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An assignment writing crash course: Transferring writing centre practice into the academic literacy classroom by reshaping the curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The transfer of academic literacy (AL) skills into discipline-specific modules is one of the primary goals of AL interventions. Skills transfer entails students being able to read and write at academically appropriate levels, especially with regards to assignment writing. Previous research indicates that it takes time to teach AL skills, yet content modules require these skills almost instantly for successful assignment writing. Ultimately, this means that students are often underprepared for the writing tasks required in content modules at first-year level to the extent that it worsens the attrition rate. Thus, students may not obtain the necessary competencies in both writing skills and subject content.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to seek a remedy for this adverse effect with the facilitation of a writing centre 'crash course' workshop in the AL classroom at the time students start writing assignments in core modules. The crash course focused on providing students with academic writing skills for assignment writing in their disciplines by combining writing centre pedagogy and social constructivist teaching strategies. Thus, the article measures the impact of the crash course by analysing both quantitative and qualitative data based on analyses of marks and students' perceptions.

Keywords: academic literacy; writing centre; skills transfer; academic writing skills; assignment writing; social constructivism

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1. Introduction and background to the study

Academic literacy (AL) has been shown through previous research to assist underprepared students in achieving at university level and potentially addressing the high attrition rate often affecting at-risk students in South Africa (Nel, 2025, p. 2; Van Rooy & Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2015, p. 42). Indeed, writing skills, combined with critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which form the basis of AL courses, are listed as crucial for both graduation and becoming efficient in the workplace (Drennan & Keyser, 2022, p. 3). Yet, students often do not realise the importance of AL and how it relates to assisting them in the modules of their specific disciplines, especially when it comes to academic writing (Sekonyela, 2023). As a result, students may not acquire the academic writing skills needed for the completion of AL and content modules, and this may jeopardise their studies (Sebolai, 2014; Sekonyela, 2023). Therefore, an intervention which can address students' writing needs early on in their first year within an AL course, may assist students who are underprepared for university study.

This article focuses on an intervention implemented on a University Access Programme (UAP) Higher Certificate (HC) in an AL module, which could help students transfer the academic writing skills taught in AL to assignment writing in their disciplines. The HC is a qualification which once gained, grants students who did not meet the university admission requirements, access to higher education institutions (Marais & Hanekom, 2014, p. 12; Sekonyela, 2023, p. 89). Usually, the University of the Free State's (UFS) writing centre assists students with assignment writing. This takes the form of a writing centre consultation that refers to the practice in which an academic writing consultant assists a student with assignment writing so that they can thereafter independently improve their academic writing. However, because there is no writing centre on the UFS's satellite campus that accommodates the HC, the 'writing centre crash course' became a solution for meeting students' writing needs in a classroom setting.

The main aim of the research conducted on this writing intervention, hereupon referred to as 'writing crash course', was to address students' writing needs for assignment writing in discipline-specific modules. The first research objective of this study was to analyse student marks in both AL and content modules to determine whether marks indicated improvement in writing skills. Content modules in this case are those of psychology and sociology, in which the lecturers of these subjects formed inter-disciplinary collaborations with the AL lecturer. The second research objective was to interpret quantitative and qualitative data from student perceptions to examine whether students perceived improvement in their academic writing abilities. Therefore, the research questions that informed this study, based on the aim and objectives are:

1. Does an analysis of students' marks show that a writing centre workshop assists students' academic writing skills (both in AL and in content subjects)?

2. Do students perceive improvement of their academic writing skills owing to the workshop?

The next sections of this article discuss underpreparedness in AL, a discipline-specific approach to assisting with the required skills transfer, as well as writing centre pedagogy and social constructivist teaching approaches followed during the intervention. Methodology and data collection, and findings and recommendations will form the final sections of the article.

2. Exploring the need for an academic writing intervention to address student underpreparedness

Despite the nationwide introduction of AL programmes since 1994, an attempt to address student preparedness in this area, students perceive themselves to be able and ready to manage university expectations (Sebolai, 2014, p. 51; Sekonyela, 2023, p. 89; Van Wyk, 2014, p. 205). Indeed, Monnapula-Mapesela (2015) emphasises that despite the reality of student underpreparedness, the first-year majority consists of "overzealous students who feel they are adequately prepared for tertiary education and who do not take support services provided by their institution, seriously" (p. 263). This is true of students who are underprepared for university level academic writing, but who will often disregard AL as a subject even though they need to apply academic writing skills when it comes to, for example, assignment writing. Although they are informed that AL will be an important developmental subject and crucial for success in their academic work, many students do not know that they will need AL skills in other subjects, nor do they realise that they lack these skills (Monnapula-Mapesela, 2015).

Underpreparedness often stems from poor teaching and learning at school level (Boughey & McKenna, 2021; Monnapula-Mapesela, 2015; Van Wyk, 2014). Adding to this, Sebolai and Huff (2015) report that many students entering the South African university system have not been taught the required AL skills at high school, "which causes them to fail to complete their studies in the scheduled time and even to drop out" (p. 334). Various researchers agree that this is exacerbated by English being the language of instruction if students originate from multilingual backgrounds (Sebolai & Huff, 2015: 334; Van Wyk, 2014). Lack of skills transfer may be that "students seem to treat modules in isolation" and "the significance of [AL] skills is not asserted" (Sekonyela, 2023, p. 90). Research by Drennan (2022) demonstrates the impact of this

on South African higher education, in that lecturers, in general, are concerned "about the steady decline in students' academic writing abilities and the impact this has on students' ability to demonstrate their learning and negotiate written tasks in their respective disciplines" (p. 1). As a result, the very aim of AL modules to support other major subjects is compromised if students cannot apply and transfer writing skills into their university work. This means that both the AL and content modules then do not serve their purpose, potentially causing a higher attrition rate that may impact students' successful completion of their studies.

To address lecturers' concerns and what constitutes the research problem in this article is that it became necessary to implement a strategy that would enable AL skills to be taught earlier in the first year with the aim of assisting assignment writing. Thus, a crash course workshop that teaches basic writing skills was offered in the AL curriculum with the intention of increasing the pass rate for writing in both the AL subject and other content subjects. The next section elaborates on the importance of a discipline-specific approach to assisting students with assignment writing both in AL and in content subjects.

