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Metacognitive awareness and academic literacy skills in English as a foreign language: The case of summarising

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Abstract

A range of studies has demonstrated that the transition from secondary to higher education (HE) remains a challenging experience for first-year students. A primary factor that has an impact on students' acculturation to the new learning and teaching environment, and by default on their academic success, is their mastery of general and discipline-specific academic discourse. In other words, novice university students are required to learn to effectively and efficiently communicate in a manner established by their academic community by engaging with academic discourse in all its diversity. Not surprisingly, many students experience the process of academic acculturation as challenging (at best), particularly due to its implicit character and unwritten rules, which as a whole seems to create tensions and discrepancies in students' understanding of the academic expectations of their new community. An effective command of disciplinary discourse is, nonetheless, critical for the students' progression in HE and can be attained through their academic literacy development whether implicit or explicit.

In this study, effective and integrated reading and writing are understood as central academic literacy practices through which students learn and develop their knowledge within disciplines and master disciplinary discourse. As written assignments remain the main form of assessment in HE, writing is regarded as a dominant literacy practice. However, at the very least, academic reading is an equally important literacy practice; and yet, it is often taken for granted and in turn given less attention in support materials for students' academic literacy development. Thus, a key component in the teaching and learning of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) –learning to write from reading input– academic reading remains a prevailing issue. More specifically, core academic literacy practices such as summarising and paraphrasing, in particular in a foreign and second language, continue to be challenging for first-year students and often for senior undergraduates as well. Consequently, it is important to rethink teaching and learning support for first-year students' academic literacy skills development in a responsible and informed way.

As research up to date has indicated a positive correlation between metacognition and academic performance, this study takes the perspective that first-year students can be supported in their academic literacy skills development

by increasing their metacognitive awareness of their competencies. In other words, raising students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses can help them better assess their own mastery of academic tasks, focus their skills development and perfect their knowledge.

With the aim to further inform the design of first-year students' academic literacy support, this thesis examines students' strengths and weaknesses within core academic literacy practices at the beginning of HE, as well as their understanding of those competencies. The research took place at the University of Antwerp in Belgium among first-year English majors for whom English is a foreign language. In the exploratory study, students (N = 116) discussed in small groups how they had experienced academic reading (in relation to writing) during their first three months at university. In the main study, summarising was focused on. This is a skill that students make use of when checking their reading comprehension and analysing a text, and, at the same time, it represents a prototypical academic literacy task. In order to enrich the preliminary insights, a new group of students' (N = 109) perceived and actual summarising skills (and the relationship between them) were studied by making use of a mixed-method research design.

The findings of this study confirm that first-year students' weaknesses in core academic literacy skills, such as summarising, are persistent. More in particular, filtering primary from secondary information and paraphrasing remain challenging, which indicates that students need additional support in both their receptive and productive skills in summarising. Moreover, the students' misunderstanding or lack of understanding of their competencies can have a detrimental impact on their academic literacy development. More specifically, discrepancies have been identified in students' awareness of their summarising skills in English as a foreign language (EFL): students tend to overestimate or underestimate their summarising skills. The aforementioned discrepancies may explain first-year students' struggle in mastering academic discourse. Consequently, this research suggests making use of the identified discrepancies to help raise students' awareness of their competencies in the early stages of higher education in order to additionally support their skills development. Moreover, the data show that the approach underlying the task used for the purposes of this study is useful in order to gain an insight into students' understanding of reading and writing materials and can in turn inform syllabus

design. Since a *one-size-fits-all* approach has been contested, suggestions are made as to how both approach and findings are relevant for local as well as wider contexts.

Key words: first-year students, English as a foreign language, academic literacy skills development, integrated reading and writing, summarising skills, metacognitive awareness-raising, curriculum and syllabus design, support design

Samenvatting

Studies hebben aangetoond dat de overgang van secundair naar hoger onderwijs een uitdaging blijft voor eerstejaarsstudenten. Een bepalende factor voor de acculturatie van studenten in hun nieuwe studieomgeving en daarmee voor hun academisch succes is de beheersing van het algemene en discipline-specifiek academisch discours. Met andere woorden, van nieuwkomers in het universitair onderwijs wordt verwacht dat ze effectief en efficiënt leren communiceren op de manier die hun academische gemeenschap bepaalt door zich te engageren in het academisch discours in al zijn facetten. Het is niet te verwonderen dat heel wat studenten dit proces van academische acculturatie op zijn minst als een uitdaging ervaren, in het bijzonder door het impliciet karakter en de ongeschreven regels. Dit veroorzaakt in het algemeen spanning en discrepanties in hoe studenten de academische verwachtingen van hun nieuwe gemeenschap begrijpen. Een effectieve beheersing van disciplinair discours is niettemin doorslaggevend voor de vorderingen van de studenten in het hoger onderwijs en kan enkel bereikt worden door hun ontwikkeling –impliciet of expliciet– op het vlak van academische geletterdheid.

