and professional interests share messages among themselves. Devitt (2004: 2) defined genres as "types of rhetorical actions that people perform in their everyday interactions with their worlds". This means that for someone to be pronounced an adequate communicator, he/she relies primarily on the mastery of genres in a particular activity or situation with which he/she is familiar.

In recent studies, Cao and Guo (2015: 2613) describe genres as "a staged goal-oriented social process" that is used to complete tasks. These concepts perceive genres as instruments that are created to function in a society that is constructed by people who share the same social and cultural interests. These instruments differ from one setting to the other due to preferences, resources, functionality, and the goals the society aims to achieve. For instance, one common genre can serve different purposes in different settings, and the level of its importance differs from one context to the next. Furthermore, Burstain, Elliot and Molloy (2016: 118) perceive genres as a "lens" or a "window" that is a part of a society and used to see through people's writing abilities and skills in the context to which they are accustomed. For the purposes of this study, genres are viewed at a professional and scholarly level and include memos and reports as communication tools in the classroom and workplace context to investigate students' and employees' communication skills.

AlAfnan (2015: 2) conducted research on computer-generated communication, focusing on emails, and discovered that when it comes to communication, most scholars focus on business communication, but not much attention has been given to email learning as a communicative genre at the classroom level. Currently, emails are the primary communication instruments used in the workplace. One would have expected, therefore, that

many studies would have focused on how email practices are learnt in the classroom. That is not the case, however.

Wang, W. and Shen (2015: 157) state that genre learning is about how students acquire genres and how they use them to accomplish communication purposes in different contexts. Wang, W. and Shen (2015: 157) observe that in the current studies of English for Specific Purposes, authors have shifted their focus from genre analysis and pedagogical aspects to investigating the ways in which genres are learned and how students use them in academic or professional settings.

The challenges most researchers have observed regarding familiarising students with the use of genres in the classroom and workplace emerge when it comes to communication practices learning (Kain and Wardle 2005: 113). The ways in which these scholars view AT works best for this study because the focus of this study is on communication difficulties Language Practice graduates face when entering the workplace. The research suggests that there is a gap between the ways in which communication is learned and how it is applied when graduates enter the workplace.

It is important for university students to study the genres they will use not only in their prospective places of employment but also later in life for them to be good communicators. According to Al Gurkosh (2015: 2454), genres are a "class of communicative events" whose community shares similar communication purposes. Equally, Devitt (2004: 2) states that genres have an impact on how people use language, how they interact with each other, how they perceive the world around them, how they manifest relationships, how they operate within their societies and how they transfer culture from one generation to the next.

Ideally, genres learnt in the classroom should prepare students for different situations and activities once they enter the workplace. and Al Gurkosh (2015: 2453) states that students perform better with the genres to which they are accustomed. This notion suggests being better communicators is dependent

on students familiarising themselves with these genres inside and outside the classroom.

2.5   Conclusion

In the current chapter, a review of theoretical constructs, which includes AT, discourse, and genre was provided. In the following chapter, a detailed discussion of the methodology followed for the current study is described.

3. Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, elements that constitute research methodology, such as research paradigms that incorporate positivism, post-positivism and interpretivism, the qualitative and quantitative research methods, research design, population, sampling, data collection procedures, validity and reliability, anonymity and confidentiality, as well as informed consent are discussed in detail in terms of their relevance to the current study.

Scholars may choose to use both qualitative and quantitative research approaches; however, due to the nature of this study, which seeks to explore the participants' viewpoints, a qualitative research method was employed.

3.2 Research paradigm

Research paradigms refer to a set of theories, agreements, and assumptions researchers employ to identify, understand, and solve research problems (Rahi 2017: 1). Krauss (2005: 758) postulates that when discussing research paradigms, *epistemology*, which, according to Ryan (2018: 2), is a philosophy of knowing and coming to know of a phenomenon, is closely related to ontology and methodology. Ryan defines *ontology* as a philosophy that is associated with reality. Finally, Krauss (2005) refers to *methodology* as a philosophy that is concerned with approaches used to gain knowledge. Briefly, the relationship among the three philosophies is that one selects the methodology of choice so that the reality of the phenomenon investigated may be known.

Krauss (2005: 758) states that epistemology questions if there is one reality that all people know or there are other possible realities to be studied that can be attained from particular individuals who have knowledge about a phenomenon under study, and that the distinction relies on research paradigms. These paradigms, which are most common in research, include positivism, post-positivism and interpretivism.

3.2.1 Positivism paradigm

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017: 30) define positivism as a "worldview" that is based on the scientific and empirical research method. In the positivistic paradigm, researchers have a single ontological perception about the world around them and their views are one sided (Krauss 2005: 760). The implication is that researchers who adapt the positivism paradigm usually base their ontological observations on quantifiable measurements, mathematical calculations and equations; logic that is deductive; and the invention and testing of hypotheses (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017: 30). According to Ryan (2018: 3), positivistic research follows a reverse method whereby the researcher starts with identifying a concept, makes estimations or hypotheses about the phenomenon under study and then conclusively observes, experiments or measures, depending on the nature of the study, to validate or invalidate a hypothesis.

Furthermore, positivists claim to be objective, and they separate themselves from the phenomenon they intend to study in order for the researched object not to be affected by conducting the study (Krauss 2005:760). Ryan (2018: 4) posits that positivists believe knowledge should be value-free to discourage bias. Positivistic researchers believe that there is nothing beyond what is describable and measurable, meaning the world is as we see it, and there are no justifications needed to explain what can be proven or disproven scientifically or mathematically. Hence, with or without a researcher, the worldview remains the same.

For the reasons stated above, the current study did not adopt the positivistic paradigm, since, according to Pham (2018: 3), in positivism, it is impossible to quantify intention, attitudes, thoughts or perceptions because these aspects are not measurable.

3.2.2 Post-positivism paradigm

The research that is situated between positivism and interpretivism is the paradigm of post-positivism research, which is a combination of both

paradigms. According to Krauss (2005: 760), the ontological perspective of post-positivism postulates that reality alone is imperfect. Social conditions and individuals' perspectives also play a role in attaining knowledge (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017: 32). Thus, the epistemological perspective of the post-positivist postulates that knowledge cannot be understood independently. Hence, the subject and an object should be explored to fully understand the phenomenon under scrutiny. Similarly, Ryan (2018: 7) mentions that knowledge is gained through studying individuals' inspirations and their experiences combined with reality.

The post-positivistic paradigm is motivated by the research problem more than the methodology (Rahi 2017: 3). This means the post-positivist uses all possible approaches to understand and investigate a research problem.

3.2.3 Interpretivism paradigm

The core interest of the interpretivist paradigm is to study the world through the opinions, experiences, thoughts and meanings of the people who live in the world (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017: 30). Ryan (2018: 9) posits that reality is constructed by meanings shared by a society of interest. This means that human behaviour is based on how the society interprets the world; for instance, meanings are motivated by interactions amongst people who share the same culture and interests, and the situations people are faced with shape the meaning of a phenomenon.

According to Krauss (2005: 759), meaning is expressed through culture, language, norms, understanding, social reality, stereotypes, typification, ideology and belief systems. Consequently, interpretivism does not view the world from a unitary and particular perspective, and ontologically, it adopts the perspective of relativism (Ryan 2018: 2). Relativists believe that a phenomenon has multiple perspectives. The researcher, therefore, needs to explore the perspectives of individuals within the context of the research. For this reason, the current study adopted the relativist philosophy, which believes that communication practices in workplace contexts differ from person to

person based on the actors' experiences and the contexts in which they find themselves.

This study explored beyond what could be measured to better understand different perspectives. Ryan (2018: 2) believes that reality is what people see and feel more than what can be measured. Epistemologically, people could not come to know the world they live in if they just observed, so a researcher needs to immerse him/herself in the phenomenon that is being studied and engage with the society in which the explored phenomenon occurs. For that reason, Pham (2018: 3) emphasises the importance of using interviews when collecting data to better understand participants' thoughts, views, feelings, perspectives, prejudices, and values. This is because interpretivism is not value-free, compared to positivism, meaning the researchers' values have an impact on the outcomes of the research (Pham, 2018: 3).

3.3   Quantitative research methodology

The quantitative approach is a method usually applied in research when dealing with data that is numerical, and the term is derived from the word "quantity". Fekede (2010: 98) states that this type of method falls under empirical or statistical studies.

According to Newman and Ridenour (1998: 3), researchers who adopt the quantitative approach first identify a theory and then work their way toward proving if their theory or hypothesis is true or not. Queirós, Faria and Aimeda (2017: 369) agree with this notion, stating that the main aim for using a quantitative approach is to provide precise and consistent measurements based on the researcher's chosen theory.

Quantitative research methods deal with numbers more than they do with words. Queirós et al. (2017: 369) argue that scholars within the Mathematics and Statistics disciplines usually apply the quantitative approach the most because their studies regularly sample large numbers of participants and does not require in-depth discussions with participants. Over the years, the quantitative research methodologies have proved inadequate when applied in

the social sciences field (Queirós et al. 2017: 369). Hence, scholars within the social sciences field prefer to use qualitative research methodologies. The argument is that social science research should seek to investigate meaning and how people act within their societies and understand why things happen in a certain way (Fekede 2010: 98). Queirós et al. (2017: 369) hold that quantitative studies use structured data collection procedures that follow rigid and organised protocols. This means that when collecting data using quantitative procedures, research questions do not provide subjects the opportunity to give open-ended responses.

For the reasons stated above, in this study, a qualitative research methodology was used. Data collected for this study was not numerical, and the focus was to investigate people's viewpoints and experiences, which a qualitative research methodology allows.

3.4   Qualitative research methodology

Cibangu (2012: 197) defines qualitative research methods as research whereby the basis of the study is not numerical. The term is derived from the word "quality", which in this case, means that qualitative research methodologies deal with investigating data that is based on real life events, experience, and meaning, and focuses on understanding human and social behaviours. Furthermore, Newman and Ridenour (1998: 90) describe qualitative approach as a method in social science research that arose from the fields of anthropology, whereby a study is rooted in an in-depth understanding of the people under study and their culture in its context.

Qualitative researchers, who are also known as constructivists, believe that society is constructed by its values, beliefs, and assumptions (Waller, Farquharson and Dempsey 2016: 240). In the current study, it is assumed that the workplace is constructed by its values, beliefs and assumptions, and these affect the way the actors in the workplace communicate with one another, and how they communicate with each other may provide background on how they were taught communication in the classroom. Concerning this, Flick, Von

Kardoff and Steinke (2004: 1) perceive qualitative research as a mirror whose reflection brings the unknown into the known. Similarly, Kumar (2018: 23) states that qualitative research is a method that enables the researcher to explore different aspects of human behaviour as an attempt to understand the context under observation.

Flick et al. (2004: 1) describe qualitative research as a common term to define a wide range of research methodologies that differ in their theoretical understandings, expectations, data collection procedures and research focus. This means that qualitative research allows a researcher to explore beyond standard procedures based on their research question and which method would best answer that question. Newman and Ridenour (1998:1) agree to this notion, stating qualitative research enables researchers to express their personal perspectives on the occurrences explored.

In this regard, Waller et al. (2016: 21) also believe that qualitative researchers start with introspection about the structure of the society in which they live. Qualitative researchers act as activists on behalf of the society they investigate by trying to solve the problem under scrutiny to best benefit the society. As much as that may be true, Choy (2014: 99) believes the openness characteristic of qualitative research is subjective and leaves room for subjects to take over the content of data collected. This is done to allow subjects to express their beliefs, values, and assumptions free from restrictions.

Qualitative research may be perceived as suitable for most social science research. However, Howe and Eisenhart (1990: 2) state that qualitative research did not receive the same recognition previously as it does now because decades ago, its legitimacy was questioned, especially by natural sciences researchers. Natural sciences scholars were also not impressed with how social sciences scholars were fascinated by the approach. Howe and Eisenhart argue that natural sciences scholars presumed qualitative research as a description of and for something, which, in their opinion, is biased and cannot be confirmed.

Choy (2014: 102) provides a table illustrating the main strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research. Table 1 incorporates qualitative research's strengths and weaknesses.

Table 1 Main strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. View of standard investigation	1. Results are not objective
2. Ability to resolve many problems at once due to the level of broadness it possesses	2. Requires intensive interviewing skills
3. The ability to understand people's behaviours, morals, principles, and traditions.	3. Interviewing processes and data analysis are time consuming.

Choy (2014: 102) also perceives qualitative approach's openness as a weakness because data collected is not objective, which means, it may not be traced and tracked, which also raises concerns on its reliability. Nonetheless, scholars in psychology view qualitative research as an adequate tool to investigate behaviour. In this regard, Flick et al. (2004: 1) share their perspectives on how qualitative research plays a crucial role in a time where social life is subject to the introduction of new modes, restructured ways of living, and disintegrating paradigm shifts. For these reasons it has gained traction in social sciences studies.

In this study, a qualitative research method was used in accordance with Van Rensburg et al. (2010: 137) who state that in qualitative research, data is collected by investigating the subjects' experiences and events chronologically. Van Rensburg et al. (2010: 136) state that in a qualitative research method, the researcher works with the community with which she/he shares the same interests. Using a qualitative research method enables

investigation of communication as an activity in the workplace context. Therefore, the researcher worked closely with the samples targeted for this study to share their experiences and viewpoints on the topic of the study.