3. The importance of a discipline-specific approach in assisting with skills transfer

The link between relevance and motivation, as well as the importance of a discipline-specific approach for AL practitioners is vital for skills transfer (Butler, 2013; Drennan, 2022). In their article which focuses on skills transfer, Drennan and Keyser (2022) make this clear: "[s]upport that is based in the discipline is relevant to the language requirements of specific discourses; learning materials that are relevant and interesting bolster student motivation and facilitate skills transfer" (p. 19). This discipline-specific approach is in opposition to a generic approach that teaches academic skills in isolation away from the relevance of the discipline (Butler, 2013, p. 77). In fact, Butler (2013) states that there is a strong argument for undergraduate AL courses to be designed around the context of specific disciplines, rather than following a generic approach that teaches academic skills that students may not see as applicable to their studies. Drennan and Keyser (2022) state that students need to be familiar with "the conventions of academic discourses to be accepted as members of specific discourse communities" (p. 4). This means that not only was the intervention discipline-specific and providing relevance, but students' involvement and engagement was at the centre of the learning process. According to Shabanza (2017), it is this "active participation in learning" which is an important link to being comfortable with the academic languages of various disciplines and thus skills transfer (p. 161).

Similarly, collaboration between AL lecturers and content lecturers in providing support to students provides a rich environment for students to realise what is involved in achieving academic writing success at university and towards graduation (Drennan & Keyser, 2022; Sekonyela, 2023). Furthermore, Dison and Moore (2019) emphasise that:

> discipline-specific writing centres have the following potential: to facilitate dialogue between students, literacy practitioners and other academic staff; to develop student voice, to deepen discipline-specific curriculum and assessment conversations; and to contribute to disciplinary development and reflexivity. (p. 3)

This collaborative intervention goes one step further as it brings this "discipline-specific writing centre" into the AL classroom and its curriculum. At this university, the writing centre is not faculty specific and thus AL courses run separately from writing centre interventions. Therefore, this crash course writing intervention "serves to transform students' experience of writing development" as it involves collaboration with content lecturers, the academy and the AL practitioner (Dison & Moore, 2019, p. 6).

4. Implementation of the crash course: combining writing centre pedagogy and social constructivism to establish skills transfer

The level of support needed by students on the HC means that it is imperative that students feel that they are in a safe environment where a sense of familiarity and social presence is established (Kluyts et al., 2022). This allows for interaction in the classroom, between peers, as well as with facilitators, and students feel that they are an "equal partner in this process" (Rambiritch, 2018, p. 52). As such, a social constructivist approach is followed which involves student engagement, interaction and empowerment in the acquiring of academic writing skills (Carstens & Rambiritch, 2020; Louw & Sparks, 2023; Naidoo & Mabaso, 2023). Students are therefore empowered by the knowledge they create through brainstorming and ideas creation in a social setting in which they are comfortable enough to express their voice. These social constructivist strategies are similar to writing centre practices as Rambiritch (2018) highlights:

> By drawing them into the discussion, asking them their thoughts on the topic they have to write about, and sometimes even venturing into discussions not directly related to the text, a student can begin to feel

accepted, acknowledged, and respected. This can become the ideal platform to give the student a voice. (p. 52).

In addition, confidence is built through interaction and students are guided into being able to write academically. Emphasising the importance of social constructivism to learning, Naidoo and Mabaso (2023) state that it is the "dominant pedagogical theory endorsed in educational discourse today" (p. 60). According to their research, many educators in South Africa shy away from this approach, despite its benefits to learning. However, on this specific AL programme, it is an approach in which facilitators are thoroughly trained. The same approach was continued within the crash course writing intervention to accommodate any writing assignments students would have received. In other words, as with psychology and sociology, assignment topics and instructions were provided to AL facilitators to guide the process.

At this university, the writing centre operates as a "safe space" for students to seek help with their assignments (Carstens & Rambiritch, 2020). Writing consultants act as "critical friends" (Daniels et al., 2017, p. 133) who assist students through Socratic questioning, rather than critiquing and editing their work, thus developing "better writers, not better writing" (Boquet & Lerner 2008, p. 170; North, 1984, p. 438). This links with social constructivism and is a method suggested by previous research on writing centre practice and theory (Carstens & Rambiritch, 2020; Daniels et al., 2017). Shabanza (2017) confirms that "this is achieved by means of a quasi-Socratic questioning technique in a writing consultation, where disciplined and rigorous dialogue is encouraged" (p. 162). Writing consultants are trained in various text types across multiple disciplines to assist as many students as possible. Thus, an interdisciplinary and collaborative perspective is essential in gaining student understanding of the writing process, especially when it comes to discipline-specific writing (Sekonyela, 2023). Therefore, social constructivism combined with writing centre practice informed the process taken when offering the writing crash course, which in essence transferred the writing centre into the AL classroom.

Writing centre consultations work best when the consultant builds rapport with the student to enable comfort and openness when speaking about their assignment. This is similar to the social constructivist approach taken in the AL classroom and which is indicated by previous research to encourage students in gaining confidence, voice and improvement of writing skills (Louw & Sparks, 2023). Writing centre consultants do not edit a student's work but rather, through Socratic questioning and discussion, allow the student to arrive at their own conclusions about how they can best improve their work. Daniels et al. (2017) assert, "writing centre consultants are trained in how to give developmental feedback that is constructive and supportive" (p. 134). The presenters of

the crash course are trained in this way. Consultants encourage students to take notes or engage in drafting writing to ensure that they have something to work from after leaving the consultation.

In this way, writing centre practice is also driven towards process writing, which is prominent in this AL course. Process writing is essential in assisting students to revise their work, self-edit and gain autonomy in academic writing (Carstens & Rambiritch, 2020). Drennan (2017) emphasises the importance of process writing, as well as its necessity in skills transfer within content subjects: "[w]riting should be acknowledged as a process that requires several drafting sessions geared towards fostering students' critical thinking, as well as the acquisition of course content and skills necessary for success in their studies" (p. 3). Much like a writing centre appointment, at no point are facilitators allowed to "edit", and students are encouraged to learn from one another. Drennan (2017) emphasises that the writing centre and in this case the writing centre intervention is not a "fix-it shop" but "an intermediary between students and lecturing staff", which "provides students with opportunities to discuss and negotiate meaning" (p.3). Everything takes place only from the point of view of guidance, as it would in a writing centre consultation.

