

Students' and Staff Perceptions of the Efficacy of English Language Literacy Support Programmes for Students at a Previously Disadvantaged Higher Education Institution in South Africa

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ABSTRACT This study, informed by the academic literacies approach, was part of a broader study that sought to establish students' perceptions of the efficacy of the English language interventions at a university using a case methodology. A sample of 142 students responded to a structured questionnaire on English Language Literacy Support Programmes for Students offered by the University's Writing Centre. The non-probability sampling method was used in selecting the students. Data were also collected through an interview with three university officials for triangulation purposes. Questionnaire data were quantitatively analysed (statistical frequencies) while interview data were qualitatively analysed by discerning themes. Paradoxically, the findings indicated that the students did not perceive themselves as weak in English (an aspect refuted by the interviewed officials) but indicated that they were in need of English language support. The study concluded that the English Language support services were therefore not as effective as they should be since few of the students made use of them. It is recommended that the English Language support services need improvement in terms of space, human and e-resources to support teaching and learning. Moreover university authorities should seriously consider implementing a compulsory assessment test for all new entrants whose mother tongue is not English to identify those in need of such support.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Institutions of higher learning, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, face challenges in producing and distributing knowledge (Ondari Okemwa 2011). A unique challenge relates to high academic failure rates of students (Potgieter et al. 2008). This is attributed partly to the lack of adequate academic support for students after they have been admitted. Academic support or development is very necessary, since research in South Africa, in particular (Herman 1995; Yeld and Haack 1997; Ayliff 2001; Moyo 2001; Skead 2006; Archer 2010; 2012; Harran et al. 2011; Makura et al. 2011) shows that many students are underprepared for tertiary education. Many South African universities have instituted academic support programmes to assist such students.

Universities are expected to produce 'knowledge workers for the knowledge economy' (Ondari-Okemwa 2011:1447). Examples of support or academic development programmes meant to produce knowledgeable students in South Africa for instance include the Academic Literacy programme, Peer Assisted Learning, the Writing Centre (WC) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) programmes. The objective of this study was to investigate students' and staff perceptions of the efficacy of the English Language support services at one of South Africa's institution of higher learning located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. A subsidiary aim was to demonstrate and market academic interventions and processes of some Universities to a wider audience. The University studied is one of the merged institutions of higher learning that resulted from the restructuring (merger) of the higher education sector in South Africa.

Most merged institutions of higher learning are faced with many problems, such as students' financial exclusion, access and under-preparedness (Skead 2006; Hlalele and Alexander 2012). Students naturally face plethora challenges par-

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ticularly a lack of English Language competency. Although this lack of English language proficiency may not be an unusual occurrence at institutions of higher learning, nationally and internationally (Moyo 1995, 2001; Dlamini 1998; Ayliff 2001; Webb 2002; Arkoudis and Tran 2010; Mapes 2011; Archer 2012; du Preez and Fossey 2012; Woollacott et al. 2012), it appears to be a more serious phenomenon at one of this university's campuses. The researchers posited that because the campus is in a predominantly isiXhosa speaking region, first language influences and academic background impact on students' English language acquisition.

Students at the particular university are not expected to do assessment tests to gauge their level of English proficiency. Most students are enrolled, because of their Matriculation (Matric) results. Matriculation is the final stage in a high school student's learning prior to entry into higher education on completion of a National Senior Certificate. Such a certificate enables a student to pursue degree, diploma or certificate studies at a higher education institution. At university, some students are placed into the mainstream group (expected to do a programme within the normal/stipulated time for example, 3 years) and the extended programme (doing a programme a year more than is the norm). Normally, the former are students that meet the legal requirements to pursue degree studies. The latter are a cohort that is on the threshold (that is, they show potential to pursue degree studies but have weak Matric results).