3.5 Population

Population refers to the community a researcher finds appropriate for his/her study. According to Porta (2014: 279), the term *population* refers to the primary population to which a study is directed. Asiamah, Mensah and Oteng-Abayie (2017: 1607) discuss three levels when deciding on the population of the study. These include the general population, target population and accessible population. They argue that for a researcher to decide on his/her target population, he/she needs to first identify the general population, which refers to the larger group of people who have a potential of being a part of the study.

The second stage is the target population, which according to Asiamah et al. (2017: 1612), refers to the group of people who meet a researcher's criteria for the study. This means this group is intentionally selected based on the study's aim, objectives, and context because inclusion of people identified in the first level, which is the general population, may not align with the desired outcomes of the study.

Therefore, from the large population of eThekwini Metro District, Language Practice graduates in the workplace were targeted for this study because their attributes align with the aim, objectives and purpose of the study. From this group, not everyone was willing and available to participate in the study, and it was impossible to have everyone participate in the study. Hence, sampling of participants who were willing and available to participate in the study was done. This population is known as the accessible population (Asiamah et al., 2017: 1614).

3.6 Sampling

In research, sampling refers to the representatives of a large population or community. It is a technique used to narrow down the number of a large population, ensuring every individual is represented, considering race, gender,

age, social status, and other sub-categories. Turner (2003: 9) states that from the target population, a researcher decides on the sample to be drawn. For this study, the types of sampling methods used were purposive and snowball sampling methods.

Purposive sampling applies when a researcher chooses subjects based on his/her knowledge for the study, whereas snowball sampling method allows subjects used by a researcher to refer other people as participants. The current study used the purposive technique because it was not possible to include the whole population identified in this study. According to Etikan, Ikkasim and Abubakar (2015: 2), purposive sampling, also known as judgemental sampling technique, is a sampling method that deliberately sets apart its subjects based on the characteristics and attributes they possess.

Snowball sampling, also known as chain referral sampling, according to Etikan et al. (2015: 1), starts with what is called "convenience sampling," or selecting one subject who serves as a "seed," which is also known as a "wave 1 subject", who introduces other subjects to the study until the point of saturation is met. It is a researcher's responsibility to ensure the subjects introduced by the wave 1 subject are in accordance with the limitations of the study and possess the qualities defined in the sampling strategy of the study to ensure validity and reliability.

In this study, both new and old Language Practice graduates in the workplace were included in the sample based on purposive and snowball sampling techniques to gather information on their communication experiences because their qualifications set them apart from other employees. In the context of this study, a new employee is someone who has been working in an organisation for less than three years, and an old employee refers to someone who has been employed for over five years. The focus on the GLDY lecturer was based on one who has been teaching the subject for more than three years. In this study, a purposive sampling of four Language Practice graduates in the workplace including the GLDY lecturer was used. Thereafter, the additional eight samples were referred to by the "seed" subjects, who in this context were

the Language Practice graduates in the workplace, as the snowball sampling technique allowed. This brought the number of sampled individuals to a total of twelve samples.

According to Dworkin (2012: 1320), the sample size policy in qualitative study states that between five and fifty subjects is adequate. Therefore, having a total of twelve subjects is an acceptable sample size in terms of the policy. Dworkin (2012: 1320) goes on to say that there are other factors that contribute towards deciding on the number of subjects to be used for a study. Such factors may include the type of research conducted, for instance, academic research for a master's degree does not require a huge sample, whereas conducting research for a journal article requires a huge sample (Dworkin 2012: 1320). Furthermore, other factors may include the timeframe and budget for the study as well as the nature of the study. For the reasons stated above, a sample of twelve subjects was justifiable because it was not too close to the minimum number.

The criteria for selecting subjects for this study of employees in the workplace included the year the qualification was obtained, employment status, position, years of employment, full-time or part-time employment, and working for either public or private sector. With respect to lecturers, the criteria for selection considered GLDY lecturers that had been facilitating the subject for more than three years. These criteria were applied to ensure targeted individuals were drawn for this study.

3.7 Data collection procedures

The data were collected using semi-structured interviews. In research, interviews refer to conversations between two or more people who share similar interests. Interviews attempt to explore people's truths, realities, experiences beliefs, attitudes, and the state of mind of respondents (Talmy 2010: 131).

Galletta (2014: 812) states that there are three levels of interviews; these include structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews. Galletta

defines semi-structured interviews as interviews that is situated between structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews follow a rigid protocol while unstructured interviews do not. Structured interview protocols are designed prior to the interviewing session and may not be adjusted nor restructured during the interview; they usually require "yes or no" responses.

Semi-structured interviews have a mix of both standard questions and open-ended questions. Semi-structured interview protocols are loosely designed prior the interview and enable a researcher and subject to express themselves fully. This kind of interviews enables a researcher to ask probing questions during the interviewing session. Unstructured interviews are impromptu questions that do not require prior preparation before the interviewing session.

Semi-structured interviews that were conducted in the workplace assisted in exploring more about challenges faced by employees when they entered the workplace and how their communication dynamics evolve as they become accustomed to communicating in the workplace communication context. New employees in the workplace were chosen because they have experience in both contexts of interest, and they may provide new perspectives on the subject. In contrast, old employees were perceived to be more experienced and provided data that had substance because of their experience.

Due to the nature of this topic, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This type of interview was deemed to be effective for this study because semi-structured interviews allow respondents to share their perspectives freely and offer useful information the researcher might have not taken into consideration. Subjects interviewed included eleven employed Language Practice graduates in the workplace and the GLDY lecturer. Semi-structured interviews allowed for structuring questions in the form of an interview guide for the respondents to answer, and they were given an opportunity to provide their in-depth insights from the prepared interview guide.

Using semi-structured interviews as the data collection procedure, one-on-one interviews were conducted with old and newly employed Language Practice

graduates in the workplace, and these interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 60 minutes each. The purpose was to find out about communication issues they had experienced in their appointed positions in the workplace. The semi-structured interview that was conducted with the GLDY 101-103 lecturer was focused on how students acquire workplace communication practices; how they identify, analyse and solve communication challenges; how they adapt to communication diversity in different contexts; how they respond to what is being studied from a lecturer's perspective; and how they work around communication in general. The aim was to investigate if there are any solutions designed to solve communication problems students might come across in their future places of employment. This was done to determine if what is being studied in the classroom is effective and applicable in the real world of work.

A one-on-one semi-structured interview with the GLDY lecturer, who has been facilitating the subject for more than three years, and who, by default, has experience in both worlds, was 45 minutes long. It was assumed the lecturer was an expert in this field. This semi-structured interview was directed from the lecturer's perspective, not the students', because when students are still undergraduates, they do not know what would be expected from them in the workplace communication context, and what they know, they are taught by the lecturer. Thus, their responses would be speculative, which cannot be reliable. In this way, it was ensured that individuals drawn for this study provided valid and reliable data.

To ensure the safety of the respondents, the researcher followed the Covid-19 safety measures by wearing a mask during interviewing sessions and politely asked the respondents to do the same. The interviewer carried a sanitiser with them all the time to sanitise herself and the respondents and made sure to keep the recommended social distance between herself and the respondents at all times.

3.8   Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of working, unpacking and making meaning of the data collected during fieldwork. Qualitative data analysis brings light and produces deeper meaning and understanding of data once data gathering is complete (Bazeley 2013: 3). Bazeley suggests that data analysis is just an extension of daily activities since sampled individuals for a study offer to talk about their everyday experiences. In the same way, qualitative researchers interpret data to influence individuals around them, based on what they have explored and collected.

Qualitative researchers usually gather audio and visual data to later transcribe. Grinch (2012: 20) discusses two stages when analysing qualitative data, which include transcription (documentation of a dialogue) and preliminary data analysis (process of constantly reflecting on the data and asking where the collected data is heading). Bazeley (2013: 5) posits that data analysis requires the researcher to refer to data collected; the methodologies used and the aim of the study.

In the current study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which were recorded to later transcribe. Transcription, according to Bailey (2008: 127), is a process of copying audible data, in this case, interviews, into written arrangements. Bailey (2008) states that the stage of transcribing is usually seen as a simple process. However, hinderances like differences in accents, pronunciations or ways of speaking may pose problems when transcribing. So, researchers need to decide on which information to omit (omitting nonverbal speeches, like "uhm", "mmm"), interpret (for instance, deciding whether "I don't no" is actually "I don't know"), and translate (writing "ja" as "yes"). It is crucial to transcribe information that will be useful for the analysis.

Seers (2011: 2) discusses coding, categories and themes, which occurs after transcription, stating that a researcher should read through the transcribed documents to identify codes, form categories and extend data into themes that

precisely summarise the whole connotation of the interview. Guest, McQueen and Namey (2012) denote the abovementioned steps as thematic analysis.

In the current study, thematic analysis procedures were followed due to how flexible and applicable they are in a qualitative study. Familiar codes were grouped to create themes that fall under those codes. Braun and Clarke (2012: 57) refer to *thematic analysis* as a systematic method that identifies unique and distinctive meanings and experiences shared by the interviewee. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis strategy. Guest et al. (2012: 12) mention this data analysis procedure, which they assume is easy to follow, may not be presented chronologically, and some themes may be left out because they do not align with the study's aims. The following procedure was followed:

1. Read verbatims transcripts,

2. Identify possible themes,

3. Compare and contrast themes, identifying structures among them, and

4. Build theoretical models, constantly checking the models against the data.

To produce precise results, the thematic analysis procedures listed above were applied. However, the arrangement did not follow the chronological order of the procedure because qualitative research is more concerned about the case than it is with variables (Bazeley 2013: 4). Therefore, each analysis depended on the experiences shared by the interviewees. After organising and sorting the data, a detailed discussion of the findings is provided.

Due to the need for anonymity, interviewees were referred to by codes, for instance, the first interviewee was referred to as "E1" (meaning employee one), second interview was referred to as "E2" (meaning employee two), up to the last employee, and the GLDY instructor was referred to as "E12" because he/she is also an employee.

3.9   Trustworthiness of the study

According to Gill, Gill and Roulet (2014: 2), trustworthiness refers to the responsibility researchers have for ensuring their study is accessible, assessable and transparent to others, including participants, readers and the research community, and that others can gain insight into how the study's findings were generated. This responsibility encourages a researcher not to attach him/herself to the study so that they produce findings that are unbiased. Gill et al. (2014: 4) states that when evaluating trustworthiness, there are no rigid protocols and fixed sets of principles followed; judgement depends on the conceptual, spatial, or historical boundaries of the concept under scrutiny. Gill et al. discuss four subcategories of trustworthiness relevant to qualitative paradigms, which include credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability.

3.9.1 Credibility

As explained by Gill et al. (2014: 4), a research is credible when individuals sampled agree with the researcher's interpretations after the findings have been presented. Authors like Rudolf, Penz and Ghauri (2008) and Shenton (2004) agree with this conception, stating that credibility is concerned with how congruent the study is with the reality presented by the sampled individuals and the study investigates what the researcher aimed to research. For instance, the content of the study should align with research questions of the study.

To ensure credibility, as posited by Shenton (2004), different strategies were employed in the current study to ensure the respondents provided honest responses. For instance, the use of iterative questions to uncover dishonesties was employed. Interviewees were asked further probing questions in relation to the information they had earlier provided to ensure their answers did not contradict each other and they said what they actually meant. To further ensure credibility, the current research was inspected by the supervisor time and time again, and previous research findings provide a point of reference to ensure

that the findings of the current study are compatible with the pervious works on a similar topic. Another element of trustworthiness in transferability.

3.9.2 Transferability

Shenton (2004: 70) denotes transferability as a crucial component in ensuring trustworthiness because it deals with providing the reader with accurate contextual information regarding the boundaries and additional information pertaining to the study. Such information includes types of organisations targeted for the study, criteria for individuals sampled, data collection methods as well as information on data collection sessions. Furthermore, if readers think their situations are similar to the circumstances discussed in the study, it is possible they transmit findings of the study to their situations (Shenton 2004: 70).

This means a study is trustworthy if results make an impact on the individual who is in the similar situation that is under investigation based on the contextual information provided. To ensure transferability in this study, information regarding the types of organisations, individuals, population, and additional information was provided so that readers can relate to the focus of the current study. For instance, Language Practice graduates in the workplace had different opinions and shared their experiences on the current topic and how the issues discussed in the study affected them. The next dimension of trustworthiness is confirmability.

3.9.3 Confirmability

According to Rudolf et al. (2008: 699), confirmability is concerned with aligning the research with the reality being investigated. Researchers need to combine different methods in their studies so that results from one method confirm those of the supplementary one. It is an element that ensures that the data provided by a researcher is not just a product of his/her imagination (Gill et al. 2014: 4). Thus, in this current study, primary data (interviews) were used to collect data from individuals whose experiences and opinions align with the focus of the study. Similarly, secondary data were employed to accord with perceptions on

the current topic. This was done to ensure that the perspectives gathered were not just the product of the participants or researchers' imaginations but verified theories. The integration of literature and responses from respondents ensured that the data collected from individuals sampled for this study complimented those extracted from literature.