The approaches explained above with regards to writing centre pedagogy and social constructivism were followed when applying this to the AL class in the form of a writing centre crash course. Although the crash course is a summarised version of key writing skills within the AL subject which would usually be taught in a more in-depth way throughout the year, at least content subjects may benefit in the short term (Sekonyela, 2023). Students receive writing assignments within the first six weeks of the first semester in some of their major subjects, which emphasises the need for this writing intervention. Thus, a crash course writing workshop within the AL classroom provides students with the opportunity to engage with academic writing skills before major subject assignments. In addition, students may then also realise the importance of AL skills in eventual success at university, as special focus is put onto their major subjects, whilst incorporating the necessary writing skills. The intervention might prove relevant to students because they can see their marks improve in their content subjects, and thus they might be more motivated to apply the skills as previous research makes clear (Drennan, 2022; Sekonyela, 2023).

5. Research methodology

Ethical clearance was obtained for this research intervention and the requirements for ethical research practice were followed. A mixed-methodology approach was followed,

as both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), this allows for reliability and validity, as well as utilising the strengths of both methods. A qualitative angle provides rich data for corroborating the findings of quantitative data which may also provide a "mutually illuminating" perspective (Bryman, 2016, p. 628). Utilising this approach, the aim was to gain insight into whether students acquire the necessary writing skills through marks analysis and students' perceptions of the intervention.

The intervention took place within an AL module on a UAP. The HC for Humanities acts as a qualification for students of the different disciplines within the faculty to gain university entrance and consists of about 653 students. These students are also English second language (ESL) learners with an AP score of under 24, who though deserving, "did not meet university admission requirements due to underperformance at the school level" (Sekonyela, 2023, p. 89). All students on this programme took part in the intervention. Psychology and sociology cohorts, amounting to 591 students, were of importance to the study because of access to assignment marks provided by content lecturers. The marks were made available to the AL researchers because of collaborations during the intervention. Convenience sampling was used to select participants, all of whom were AL students in the classes of the researchers involved in the study. After the intervention, at the end of the second semester, samples of marks from both the AL subject and content subjects were selected from the classes of experienced writing centre consultants and AL facilitators. In addition, these classes had a high attendance rate with which to compare the results of both modules' assignments. In this case, the researchers had convenient access to both attendance lists and marks in both AL and the sociology and psychology assignment marks. This ensured that marks of those students who attended and those who did not, could be compared.

6. Data collection

To safeguard quality assurance of the intervention, the four experienced and qualified facilitators who marked essays were thoroughly trained. Facilitators are appointed with at least an undergraduate degree and all of them had at least five years of experience in writing centre consultation and AL facilitation. Moreover, facilitators and writing centre consultants undergo rigorous training throughout the year, and additional training was received before the intervention. This supplementary training consisted of instructions for facilitating the intervention and the marking of essay scripts. To ensure inter-marker

reliability, facilitators were given examples of students' essays to mark within training sessions which occurred regularly throughout the year. This ensured that the facilitators involved in the marking process would be marking at a standardised level. Furthermore, moderation of scripts also took place at various points in the study to ensure the validity and variability of the results of AL essays. This links with previous research which suggests that writing centre consultants, and facilitators should undergo thorough training (Daniels et al., 2017, p. 141; Drennan & Keyser, 2022, p. 10).

In the AL subject, marks were compared by analysing pre- and post-test scores of students' essays. The pre-test essay was written before the writing intervention. At the beginning of the semester students were given an essay to write without prior teaching instruction and assistance. The post-test essay was written as the final draft of an essay after the intervention. Marking for both the pre- and post-test involves applying a rubric which assesses academic writing conventions that include academic organisation and structure, content and argumentation, vocabulary and grammar usage. Sociology and psychology marks were made available to the researchers after the intervention and all assignments were marked by subject lecturers who have the necessary qualifications and experience to ensure the reliability of assignment marks.

At the same time, a voluntary Questback survey, as seen in Table 1, was sent out to students. This survey mostly consisted of Likert scale questions and dichotomous (yes/no) questions, with space available for students to make comments about their answers. An analysis of survey feedback allowed for a triangulation of results. This was further validated by an analysis of the AL essay, as well as psychology and sociology assignment marks. In total, 155 students from both the sociology and psychology cohorts participated in the survey, allowing for a reliable sample size. Table 1 below captures the content of the survey on student perceptions of the impact of the crash course.

**Table 1:** Survey testing students' perceptions of the crash course writing workshop

	Questions and answer choices	Question type
1	**Did you attend this class/workshop either for 1st or 2nd semester?**	*Yes / No*
2 3	**Did the intervention help you to improve your marks in a specific assignment?** **Did this intervention assist you in this [AL] class? (For instance did you see you marks improving?)** *Choices for 2 and 3: There was a definite improvement / There was a gradual improvement / I noticed a slight improvement / They stayed the same, but possibly in future because of this intervention, there could be improvement / There was no improvement*	*Likert*
4	**Explain further if you wish.**	*Open-ended*
5 6	**What mark did you achieve for assignments / essays in other classes before the intervention?** **What mark did you achieve for assignments / essays in other classes AFTER the intervention?** *Choices for 5 and 6: Under 20% / 20%-40% / 40%-50% / 50%-60% / 60%-70% / 70%-80% /Over 80%*	*Likert*
7	**Explain further if you wish.**	*Open-ended*
8	**Did this intervention benefit your studies and your understanding of what is expected of you at university?**	*Yes / No*
9	**Explain further if you wish.**	*Open-ended*
10	**Do you feel as if this intervention improved your marks in general (in other subjects) too?**	*Yes / No*
11	**Explain further if you wish.**	*Open-ended*
12	**Did you learn more about academic writing as a result of this intervention?**	*Yes / No*
13	**Leave comments, suggestions or explanations below if you wish.**	*Open-ended*
14	**Do you feel more confident about academic writing / reading as a result of this intervention?**	*Yes / No*
15	**Explain further if you wish.**	*Open-ended*
16	**Did this intervention improve interaction / engagement with other students?**	*Yes / No*
17	**Did this intervention improve interaction/engagement with your facilitator?**	*Yes / No*
18	**Leave comments, suggestions or explanations below if you wish.**	*Yes / No*