The Need for Academic Support for Students at Institutions of Higher Learning

Research on how to improve English proficiency at these institutions therefore abound nationally and internationally (Ayliff 2001; Webb 2002; Arkoudis and Tran 2010; Harran et al 2011; Archer 2012; du Preez and Fossey 2012; Woollacott et al. 2012). These studies have given rise to different approaches to teaching and learning, such as New Literacy Studies of the late 80's (Gee 1990) and multimodal design writing (Archer 2012). A study by Webb (2002) in South Africa highlights the necessity of ensuring that students receive adequate support to enable them to become proficient in English while Archer (2012) explored the visual and verbal nature of reflective writing. Some aca-

ademic problems are rooted in the apartheid legacy and the problematic nature of pre-tertiary education whereby students develop and bring into higher education (with deleterious consequences), undesirable behaviours such as rote learning and uncritical reliance on teachers and textbooks (Woollacott et al. 2012).

The researchers have also casually observed that most isiXhosa-speaking students understand the importance of the English language and desire to improve speaking it. In addressing the problem of students' lack of English Language proficiency internationally, universities have instituted various support services. Davies (2007) for instance has researched on Computer Assisted Language Learning. Arkoudis and Tran (2010) looked into students and lecturers' perceptions of the support offered to international students. Harran et al. (2011) showed the effect of Writing Centre document/assignment electronic feedback on students' learning in South Africa. Du Preez and Fossey (2012) advocated for the inclusion and development of graduate attributes in undergraduate curricula if student academic writing is to be of use to the academic community.

The University the researchers studied has put various support services in place to mitigate academic challenges. These include the Academic Literacy course Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) programmes. Most South African universities do have access programmes also, as part of social justice (Hlalele and Alexander 2012). Very little is known about students' and staff perceptions of these interventions meant to mitigate student English language proficiency.

Students Attitude towards Support Services

Previous studies on students attitude towards English Language support, cited in Baiden-Amissah (1996), indicated that students' attitude towards the English support service, at the time the Communication Course, was negative. The same author argues that this was because the discipline was not perceived as serving a useful purpose since at the time, it did not receive accreditation. At the time and before accreditation, the English Language Course was seen as 'an expensive waste of time' (Baiden – Amissah 1996: 72). In Australia, a discussion

paper (Hirsh 2006) drew on key studies in literature on English Language, academic support and academic outcomes. The findings revealed that few of the 25% of students at the University of Sydney, identified as in need of support, actually received support.

In Taiwan, Hsu and Sheu's (2008) examined the attitude of Low English Proficiency students' attitude toward Online Learning. A correlation analysis revealed that the more frequently the users visited the Website, the more favourable their attitude towards it were (Hsu and Sheu 2008). Harran et al. (2011) demonstrated that comments inscribed on online assignments by a South African University Writing Centre were a conversation that either promoted or curtailed students' learning. As such, the authors implored Writing Centre Consultants to be chary of such feedback comments. The preceding observations also make a case for investigating the efficacy of the English support services, at the University the researchers studied.

Theoretical Framework: Academic Literacies Approach

The process of trying to develop an academic identity demands that initially students face unintended challenges in trying the discourses in academia (Boughey and van Rensburg 1994; Hutchings 2005; Lea and Street 2006, 1998; Mapes 2011; Archer 2012). Most university students in South Africa lack craft academic literacies and identities within their preferred disciplines. As such, their formative years in university are marked by try and error as they try to ground themselves into specific disciplines or discourse. Student language development and the acquisition of academic literacy thus begin with an emphasis of 'surface features' (Lea and Street 1998) such as grammar and spelling. The lecturer's role is that of 'fixing' this linguistic pathology by developing of academic writing skills. This, in our opinion is both a staff and curriculum development issue. Hence, Lea and Street (1998) have suggested the adoption of academic literacies approach as a curriculum strategy meant to address broader academic literacy development problems through Writing Centres.

The academic literacies perspective regards reading and writing as social practices that differ with context, culture and genre (Lea and Street 2006). According to the authors, it inte-

grates the study skills model and academic socialisation model into a more encompassing understanding of the nature of student writing within institutional practices, power relations and identities. Lea and Street (1998) state that the academic literacies perspective views student writing and learning as issues of epistemology and identities rather than of skill acquisition or academic socialisation alone, although the perspectives are not mutually exclusive and individuals may move between them according to context and purpose.

Research Question

What are the perceptions of students and staff regarding the efficacy of English Language support services meant to enhance their English language literacy at an institution?