In deze studie worden effectief en geïntegreerd lezen en schrijven beschouwd als centrale academische geletterdheidstoepassingen waardoor de studenten hun disciplinaire kennis en discours ontwikkelen en onder de knie krijgen. Aangezien schrijfoopdrachten de bevoorrechte beoordelingswijze blijven in het hoger onderwijs, wordt schrijven aanzien als een dominante geletterdheidstoepassing. Academisch lezen is echter een minstens even belangrijke geletterdheidscomponent, hoewel die vaak als vanzelfsprekend beschouwd wordt en minder aandacht krijgt in het ondersteuningsmateriaal voor academische geletterdheidsontwikkeling. Als sleutelcomponent in het onderwijzen en leren van Engels voor Academische doeleinden –met centraal het leren schrijven op basis van leesmateriaal– blijft academisch lezen daarom een centrale kwestie. Meer in het bijzonder, centrale academische geletterdheidstoepassingen zoals samenvatten en parafraseren blijven, vooral in een vreemde of tweede taal, een uitdaging voor (vooral) eerstejaarsstudenten. Daarom is het belangrijk om leer- en onderwijsondersteuningsmateriaal voor de ontwikkeling van de academische vaardigheden van eerstejaarsstudenten op een verantwoorde manier te heroverwegen.

Omdat onderzoek een positieve correlatie aangetoond heeft tussen metacognitie en academisch functioneren, neemt deze studie als uitgangspunt dat eerstejaarsstudenten ondersteund kunnen worden in hun academische geletterdheidsontwikkeling door het metacognitief bewustzijn van hun competenties te versterken. Met andere woorden, studenten bewustmaken van hun sterktes en zwaktes kan hen helpen om de eigen beheersing van academische taken beter in te schatten, hun vaardigheidsontwikkeling te focussen en hun kennis te perfectioneren.

Met het doel om het ontwerp van onderwijsondersteuning te verrijken onderzoekt deze studie de sterktes en zwaktes van studenten in centrale academische geletterdheidspraktijken bij het begin van hun hogere studies, zowel als hun begrip van deze competenties. Het onderzoek vond plaats aan de Universiteit Antwerpen (België) onder eerstejaars hoofdvakstudenten Engels. In de verkennende studie wisselden studenten (N=116) in kleine groepjes van gedachten over hun academische leeservaringen (in relatie tot schrijven) gedurende de eerste drie maanden aan de universiteit. In de hoofdstudie lag de focus op samenvatten als vaardigheid die de studenten gebruiken om hun leesvaardigheid af te toetsen en teksten te analyseren, terwijl het ook een prototypische academische geletterdheidstaak is. Om de eerste inzichten te verrijken werden de door de studenten zelf geobserveerde en de effectieve samenvattingsvaardigheden en de relatie tussen beide bestudeerd in een mixed-method onderzoeksaanpak.

De resultaten van deze studie bevestigen dat de zwaktes van eerstejaarsstudenten in centrale academische geletterdheidsvaardigheden, zoals samenvatten, hardnekkig zijn. Meer in het bijzonder, blijven het filteren van belangrijke informatie en parafraseren een uitdaging. Dit wijst erop dat studenten bijkomende ondersteuning nodig hebben voor hun receptieve en productieve vaardigheden bij het samenvatten.

Verder blijkt dat foutief of afwezig inzicht in hun competenties een ongunstige impact kan hebben op hun academische geletterdheidsontwikkeling. Meer in het bijzonder werden de volgende discrepanties geïdentificeerd in het bewustzijn van studenten met betrekking tot hun samenvattingsvaardigheid in het Engels: de studenten hebben de neiging om hun samenvattingsvaardigheid te overschatten of te onderschatten. Deze discrepanties zouden een verklaring kunnen zijn voor het feit dat eerstejaarsstudenten moeite hebben met het

verwerven van het academisch discours. De discrepanties die dit onderzoek blootlegde, kunnen daarom aangegrepen worden om studenten bewust te maken van hun competenties in de eerste fases van het hoger onderwijs om daarmee hun vaardigheidsontwikkeling extra te ondersteunen. Verder tonen de data dat de pedagogisch-didactische aanpak die ten grondslag ligt aan de taak die voor deze studie gebruikt werd nuttig is om inzichten te verwerven in hoe studenten lees- en schrijfmateriaal begrijpen om zo de syllabus- en materiaalontwikkeling verder te informeren. Aangezien een *one-size-fits-all* aanpak niet werkt, worden in deze studie aanbevelingen geformuleerd voor hoe aanpak en bevindingen relevant zijn voor zowel lokale als ruimere onderwijsleercontexten.