7. Results and discussion

7.1 *Mark analysis in academic literacy*

An analysis of essay writing marks within the AL subject indicates that the crash course assisted academic writing improvement. Many students went from hardly passing essay writing in the pre-test to gaining a distinction in the post-test which took place after the intervention. Attendance of the crash course workshop was also used to compare the marks of students to ensure that improvement occurred because of the intervention. For those students who attended the entire crash course, a 17% improvement in marks was witnessed. Furthermore, if more than half the workshop was attended, there was a 13%

increase in marks. This can be seen in Figure 1 below, which shows that attendance of the crash course likely benefitted students writing skills within the AL subject.
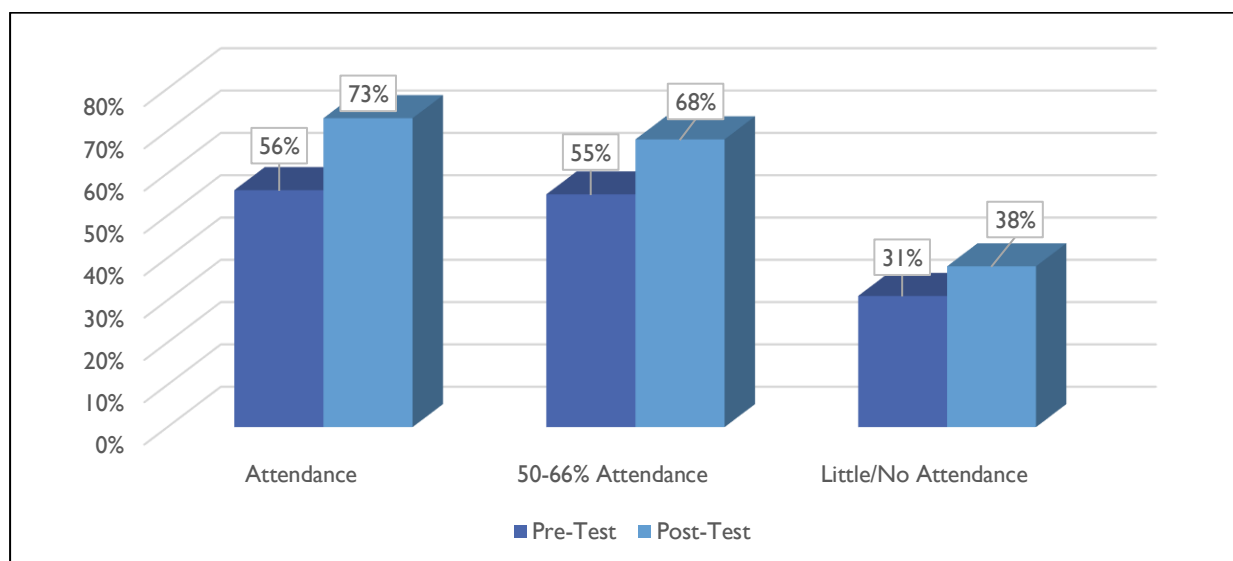
Figure 1: Improvement of marks in AL writing assignments (based on attendance of workshop)

In Figure 2, 81% of students who attended the intervention received a mark of over 70% in their AL writing assignments. This means that the majority of students attending the intervention did well and can be seen as having acquired the necessary writing skills for passing AL. It is worth noting that 28% of students received over 80% in their final essay mark (post-test). In addition, students went from 16% of them receiving under the pass mark (pre-test) before the workshop, to only 4% failing the essay after the workshop (post-test). Thus, improvement was visible based on students' writing marks within the AL module.
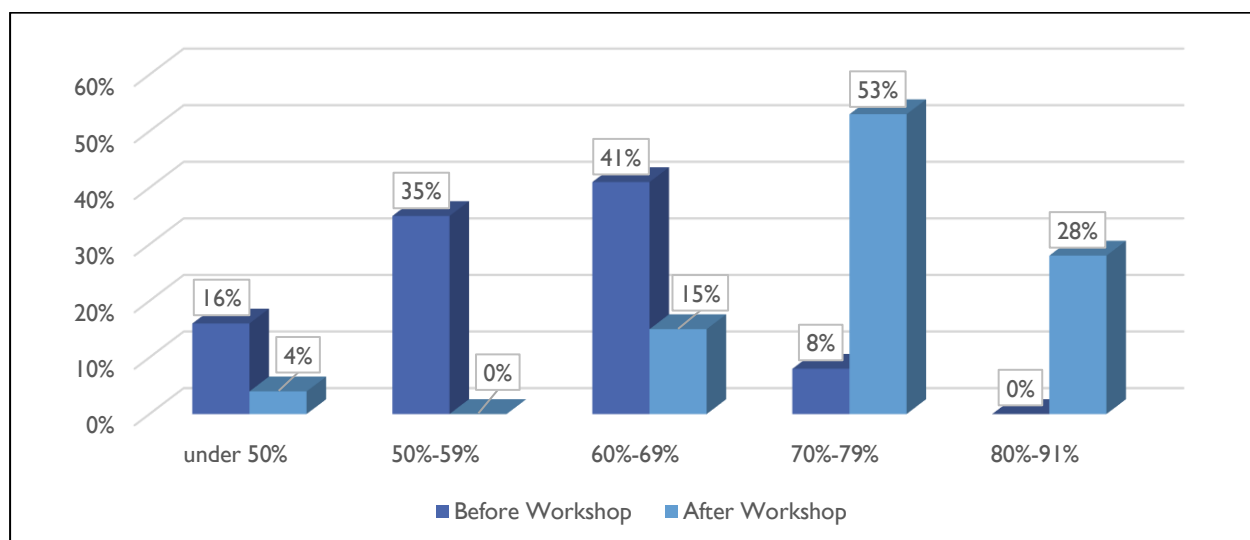

Figure 2: Improvement of marks in AL writing assignments after workshop (based on attendance)

## 7.2 *Marks analysis in discipline-specific modules*

As mentioned earlier, two collaborations took place during this research project, that is, between AL and psychology lecturers and AL and sociology lecturers. Both subject lecturers provided assignment topics, directions and rubrics for the crash course workshop to take place within the AL subject. It is important to note that subject lecturers were responsible for marking content assignments. AL facilitators were not responsible for marking content assignments, but did act within the guidelines of the assignment instructions to facilitate a crash course writing workshop which could assist students in writing the academic assignment.