3.9.4   Dependability

Shenton (2004:7) posits that to address the issue of dependability in research, a strategy needs to be employed to make sure that if the work were repeated in the same context with the same respondents, similar outcomes would be achieved. In the context of this study, the method used and all other aspects involved in conducting the study were reported clearly and in detail so that future researchers can repeat the work. More specifically, the research design, implementation, and operational details of data gathering and analysing data were discussed to ensure dependability.

3.10   Ethical considerations

In research, ethical considerations are focused on anonymity and confidentiality to ensure that subjects' identities are kept anonymous and cannot be shared with anyone without their consent. According to Porta (2014: 55), anonymity and confidentiality refers to the commitment not to reveal information against the participants' wishes. Therefore, if the subjects prefer to remain anonymous, it is the researcher's responsibility to make sure the information shared remains confidential.

In this study, individuals who wanted to remain anonymous, for whatever reason, remained anonymous to ensure they felt comfortable giving out their opinions and sharing their experiences. Personal information such as identity numbers, student numbers, full names, organisation information, supervisors' or employers' names were not disclosed, and other delicate information was not asked from subjects for this study to emphasise confidentiality.

Cohen et al. (2007: 100) define *informed consent* as the permission given by the participants to be a part of a study. Informed consent is important in a study

to protect the rights of the sampled population from the consequences of the outcome of the study, especially if the research invades their privacy or exposes them to any kind of physical and/or emotional strain. In this study, informed consent requirements were followed to ensure participants provided reliable information.

The letter of consent delineating the aim and objectives of this study was given to the subjects so that they were informed about the study (see Appendix D). Informed consent forms were given to participants to sign and to confirm consent before conducting interviews. This aspect of ethics is important to build trust and gain loyalty from the respondents because if they did not understand their role in the study, they might have not wanted to be a part of it and even pull out if they had already agreed to partake in the study because they are given the platform to do so.

3.11   Conclusion

In this chapter, in-depth discussion of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, the target population, sampling procedure, data collection procedures, trustworthiness in qualitative research, and ethical considerations pertaining to the study were discussed with respect to how they were applied in the study. In the next chapter, the data and analysis of the findings are presented.

4. Chapter Four: Data analysis and interpretation

4.1   Introduction

A detailed analysis and interpretation of data based on the themes that were common to the participants is provided in this chapter. Themes identified in the data are analysed and discussed based on the responses provided by the participants as well as reference to concepts such as discourse, genre, and activity theory. These themes include:

- interpersonal and intrapersonal skills,
- versatility,
- time management,
- different communication contexts and occasions,
- workplace communication challenges versus communication solutions,
- students' expectations versus their experiences of workplace communications,
- relationships and diversity in the workplace,
- classroom versus workplace communication practice,
- social media in the workplace communication context
- and communication genres use.

The participants of this study include black African males and females between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five years. These participants are employed in different departments in the eThekwini local municipality, local courts under the eThekwini Metro District, retail shops, primary schools, a cinema, call centres, a media house and a higher education institution. These individuals have employment experiences that range between one and seven years. Some participants are working part-time; others are full-time and permanently employed, and some are working on contract basis.

4.2   Interpersonal and intrapersonal skills

Interpersonal skills refer to the ability to interact with other people while intrapersonal skills allow an individual to communicate with themselves. Thus,

successful communication does not only rely on how individuals involved in a discourse are fluent in the way they speak but also the way they carry themselves, their personal attributes, and their behaviours play a substantial role in determining whether or not the communication activity will be successful. In other words, both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are significant for workplace communication because such skills are used when employees interact among themselves as well as their managers. However, according to Chen et al. (2019: 28), not much research has been conducted on how to improve interpersonal skills such as self-assurance, communication skills, etiquettes in the workplace, and professionalism. The analysis shows that some participants, sometime in their careers, lacked interpersonal skills such as openness and the ability to speak their minds. Thus, E3 stated:

> I wasn't confident enough for the job, I couldn't manage stress and emotions properly.

Similarly, E11 stated:

> I expected it (the workplace) to be extremely hard. I had not been working before, so that made me nervous.

Nonetheless, most participants were able to identify the strongest personal attributes that influenced how they communicate in their organisations. It is important that communications courses are designed to equip students with skills to identify, analyse and solve communication problems.

What the participants have in common is a sense of responsibility over how they act and how their colleagues around them act. This theme demonstrates that participants' interpersonal skills assisted with maintaining professional relationships amongst themselves and their colleagues. For instance, E5 said that he makes sure verbal and written communication processes run smoothly and successfully and that people involved in a communication process express themselves harmoniously. Similarly E2 stated:

> I am calmer to certain situations and level-headed. I look for solutions instead of dwelling on conflicts and problems.

And E4 added:

> What makes me different from other employees is that I am more observant and cautious when it comes to language usage.

E3 also stated:

> I learnt to handle every situation calmly and understand that we are all different and there will be challenges.

In GLDY 103, students are taught discourse analysis as well as the advancement of written and verbal communication in the workplace, among other topics that equip students with the confidence to recognise, analyse and resolve communication obstacles that may arise. Thus, when graduates enter the workplace, they easily spot communication shortfalls and give themselves the responsibility of ensuring that everyone else involved in a discourse understands their contribution. E11, for example, stated that her colleagues were discriminatory towards other cultures. Therefore, she had to constantly remind them about the importance of cultural inclusivity in the workplace, as taught in GLDY.

E12, emphasised self-discipline, which is one of the most significant intrapersonal skills, and stated that graduates need self-discipline as new employees because they encounter people who have been working for a long time who may have a negative influence on them if they lacked self-discipline. According to Samuel (1997: 161), self-discipline is a basic requirement to keep working, which means, as it applies to this study, that when employees are self-disciplined, they communicate better to produce excellent and valuable services because their focus is mainly on completing the task by eliminating unnecessary circumstances. In the context of this study and in line with AT, it means E12 regards self-discipline as a tool to produce and complete jobs properly, and this includes the communication that is required for interpersonal relationship in the workplace.

When asked about how participants deal with communication challenges that arise in the workplace, E2 mentioned that critical thinking, emotional

intelligence, level headedness and staying calm enables him to amicably deal with any communication challenge that arises in the workplace. E2 then stated,

> In the workplace, you will have a boss, and if there are any issues you are facing or questions that you want to ask, you need to be in the know of the specific organisation's proper channels of voicing out those opinions. When you come into the workplace environment, you will encounter people with different personalities. Some bosses would deliberately ignore their own channels (company's channels) and that might confuse you because you were taught that when you know the proper channels everything will be fine. This is where you are supposed to display emotional balance and intelligence to deal with that situation amicably.

E2 emphasises that sometimes, in the workplace, one might know what one needs to do. However, one might encounter individuals who are in higher positions than one, that, when one tries to voice out one's opinion, they may feel like one wants to start quarrels. Thus, when one encounters such a challenge, one must be emotionally intelligent to avoid conflicts and communicate one's point effectively, using relevant communication channels that are proper for that organisation. Pazcoguin (2013: 2) discusses conflict and miscommunication that occur between subordinates and superiors in organisations and value conflicts, which are examples of interpersonal skills that may challenge communication in the workplace if not addressed. He states that value conflicts arise when values, ideas, principles and practices between subordinates and superiors do not match, which is what E2 was experiencing in his organisation. The participant displayed emotional intelligence by not letting the emotion of how he is being treated affect him, and instead, used basic principle of communication (relevant communication channels) to avoid conflict. E2, therefore, thinks being emotionally balanced and intelligent will help an employee understand the context in which he/she is communicating and with whom he/she is communicating.

In a similar light, E3 said that when she started working, she was not confident enough to do the job, could not manage stress and her emotions properly, lacked openness, and could not speak her mind. She stated that this challenge was caused by anxiety because she was in a career path for which she did not study. To overcome these challenges, she learnt to handle every situation she was faced with calmly. All participants emphasised their enriched state of mind and the lengths they took to ensure successful and effective communication in their organisations so that they would be recognised as effective employees. E5 noted the following about written communication:

> What you write is a representation of who you are, so, I spend a lot of time focusing on producing masterpieces.

Concerning this, Parreti (2008: 491) suggested that "the ways in which lecturers and students work together around communication tasks play a substantial part in assisting students to develop transferable communication skills" and E5's assertion is evidence of such transferable skills. One of the emphases of GLDY is to be mindful of what is written because a poorly written piece reflects negatively on both the writer and the organisation. This means E5 was able to transfer his written communication skills into the workplace, not only to project effective communication skills but also to stand out from everybody else who did not study GLDY. In other words, as a graduate of GLDY, E5 is conscious of his writing and what it says about him, and this can also be extended to what his writing says about his organisation. One of the arguments of AT is that there should be a process that leads to good outcomes (Jonassen and Rohner-Murphy 1999). In this respect, E5 has shown that he has gone through an effective process led by his lecturer at university. Consequently, he is able to produce the good outcomes he referred to as masterpieces. Similarly, E9 believes GLDY prepares graduates for the workplace, giving them confidence and assisting them to perform most of the communication tasks presented to them and identify the appropriate communication genres needed for a certain task or situation.

One of the most common attributes employers look for in a job seeker is the ability to work under pressure. E10 thinks employees need to possess the ability to work under pressure and to adapt to slow and fast paces in the workplace. E10 emphasised these points because she understands how fast-paced working environments normally cause anxiety and may result in communication challenges that may, in turn, result in mistrust, reduced performance and results and lead to resignation if not addressed (Pazcoguin, 2013:2).

A few participants talked about the importance of physical appearance, gestures as another form of representation, the message conveyed by the way a person looks and his/her facial expressions, the manner in which challenges are resolved depending on personal attributes, for instance, how delicate and respectful one is, not only to one's colleagues but also the situation itself. Most participants talked about listening and people skills as significant skills. The participants' emphasis on listening skills can be attributed to the fact that they were applying what they learnt while doing the GLDY module. In the workplace, effective listening is an important communication skill because employees are involved in workplace activities that require critical listening (Cleary et al. 2016). Activities such as meetings, interactions with co-workers about work activities, and taking oral instructions from superiors require critical listening.

4.3. Versatility

In this study, *versatility* refers to flexibility when performing tasks in the workplace and acquiring new genre techniques. Workplace communication requires an employee to be flexible and adapt or communicate in terms of the prevailing situations or contexts. E12 believes students are versatile enough for the workplace communication situations because they were taught open-mindedness because the field of humanities is largely informed by different perspectives. When participants were asked about what sets them apart from other professionals in the workplace, E1 stated that versatility made her stand out, saying as follows:

GLDY taught me how to communicate with different people, such as my colleagues in the workspace and the community at large. My work was mostly about communicating and translating, so, GLDY played a huge role in delivering that.

Versatility is needed to be a good translator as it enables the person to put him/herself inside the shoes of the original composer and those of the targeted audience simultaneously. If an employee is not versatile enough, he/she will not be able to understand the source text message that needs to be translated into a targeted text and the intended message will not reach the targeted audience as it should. Applying the same example as above, in communication studies, especially where bilingualism or multilingualism are concerned, students are made aware that, for an example, as employees, they might receive an email that needs to be translated from English into isiZulu and should be sent to a leader of the community. Obviously, an employee cannot send an email to a headman who does not have device to access email or is not technologically savvy enough to use his device for email. Therefore, they need to convert the source text into the genre that is appropriate to the target audience, which, in this case would be a letter. Thus, in such situations, employees need to be versatile to show they acknowledge the recipient of the message.

When asked about what makes her different from other employees in the organisation E11 stated as follows:

My communication skills are different. I know about different cultures even cultures from abroad; in GLDY, we did not only study about South African cultures.

As an employee engaged in workplace discourse, versatility is a mandatory skill to have because communication itself is dynamic and requires dynamism and versatility. So, the ability to communicate with different people from different cultural backgrounds displays versatility. Furthermore, E1 thinks as a Language Practitioner, one needs to be versatile because one communicates

with people from different departments in the workplace. When asked about genre usage in the workplace, E1 also thinks genres used for communicating in the workplace are not too different from those she uses for personal communication. However, how she uses the different genres on different occasions differs. Using a single communication technique in different contexts displays versatility. E11's response is relevant in the modern-day multicultural workplace in South Africa because the ability to communicate interculturally means one is open-minded and accommodating in negotiating meaning (Fielding and du Plooy-Cilliers 2018: 110).

Transitioning between the classroom and the workplace encourages the versatility that workplace communication demands, as posited by most of the participants. For example, E2 said the following:

> In the classroom you are taught theory and in real life situation you must use your own intelligence to manoeuvre some things. It helps to have a background of what you are doing but it is also important to be able to think on your feet.

E9 believes GLDY gave her a foundation that taught her how language can be manipulated and how to write and analyse discourse. These are the most important skills to learn as far as versatility is concerned because with such skills, employees are able to use appropriate language based on a proper analysis of the prevailing situations in the organisation.

Most participants displayed versatility in their responses as they mentioned that GLDY played a huge role in equipping them with different communication skills that enabled them to communicate with different people in the workplace. Versatility is required in the workplace because communication is an ever-changing and dynamic process in which people participate in order to have a mutually shared meaning or understanding.

4.4   Time management

Time management is a recurring theme in the data analysed, and participants believe time management should be considered in the classroom as its

importance is emphasised in the workplace. Thus, it is critical to investigate other attributes of discourse that may not be language or communication related (Gee, 2005: 21) as these may influence the nature of communication in an organisation. E1 mentioned that time management is an important skill that they did not acquire in the GLDY module. According to E1,

> Time management is one skill that is of great importance to have that should be studied in the classroom. If you did not acquire that skill properly, it shows in your work and the way you communicate.