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Introduction and literature review

1.1. The transition from secondary to tertiary education

Many higher education (HE) institutions are persistently faced with academic underachievement and high drop-out rates of first-year students. The fact that the transition from secondary to tertiary education is a challenging process in students' educational career has been demonstrated by an extensive research literature, and it has gradually become a serious issue for HE institutions globally. In 2000, for instance, Macdonald pointed at the situation in Australia as a major concern and highlighted that 'in recent times the problem of the transition has become more acute' (p. 7). Macdonald (2000) explained that 'times have changed, and more students than ever before are entering the tertiary education system, with a wider range of backgrounds, a greater range of abilities, and more diverse expectations' (p. 7). Issues related to students' transition from secondary to higher education have remained a focus of attention not only within Australian HE (cf. Brinkworth, McCann, Matthews & Nordstörn, 2009; Crisp et al., 2009; Perry & Allard, 2003), but also in the US and the UK (cf. McCarthy & Kuh, 2006; Rausch & Hamilton, 2006; Yorke, 2001). Both the US and the UK have faced an increase of students or a massification of their HE systems resulting in more students under-prepared for university studies compared with the previous, more selective system (Russell, Lea, Parker, Street & Donahue, 2009; Wingate, 2007). Another example is South Africa, where about a third of

first-year students drop out during or after their first year of university studies, while an estimated completion rate is just below half (Scott, Yeld, & Hendry, 2007; Scott, 2009). The situation at Flemish universities (in the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) is not different with only 51.4% of the junior undergraduates passing their first-year exams (Vives, 2010). The last area is where the research described in this thesis is situated.

Foremost among a range of reasons that make it challenging and stressful for students to start tertiary education is the requirement to engage with new ways of **teaching, learning and language use** (Cazan, 2012; Hyland, 2009; Lowe & Cook, 2003; Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012a; Van Dyk, Van de Poel & Van der Slik, 2013). This comes as a consequence of junior undergraduates' underpreparedness for university studies in terms of both language and learning skills (cf. Brinkworth et al., 2009; Drew, 2001; Hellekjaer, 2009; Hyland, 2009; Van Dyk et al., 2013; Wingate, 2007). Junior undergraduates are required to cope effectively with academic literacy demands (Hyland, 2009; Van Dyk & Van de Poel, 2013); however, overall they start HE with poor academic literacy skills, particularly poor levels of (academic) reading skills in both first (L1) and second (L2) languages (Grabe & Zhang, 2013a; Muhammad, 2013; Stone, 2013; Van Dyk et al., 2013). Furthermore, junior undergraduates do not (always) know how to deal with the type of learning that is required of them (Ozga & Sukhmandan, 1998; Drew, 2001) nor with the expected higher level of independence and self-regulation (Devlin, 2009; Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012a). The negative impact of these key factors on students' transition and academic success is even larger when instruction and teaching is done in a foreign or a second language. More specifically, due to insufficient practice in writing from textual sources, language students face a range of challenges in performing typical academic reading-writing tasks such as summarising and synthesising information, critically responding to text input, and writing a research paper (cf. Grabe & Zhang,

2013a). In order to successfully handle specific academic tasks, students are also required to engage in higher-level thinking processes (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006). However, novice writers and readers are also novice in reasoning in an academic discipline and many of them tend to passively receive discipline's knowledge rather than critically engage with it (Wingate, 2007). Moreover, students not only lack an effective approach to academic lectures, texts, class tasks and tests, but also tend to overestimate their academic competencies when entering university (Van Dyk, et al., 2013, Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012a). Nonetheless, if they are to master disciplinary discourse and eventually formulate a critical stance, students first need to understand the disciplinary discourse.

1.2. Academic acculturation and academic discourse

Students' mastery of academic discourse has been recognised as a major factor in their successful academic acculturation and in turn academic success (Fox, Cheng & Zumbo, 2014). When students start tertiary education, they encounter academia as a community whose members interact, display knowledge and communicate in ways different from other communities. Aspiring members of academic communities are 'young' undergraduates who have to learn to communicate in a manner established by that community (Hyland, 2006). In other words, they have to engage with academic discourse, here understood as 'ways of thinking and using language which exists in the academy' (Hyland, 2009, p.1). 'The ability (and motivation) of these young people to assimilate, understand, embrace, interact and engage with academic discourse in all its diversity' is referred to as academic acculturation (Van de Poel & Van Dyk, 2015, p. 3). Students' successful academic acculturation depends on how efficiently they engage with academic discourse which underlies their efficient communication with other members of the community (their peers and lecturers) and their interaction with academic texts. Nonetheless, learning to use language

in new ways in addition to learning to communicate in a new context presents considerable challenges for many students (Hyland, 2009, viii-ix).