With psychology assignments, comparison of average marks was based on whether students attended the intervention. Figure 3 below shows the substantial mark difference in psychology assignments of those who attended the workshop and those who did not. Those attending received an average mark of 74% in comparison to students who missed the intervention and who received an average of 40%. This is a 34% difference and a fail mark in comparison to a mark which can almost be considered a distinction.
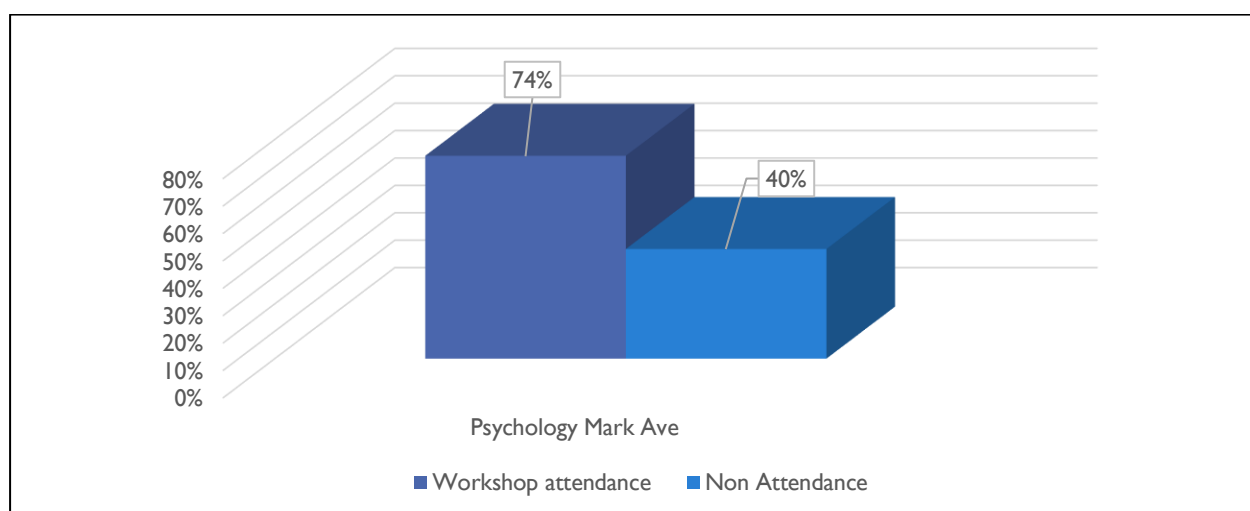

Figure 3: Average mark improvement based on attendance of psychology writing intervention

When looking at the different ranges of marks in Figure 4, it seems that attendance of the intervention yielded positive results. Here, it is possible to see that 50% of non-attending students failed the psychology assignment. For example, 34% of students who attended, received over 80% for the psychology assignment, with at least 30% of students receiving between 70 and 79%. This therefore implies a benefit for students.
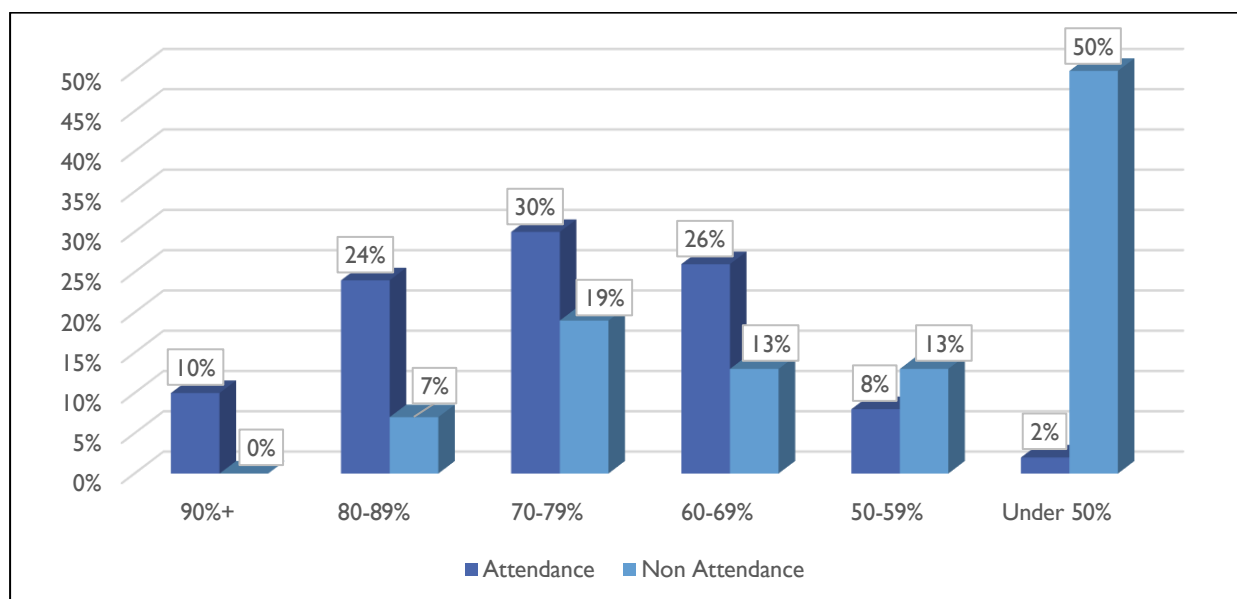
Figure 4: Psychology assignment mark improvement (based on attendance)