Significance of the Study

This baseline study is noteworthy, firstly, as it gives insight to the importance of using a socio-cultural understanding of literacy to facilitate a rapprochement of frames and secondly that lecturers should be aware of possible mismatches in their approach to students' learning. The findings could give the studied institution as well as other institutions an indication or the assurance of the perceived efficacy of English language academic support. It could model and measure the antecedents and consequence that complement academic performance of effective language learning through language support services. The study could also reveal any mismatches between the support services and the perceptions of students and academic staff, which could then be modified. The results of the study could also inform higher education institutions' planning and development of the English language support services in order to provide the best service to students. The knowledge revealed could be shared with other tertiary institutions that could be encountering problems with English language literacy support.

METHODOLOGY

Paradigm

This study was positioned in the interpretive –positivist paradigm which combines qualita-

tive and quantitative approaches. It was positivistic with an interpretive slant. The researchers firstly used the positivist paradigm in collecting questionnaire data that yielded factual information, such as the number of students who made use of the English support services. Based on this, the researchers then formulated interview questions for the second phase (qualitative approach) which was located in the interpretive paradigm, to investigate how some key university officials felt about student support services amongst other issues. The interpretive paradigm allowed the writers to obtain a holistic view of the participants as we interacted with them to gain insights about their experiences, complexities, views and feelings in natural settings (Leedy and Ormrod 2005). In that vein, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, in the hope of getting a better understanding of the subject matter at hand (Denzin and Lincoln 2008).

Research Design

The researchers adopted the case study design (Henning et al. 2007; Maree 2007). The advantages of a case study research is that one can collect data on subtle and complex situations (Lincoln and Guba 1995; Babbie et al. 2004) that one does not need to try to impose control over events or variables, and that it is ideal when one wish to do small-scale project research. Regrettably, case study research findings cannot be generalised. It is viewed as producing 'soft data' (Yin 2003).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researchers conveniently selected to study only one campus, because of its proximity to the researchers. A stratified random method of sampling was used in selecting a sample consisting of 142 students. After stratifying by year of study, the students were randomly selected from among the first (N=50), second (N=45) and third (N=47) year of their respective programmes. Data were also collected from three staff members /officials (a library official, an academic and a Writing Centre [WC] official) to augment student data. Permission to conduct research from the University was obtained from University Management in writing. Moreover, verbal informed consent from the

participants was obtained before administering the research instruments.

Instrumentation

A self-constructed questionnaire and interview schedule were used to collect data from the participants. Specific questions asked were in tandem with the research question. Both closed and open questions focusing on specific aspects of students' learning were included in the crafted questionnaire. The interview questions were open, allowing the respondents to elaborate on issues under discussion. A common and semi-structured interview schedule was used to solicit responses from the three officials. Responses were captured by an electronic recorder, and manually transcribed. These instruments and their contents were also in line with our preferred design and paradigm. Knowledgeable researchers from other institutions assisted in checking on instruments' content validity and reliability aspects as well as the language aspects.

RESULTS

Students' Perceptions Regarding Their English Language Proficiency

A question in the questionnaire sought to gauge students' self-perceived proficiencies in the English language. As summarised in Table 1, over 50% of the first and third year students rated themselves as good while 48% and 32% rated themselves as average respectively. Of these groups, a paltry 2% and 6% of respondents rated themselves as weak respectively. None of the respondents in the 2nd year of study rated themselves as weak in English.

Table 1: Students' perception about their English language proficiency

<i>Year level</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Weak</i>
1 st Year	25 (50%)	24 (48%)	1 (2%)
2 nd Year	13 (29%)	32 (71%)	0%
3 rd Year	29 (62%)	15 (32%)	3 (6%)

Twenty- nine percent (29%) of second year participants rated themselves as good in English whilst 71% responded that their English proficiency was average. It was not immediately clear why the second years' perceived confidence lev-

els were the least (but in the 'good' category). The data therefore clearly indicate that most of the students do not perceive themselves as weak in their English language proficiency. Paradoxically, data obtained from a lecturer indicated that students' English proficiency was indeed poor. The lecturer's opinion was representative of the other lecturers' perceived students' English language proficiency.