The pronounced cause of problematic academic acculturation is the implicit character of the process in which students do not always understand what is expected from them. As Van de Poel & Gasiorek (2012b, p. 60) pointed out, there is a tension in student-staff communication due to a discrepancy in expectations, i.e. teaching staff assume students' familiarity with and knowledge of the conventions of academia which in reality many students lack. This is particularly the case within the context of academic literacy, 'the building block for acculturation and success in HE' (Van Dyk & Van de Poel, 2013, p. 45). At university, students will finally be judged by the way they demonstrate mastery of and control over the discourse (Van Schalkwyk, 2008), being through their academic literacy skills, primarily effective reading and writing (Gee, 2003). Writing in particular is the main form of assessment of students' knowledge in a specific area (Hyland, 2006). However, students do not always understand what the teaching staff is expecting from them in terms of academic writing (Lea & Street, 1998; Van de Poel & Brunfaut, 2004a&b).

Accordingly, students should be gradually guided through the process of academic acculturation by the means of teaching and learning practices that will help them understand how to master and control academic discourse. To that end, this study considers raising students' awareness of their academic literacy skills with regard to the typical tasks that university education requires of them to be a starting point to better understanding of a) their own skills and b) the teaching staff expectations.

1.3. Academic literacy skills development and support

1.3.1. Academic literacy

As pointed out earlier, academic literacy development is considered to be a key aspect of academic acculturation. Defining the concept of academic literacy is far from a straightforward endeavour, which has resulted in a lack of a universally accepted definition of academic literacy in the literature. When the traditional belief was challenged that acquiring literacy implied acquiring a specific set of cognitive skills to be used with ease in any new context (Street, 1984; Gee, 1990), academic literacy was no longer regarded as a unitary concept (Lea, 2004; Lillis & Scott, 2007; Van Dyk & Van de Poel, 2013). Dominant literacy practices in tertiary education across various national contexts were questioned and the diversity of literacy practices was debated. Apart from ‘the ability to read and write the various texts assigned in college’ (Spack, 1997, p. 4), academic literacy entails a number of abilities supportive of making meaning, and mediating and negotiating knowledge (Carstens, 2012). Reading and writing are considered ‘beyond print’, ‘caught up with and in social practices’ (Gee, 2003, p. 28–29). Or, as Johns (1997) stated, literacy is ‘more inclusive’ than reading and writing; the term literacy ‘integrate[s] into one concept the many and varied social, historical, and cognitive influences on readers and writers as they attempt to process and produce texts’ (p. 2). Consequently, a new conceptualisation emerged to distinguish between academic literacy and academic literacies in research and applied settings (cf. Lillis & Scott, 2007). The new concept embraces various cognitive and social practices of taking and making textual meaning which would in turn empower students to access new communities beyond the classroom (Kern, 2004, p. 20).

Although the definition of academic literacy is evolving into one encompassing multidimensional abilities, at university, students’ academic literacy is mostly

demonstrated through their effective reading and writing (Gee, 2003). As written assignments remain the main form of assessment, writing in particular is regarded as a dominant literacy practice and a ‘high stakes’ activity in HE (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 9). At the same time, primary focus on supporting students’ writing in their academic literacy/ies development rather than any other literacy practice is the main point of criticism of the provided support (Lea 2004; Lillis & Scott 2007; Weideman, 2013; Wingate, 2015). Looking into academic literacy, however, requires not only considering students’ written text (product), but also what precedes writing: gathering and processing information (Weideman, 2013). Within the scope of this study, academic literacy is understood as students’ effective reading and writing as the central processes through which they master discourse, learn, and develop their knowledge within disciplines (cf. Lea & Street, 1998, p. 160). It should be pointed out that reading and writing are not taken into account in isolation, as discrete skills. On the contrary, it is considered essential to teach reading and writing skills in combination as mutually supportive to literacy development and content learning in academia is considered essential (Grabe, 2003; Grabe & Zhang, 2013a).

1.3.2. Reading and writing in academic settings

Reading and writing are considered to be central academic literacy practices through which students learn and develop their knowledge within disciplines (Lea & Street, 1998, p.157). More specifically, the importance of learning to write from source texts in academic settings has been recognised by teachers, institutions and students (Grabe & Zhang, 2013a). Furthermore, academic tasks that require writing from reading input have been identified as critical for academic success (Hale et al., 1996; Hedgcock & Atkinson, 1993; Rosenfeld, Leung, & Oltman, 2001) and a critical component of EAP teaching and learning

(Hirvela, 2016; Grabe & Zhang, 2013b, 2016). Therefore, developing students' ability to successfully complete these tasks is a key area in academic writing instruction (Hirvela & Du, 2013).

Nonetheless, these core academic literacy skills are complex and challenging for both first (L1) and second language (L2) students and require considerable practice. For L2 students in particular, the most pronounced challenges in academic reading/writing tasks arise from their limited proficiency and less fluency in reading and writing, insufficient experience in reading and writing, as well as limited L2 background knowledge to draw on (cf. Grabe & Zhang, 2013a). The complexity and challenges become even greater in the era of rapidly developing technologies and different media resources such as electronic texts, web pages, etc. (Grabe & Zhang, 2016). As new media is reshaping the foreign language classroom, students are developing an additional, complex set of competencies and skills, i.e. new media literacies (cf. Ludwig & Van de Poel, 2017). However, new literacies that come with contemporary technology do not supersede traditional literacy (Horning & Kraemer, 2013, p. 12). On the contrary, they 'almost always build on foundational literacies [reading and writing] rather than replace them' (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004, p. 1590).