The above response shows that if an employee takes too long to finish tasks in the workplace, it shows in his/her performance since he/she would not be able to meet deadlines. When employees manage time effectively, they are most likely to communicate tasks harmoniously (Daniel 2020: 73). Furthermore, when employees are unable to manage their time effectively, it shows in how they communicate and perform their tasks because they feel pressured to finish, and the possibilities of improper handling of communication related issues are elevated. E9 further added the following:

> Time it takes to resolve communication challenges is lesser than someone who did not study communication.

In other words, E9 implied that her knowledge of communication helps her deal with communication challenges or issues in less time as opposed to someone who does not have a background in communication. E9's background in communication is therefore a tool that enables her to achieve her objectives or outcomes, which is completing the task or resolving communication challenges.

Time management is mostly about the planning and distribution of one's time according to one's tasks, from the most important to the least important. Therefore, as a communication graduate, one's priority is communication, and it takes communication to resolve any challenge. Challenges may be about work activities that are not completed as required, and this may be because of a lack of role clarity or a supervisor not properly explaining what the job entails

(Usadolo, S.E. and Usadolo 2019: 248) to employees. Furthermore, GLDY teaches effective techniques to resolve any kind of quarrel in the workplace more quickly. According to E12,

> Time management is highly important because when there are delays when delivering a message, feedback will be delayed as well.

As mentioned above, when time is not well-managed, it will cause employees to miss deadlines, which will result in decreased productivity. Furthermore, E12's insights suggest that when one sends a message at the eleventh hour, chances are, the message may not reach the targeted individuals on time. This is because everyone at work has their own duties, so they might not be able to shift their schedules to accommodate the communicated demands. That means the communicator will have to wait until the audience is not busy with their duties, and if a communicator does this habitually, it will break the trust between the communicator and his/her audience. Once trust, which is a necessary element of interpersonal relationships in any communicative encounter, is broken, interpersonal communication suffers as well.

Furthermore, E4 mentioned that he learned the importance of addressing the issues immediately. E4's response is important because in the workplace, time is of the essence. Hence, if ever there are any concerns, they should be presented as early as possible because if one takes too long, the issues might not be relevant at the time they are presented, and the effect of those work-related issues may affect productivity or the operation of the organisation. E9 stated that as a Language Practice graduate in the workplace, she prioritises communication and ensures that communication is practiced correctly. Regarding this, Daniel (2020:75) states that actors in the workplace should prioritise important tasks and discusses the 10/90-time management principle, which stipulates that 10% of the time one takes to communicate tasks successfully saves 90% of the effort to accomplish the desired outcomes.

When asked about skills learned in the workplace that are not studied in GLDY, E10 and E5 said that in the workplace, they learned the skill of timing, and E10

explained further that they give the customers time to explain themselves before responding. E10's response is consistent with Daniel (2020: 77) observation that when actors in the workplace act without thinking they are more likely to mismanage their time. This means that, as explained by E5, when one gives the person one is interacting with time to express him/herself before responding, one is more likely to eliminate the possibility of having to do the same thing over again.

E5 mentioned that the workplace is fast-paced and time sensitive, so for him, the biggest challenge as a new employee was getting used to the rush and getting things done and done right on time. Some organisations are busy during certain periods of the year, month, season, day, hour or minute; therefore, as an actor in the communication activity, one should adapt to these shifts so that one maintains harmonious communication with clients and fellow employees. Hence, Daniel (2020:77) recommends that employees not concern themselves with accomplishing more tasks in a day but complete tasks correctly and encourages employees to work smarter rather than harder. This is because if they do not perform their tasks well because they are rushing to finish, it will show in the completed product.

4.5   Different communication contexts and occasions

Context is an important consideration in communication or in the way language is used. Most participants commented on the classroom and workplace contexts, pointing out similarities and differences between these contexts. Kern et al. (2014: 209) state that language shapes the context, but context also shapes language. This also applies to communication as learned in the classroom and workplace. Concerning this, E10 identified how, in her experience, language use is influenced by the context in which she is communicating and vice versa, and stated the following:

> It (GLDY) provided me with various ways of communicating since communicating in the classroom and the workplace is different. When I started working, I realised that the language I use to communicate with

the customers is different from how we were taught in the classroom. I assumed I had to use formal language when communicating with my customers, but I actually use informal language. I have to give them information all the time and do not assume they already know because I am trained for the job. I also have to adapt to their communicating styles.

In GLDY, students are introduced to topics that cater to different communication situations such as organisational communication and communication in general. Thus, the response provided by E3 shows that she has mastered the ability to understand that even if one is communicating in the workplace context, it does not mean she has to use professional jargon all the time. Therefore, E3 used a general communication style in a professional environment when communicating with lay people to increase the chances of being understood. This also highlights that sometimes the environment in which individuals communicate may be the same, but the situations may differ and that may require them to use different communication styles to cater for prevailing communication needs. In other words, communication styles may change to accommodate individuals who are not experts in that field.

Similarly, E6 said that her colleagues who did not study GLDY, when interpreting, do not take into considerations that they are conveying a message to a lay person, which is why she thinks they use bombastic words and professional jargon unnecessarily. Using jargon with layperson is an example of semantic noise because the meaning of the jargon are likely to be known by speaker uttering them but a layperson will not understand, especially when such jargon needs to be understood in a given a context.

E2 stated that communication taught in the classroom and the workplace are too different:

In the classroom you are not taught specific situations, but we were given scenarios which may or may not apply to everyone else's workplace environment. In the workplace, you are dealing with specific

situations that require you to use the background knowledge (what you learnt) to complete them. The only difference is that in the classroom you are given a generalised view of the communication situation, and in the workplace, you get first-hand experience of a specified situation. In the classroom, they will only tell you of the communication practices.

In this regard, Schapp, Baartman and Bruijn (2011: 100) advise that the classroom should produce experts who possess a compatible combination of knowledge that is field-specific and general knowledge. The above statement means that graduates should build professional capabilities based on the skills and knowledge that they gained in the classroom and experiences of the workplace. Furthermore, employees are expected to solve complex communication problems that arise in the workplace and be able to learn and enhance new knowledge that they will gain as they grow in their new professions. As posited by E2, if employees were to combine the background knowledge (what is learnt in class) and the knowledge gained through lived experiences in the office, they (employees) would be able to solve communication problems that arise in the workplace.

4.6   Workplace communication challenges versus communication solutions

As posited by Paretti (2008:492), AT is important for uncovering the difficulties students go through when transitioning communication skills learned in the classroom into the workplace. The data in this study show the difficulties new and old employees face when communicating using genres they learned in the classroom in the workplace context. Participant E12 (the instructor) mentioned that students did not face any challenges when acquiring workplace communication practices in the classroom. When asked if the ways in which students acquire communication skills determines the ways in which they will practice them in their future places of employment, she stated:

> The way they acquired GLDY did not determine their performance in the workplace. Students are very smart; they might behave otherwise

because in the classroom they have a bad attitude, [but] they change for the better when they enter the workplace because they know about the unemployment status of this country.

With respect to E12's response, classroom discourse emphasises that the instructors need to study their students' attitudes. Hence, E12 believes students do not perform to the best of their abilities in the classroom as compared to how they act when they enter the workspace as new employees. As stated above, students are motivated by the marks they achieve so that they can complete their qualifications.

The above statement suggests that students set themselves goals, which, according to the instructor, is to get good marks so that they stand a better chance of employment. Considering what E12 said, it means that even if GLDY students' motivations do not accurately portray the workplace goal, they change easily when they reach the workplace. In other words, they are able to adapt to workplace because of the GLDY modules they have taken. However, since effective communication is also a tool to build harmonious relationships, employees who are not effective communicators do not have the chance to advance themselves and help their organisations achieve their strategic objectives. Harmonious relationships between employees and employers are a desired outcome in an organisation.

Based on the data analysed, most participants described communication challenges in workplace communication contexts. Some of these challenges required intervention to be overcome. According the E12, nothing should hinder students from communicating effectively in the workplace because they are taught about types of communication activities, ways of communication, medium of communication, and formats for writing, for an example, internal and external memos. However, E1 faced countless challenges that affected the way she communicated in the workplace, to the extent that a staff meeting was organised to give new employees a platform to voice their grievances. This is in stark contrast to what E12 said above as she said the students would

easily adapt to communicative situations in their workplaces even though they have different attitudes as students.

E2 believes communication challenges depend on the nature of one's occupation; however, one needs to familiarise oneself with understanding registers and language variation, meaning that one has to understand the differences in contexts and situations in the workplace. As observed in this regard by Agha (2004:23), people become acquainted with different registers based on how much they interact with other individuals who have different registers from theirs. Employees are likely to interact with people, including colleagues and the community, outside their register range. The frequent register exchanges become registered in their minds to the extent that it becomes easier to understand each other when communicating. For example, when one takes one's isiZulu-speaking child to a predominantly English-speaking school, the child is most likely to adapt to how English speakers use language. Hence, registers are linked to differences in status, social class, or positions in hierarchies, which is why E2 believes occupation is a defining factor because if an employee enters the workplace with a limited register exposure, he/she is most likely to experience communication problems if the organisation includes diverse registers.

E3 said that as a new employee in the workplace, she also went through communication challenges whereby she struggled giving and receiving feedback, and what made things worse on her side was the fact that her colleagues were not as equipped and did not consider communication as important as she does. E3's admission that ''her colleagues are still not as equipped and do not see communication as important as I do'' sounds oxymoronic or self-contradictory because she admitted that she struggled giving and receiving feedback. If she struggled giving (communicating), there is no way she would receive appropriate feedback because the process of encoding and all other elements of communication that may affect communication from its source will also affect the way the message is decoded and responded to. When the process of encoding that is involved in sending a

message is problematic, it is likely that the feedback from the receiver of the message will also be problematic. Thus, given E3's assertion, her struggle to receive feedback is due to her poor communication and not the fault of the people with whom she is communicating or not because they are not ''equipped'' or "do not see communication as important as she does". To overcome the communication challenges, E3 said she read more books on communication to educate herself on how to overcome the communication problem she was having.

E5 also encountered some communication challenges because as a new employee, when he could not reach out to other people, his strategy to resolve the communication challenges that arose in the workplace was to communicate as "communication issues are resolved by communicating". In other words, E5 believes that communication challenges are best dealt with by talking about the challenges, suggesting that whenever one faces challenges in the workplace, the way to address them is to communicate. Not communicating verbally means one may be communicating discomfort, anxiety, or distress nonverbally, or as E9 stated, "silence is another form of communicating". It means a refusal to verbalise or write about concerns in the workplace. However, as one with a communications background, one needs to communicate one's feelings or grievances effectively and efficiently to encourage honesty and transparency among employees. Modules like GLDY are meant to train students to express themselves, which is why when E3 identified and analysed her communication challenges. She said she had to make sure that there was effective communication between herself and her colleagues. She did this by finding out about the communication barriers she was having and then decided how to overcome the communication barriers in the way she related to other employees. She said she was able to do this because she applied the communication techniques studied in GLDY.

E7 said as follows:

The only minor challenge I faced was caused by difference in dialects. As you communicate regularly you get used to how the other person communicates. Whenever I do not understand them, I ask for clarity.

The difference in dialects among employees, as deliberated in the register discussion above, can only be overcome if employees regularly communicate with people who speak different languages to theirs. This is because learning to understand another dialect is a process that needs a great deal of habitual practice to grasp. To overcome the challenge in differences in dialects between herself and her colleagues, E7 asked for further clarity. This is because if she assumed she understood what the other party intended to say, the meaning behind the message would have not served its intended purpose.

E10 stated that one of the challenges experienced is the following:

In Language Practice we did phonetics; so, I was aware of differences in how words sound. I would pronounce words differently from my colleagues, and they would also pronounce differently, which sometimes made them assume I was saying one thing, while I was actually saying something else. Also, my colleagues used slang a lot to communicate, so sometimes I would not understand what they were saying.

Phonetics plays a crucial role in how people communicate. As one with communication background, E10 knows the importance of pronouncing words correctly, especially people's names. Thus, an understanding of phonetics enabled E10 to recognise how words sound, and she was flexible enough to imitate the sounds of words that were outside her linguistic range. Phonetics is essential in terms of eliminating ambiguity and miscommunication because when someone mispronounces a word, the whole sentence might lose its meaning. E10 further stated,

… pronouncing surnames of tribal groups I am not familiar with also posed communication challenges. To overcome these challenges, I had to adapt to how they speak, and when they speak using slang, I form

my own understanding of what they are talking about through the initial conversation we had before they switched to the slang.

E6, E7 and E10 described their experiences of their interpersonal relationships with their co-employees or clients in the workplace. Cheng et al. (2019: 28) suggest that factors that negatively influence communication in the workplace include the "interpersonal aspect of workplace interaction", which has a negative impact on how individuals interact in the workplace and may result in financial loss if not addressed. Regarding how communication challenges affect employees personally, miscommunication would have had negative results on the finances of E11's organisation had she not taken it upon herself to find new strategies to be appealing to clients who were initially having difficulty understanding her accent. The Language Practice course offers intercultural studies, which is a subject that focuses on communication across cultures in different contexts. The approaches E6, E7 and E10 adopted ensured that there was mutual respect, cultural tolerance and understanding among themselves and the clients with whom they did not share similar cultures. This indicates that they understood the subject and applied necessary measures to solve the prevailing communication challenges.