The sociology collaboration was constructive for developing students' academic writing as seen in Figure 5 below. In the first semester, almost all students underperformed as opposed to the second semester, after the intervention, in which most students not only passed, but received scores of over 70% for the assignment.
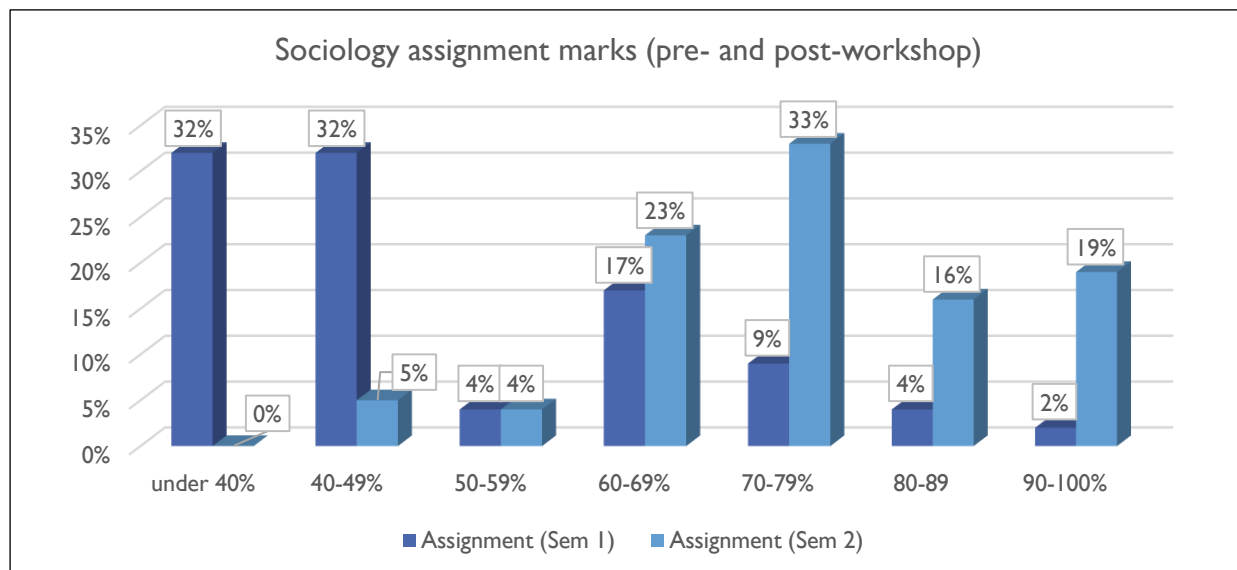

Figure 5: Comparison between first and second semester sociology marks (pre- and post- workshop)

As a result, students seem to have benefitted from the intervention in both AL and in content subjects, namely psychology and sociology, with encouraging results. Therefore, an interdisciplinary collaboration seems beneficial for students, as confirmed by previous research (Drennan & Keyser, 2022; Sekonyela, 2023; Van Wyk, 2014).
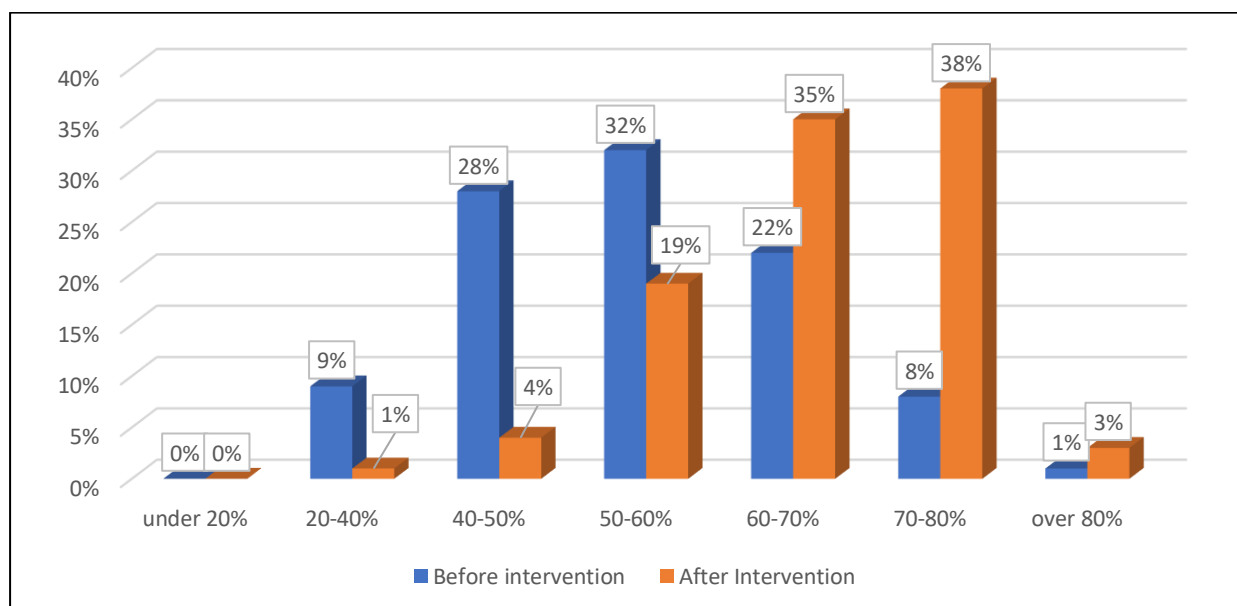
7.3 Student perceptions