Integrated reading and writing remain the major way of learning the language and/or content in English for academic purposes (EAP) contexts, but also a prevailing issue (Hirvela & Du, 2013; Grabe & Zhang, 2016). It is generally acknowledged that especially first-year students find integrating reading and writing effectively and appropriately difficult (Cumming, Lai & Cho, 2016; Grabe & Zhang, 2013a; Hirvela & Du, 2013). In particular, summarising together with paraphrasing are considered 'the threshold of reading and writing' in academic settings (Murray, Parrish & Salvatori, 1998); they continue to be

problematic for first-year students but very often also for senior undergraduates. These central academic-literacy activities are receiving even greater attention as acts of plagiarism are being increasingly discussed in the literature (Hirvela & Du, 2013). The present study focuses on summarising, a core activity in integrated academic reading and writing.

1.3.3. Summarising as a core reading/writing activity

The majority of the written tasks at university are reading-based: students need to use textual resources to derive their content from and to demonstrate an understanding of what they have learned. Core source-based reading and writing practices across various HE settings are *summarising* and *paraphrasing* (Grabe & Zhang, 2013a; Hirvela & Du, 2013). Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) suggest that:

Summarizing is both a reading and writing skill. Where reading is concerned, effective summarizing requires an understanding of the key ideas in a text and an ability to distinguish among main points (which belong in a summary) and supporting details (which typically do not). For writing, summarizing requires the writer to express the main points of a text she has read succinctly and in her own words. (p. 185)

Or, as Grabe and Zhang (2013b) put it:

Summary writing is the quintessential reading-writing task, involving general comprehension, attention to main ideas, frequent re-reading of the text, translation of ideas into one's own writing production, and a responsibility to have the written summary reflect information in the text. (p. 114)

Summary writing remains an essential task in EAP and provides an insight into students reading for writing skills (Hirvela, 2016). As Sarig (1993) observed, 'summarising tasks are junctions where reading and writing encounters take place and it is here that a complex composing process begins (p. 161). Summary writing, or the summarisation of content, represents a considerable amount of university academic writing (Horowitz, 1986). However, junior undergraduates

experience effective summarising as challenging. Various issues are central to this challenge: limited vocabulary knowledge, poor reading comprehension, lack of practice in writing a summary, direct copying of sentences, lack of topic knowledge to draw on (Grabe & Zhang, 2013a). A highly problematic issue in writing from source texts is plagiarism, i.e. direct copying from the original text or using another author's ideas and words without acknowledging their work. There are a number of strategies that are used in pedagogical interventions to teach students to avoid plagiarism, amongst which mostly the strategies of the 'triadic model' of 'paraphrase, summary, and quotation' (Barks & Watts, 2001, p. 252), also referred to as triad (Keck, 2010). Moreover, research suggests teaching paraphrasing as the most efficient way of preventing direct copying from source texts when integrating someone else's ideas into own writing. Nonetheless, compared to summarising, paraphrasing is considerably less taught in academic writing courses for (non)native speakers of English, and receives less attention in the pedagogical and research literature (Hirvela & Du, 2013). The main reason for this tendency is that paraphrasing is often seen as integrated in summary writing (Hyland, 2000; Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Nonetheless, paraphrasing in tertiary education "provides insight into how well students read (since comprehension is the first step toward paraphrasing) as well as write" (Hirvela & Du, 2013, p. 88). In the present study, paraphrasing is seen as one of the components or devices of summarising.

1.3.4. Support (issues)

Support of students' literacy and learning skills has been referred to as inadequate, insufficient or even outdated and has also received significant scholarly attention (Wingate, 2007, 2015; Weideman, 2013). Students' academic literacy development is generally being supported in a number of ways which are not necessarily mutually exclusive (cf. Van de Poel & Van Dyk, 2015). For

instance, the support provided can be discipline-specific and taught by disciplinary specialists, generic and taught by language experts, or a combination of the two. However, as Wingate (2007) points out, learning support including academic literacy support at most universities is provided through extra-curricular, generic and remedial courses designed to cater for the needs of students from various disciplines. These support courses have many limitations: students often consider them irrelevant to their subject courses, and academic reading and writing tend to be practiced as context-independent techniques (Wingate, 2007). Furthermore, students attending courses which focus on remedying their deficiencies from secondary education might feel as if they failed in their development so far, and as if they are less successful than their peers in advancing at university (Higbee, 1993). In sum, the degree to which junior undergraduates become familiar with the discipline's practices, gain the subject knowledge and master their discipline's discourse conventions is likely to be insufficiently supported by extra-curricular skills courses (Wingate, 2007).