In this regard, E11 said,

> As a call centre agent, I remember when I used to call Whites using my normal accent. They would always drop my calls. So, I had to change the way I sounded and block my nose so that I may sound White and twang. I also had to use a false name so that they thought I was a White lady, so I could boost the sales.

As narrated by E11, she had to assume an identity that is not hers to communicate with clients at work. This is expected in South African society where diversity among employees often results in a big chasm in interpersonal relationships in the workplace and many other communicative encounters. According to AT, there is always the need to know those with whom one wants to communicate and knowing with whom one is communicating is emphasised

in GLDY as well. For E11, knowing the clients and their communication preferences, she had to assume an identity in the form of changing her accent and name. Going by the proposition of AT, the rules or the set of conditions E11 found at work made her pander to what society or people needed in order to advance her interests at work. Thus, the tool she used was her communication skills, which although not part of what she was taught as a GLDY student, the emphasis on communication meant she had to do something.

Sharma, Levon, Watt, Ye and Cardoso (2019: 1) discuss accent bias, which is a term that refers to prejudice against people who have a different accent to one's own or one's preferences based on one's ethnicity, social class or geographical demarcation. Hence, call centre agents are hired based on how well they can imitate the accents of their targeted clients. As stated above, if E5 did not change her accent, she would have not made sales, and it might have resulted in financial loss. Thus, as a person with background in communication, this participant prioritised appealing to her clients to keep them happy because in the workplace, biased or not, the customer is always right.

The data provided by the above responses show that participants used different tactics to solve their communication challenges. They were able to identify the problems they faced, analyse the challenges and strategies to solve those problems, and employ strategies to resolve those problems.

One aspect that is common in the data is that the participants took their time to familiarise themselves with various contexts of communication in their organisations. However, some participants stated that they did not face any communication challenges because they were already familiar with the environment. Others said that they instantly became used to the communication practices in their organisations.

4.7 Students' expectations versus their experiences of workplace communications

When genre learning is positioned optimally, it enables students to be adequately prepared for different communication activities outside the classroom. This means students' expectations of the workplace are based on what they were told about workplace communication. In that way, it makes it easier for students to prepare themselves – to properly apply the skills they have learned when they enter the workplace. The data demonstrates that participants reflected on what they were taught, their assumptions of the workplace and their conclusions about the workplace communication situation they are a part of.

E3 expected the workplace to be a friendly and welcoming environment: she thought that she and her colleagues would have a close relationship or a "family-like" kind of relationship and be able to face challenges together. However, this was not the case. E3's response shows that sometimes students have high expectations of the workplace, and when their expectations are not met, they face challenges. E5 shared same sentiments as E3:

> The workplace is a very complex environment. Being a graduate, I expected to have it easy, only to find out that, even though I am qualified, in the workplace, you learn something new every day.

What these participants (E3 and E5) have in common is how high their expectations of the workplace were. To overcome this challenge, E5 said he had to familiarise himself with the workplace communication context, especially the communication hierarchy. E4 also stated it was difficult for him to adapt in the workplace, but he had to learn and adapt to the working environment by applying communication techniques he knew. E4 added that this transition took a while, which is understandable, because these contexts (what you learnt in the classroom and the workplace) are different in nature. Furthermore, E1 stated:

When required to apply techniques learned in the classroom, I tend to realise that this is what I learned and try to remember how to apply them [techniques] as I remember how I acquired them in the classroom.

E1 added that she expected to advance her skills and receive guidance from her supervisor. Her expectations were not met because her supervisor did not give her the kind of guidance for which she was yearning. E1 went on to say that as students, one expects that all one studied in the classroom is going to be applied in the workplace exactly as it was acquired in the classroom, but this is usually not the case.

E6 expected the workplace to be professional; however, her interactions with her supervisor proved otherwise because she was addressed as "*Sisi*", which is something she said she never thought was accepted in the workplace. *Sisi* is a Zulu word meaning sister, and it is also often used to qualify housemaids. E6 took offence at being addressed or referred to as *Sisi*, which shows the different meanings people attach to words or terms used. There is nothing derogatory about being called *Sisi*. It shows that the superior wants to narrow the communicative distance between him and his subordinates or wants to be friendly. However, E6 experienced the use of *Sisi* as derogatory or negative, and what stuck in the participant's mind was how housemaids are called *Sisi*, and she is not a housemaid. The meaning people attach to words or how people understand words or terms used is context-bound as shown in E6's response.

In contrast, E10 and E2 did not have any expectations of the workplace. E2 stated that he did not expect anything different as a new employee since he was already familiar with the place. He knew what was expected of him, and he delivered just that. E5 stated that he thought he was going to have it easy as the classroom prepared him for any kind of workplace communication.

In a situation like the one described above the situated theory as explained by Parreti (2008: 491) states that students should partake in the real situations of the contexts studied. Just like in other fields like law, education, journalism,

and marketing, to name a few, situated learning theory influences how students are equipped with the right tools and exposes them to real (not imaginary) situations in their future work life. Being a part of the environment that was his future working environment assisted E5 not to have false expectations about the workplace communication context. E12 stated that in Language Practice, they do not have a program whereby students are placed in different organisations to gain experience before graduating.

E10 also stated that she did not have any expectations of the workplace communication context because she did not know the kind of a job she was going to have. Thus, she said she did not want to elevate her expectations only to encounter situations in the workplace that were worse than what she had imagined. She mentioned that not having any expectations worked in her favour since she interacted with people who communicated differently to her. Thus, not having any expectations gave her room to take the workplace as it is and learn about that specific environment.

This also means the difference between what is learnt in the classroom and the workplace is that in the classroom students are told that their writing and speaking have to reflect the formality of the workplace while at the workplace, employees apply what is accepted in that organisation, and people speak and write based on the context that influences their communication. In other words, formal and informal communication goes hand in hand in the workplace, depending on the communicative situation on the ground. In the classroom, generalised views of organisational communication are taught; hence, E11 said she was ready to work extra hard to meet the high standards of the workplace she had created in her head. However, when she started working, she realised that the environment she was working in was not as difficult as she had imagined, and her communicative encounters, according to her, have been cordial or as not formal as she had envisaged.

4.8 Relationships and diversity in the workplace

AT is used as the analytic lens in this study and emphasises the importance of identifying the relationship between individuals involved in the communication process as well as their goals and purposes. Participants in this study commented a great deal on the relationships they have and with whom they interact in the workplace and how these relationships helped or hindered them from having successful communication.

AT enables investigation of diversity. According to Kong (2014: 92) and Lam et al. (2014: 68), diversity and changes in workplace discourse are influenced by outside factors such as advancements in technology, globalisation, intercultural influences, multilingualism and the emergence of small and home offices. Based on the data analysed, these factors affect workplace communication and the impact of GLDY when it comes to workplace communication practices' acquisition and application.

E1 stated that GLDY taught her how to communicate with different people, such as her colleagues in the workspace and the community at large. The study of discourse mentions that when a professional communicates in the workplace, he/she does not only communicate with his/her colleagues but also clients, the community, and people from other departments. E1, therefore, recognises the role GLDY plays in communication acquisition as it did not only equip her with skills to communicate with her immediate colleagues but also with every other individual she encountered in her workplace.

E5 talked about using a tone that is not too professional nor unprofessional when interacting with his colleagues, a theme that E8 confirmed, adding that her colleagues think using complicated terms and a strictly formal tone is professional. E6 stated that when she works outside her unit, she faces communication challenges because people from other departments use jargon to communicate with lay people. E6's response shows that people with a sound background in communication are likely to focus on being understood when they speak and write as opposed to people whose field of education is not

communication; hence, according E6, the use of jargon implies the communicator does not care if he/she is understood or not. In other words, they may be constituting semantic noise for laypeople with whom they are communicating. E10 stated that as someone who was trained for the job, she knew her workplace jargon, but she did not use jargon to communicate with lay people in her field. She stated,

> Applying these techniques had a positive outcome because I did not encounter challenges when I had to address a customer. I knew what I had to say to them, for an example, tell them to check the style on tags whereas as a customer you wouldn't know what that is, so I had to improvise and choose another word that may be familiar to them for them to understand what I was talking about.

Some of the aspects of AT include rules (sets of conditions), and this is consistent with E10's emphasis on the importance of the "customer is always right" rule in which she communicates with customers in her workplace to ensure customer satisfaction. Thus, there must be set of conditions or context in which employees operate, and for E10, this means communicating with customers politely in terms of their needs. E10 explained that also ensured that she studied the society she was serving by analysing their communication styles and language use to know to how to properly address their needs. When asked about how she deals with communication challenges, E10 responded as follows:

> When I started working, I realised that the language I use to communicate with customers is different from what I thought I would use given what I was taught in the classroom. I assumed I had to use formal language when communicating with my customers, but I actually use informal language (not slang), and I keep the conversation professional). I have to give them information all the time and do not assume they already know because I am trained for the job. I also have to adapt to their communication styles. Sometimes, I did not know how

to pronounce my customers' names, so I would ask them to help me practice how to pronounce their names so that I do not offend them.

Similarly, to satisfy her clients' needs, E11 stated that she pulled a few tricks of her own; she said,

I had clients who spoke seTswana or seSotho; I could understand them, but I was not able to answer; I tried speaking their languages. That made them happy; I did not stop talking to them because they spoke a different language. I also tried to throw a few of their native words to impress them.

These participants (E10 and E11) ensured that they built long lasting relationships with their customers and clients by showing interest in who they (clients and customers) were. As posited by Nelson Mandela, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart" (Mandela 2013)." Had they not, it would have affected the relationships they had with their customers; ultimately, it would have had a negative impact on the finances of their organisations. This shows that effective communication has a positive impact on organisational success.

Other workplaces are so diverse that employees interact with people from other countries and continents. E9 and E11 stated that they interacted with people from United States of America (both E9 and E11), Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and many other African countries (E11). Diversity is emerging in organisations due to globalisation. To deal with the diversity occasioned by globalisation, it is essential to consider how communication can be used to bridge the gap between nationals and cultures. When working environments are globalised, multiculturalism is inevitable, and technologies have been noted as a tool to deal with effect of multiculturalism and globalisation. For example, there are many translating tools available online that are used in a linguistically diverse work environment. In addition, to meet globalisation demands in the workplace,

there is a need to improve on the genres learned in the classroom to equip students with appropriate communication tools.

When E11 was asked about what makes her different from her colleagues, she stated,

My communication skills are different. I know about different cultures, even cultures from abroad; in GLDY, we did not only study about South African cultures. As Zulus, we are stubborn regarding learning other people's languages. So that made some of my colleagues to always have quarrels with people from different cultural backgrounds from theirs. I always had to lecture them about differences in culture and how to overcome misunderstandings. Also, Zulus have this mentality of thinking that they are dominant in everything; so, that made it hard for other people from other ethnic groups. Zulus used to call others "amaShangane" and other discriminatory terms. "AmaShangane" is a demeaning term which is mostly used by Zulus to address people from the upper parts of the country. What E11's response shows is that her communication background or her study of GLDY has equipped her to rise above the narrow view of people who are ethnocentric. She realises that being ethnocentric is antithetical to the communication requirements in a society that is diverse. It is not possible to communicate interculturally if one holds the view that one's culture is better than others' culture. However, since GLDY equips participants with compulsory skills to deal with intercultural situations, E11 knew there is no need to be ethnocentric, unlike her colleagues who did not study GLDY.

Communication studies emphasise the issue of ethnocentrism in the workplace. According to Bizumic (2015), ethnocentrism, when simply put, is cultural ignorance. When other ethnic groups, as happens in E11's organisation, think their ethnic group is superior to other groups, it has a negative impact on intercultural communication, which refers to the common understanding and tolerance of people from other cultures and ethnic groups. When members of a group are discriminated against because of their ethnicity, they are likely to underperform, and there will be poor interpersonal

communication in the workplace, which is most likely to result in poor performance. Such relationships would be characterised by conflicts and poor role clarity from employees' superiors who are ethnocentric.

E11's response indicates that the Zulu ethnic group in her organisation had a superiority mentality and discriminated against other ethnic groups. However, as a Zulu person herself, E11 did not act like some members of her team who are ethnocentric because she understood that to build healthy relationships with her colleagues and people, she needed "be open-minded at all times, have empathy, respect, and choose words wisely", and as stated by E9, this assists in having a smooth communication process in the organisation.

E12 stated that she believes graduates effectively apply communication techniques they learned in class because as Language Practitioners, it is inevitable that one will work with people. So, if one masters the ability to communicate with different people effectively, as it is emphasised in GLDY, students will not face problems working in various kinds of institutions.

However, E1 faced communication challenges that occurred because of the change in environment whereby she did not know who to report to. These challenges caused strain between her and her supervisors. If there is strain or poor working relationships between an employee and his/her superiors, it affects performance (Usadolo, S.E. and Usadolo 2019). This tension in relationships between E1 and her superiors left her feeling that if she were to be supervised by someone who studied Language Practice or had background in communication, none of these problems would have occurred. There would not be problem because such superiors would know what is involved in interpersonal relationships and the communication required to maintain such relationships. According to Usadolo, S.E. and Usadolo (2019), when employees or subordinates feel that their needs are not being met by their superiors at work, they reciprocate with poor work performance (Usadolo 2016).The scenario explained by E1 shows a demoralised worker who, according to Usadolo, S.E. and Usadolo (2019: 246), is "likely to have poor

integration with other organisational members due to the lack of strong interpersonal relationships … with their supervisors".