The survey results of the writing intervention show that students perceived an improvement in their writing skills, both in AL and in content subjects. In Figure 6, it seems that more than half of the students who participated in the survey believed that there was a definite improvement in writing assignments for their content subjects. After the intervention, the majority perceived that there was an 86% improvement in AL and an 82% increase in content subjects. Even though 12-13% of students only perceived a slight increase, this is still notable considering that the AL subject still leaves room for improvement over the course of the rest of the year. This perception combined with the improvement evident from the analyses of marks suggests the success of the intervention, especially when considering that students were still on a UAP.
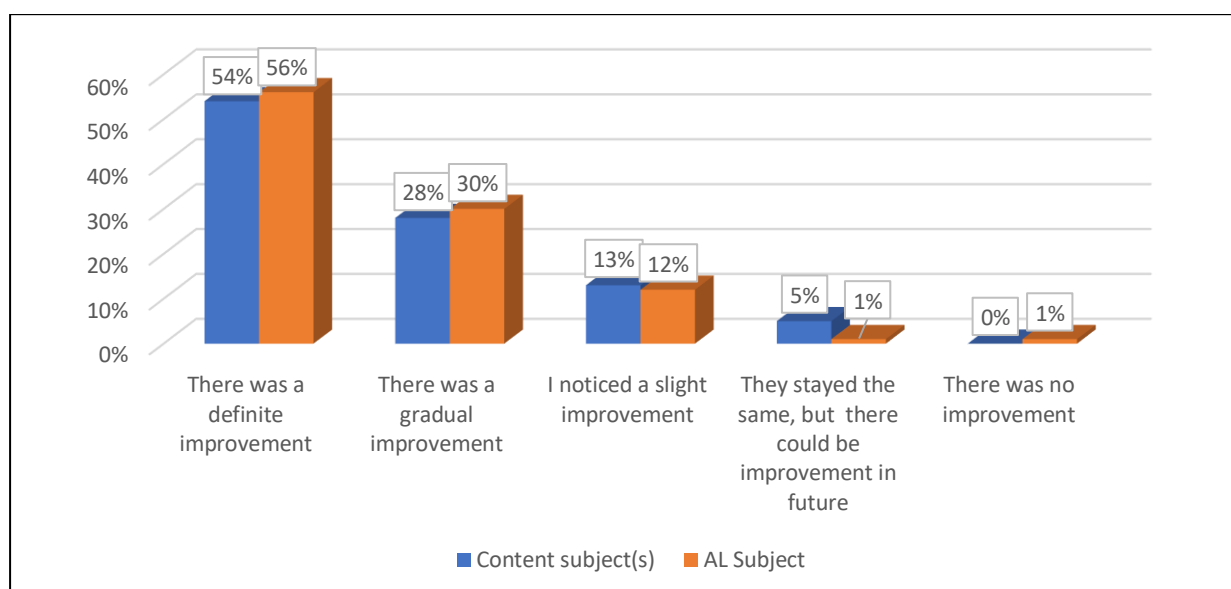
Figure 6: Student perception of improvement in writing in content subject(s) and AL

Figure 7 displays the results of students' perception of mark improvement in content subjects. The survey shows that 37% of students perceived that they had not passed content writing assignments before the intervention. However, after the writing intervention, student perceptions show that only 5% of students were not passing subject assignments. In addition, 76% of students seemed to have passed after attending the intervention. Over 40% of those who passed scored above 70% for writing assignments. This is similar to the results of the analyses of marks which corroborates students' perceptions. Students felt an improvement in their writing abilities after the intervention. This also suggests a perceived skills transfer owing to the intervention, as well as students' understanding that the intervention would lead to an increase in their subject assignment marks.
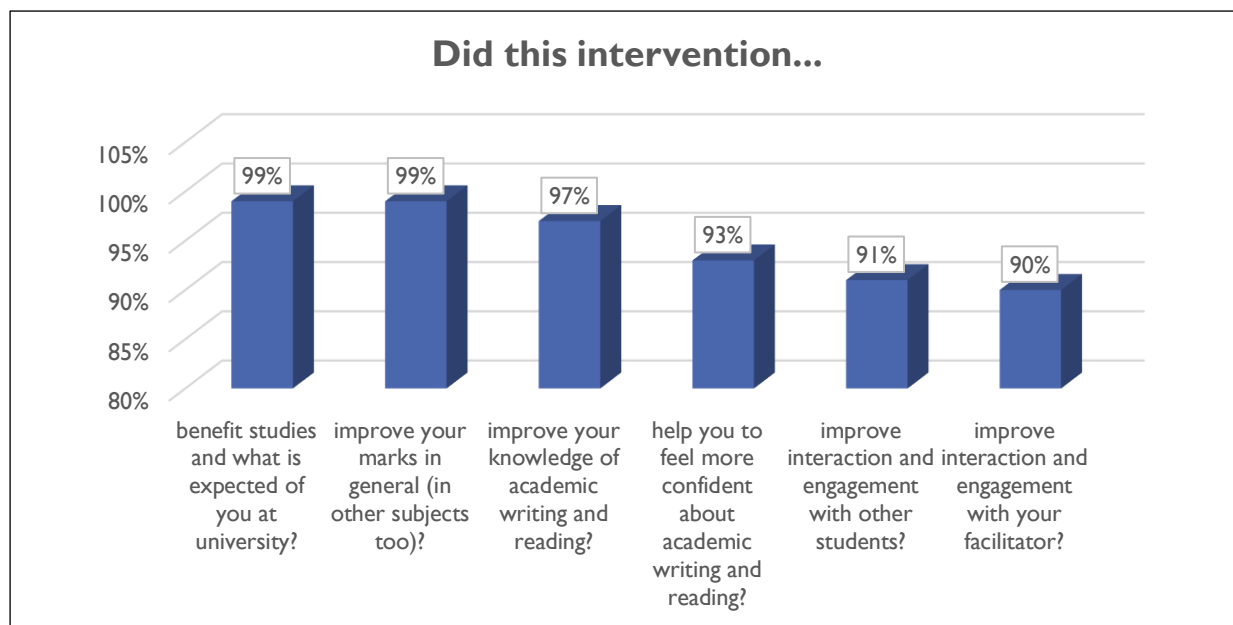
Figure 7: Students' perception of content assignment marks before and after the intervention

Similarly, most students agreed that because of the writing intervention, academic writing in general improved, as well as feeling like they were more prepared for what was expected of them at university. Figure 8 below illustrates the results of questions asked in the survey. The questions in the survey explored, for example, improvement in marks in AL, knowledge of academic writing and reading, confidence in these areas and general interaction between facilitators and students. Improvement in confidence when it comes to writing is a key factor when assisting students in writing development as is shown in previous research (Sekonyela, 2023, p. 98). In the second column of Table 2, a student shows how confidence assisted them to improve and to at least know what the expectations are: "[my] anxiety is now gone because I didn't know what is expected of me but now I know and I'm ready". Similarly, the majority of students, over 90%, reported that interaction with peers and their facilitator was present, suggesting the presence of a positive learner centred environment in line with social constructivist and writing centre approaches (Carstens & Rambiritch, 2020).