An additional issue that is equally important is that today more attention is being paid to productive rather than receptive skills in academic literacy instruction, independently from whether the support is generic or subject-specific. In developing students' reading-writing abilities, the centre of attention is on writing whereas reading comprehension is treated as 'relatively unproblematic' (Grabe & Zhang, 2016, p. 339). However, reading should not be taken for granted or neglected since, of all academic literacy practices, writing from reading input is a major challenge for both native and second language writers (Grabe & Zhang, 2013b; Hirvela & Du, 2013).

'Because academic writing so often entails the use of what students have read, the need to reconnect reading and writing is clear' (Horning & Kraemer, 2013, p. 11). Yet, integrated reading and writing represent pervasive challenges for

junior undergraduates and students' academic literacy readiness for university remains a persistent point of discussion. Consequently, a valid question with respect to academic literacy interventions remains 'What are we not yet doing, or not yet doing right?' (Weideman, 2013, p. 11). As mentioned earlier, this study considers raising students' awareness of their competencies with regard to the typical tasks that university education requires of them to be a starting point to better understanding of a) their own skills and b) the teaching staff expectations. Eventually, the aim is to help students approach their academic literacy tasks in a more effective manner.

1.4. Metacognitive awareness raising in support of academic literacy development

1.4.1. Metacognitive awareness raising

Being effective learners presupposes students' awareness of the requirements of an academic task and of their own strengths and weaknesses in the task completion which allows them to regulate their further development (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006). In practice, many students are unable to objectively assess their competencies regarding the demands of assigned academic tasks (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006). A possible way to help students approach their academic literacy tasks in a more effective manner is by increasing their metacognitive awareness of their competencies.

Metacognition was first defined by Flavell (1979) as one's ability to understand, control and manipulate one's own cognitive process to enhance learning. From the mid-1970s onwards, metacognition and its constituent parts were researched from many perspectives, which resulted in numerous definitions. Most of these, however, distinguish between knowledge of cognition and monitoring or regulation of cognition (Flavell, 1979; Baker & Brown, 1984; Paris & Winograd, 1990; Schraw, Crippen & Hartley, 2006). Metacognitive knowledge includes

awareness of: oneself as a learner and the factors that might influence performance (declarative knowledge); strategies (procedural knowledge); and when and why to use strategies (conditional knowledge) (Flavell, 1979; Schraw et al., 2006). Regulation or monitoring of cognition refers to activities that help students control their learning such as planning, monitoring and evaluating (Flavell, 1979; Paris & Winograd, 1990; Schraw et al., 2006). The two components influence each other: metacognitive knowledge facilitates the ability to regulate cognition which in turn refines metacognitive knowledge (Lai, 2011). In other words, students' controlled application of strategies requires sufficient task, person and strategy knowledge (Flavell, 1979). Accordingly, raising students' metacognitive awareness can help them better assess their own mastery of academic tasks, focus their skills development and perfect their knowledge. Moreover, becoming (more) metacognitively aware can help them regulate their learning better and support them in becoming more autonomous (Ruelens & Vulovic, 2018). A fundamental metacognitive process is (self-)reflection: engaging students in (self-)reflection while completing an academic task could help them to critically analyse their performance related to that task and identify areas that need focused attention.

1.4.2. Self-reflection

Self-reflection is the capability that is most 'distinctly human' through which people evaluate and alter their own thinking and behaviour (Bandura, 1986, p. 21). Various self-referent processes fall under the umbrella concept of self-reflection. For instance, Bandura (1986) distinguished two of those processes: self-judgement and self-evaluation. Furthermore, next to forethought and performance or volitional control, self-reflection is a third phase in Zimmerman's (1998) distinction of self-regulation processes. In the self-reflection phase, Zimmerman (1998) differentiates between self-evaluation,

attributions, self-reactions and additivity as the most studied self-reflection processes under the umbrella of self-regulation to date. Even though the third phase is explicitly named ‘self-reflection’, the act of self-reflection underpins the overall process of self-regulation and is critical to mastering the content being learned. Or, as Zimmerman (1998) puts it, ‘the self-reflective processes influence subsequent forethought and prepare the learners for further efforts to achieve mastery’ (p. 5). In skilful self-regulators, self-reflection processes will positively influence the forethought phase and the overall learning process (Zimmerman, 1998).