E1's opinion also suggests that having someone who she can relate to would have provided her with a sense of belonging and made her feel like she was in the right place. E12 also mentioned that communication modules are not emphasised enough in universities; therefore, people leave university not sensitive to the need for appropriate communication. When such people are used to fill positions in organisations, interpersonal relationships that rely on strong communication in the workplace suffer. Hence, most graduates in the workplace are faced with communication challenges because their superiors lack the basics for communication in the workplace. Going back to the point made by E1, if her communication challenges were not dealt with, it would have affected other employees' work performance, which might have led to decreased productivity.

E7 said that her colleagues were regular people; even their manager was a friendly person. The data show that what is appropriate in one organisation may not be appropriate in other organisations. As such, it is important to understand the relationships formed and how such relationships affect communicative encounters in the workplace. Concerning E6, E7 and E8s' situations, these participants highlighted that before they were a part of the workplace activity system, they thought appropriateness in the workplace meant enforcement of strict professionalism. The concept of appropriateness as contained in Fisher's (2019: 254) explanation, means the acquisition of genres and using them where needed and not strictly about enforcement of workplace professionalism as stated by E6, E7 and E8.

E8 said that her workplace was too diverse in terms of differences in cultures from herself, her colleagues and her clients. However, E8 thinks this diversity strengthens the relationship between her superiors, her clients and herself because some of her superiors ensure she understands what needs to be done in the courtroom in the way they communicate about job activities to her. In contrast, E3 said that her workplace is very culturally diverse, and the dominant

cultural group is the Indian South African group. However, cultural diversity in her workplace sometimes caused conflict because of the cultural barriers and put a strain on the relationship she has with her colleagues. To deal with these communication and cultural barriers, she sectioned her audiences based on the kind of a relationship she has with the colleagues with whom she interacts and stated,

> I also used different communication channels with different people. I spoke to some people on one-on-one basis and had an open discussion, but with others, in most cases, I felt more comfortable if we were messaging or emailing each other. This allowed me to be free to communicate with everyone.

This data shows that E3 first understood the kind of relationships she had with her diverse colleagues, and it determined the genre she used to communicate with them, which means if she cannot talk face-to-face with her co-worker with whom she is comfortable communicating, she does have other options such as texting and emails at her disposal. Not having a close relationship with her other colleagues, however, does not stop her from interacting with them. This means she uses the genre that conveys the message when needed as she does not see the need to converse with them beyond one-on-one interactions.

4.9   Social media in the workplace communication context

Most of the participants referred to the use of social media in the workspace. Participants shared their thoughts about the emergence of technology in organisations and how that has led to the introduction of social media and social networks in their workspaces. E5 thinks the way he handles his interactions within the social media space sets him apart from the rest of his colleagues who did not study communication because he is able to use social media in a context that is relevant to his work, as opposed to his colleagues.

Furthermore, E2 talked about how lines usually become blurred when people interact using social media platforms. E5 agrees with the notion, stating that the youth usually does not conform to language rules while using social media

platforms for work purposes. However, communication studies (for example, GDLY) emphasise the use of formal language when interacting professionally. In addition, E7 said that as much as colleagues use social media for communicating, if ever one has grievances, one has to use the appropriate channels, which in most cases, do not include the use social media.

E12 also stated that genres such as social media platforms are dominant in the workplace. Hence, students should be taught about the ways of communicating using these genres, language and the manner of communicating using these genres. E11 also mentioned that in her workplace, they were given cell phones that are strictly for professional purposes. She said that they were trained regarding what to post for WhatsApp statuses, displaying pictures, even the numbers that should be saved.

4.10   Classroom versus workplace communication practice

Participants highlighted that when they entered the workplace, they expected to apply everything they learned in the classroom. However, they discovered that due to the workplace context, they still had to learn some things that they had not been taught in the classroom as well as some things that are not exactly how they remember them while they were studying. The participants' comments are consistent with Read and Michaud's (2015: 432) observation that genre learning in the classroom does not really translate easily in the workplace.

The participants' comments reflect the nature of education Language Practice graduates had. The education is theory-based courses, especially the GLDY course, with no opportunities of work placement or work integrated learning. In other words, graduates who are lucky enough to find a job, leave the classroom for the world of work without knowing what the work world looks like. E12, one the instructors teaching GLDY, said that students do not have what is called a "window" whereby they are given an opportunity to go and work for a specified period. However, she did assign students for a single day to visit organisations that are most likely to hire a language and communication graduate. She stated

that the field trips to these organisations often highlighted similarities between what she teaches in the classroom and the workplace; the only difference lies in the content of these contexts. She also added that the workplace teaches students what they already know from the classroom.

The analysis that follows lays out the different experiences graduates had regarding communication genres learned in the classroom as compared to those they learned when they entered the workplace. E1 said that GLDY taught her how to communicate with different audiences, especially being mindful of the culture of people when communicating using any of the workplace genres. Other participants agree with this statement, saying that due to the techniques they acquired in GLDY, they have the skills to communicate with different audiences, knowing that communication is about mutual understanding. This implies that the ways in which they learned communicating with different audiences was effective, and they are able to apply the knowledge they acquired in the classroom to the workplace.

Furthermore, E1 stated that when she communicates in the workplace, she tries to remember all the techniques she learned in GLDY, especially when dealing with complex or near-crisis situation. However, she did not learn everything she knows about communication in the workplace in the GLDY. She stated that APSL (Applied Second Language/isiZulu) and APFL (Applied First Language/English) also played a significant role in her communication skills because these subjects enhanced her isiZulu and English skills, which are two languages that are commonly used in her place of work. Similarly, E7 states that GLDY does not equip one effectively in terms of impromptu presentations; in the workplace a great many unprepared presentations take place. What helped is that she studied Public Speaking, where they were taught basic presentation skills. E1, E5, E6, E9 and E10 stated that time management is one important portion in communication learning that they did not acquire in GLDY, yet it is very important.

In addition, E1 stated that when lecturers assign students tasks, they give them stretched timeframes, whereas in the workplace, stretched timeframes is not

the case. So, the amount of time it takes graduates to finish tasks as new employees hinders them from performing their duties to their full capabilities because they may feel rushed, and this affects several of their communicative encounters in the workplace. As a new employee, it is normal that one may see things differently from how they were taught in the class, and this will be felt in terms of the time one takes to complete work activities as one is still learning the ropes.

It is also important to note that the discussion of discourse and genres in this study emphasises the context in which job activities are done. The consideration of context, discourse and genre is that the context in which the teaching of GLDY is taught and the context of application in the workplace may be different and even diametrically opposite. The difference may be felt in the way new employees reconcile what they have learnt in the class with what it takes to perform their job activities. E2 thinks that report writing is one aspect that they did not spend enough time learning in the classroom; however, it is important in the workplace. This has been recognised as a problem by scholars. For example, Heller and Morek (2014: 174) state academic discourse should include academic writing across different modules, and this will help graduates to excel in the workplace. Given the responses by the participants, a large portion of what they know about communication in the workplace (especially written communication such as report writing) is what they learned in the workplace.

Similarly, E4 describes how transitioning from the classroom to the workplace was not an easy journey because he had to adapt to the working environment, relying in some instances on some of the techniques he learned in the classroom. E2 remarked that the classroom teaches theory and made-up scenarios that imitate workplace situations, while the workplace teaches one how to do the work. He added that most of the scenarios used to teach are far from the contexts found in the workplace. Hence, transitioning from the classroom as a graduate to the workplace was not easy for most of the participants.

E1, apart from the rushed nature of workplace activities, which is about time management, regards herself as someone who studied GLDY with the idea of communicating effectively. As such, she breaks down communication barriers (culture, stereotypes, perceptions and ethnocentrism, etc.) and provides solutions to communication challenges by applying what she studied about communication. E4 is of the same view as E1, who stated that whatever constitutes or would constitute communication barriers in his workplace, he identifies them and proactively eliminates them where possible or flags them as issues to deal with cautiously as they apply to employees' workplace relationships. E4 emphasised that the teaching of GLDY modules was very emphatic on those factors that could constitute communication barriers in the workplace, even though the scenarios in which they would happen were not taught. E1 and E4s' responses show that they are able adapt what they learn to workplace situations.

For E5, the skills he learned in GLDY helped him to secure a job because as a journalist, he was shortlisted based on his written communication skills. E5 stated that basic communication skills are covered in GLDY, such as how to write an email, a letter, a memo, and other communication genres. He stated that journalistic skills were not a part of GLDY package; he thinks they should be part of the package because Language Practice graduates stand a chance of being journalists due to the impeccable writing skills they possess. E5's comment has demonstrated the essence of the interdisciplinary nature of GLDY. Although the GLDY course is meant to make graduates fit into the workplace and deal with communication issues effectively, some aspects of the course such as business communication and professional writing in terms of the correct use of grammar, spelling, and punctuation have helped E5 to work as a journalist. E5 further stated,

> GLDY played a huge role in what I know about communication in the workplace. A least 70-80% of what I know about communication in the workplace, I learned in GLDY, but there were training programmes offered by the Independent Newspaper to teach us, as interns, about

how the organisation operates. I was able to integrate what I learned in GLDY with what I learned in those training programmes. I have discovered that the workplace is a very complex environment. Being a graduate, I expected to have it easy, only to find out that, even though I am qualified, in the workplace, you learn something new every day.

On the other hand, E7 said that GLDY helps one understand how other people communicate and that one's own language is not the only language that one will find in the workplace communication context. Therefore, one will have to find a common ground to communicate effectively, meaning, if as a graduate in the workplace, one encounters different languages in the workplace; moreover, there is a possibility of encountering genres that are different from those learned in the classroom and emphasised in the GLDY course.

The GLDY course is not language teaching but does emphasise the central role of language in the workplace especially in the South African context where there are eleven official languages. As a communication study, it prepares students with skills to communicate effectively with people who do not speak the same language. The same applies to the occurrence of difference genres: communication studies should equip students with skills to use. E12 stated that the syllabus does not allow her to teach every genre that emerges, but the basic communication techniques taught in the classroom effectively equip students for any communication situation and the complexity of workplace that requires different genres. E9 believed GLDY gave her a foundation for how language is used in different contexts, how to analyse discourse and writing for different types of situations, and how to choose and use the genre that helps to convey messages to the audience.

4.11   Communication genres usage

All participants were asked about the genres they learned about in the classroom and those they found in the workplace. This was done because employees in the workplace need to be well-equipped to deal with changes in

the organisation. One of the ways this is done at school level is through teaching students the different workplace communication genres and how technologies could be useful when using genres in the workplace context.

Most of the of the participants stated that they used telephones as means of communicating in their organisations, which they studied in the classroom. The participants recalled studying reports and memoranda in the classroom, which are genres chosen for this study, but the memoranda genre is not common in the workplace. Memoranda seem not to be common because technology-enabled communication such electronic mail (email) has been embraced. In place of what was done internally in the form of memorandum is email to facilitate communication between employees and management. Sometimes, the nature of communication may be synchronous or asynchronous but, in both cases, feedback, which is very important in interpersonal communication, is possible with email. Email is one of the transformations that has taken place in the workplace communication, but it is not clear from the data analysed whether this has been embraced comfortably by the participants interviewed.

Some participants commented that they use reports (written and verbal) in the workplace. Participants mentioned that they do not use written reports as often as they use verbal reports. E9 mentioned that in her organisation, written reports were prepared monthly, and the reports she submitted were handwritten and hand delivered to her supervisor. E10 stated that since she worked for an international company, in her organisation, they had an online system that they used to fill in their reports; the report was not as traditional as a narrated report. She stated that the system they used was more technologically mediated and advanced, which is why it was part of the training programme when she started working. Thus, it is important that communication studies teach students different report writing styles that may not be specific because students need to know that some organisations, especially those who are advanced technologically, may require them to report electronically as opposed to the traditional way of filing a report.

Reporting takes place in organisation across different fields. Hence AT emphasises the need to study how people use their tools, language and genres (Kain and wardle 2005: 130). Tools as considered by AT can be likened to communication used to convey messages. The data collected also conveys that genre usage differs from one setting to the other due to preferences, resources, functionality, and the goals employees are aiming to achieve. For instance, one common genre can serve different purposes in different settings, and the level of its importance differs from one context to the next. For instance, one organisation may prioritise communicating using the telephone over email because the working environment is fast paced and some messages may require instant attention. E5 also mentioned that he uses text and cell phone to communicate with the editor of his organisation when he is working outside the office because sometimes emails notifications take time.

Thus, it is important that genres learnt in the classroom prepare students for different situations and activities once they enter the workplace. In line with this, E12 stated that communication evolves over time and being a lecturer and a part of a society, she is aware of this evolution. However, the syllabus does not shift when communication shifts, so they only teach the standard ways of communicating and standard communication genres. Thus, she takes it upon herself to inform students about these shifts so that when they enter the workplace, they are not surprised.