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Figure 8: General improvement based on students' perceptions

The comments in Table 2 reveal perceptions of the success students experienced. These comments show not only perceived improvement, but how some students may have achieved distinctions in assignment writing because of the writing intervention. For example, in column 1, one student comments on their achievement: "I got 86% in my [content] assignment because my facilitator taught us how to structure our assignment very very well". Many of these comments also point to the most important aim of this article which is identifying effective strategies to assist skills transfer, both for benefit in other subjects and for university success, as emphasised by Drennan (2022).

From these figures, it seems that students have gained an understanding of the importance of AL in helping them to succeed in other subjects, which provided motivation in the learning process. This is supported by student comments in Table 2, especially in column 2, where a student stated "I applied what I was taught in [AL] class to other modules and it worked perfectly" and "[b]ecause I applied what I was taught in [AL] to other modules and it actually worked and improved my marks". This is in line with the findings of Drennan and Keyser (2022) who confirm that "[s]tudents are more motivated to engage in tasks and texts related to their disciplines" (p. 5).

Table 2: Student comments on the writing centre intervention

1. Improvement in academic literacy and writing skills	2. Improvement in content subject assignment writing and skills transfer
- I really love [AL] module.it helped me to improve my writing skill and reading skill as well - I was able to understand how to draft or write an essay in an academic way. - Being introduced to [AL] was so enjoyable because I have better knowledge in writing and reading. - It was an amazing experience. - My marks has increased a little bit this semester, im still improving - I have learnt how to structure my assignment and also how to reference my essay in a correct format. - I leaned how I should structure the essay and other things. We started writing the essay 3times before submitting it - yes it did help me to improve my marks - I wish I can get more improvement than this, but I am improving bit by bit - Yes , my writing improved better on the second semester and my marks are getting better - I am still struggling but i will keep working on it. - I see improvement in Essay writing and I'm very happy - I did notice change and I was very happy about that - I didn't know there are different types of references before but now I am very proud to say I can write my essays as well as assignments with good referencing format. - I improved my marks in such a way i never thought - I get more and more knowledge with strategies that can help me generally - After this intervention I saw change in my work	- I got 86% in my [subject] Assignment because my facilitator taught us how to structure our assignment very very well - The intervention definitely has helped with completing the essay part of my [content] assignment. - That session helped me a lot I got a good marks of [psychology] essay and I am very thankful and I appreciate. - The [sociology intervention] helped me a lot because i knew how to compile a academic essay - My marks improved alot especially on [communications] and [psychology] essays.. because that's what we are being taught on [AL] - I now know how to do a research to gather an important information needed for my assignment or essay. - I applied what I was taught in [AL] class to other modules and it worked perfectly. - Because I applied what I was taught in [AL] to other modules and it actually worked and improved my marks - Definitely, it taught me what to be expected of me and it contributed to my studies well and I'm glad. - I now know that it is important to understand what is expected in the assignment such as reference, writing structure and most important thing avoiding plagiarism - It made me grew academically and took out the potential in me. - My anxiety is now gone because I didn't know what is expected of me but now I know and I'm ready - The only wish I have is directed to my self I wish I came early because my Mark's wouldve been greater

That it seems as if students realise the importance of AL skills after the intervention is of importance, as often they overlook the module to the inevitable detriment of their studies (Sekonyela, 2023). One student points out this error in judgement and regrets not realising this sooner: "[t]he only wish I have is directed to my self I wish I came early because my Mark's would've been greater [*sic*]". Table 2 summarises the most meaningful qualitative data received from students about their improvement in academic writing and skills transfer, and corroborates quantitative data from the survey and from the analyses of marks.

8. Findings and recommendations

This intervention, which focused on taking a writing centre approach within the classroom to develop academic writing skills, shows positive results. Indeed, this is apparent from the analyses of marks and student perceptions. What is also important here is that in this study, the facilitators were experienced writing consultants. The three co-authors form part of this group, as well as being experienced facilitators and AL practitioners. However, this ideal environment might not always be possible in the future, if this approach was re-implemented. Thus, it is vital when implementing a workshop such as this, that facilitators are trained and fully prepared. Ideally, writing centre training and experience is the most beneficial way to incorporate this type of writing intervention into the classroom. Furthermore, this study reiterates the importance of collaboration between AL lecturers and subject lecturers as indicated by previous research (Drennan, 2022, p. 2). This applies to not only being able to assist students' writing needs at university, but also to improve students' understanding and awareness of the importance of acquiring AL skills. Hence, lecturers' awareness of the need for AL skills can also boost student success in academic writing, as has been shown in this collaboration with psychology and sociology lecturers.

A potential concern found in this study, which evidently shows the need for AL awareness, is student absenteeism. Those who missed the writing intervention were at a loss. It is important to note, some students would have had access to at least two workshops approaching different assignments, in addition to the lessons constituting a whole year of the AL course. Subject lecturers and AL lecturers, therefore, need to implement awareness as early in the year as possible, and throughout the course of the year. The writing intervention itself creates awareness, which is a beneficial feature of the study. This points to skills transfer, especially if the results of this research are taken into consideration. Possible future research could also investigate whether students continue to apply the skills learnt through this writing intervention in future years and not just within the assignments considered within the intervention.

9. Conclusion

While skills transfer lies at the heart of this research, it is evident that all stakeholders (from students to AL practitioners and content lecturers) need to be involved with students' academic literacy needs, whether it is within the AL class or in another class. This awareness can contribute greatly to success rates. In addition, student and lecturer awareness of AL needs could hold the key to obtaining future academic success. To sum up, without AL, students are at a disadvantage, and thus it is the duty of AL practitioners to implement strategies which assist students in seeing the benefits of the course and its application in major content subjects. Collaboration in this regard can lead to student success to graduation level and beyond.

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