Data acquired from an interview with a library staff member indicated that students had very poor English Language skills. The interviewee said that students' lack of English proficiency was especially evident when students had to be sourced to assist in the library. An officer at the Writing Centre also confirmed that students' English proficiency on the researched campus was very poor. The respondent said that the WC could not find students from those who applied to serve as tutors in the library, because they were so poor in English Language proficiency that it would be a travesty to do so. This therefore makes a case for interventions to rectify this shortcoming. This also puts into spotlight the predictive validity of the Matric results as measure of students' level of English proficiency as Lazenby (1996) questioned. The researchers went on to enquire whether indeed or not the students saw themselves as needing English language support. Table 2 is a summary of students' perceptions.

Students' Perceptions of Their Need for English Language Support

Table 2 indicates all year groups, particularly second years, (91.1%) were in need of EL support. Although most of the respondents perceived themselves as good in English (See Table 1), these data indicate that most of the respondents perceived themselves as needing English Language support. This stemmed from the fact that English is not their mother tongue. As such, they welcomed any opportunity meant to improve their proficiency. The researchers then investigated if students were aware of the existence of such English language interventions on their campus. Table 3 reveals the findings.

Table 3 reveals that just over half of the students in each year group were aware of the existence of English language support systems on campus. The first years (64%) were in the majority followed by third years (53%) and finally

Table 2: Students' perception about their need for English language support (N=142)

<i>Year level</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
1 st Year	39 (78%)	11 (22%)
2 nd Year	41 (91.1%)	4 (8.8%)
3 rd Year	34 (72%)	13 (28%)

second years (51%). These data indicate materially, that the students are generally divided in their perception of the availability of the English Language support services. It is possible that the relevant university arm did not adequately market these services to a significant number of students. Hence, most of them suffer. It could also be possible that students conveniently pleaded ignorance of the existence of such support systems. Baiden-Amisshah's (1996) research demonstrated that students' attitude towards English support service was negative. Yet the use of such support has a positive impact on learning (Hsu and Sheu 2008; Arkoudis and Tran 2010).

Table 3: Students' perception regarding the availability of English support services at WSU

<i>Year level</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total (N=142)</i>
1 st Year	32 (64%)	18 (36%)	50
2 nd Year	23 (51%)	22 (49%)	45
3 rd Year	25 (53%)	22 (47%)	47

The researchers also posed a question to the student respondents aimed at gauging the extent to which the university library and Writing centre were meeting their expectations. Again, just over half in each group were in the affirmative. Table 4 is illustrative.

Table 4: Students' perception regarding the service of the library and writing centre in meeting their expectations

<i>Year level</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No response</i>
1 st Year	31 (62%)	19 (38%)	0
2 nd Year	23 (51%)	21 (47%)	1 (2%)
3 rd Year	23 (50%)	22 (46%)	2 (4%)

Sixty-two percent (62%) of first year respondents said that they did receive the service that they expected while 51% of second years and 50% at third years indicated that they did receive the expected service. These data are clearly not pleasing in that just about half of students were satisfied with the services offered. In this

Table 5: Students' usage of services at the writing centre

<i>Year level</i>	<i>Never used service</i>	<i>Never heard of the service</i>	<i>Helpful. Learned a lot</i>	<i>Could not assist us.</i>	<i>No response</i>
1 st Year	17 (34%)	9 (18%)	9 (18%)	4 (8%)	11 (22%)
2 nd Year	13 (29%)	9 (20%)	5 (11%)	11 (24%)	7 (16%)
3 rd Year	19 (40%)	7 (15%)	10 (21%)	3 (7%)	8 (17%)

vein, Arkoudis and Tran (2010) have implored universities to develop strategic plans that infuse academic language development aligned to disciplinary learning and teaching ostensibly to cash on students' enthusiasm. The researchers went on to investigate students' usage of the Writing Centre. Table 5 sums up students' perceptions of the efficacy of the Writing centre.

Table 5 indicates that about a third of respondents in each year group said that they have never used the service provided by the WC. Around 20% said that they had never heard of the WC. This confirms data from Table 4 where a significant number of students professed ignorance about the existence of such a service. Eighteen percent (18%), eleven percent (11%) and twenty-one percent (21%) in the first, second and third year respectively said that they learned a lot at the WC saying that they found the service helpful. Around 20% in each year group did not respond to this question. As regards their satisfaction with the library services, Table 6 reveals what the students thought about it.