Considering this, the use of language should be emphasised in genre learning since discourse mentions that the way students write also has an impact on other aspects and contexts in which they are writing. For instance, E5 stated,

> Basic communication skills are covered in GLDY, such as how to write an email, a letter, a memo, and other communication genres. Applying writing techniques learned in GLDY, alone helped me secure myself employment because I had to write an essay and send it through email for me to be even considered for the post. Working in an environment that uses emails for paper trails, phone calls, reports, and diaries,

having learned techniques of the above communication genres helped a lot.

E5 aimed to secure himself employment, and he was able to communicate his language and communication skills to the point that he got the job. Most employers are particular about the type of skills the individual they are considering hiring possess. Thus, for E5 to secure himself a job shows that the way one projects one's genre skill and knowledge may help in landing a job, which is most graduates' goals.

According to discourse, the goals and purposes of individuals involved in a communication activity, tools to produce the product, rules that govern the process, and the ultimate desired outcome are important (see Gee 2002). Regarding this, E1 stated that when sending an email to her supervisor, she does not use formal language; in the salutation, she addresses her as *Sisi* (sister) because there were no rules against addressing her supervisor as *Sisi*. However, she said when she encountered communication problems relating to the hierarchy of her organisation as a new employee in the workplace, she did not know the accepted strategy or appropriate process to follow to voice her grievances. What E1 described is not knowing the appropriate process to voice her grievances, and this happens when employees are not properly inducted or given orientation about the organisational communication processes as it applies to leadership structures and the power vested on them.

Participants were asked about the genres they used for communication in the workplace but did not study in the classroom. Participants mentioned social media platforms such as WhatsApp, word of mouth when communicating work related information, text (SMS), to name a few. E9 stated that WhatsApp is a communication genre that is quite helpful and convenient in the workplace because it is both synchronous and asynchronous, but generally, it helps to complete work activities without delay.

The responses above show that communication is dynamic, which means it changes overtime. This change is influenced mostly by the emergence of new

communication technologies in organisations. For instance, people in organisations use cell phones to perform their tasks, and cell phones enable them to make phone calls, send texts, use social media platforms, and access their emails and social networks, amongst other tasks that can be performed using a smartphone.

It would be a great idea to introduce social media and social network contents into communication modules as many contemporary people have made a career through social media. The introduction of social media as one of the GLDY components would enable students to be more familiar with the use of social media in the workplace. This does not dispute the fact that writing abilities are learnt in communication studies help one's writing abilities across different genres and platforms, which include social media. Second, media houses and publishing companies are shifting towards online publications (newspapers, magazines, journals, books). Thus, it is critical that students be equipped with appropriate genres they will use in their future places of employment.

4.12   Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of data. The data was grouped into themes based on similarities and differences evident in participants' responses. The responses were then discussed in detail with reference to theories such as discourse, genre and activity theory in the discussion of the data.

The analysis in this chapter highlighted the importance of understanding the context in which one is communicating. This is because if one understands the context, one will communicate effectively by addressing one's audiences appropriately, using the correct genres to formulate and keep long lasting relationships with whomever one is communicating.

5. Chapter Five: Summary, recommendation, and suggestions for further studies

5.1   Introduction

The previous chapter offered an analysis and discussion of the interview data provided by participants in the study. The current and final chapter will conclude the study wherein the summary of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations and suggestions for further studies will be discussed.

The aim of this research was to ascertain whether communication learnt in the classroom is applicable in workplace communication activities and the following objectives informed the research undertaken:

- To study the significance of GLDY in preparing students for communication practices in the workplace context.

- To investigate aspects of workplace communication that the teaching of GLDY has not satisfactorily addressed.

To achieve these aims, discourse genres in the transition between the classroom and the workplace were investigated. The report commenced with the introduction chapter, followed by literature review, methodology, data analysis and interpretation and the final chapter, which concludes the study. These chapters are summarised below.

5.2   Summary of the study

The first chapter, the introductory chapter of the study, briefly highlighted every aspect of the study. The introduction chapter captured important parts of the study to engage the reader so that they have an idea of the focus of the study. In this chapter, the background of the study, research problem, research questions, significance of the study and an overview of the research methodology were discussed to validate reasons for conducting the study. This segment of the first chapter provided background information about the

institution and subject under study. This segment also outlined topics that are covered in GLDY.

The second chapter of the study discussed concepts that apply to this study. In this chapter, concepts such as AT, discourse and genres were defined and discussed in detail in terms of their relation to the current study. Regarding the discussion of AT, components such as contradictions; new perspectives on contradictions, known as double binds; and the subject, object, and outcome were addressed. AT theory was viewed as a construct that enables a researcher to investigate human activity from different angles, and this study chose to focus on communication practices.

In this section, the relationship between the object, subject and outcome during a communication activity was also discussed. It was mentioned that the relationship among the three concepts should be investigated to fully understand the challenges, experiences, goals, personal traits and attributes, and behaviour and contexts under which the communication activities occur. When investigating the activity, elements such as contradictions and paradigm shifts were noted as they may have an impact on how communication is practiced in the workplace.

It was also discussed that contradictions in communication are caused by paradigm shifts in the workplace such as the introduction to new technologies, multiculturalisation or cultural diversity or globalisation. It is important for communication studies to evolve since communication evolves overtime. Due to new technologies being introduced in the world of work, it means new genres are also introduced to keep up with these implementations. It was then discussed that these implementations to work activities impact genre use as much as genre use is influenced by these implementations to work activities, and this is known as double binds (Fisher 2019: 245).

The argument about discourse in the classroom and workplace was focused on communication from an academic and professional position. This is why the argument that discourse was going to be viewed from both angles is mentioned

in the discourse part of the literature review. The relation of discourse to this study was discussed to demonstrate that communication can be studied beyond words and sounds; discourse also involves meanings, motivations, tools, and the relationships of individuals involved in a communication activity or context, among other elements that construct a successful communication activity. It was noted that communication studies should prepare students with abilities to communicate in the classroom and outside the classroom because classroom discourse does not only focus on language but also other constituents. Workplace discourse was also discussed as communication that occurs in organisations; hence graduates' experiences as new actors in the workplace communication context were also investigated in this study.

It was noted that genres chosen for this study included memos and reports; however, data from sampled individuals was inclusive of other genres like word of mouth, email, telephone, texts, social media, diaries and meetings. When discussing genres, writing was denoted as the most important element in communication because if projected poorly, it shows not only how students communicate but also their responses to assignments and how they interpret and understand other subjects as well. This means better communicators are most likely to receive better marks in other subjects because the way students respond shows whether they understand instructions and are able to respond accordingly, which communicates comprehension. However, it is mentioned that motivations for writing in the classroom and workplace are not the same because students have different goals to that of employees.

In the third chapter, the methodology chosen for the study was discussed; this included discussion of research paradigms such as positivism, post-positivism, and interpretivism, as well as aspects of the methodology adopted, including population, sampling method, data collection procedures, validity and reliability, anonymity and confidentiality and informed consent, which were discussed according to how they applied to the study. It was noted that the qualitative research methodology was chosen for the current, a decision which is congruent with the interpretivism paradigm.

In this chapter, the relationship between the qualitative methodology and the interpretivism paradigm was explained in so much as the qualitative research methodology employed deals with real life events and allows sampled individuals to share their lived experiences and opinions. The interpretivism paradigm allows a researcher to study the meaning behind the realities lived by individuals who share similar cultural backgrounds and worldviews. In contrast, the other two paradigms (positivism and post-positivism paradigms) were not chosen for the study because they are mostly associated with quantitative studies (positivism paradigm) and mixed research methods (post-positivism). It was noted that a quantitative research methodology usually deals with numerical and scientific studies that require the research to validate or invalidate a phenomenon or a hypothesis, which is the reason this method was not chosen for the current study that deals with understanding human behaviours.

In the methodology chapter, population was discussed and defined as the largest population at which a study is directed. It was discussed that there are three stages when choosing a population that align with a study. These include the general population, which is the largest population; the target population, which includes individuals who meet the selection criteria of the study; and the accessible population, which are those individuals who meet the requirement criteria of the study and are willing and available to participate in the study.

After going through all the population selection stages, a sampling method was discussed. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were chosen to facilitate the process of selecting samples for the current study. These methods were chosen because they enabled the selection of individuals who met the requirements for the study based on their knowledge of the GLDY. Thereafter, sampled individuals referred additional subjects who met the study's selection criteria to participate in the study, also known as the chain referral sampling method. The study's sampled individuals included communication graduates in the workplace and the GLDY instructor.

Data collection and interview procedures were discussed. Semi-structured interviews as a means for data collection allowed the preparation of standard interview questions and room to ask further clarificatory questions when needed. Interviewees were also given the opportunity to provide in-depth responses.

Qualitative data analysis was discussed in detail as a process of uncovering, breaking down and making meaning out of the interview data provided by the participants. Interview data was recorded and later transcribed so that the interviewer could record important information. Coding and themes were discussed as subsequent phases after transcription. Coding and the creation of themes were achieved by employing a thematic analysis strategy that allows going back and forth within the transcribed data to ensure what was meant by the participants during the interviewing sessions was discussed. Furthermore, due to confidentiality requirements, participants were coded as "E" with a number, for instance, employee one is E1, employee two is E2, and so forth, up to the last participant. Last, data that were extracted from interviews were then analysed and interpreted by grouping responses according to their similarities and differences to form an argument as well as make observations about how these responses aligned to the literature discussed in this study.

To ensure trustworthiness of the study, attachment to the study was avoided; a researcher must be impartial and ensure that the study is accessible, assessable and transparent. A study is trustworthy if it is credible, transferable, confirmable, or dependable. These concepts were explained in terms of how they apply to this study. The ethical considerations of using pseudonyms so that participants remained anonymous and the data that they shared remained confidential between the two parties were followed. Consent letters, letters of information and gatekeeper letters were issued to ensure that sampled individuals provided consent and they knew what was expected of them before agreeing to be a part of the study.

5.2.1 Summary of the findings

The current study sought to investigate discourse genres as studied in the classroom and applied in the workplace communication context. Using a qualitative methodology and AT as an analytic lens, the data that were collected through semi-structured interviews were analysed and discussed in line with the objectives of the study. The aim of the study was to ascertain whether communication learnt in the classroom is applicable in workplace communication activities. The research questions were as follows:

- How significant is GLDY in preparing students for communication practices in the workplace context?

- What are the aspects of workplace communication that the teaching of GLDY has not satisfactorily addressed?

Findings from the current study highlight the significance of GLDY in preparing students for different and complex communication situations in the workplace. Most participants stated that the study of GLDY assisted them in acquiring basic communication skills that enabled them to identify, analyse and solve communication challenges in the workplace. Participants mentioned that GLDY assisted them to identify different aspects of communication that other individuals who did not study communication overlooked. For instance, the importance of identifying the relationship one has with the individuals one is interacting with to ensure correct genres to communicate are chosen was highlighted.

Findings also highlighted that GLDY is significant in terms of preparing students for different communication contexts in the workplace because most participants mentioned that versatility and the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that they acquired in GLDY set them apart from other employees when it comes to communication. Finally, participants posited that communication techniques that they learned in GLDY assisted them with building healthy working relationships with their colleagues, clients and superiors.

In the current research aspects of workplace communication that GLDY has not satisfactorily addressed were also investigated. Findings revealed that students encountered a number of communication challenges in their professions as new actors. These challenges included differences in dialects, registers and accents between some of the participants and their clients. Another challenge was that GLDY could not equip students with some of the most common communication genres that are found in organisations such as social media. Findings also highlighted that GLDY could not teach students about each and every communication style, language variation, nor genre found in the workplace: GLDY can only teach standard language and communication techniques, genre included, that are applicable in any communication context in the workplace.

As stated by Genc (2017:511), communication is a crucial aspect in everyday life, no matter the field. For example, if one works as a receptionist or administrative clerk, one requires effective and efficient communication abilities because one interacts with people frequently. Findings from the current study indicate that the everyday life of most of the participants involves interactions with different people, which affect their communication practices in their workplaces.

The data show that GLDY played a significant role in instilling professionalism in participants. As posited by Genc (2017: 512), to sustain effective communication in the workplace, it is important that superiors employ approaches that enforce the correct and appropriate use of workplace communication modes. In this respect, the current study also served as an awareness on the Language Practice course; during the interview sessions, some participants mentioned that they faced some difficulties as new employees because their superiors and colleagues were not qualified Language Practitioners or did not have communication background. As Language Practitioners, they were taught how to deal with different people from different backgrounds, they knew how to handle such situations and even emphasised the importance of communication to their colleagues. Participants

mentioned that there are genres that they found in the workplace that they did not study in the classroom, for an example, social media, word of mouth and meetings. Among genres they use in the workplace that they also studied in GLDY, they mentioned memorandum, emails, reports, and telephones.

Participants stated that this difference was caused by the classroom and workplace communication contexts not being the same and influenced by the prevailing situations. Moreover, communication evolves, so genres learnt while studying in classroom, which are mostly basic, may not apply; moreover, workplace genres change overtime due to changes in technology, globalisation and multiculturalism. All these changes play their role in the use of workplace communication genres and communication practices in general. However, participants highlighted that as much as classroom genres may be different and basic, the skills they learned in the classroom were effective to transition basic genre knowledge when communicating using any of the genres characteristic of workplace situations.