In the present study, self-reflection refers to an act of self-conscious consideration and evaluation that can raise one’s awareness of oneself and others in specific social settings, and in turn change one’s thought or behaviour (cf. Bandura, 1986, p. 21; Danielewicz, 2001, pp. 155–156). In a university language-learning context in particular, integrating self-reflection training into regular language courses can raise students’ awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in terms of specific academic task requirements, help them identify areas that need improvement, and inform and direct their learning. In turn, students with a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses as learners and of the demands of the specific tasks are identified as more skilful in academic self-regulation (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006, p. 39). (Self-)reflection is an integral part of self-regulation: in other words, university students’ ability to self-regulate their learning depends both on their ability to reflect critically on themselves as learners and on the demands of academic tasks (cf. Isaacson & Fujita, 2006; Little, 1991). Mastering self-regulation skills is an iterative process of reflection and increased self-awareness (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006; Zimmerman, 1989). Furthermore, in the development of learner autonomy, awareness raising is often identified as an initial stage, with every subsequent stage requiring more responsibility over one’s own learning (Nunan, 1997;

Scharle & Szabo, 2000). Therefore, engaging students in self-reflection is an initial step in students' gradual growth into more autonomous language learners. In the present study, the reflection focus is on task requirements, as the interest of the study is students' perceptions of their own competencies regarding a particular task.

Since peer review is gaining importance and becoming a frequent activity in HE, it is important to consider it a likely part of completing a task in academic literacy skills development. This is particularly the case in first-year classes which often count more than a hundred students, most of whom are confronted for the first time with academic expectations, and are in need of feedback on their initial academic work. Peer review is an activity in which students review each other's work, give and receive qualitative feedback (Wood & Kurzel, 2008). As noted by Wood and Kurzel (2008), students generally experience peer review as a non-threatening process as no marks are allocated during peer review. The benefits of encouraging students to review each other's work are manifold, for both the student receiving the feedback and the student giving it (Sims, 1989; van den Berg, Admiraal & Pilot, 2007; Wessa & De Rycker, 2010). The students may benefit from: gained insights into how to improve their own work; better understanding of the criteria that will be used to assess their work; higher level awareness of the task; stimulated critical thinking (Sims, 1989; Wood & Kurzel, 2008; Wessa & De Rycker, 2010). Moreover, students can make use of the gained knowledge in subsequent revisions and gradually improve their work and peer-review ability. In sum, self-reflection practice and peer review embedded in students' task completion are likely to promote critical enquiry, increase students' awareness of their own skills and prompt them to consider what they might do differently to become more effective in future tasks.

1.5. The University of Antwerp context

As mentioned earlier, the challenging transition from secondary to tertiary education is not unknown in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking northern part of Belgium) either, where 51.4%¹ of the students starting their academic studies pass their first-year exams (Vives, 2010). It is important to note that Belgian students do not have to pass a national exam at the end of their secondary education, nor do they have to pass an entrance exam when starting tertiary education (except for medical studies and dentistry). In order to gain access to HE, they are required to present a secondary education certificate displaying their final end-of-school grade which is accorded based on a combination of continuous assessments and teacher-designed exams for all subjects.² Given this context, the first undergraduate year at Flemish universities is not only a critical part of first-year academic studies, but, for many students, also a selection period to decide whether to continue studying in tertiary education.

At the University of Antwerp, several studies on English majors have confirmed that becoming academically literate and acculturated to academia is a challenging process (De Geest, 2012; De Rycke, 2010; Van de Poel & Brunfaut, 2004a&b). Moreover, a discrepancy identified between staff expectations and student interpretations of them with regard to academic literacy development (Van de Poel & Brunfaut, 2004a&b) seems to cause struggle within newly arrived students. For instance, Master's students of English who looked back on

¹ This result relates to the pre-Bologna system with fixed programme and almost no possibility for undergraduate students to self-select courses. This system, however, provided an opportunity for an easier statistical analysis of students' early success. In the current more flexible system, courses that students follow differ to a certain extent and graduation first takes place after students successfully collect 180 credits, which all together makes the analysis of students' success more complicated. Nonetheless, first-year students' study success is a general concern in first year HE in Flanders and internationally.

² More information regarding secondary school certificate in Flanders can be found via the following websites: <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl>, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/onderwijs-en-vorming/diplomas-en-getuigschriften/diploma-secundair-onderwijs>

their acculturation to HE identified this process as emotional, especially when receiving feedback on their literature assignments and exam grades showing a discrepancy between their own and their teachers' evaluation of their work (De Rycke, 2010). Furthermore, as reported by De Geest (2012), receiving the first grades at university comes as a 'shock and a reality check' to the junior undergraduates due to the same reasons: the discrepancy between students' self-assessment criteria and the criteria used by the teaching staff. Consequently, it is important to support students' academic acculturation process by raising their awareness of the expectations and demands of the academic environment, and if and why they are not meeting them. According to the studies investigating students' language skills, reading appears to be a problematic skill and deserves further focused attention (Brunfaut, 2008; Nizonkiza & Van de Poel, 2013; Van Dyk, Van de Poel & Van der Slik, in prep.). A study by Van Dyk and colleagues (in prep.) particularly, showed that students' perceived reading preparedness is rather optimistic when correlated to their actual reading performance. The authors suggested that students' should be made aware of this discrepancy from the very beginning of HE in order to realistically interpret their reading preparedness. Moreover, teachers' awareness should also be raised accordingly: they should take this discrepancy into account when helping students to engage with academic discourse and supporting their academic acculturation.