Table 6 illustrates that 52% of first year, 33% in second year and 47% third year respondents perceived their experience at the library as satisfactory. In a related matter, a significant number of the respondents, (20%, 27% and 21% respectively), suggested that the library needed more resources (human, material, technological and space). The library interviewee supported this need. Regrettably, another portion (18%, 38% and 28%) was dissatisfied with the library service. From the foregoing, it is clear that students generally perceived the services of the library as satisfactory. Some of the participants did not respond. The non-response of some of the third year participants (4%) possibly sug-

gested that they did not use the library, or that they did not understand the question.

Data obtained from interviews with the lecturer indicated that the library had inadequate resources. This development was corroborated by the library representative who said "If they (students) want to borrow some sort of a novel, you find, no it's not there". Moreover, students indicated that the size of the library was too small, resulting in overcrowding and it being too stuffy particularly towards examination time. In the Department of Law for instance, there were inadequate resources for the subject. Data from the lecturer further confirmed students' complaints that they are not able to obtain information from the Internet, as the service was always down resulting in students being unable to access the Internet. The library official also confirmed students' sentiments. The library respondent confirmed these problems including space; resulting in only a few of the books being put on display. The lack of appropriate resources for the Law subject in this case, was blamed on the lecturing staff who did not always heed the call to submit on time, their new list of resources and references. This challenge is however, being addressed, since the library has reportedly co-opted a member of staff from a different department into a relevant committee to mitigate the problem.

Another useful programme on campus is the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The researchers sought to establish students' perceptions of its usefulness. Table 7 reveals the data.

Table 7 data reveal that about 50% or more of the first and the third year participants did not know about the CALL Programme. Of those that knew it, very few thought that the pro-

Table 6: Students' perception of services at the library

<i>Year level</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Need resources</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>No response</i>
1 st Year	26 (52%)	9 (18%)	10 (20%)	5 (10%)	0
2 nd Year	15 (33%)	17 (38%)	12 (27%)	1 (2%)	0
3 rd Year	22 (47%)	13 (28%)	10 (21%)	0	2 (4%)

Table 7: Students' perceptions of the CALL programme

<i>Year level</i>	<i>Never heard of it</i>	<i>No response</i>	<i>Useful</i>	<i>Not useful</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1 st Year	25 (50%)	17 (34%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)
2 nd Year	21 (47%)	17 (38%)	5 (11%)	0	2 (4%)
3 rd Year	27 (57%)	17 (36%)	3 (6%)	0	0

gramme was helpful (6% year 1, 11% year 2 and 6% year 3). Only 3% in year one and none in the other year groups found the programme not useful. A third of the respondents in each year group did not respond to the question. This either could be that they did not know about the CALL Programmes or that they did not worry themselves about it or never used it. These data suggest that this service is available but is not being fully utilised.

DISCUSSION

Firstly, data indicate that students did not perceive themselves as weak in English; although data indicate that students do think that they are in need of English language support. It might be worth exploring this paradox in a fresh study. This study seems to suggest that linguistic barriers stem from students' social background and academic contexts. Lack of English language proficiency at institutions of higher learning is a common complaint not only in South Africa but internationally as well. In South Africa, English is for most students, a second and even a third language. Cummins (1981), Gee (1990), Harran et al. 2011 and Hutchings (2005) showed that language and academic success are closely associated and that academic language proficiency is more difficult to acquire in a second language. Widened access to tertiary institutions has given many students who are not English speaking opportunity to join the institutions that are mostly English medium. Harran et al. (2011: 1361) contend that 'embedded historical and institutional forces' are a challenge to linguistic practices. The current data showed that the campus in question has predominantly isiXhosa-speaking students. Hence, they are not English mother tongue speakers (or English first language speakers). Such students are, not exposed to the targeted official language that could assist them in improving their language proficiency. Moreover, the researchers revealed that the students feel intimidated to use English. They find it difficult to admit linguistic weakness. In the process, students are subtly segregated, stigmatised

and labeled, and treated as a separate group (Hlalele and Alexander 2012). The perceived lack of English language proficiency at the campus from this study confirms the notion that it is a common occurrence at any institution of higher learning (Moyo 1995, 2001; Dlamini 1998; Ayliff 2001; Webb 2002; Banda 2003; Hutchings 2005).