Interview data also highlighted the expectations of the workplace communication contexts graduates had before becoming a part of the workplace against their lived experiences in their organisations. This study's participants had different views of their expectations as new actors in the workplace and their lived experiences as they became used to communicating in their organisations. Participants mentioned that they expected communication practices in the workplace to match those learned in the classroom because they assumed that what they studied was going to be applied as taught in the classroom. Some of the participants had high expectations of the workplace communication context, to the point that when their expectations were not met, they encountered difficulties. Those participants who did not have high expectations of the workplace communication context did not encounter many hindrances as compared to those who had high expectations.

5.3   Recommendations

In the current study, light was shed on the challenges and experiences faced by communication students when they transition their communication knowledge into a different context, namely, the workplace. Graduates' challenges and experiences in the workplace were captured in this study.

Although not examined in this study, it was tacitly clear in some participants' responses that modern communication platforms would enhance the performance of their job activities in the workplace. It is recommended, therefore, that GLDY course contents include teaching of communication applications such as Zoom, MS Teams or Skype, to name a few. The teaching should focus on how the communication tools are used for work purposes. These are communication platforms that integrate many functions, and students need to be familiar with the functions in order to be better prepared to deal with how multi-dimensional workplace communication and work tasks are.

In general, graduates found the contents of GLDY useful in their workplace; however, most of the challenges they had could have been mitigated if the GLDY course involved work placements or internships where students are placed in the world of work to practise what they learned theoretically. That the LP course incorporate internships to complement the theoretical base of the course is recommended.

5.4   Limitations of the study

One of the ways to generalise the findings in a study is to ensure that a significant proportion of participants that represent the identified population of a study are interviewed. This was not possible in this study due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated restrictive lockdown. Thus, one-on-one or remote interviews with some participants who had earlier indicated an interest to participate in this study did not take place. Thus, a smaller number of participants were interviewed. However, the findings can be extrapolated in that the study met the basic number of participants for a qualitative study (see Etikan et al. 2015: 1).

Another limitation is that the study only focused on participants in the eThekwini Municipality, Durban. There are graduates of the DUT who did the LP course working across the country who could have participated, but because of the constraints of finance, time, and distance, this was not possible. This is a limitation to this study, but it is not expected to affect the findings and generalisation of the findings as the findings reported are consistent with the published literature reviewed.

This study is a qualitative study. Using a mixed method would have enabled the study to be subjected to different methods and analysis and would have enriched the analysis. However, as the study was mainly probing behaviours regarding communication activities in the workplace, the belief is that the findings reported, and the discussion of the findings are robust enough for a study at this level.

5.5   Suggestions for further studies

This study was conducted using a single research method, which was the qualitative research method. Thus, using a different research methodology to confirm the results as well as gain new perspectives on the topic is suggested. Specifically, the use of the mixed research method, which simultaneously employs two or more research methods, is suggested. In other words, it would be helpful if the same study can be conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This can be done because O'Byrne (2007: 1382) suggested that using qualitative and quantitative research methodologies concurrently also enables the use of different types of research approaches by collecting data through questionnaires, interviews, or observational procedures. Using two or more procedures simultaneously improves validity and reliability of the data and their interpretation.

There is also a need for the similar study to be conducted by sampling participants across the country because South Africa has different languages and cultures. More specifically, the issues in this investigation reflect Durban

contexts whereas there are Language Practice graduates who work in different parts of KwaZulu-Natal and other provinces who were not a part of the current investigation. Their contribution might have yielded different outcomes.

It is suggested that a similar study to be conducted focusing on different communication courses to produce different insights from those obtained from Language Practice graduates in the workplace. This might reveal what other communication courses offer in terms of preparing students for different communication contexts of the workplace. In addition, it is suggested that future research include more instructors to provide a broader range of feedback regarding the course and how it relates to the workplace and students. It would also be interesting to discover how non-Zulu speakers who work in the KZN province experience the workplace as Language Practice graduates. Last, it is suggested that future research focusing on different genres from the ones that were the primary focus in this study. These genres could include video communication platforms such as Zoom, Skype or MS Teams, which are used for workplace communication purposes, especially during this period of the COVID-19 pandemic that has resulted in the emergence of small and home offices

5.6   Conclusion

The current chapter was focused on a summary of the study's findings, problems and limitations, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies. First, what the current study sought to investigate was outlined by briefly discussing the aim and objectives of the study. Then, a summary of methodology employed was provided, followed by a summary of the findings. Thereafter, the limitations of the study and recommendations and suggestions for further studies were addressed.

In this investigation, the most important aspects of organisational communication as well as how communication is learned in class to fully prepare students for workplace communication challenges was unpacked.

This was done to demonstrate the dynamics and criticality of workplace communication practices.

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7. Appendices

7.1   Appendix A: Letter of information

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Study: A comparative study investigating discourse genres in the transition between the classroom and the workplace, with reference to Language Practice at a university of technology.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Nonkanyiso S. Khanyile, Bachelor of Technology in Language Practice

Supervisor/s: Dr Sam Erevbenagie Usadolo, Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

Co-supervisor: Ms. Zizipho Mdletye, MPhil

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: The aim of the study is to investigate communication practices of Language Practice graduates in the workplace, focusing on written communication methods such as memos and reports. These written communication methods are then to be compared to communication practice skills learned in Language Practice at the Durban University of Technology, focusing on written English communication methods, to investigate whether what is studied is applicable in the workplace communication context.

Outline of the Procedures: As a targeted participant, you will be invited to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. Due to the pandemic, social distancing rules will be applied. If you feel uncomfortable with a one-on-one interview, a telephonic interview option will be made available.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: No risk or discomfort may occur during interviewing sessions.

Benefits: Your involvement will add to the body of knowledge to cover an academic gap about the topic.

Reason/s the Participant May Withdraw from the Study: Your involvement is voluntary, and you may withdraw anytime if you feel you no longer want to be a part of the study.

Remuneration: As a participant you will not receive any form of remuneration.

Costs of the Study: There are no costs that you as a participant are expected to cover.

Confidentiality: This study will abide by the Durban University of Technology code of ethics, which emphasises confidentiality; so, you will be given aliases to protect your identity, and information about you will reported anonymously.

Research-related Injury: N/A

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

Please contact the researcher, Nonkanyiso Khanyile (0762944741), or supervisor Dr Sam Erevbanagie Usadolo (0313732837) or the Research Director Dr Linganiso on 031 373 2326.

7.2 Appendix B: Consent

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher,
  <u>Nonkanyiso Siphephile Khanyile</u>

  about the nature, conduct, benefits, and risks of this study as part of the Research Ethics Clearance protocol.

  Number: ____,

- I have received, read, and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.

- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.

- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.

- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent for participation in the study.

- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research that may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant   **Date**   **Time**   **Signature / Right**

Thumbprint

I, Nonkanyiso Siphephile Khanyile, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the study in which he/she will participate.

Full Name of Researcher   **Date**   **Signature**

Full Name of Witness   **Date**   **Signature**
(If applicable)

Full Name of Legal Guardian   **Date**   **Signature**
(If applicable)

7.3.1 Appendix C1: Permission to Conduct Research (DUT)

2020/12/16

Dr Linda Linganiso

2nd Floor, Berwyn Court

Gate 1, Steve Biko Road

Durban

4001

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Dr Linganiso,

My name is Nonkanyiso Siphephile Khanyile, a Master of Language Practice student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's dissertation involves a comparative study investigating discourse genres in the transition between the classroom and the workplace, with reference to Language Practice at a University of Technology.

I am hereby seeking your consent for permission to conduct research at the Durban University of Technology. I have provided you with a copy of my proposal, which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter that I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 076 2944 74 or via email at sphehkhanyile@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Nonkanyiso S. Khanyile

Durban University of Technology

7.3.2 Appendix C2: Permission to Conduct Research (Organisations)

2020/12/16

To whom it may concern

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Dr Sir/ Madam

My name is Nonkanyiso Siphephile Khanyile, a Master of Language Practice student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's dissertation involves a comparative study investigating discourse genres in the transition between the classroom and the workplace, with reference to Language Practice at a University of Technology.

I am hereby seeking your consent for permission to conduct research in your organisation.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal, which includes information about the data collection tools and consent and/or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter that I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 076 2944 74, or via email at sphehkhanyile@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Nonkanyiso S. Khanyile

Durban University of Technology

7.4.1 Appendix D1: Interview schedule (employee)

Start Time: **Organisation:**

End Time: **Job Title:**

Date:

Note to respondents.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

The purpose of this research is to study the communication practices at workplaces where Language Practice students are employed, focusing on written communication methods, which include memos and reports. This endeavour seeks to discover whether or not communication practices learned are applicable in the workplace context.

The aim of this interview is to determine if communication practices learned in GLDY 301-303 adequately prepare students for the complex communication situations of a workplace.

Please indicate if you have any questions.

Thank you.

N. S Khanyile.

Phase One: Interview Schedule One (employee semi structured interview questions)

S.1. Are communication practices learned in General Language Dynamics 301 to 303 at the Durban University of Technology applicable in the workplace communication context?

1.1. What is the significance of GLDY 301-303 in preparing students for communication practices of the workplace context?

a) What role do you think GLDY 301-303 plays in learning workplace communication practices?

b) What has been your experience when applying the techniques you have learned in GLDY 301-303 at work?

c) Is everything you know about communicating in the workplace what you studied in GLDY 301-303?

d) What skills did you not learn about in the GLDY 301-303, yet are important for an employee to have in the workplace?

e) Are there challenges you faced as a new employee that challenged the way you communicated?

f) What techniques you learned in GLDY 301-303 do you use to solve communication challenges in the workplace?

g) What makes you different from other people in your workplace who did not study communication when it comes to resolving communication challenges?

h) What is your role as a language practitioner in the workplace communication context?

1.2. What are your communication experiences in the workplace communication activity system as a new employee?

a) What were your expectations of the workplace before being a part of it?

b) When you started working, were your expectations met?

c) In your experience, did you swiftly become used to communicating at your workplace?

d) How diverse are cultures in your organisation?

e) Which cultural groups are dominant in your workplace?

f) How does this diversity influence the way you communicate in your workplace?

g) What language is used as a medium of communication in your workplace?

h) Does the medium of instruction used in your workplace affect the way you communicate? If yes, how?

1.3. *Is there an alignment between the way you were taught workplace communication in GLDY 301-303 and how it is applied in the workplace?*

a) Are there similarities between how you learned communication practices in the classroom and how you apply them at your workplace?

b) If yes, what are those similarities?

c) Are there any differences between how you acquired communication practices in the classroom and how you apply them at your workplace?

d) If yes, what are those differences?

e) Are there new communication modes you found in the workplace that you did not study in GLDY 301-303?

f) How different are communication modes you use for communication in your workplace from those you use for communication outside your workplace for personal purposes?

g) Do you think communication skills you learned in GLDY are applicable in the real world of work?

Thank you.

N. S. Khanyile

7.4.2 Appendix D2: Interview schedule (Instructor)

Start Time: **Organisation:**

End Time: **Job Title:**

Date:

Note to respondents.

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this interview.

The purpose of this research is to study the communication practices at workplaces at Language Practice students are employed, focusing on written communication methods, which include memos and reports. This endeavour seeks to discover whether communication practices learned are applicable in the workplace context.

The aim of this interview is to determine if communication practices learned in GLDY 301-303 adequately prepare students for the complex communication situations of a workplace.

Please indicate if you have any questions.

Thank you.

N. S Khanyile.

Phase two: interview two (instructor semi-structured interview questions)

S2. Do the principles of teaching communication methods at the DUT adequately prepare students for the workplace?

2.1. Do communication principles taught in GLDY 101-103 match those of the workplace?

   a) Do communication methods the students are taught introduce them to those practiced in the workplace?

   b) Are there similarities between workplace and classroom communication practices?

   c) Are there differences between workplace and classroom communication practices?

   d) Do you think students effectively apply communication principles learned in the classroom once they enter the workplace?

   e) What do you think hinders them from effectively applying these principles?

   f) What skill do you think is the most important for students to acquire before they graduate?

   g) Does the way in which communication methods are taught improve students' communication abilities?

2.2. How diverse are communication genres found in the classroom?

   a) Do genres taught in GLDY revolve to accommodate the ever-changing workplace communication genres?

   b) What genres are more dominant in the workplace?

   c) Are these genres found in the classroom communication contexts?

   d) Is it possible to teach students genres that are workplace specific?

2.3. Does GLDY prepare students for professional workplace situations?

   a) Do you think all workplaces require professionalism?

   b) As a communications lecturer, what do you do to ensure that students are prepared for professional workplace situations?

    c) Do you think students are versatile enough to function in any kind of working environment with the skills they have after graduating?

2.4.   Are there similarities between the classroom and workplace communication contexts?

a)   Do students face any challenges when acquiring workplace communication?

b)   What are those challenges?

c)   Do you think these challenges are transferred into the workplace if not dealt with?

d)   What is your role as a communications' instructor to combat these challenges?

7.5 Appendix E

Table 1 - Main strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research

Strengths	Weaknesses
4. View of standard investigation	1. Results are not objective
5. Ability to resolve many problems at once due to the level of broadness it possesses	2. Requires intensive interviewing skills
6. The ability to understand people's behaviours, morals, principles, and traditions.	3. Interviewing processes and data analysis are time consuming.