Data show that students are far from developing academic literacies. Most had challenges in expressing themselves in English. Although most of them perceived themselves as good in English, the data indicated that the students did perceive themselves as in need of English Language support. At present, they are grappling with skill acquisition (Lea and Street 1998) more than developing an academic identity. Moreover, the researchers contend that the small sample size limits the generalisability of this study's findings. The academic literacy approach helps us to understand the stage at which the students are in developing their unique academic identity.

With regard to their perception of the English language support services, it emerged that students could be justified in their perception that the services are often not available since all three of the English support services that have been investigated, have been confirmed to be under resourced in terms of human and material resources that support teaching and learning. Students and academic staff members felt that the Writing Centre was not adequately advertised, since most students and lecturers were not aware of its services. Those that knew about the services could not adequately explain their location. Of the students that did use the WC, some were satisfied, whilst others said that they could not get service from the it, due to inadequate computers and competing demands of the peer facilitators (who tended to be busy to attend to clients). The inadequacy of computers affected the CALL programme. The library, as an alternative venue was reportedly too small to accommodate clients during critical times. Hence the call for the library space to be increased. Studies by Hirsh (2006) indicated that

students in need of academic support were unable to access support measures due to the high demands on time and emotional effort associated with such activities. Baiden –Amissah's (1996) study revealed that students view non-credit bearing courses as a waste of time. Ransom et al. (2005) investigated the perceptions and expectations of international students with regard to English Language (EL) needs and support. Their results indicated that there was a significant gap between what students expected, and the university support services provided. Paton's (2009) Witwatersrand University study in South Africa revealed that tutors complained that struggling students did not attend the classes despite being offered extra classes. Results herein are consistent with these studies. One tends to feel that negative attitudes and an endemic culture of not studying could be responsible for this.

CONCLUSION

In summary, firstly, it is clear that although students did perceive themselves as in need of English Language support; paradoxically, many perceived their command of English as fair, a view that is shared by many of the academic staff. In contrast to this view, the Library staff as well as the staff from the WC perceived students' command of the English language as very poor, stating that even at third year and undergraduates level, students English proficiency was so poor, that they could not recruit students to serve in the library and the WC.

Secondly, it was inferred from the data that both students and staff members perceived the English Language support services as having room for improvement. The data indicate that the English support services currently are not adequate to cater for the needs of all the students. The library does not have enough human resources, as well as resources such as computers, books and the internet service is problematic. Furthermore, students perceived the library venue as too small stating that it was overcrowded, especially during examinations. The researchers therefore recommend the expansion of the library space and an increase in computer numbers to cater for the CALL programme.

With regard to the Writing Centre, many students and staff members were not aware of the service. However, students who were aware of

the services often could not be served, since there is only one staff member at the WC. This means that many students cannot be accommodated or assisted. This scenario compounds students' academic literacies acquisition efforts. Hence a call for lecturers to impart academic literacies to students through academic socialisation in a higher education context.

Data indicated that few students were aware of the CALL services. Those who were aware of the services could often not access it, because of the shortage of computers on campus. The interviewed lecturer however perceived the English Language support services as adequate arguing that students should be motivated to make use of the services. This calls for concerted marketing of these support services. As, such, the university needs 'to transform [itself] into a developmental university' by addressing such context specific academic challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing, concerted effort is required on the part of the students to take responsibility for their own learning to mitigate language literacy challenges. The academic literacies approach advocates that students need to be socialised in academic writing. Writing Centres and the students themselves could provide for such socialisation by engaging in deep learning. This strategy also calls for the marketing of Writing Centre services within the University particularly the CALL programme. Luckily, the CALL programme can be accessed on any computer on campus. Marketing heightens students' awareness of available academic support programmes and initiates them to take responsibility of their learning. Lecturers should be compelled to infuse academic writing in their assessment and learning regime and institutional curricula policies should back this. Current practices show that academics are at liberty to elect their teaching and learning strategies. The study also recommends that any English Language support services need improvement as regards space, human, material and e-resources to strengthen teaching and learning. Finally universities should sustain efforts around students' study/learning habits and practices that lead to enhanced English language mastery and academic performance

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