1.6. Thesis structure

The present study aims to further inform the design of the support of junior undergraduates' academic literacy skills development in English as a foreign language by providing an insight into the metacognitive awareness of their academic literacy skills and identifying their awareness-raising needs. In this dissertation, reading and writing are considered to be central literacy practices through which knowledge about a specific discipline is being acquired, and thus acculturation to the discipline's discourse conventions is taking place.

In an exploratory study, I investigated students' metacognitive awareness of their academic reading (in connection to writing) after spending their first three months at university. Based on some of these preliminary findings –which indicated summarising and paraphrasing as main practices used for various reading purposes– I further explored students' metacognitive awareness of their academic literacy skills by investigating their summarising skills. As pointed out above, summarising is a prototypical reading and writing task across higher education settings; summarising is also regarded as the most basic skill/strategy in meaning-making from the perspective of academic literacy development when acquiring subject content. Exploring students' experiences when summarising a text, their perceptions of their own skills but also their actual skills, can help us identify the challenges in their academic literacy skills development in the early stage of their university studies. As students' (lack of) awareness of their own skills can play a great role in their skills development, this research also suggests metacognitive awareness raising as an approach to supporting students' academic literacy and learning skills development, and in turn promoting a successful transition from secondary to tertiary education.

The overarching research question (RQ) being addressed in this dissertation is:

RQ What is first-year English majors' metacognitive awareness of their academic literacy skills in English as a foreign language?

The following sub-questions were formulated in order to specify the above overarching research question:

RQ 1 What characterises first-year English majors' **perceived** metacognitive awareness of their academic reading?

RQ 2.1 What are first-year English majors' **perceived** strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in English as a foreign language?

RQ 2.2 What are first-year English majors' **actual** strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in English as a foreign language?

RQ 2.3 What is **the relationship** between the expected level of difficulty and performance in relation to the same task requirement?

Answers to these questions provide insights into first-year students' skills in writing from reading input as well as their awareness of their own skills. Moreover, the different layers in identified students' needs additionally inform the design of tailored guidance and support for students' academic literacy development. In the following paragraphs, a brief overview of the studies conducted with the aim to answer the above research questions will be given. In the overview, 1.6.1 and 1.6.2 refer to the chapters reporting on the results of the performed studies and discussion of those results, while 1.6.3 relates to an overall discussion and implications chapter.

1.6.1. Exploratory study: First-year English majors' perceived metacognitive awareness of academic reading

In order for teachers to become better equipped to support the development of first-year students' academic literacy skills, students' reading deficiencies should be taken into consideration as playing a fundamental role in academic writing and academic success (Van Dyk et al., 2013, p. 355). With the aim to gain a better insight into students' perceptions of academic reading (in relation to writing) after three months at university, I first looked into their metacognitive awareness of academic reading related issues and addressed RQ 1. 116 first-year majors in English at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (University of Antwerp) were interviewed in small groups about how they approached reading during their first three months at university. The collected data showed that the most used skills for monitoring reading comprehension and analysing academic texts are summarising and paraphrasing. The results also showed these students' partial or lack of awareness of reading techniques and of efficient approaches to reading academic texts. In addition, the students felt better prepared only for

their academic writing after the initial months at university even if they do read in order to write. This exploratory study will be described in Chapter 2.

1.6.2. Main study: First-year English majors' strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in English as a foreign language

In the main study, which I will thoroughly elaborate upon in Chapter 3, I investigated first-year English majors' summarising skills in EFL. I did so by looking into students' perceived and actual summarising skills, and the relationship between the two. Below, I will briefly refer to the investigations per perspective taken.

1.6.2.1. Perceived summarising skills

First, I delved deeper into students' perceptions of their academic literacy skills in a foreign language. More in particular, in order to answer RQ 2.1, I examined what first-year majors in English identify their strengths and weaknesses to be while completing a common academic task that integrates reading and writing, i.e. summarising. The students were given a summary writing task with the tasks' requirements in the form of a writing scale provided to them as a supportive tool when completing the assignment. The scale was used as the basis for the design of prompts on which the students were invited to reflect and which were embedded in the pre-, mid- and post-task phase. The self-reflection prompts, in the form of Likert-type items followed by a possibility to add comments, aimed to help the students critically look at their own and their peers' texts, and identify the challenges in terms of the task requirements.

1.6.2.2. Actual summarising skills

In order to complement the above-mentioned study on students' perceived strengths and weaknesses, I looked into their actual strengths and weaknesses in

their summarising skills in English as a foreign language when starting HE. In this study, I investigated RQ 2.2. Students' summaries, collected in the task completion mentioned in the previous research step, were analysed with respect to the task requirements on which the students reflected when completing the summarising task. The requirements were presented to the students in the form of a writing scale.

1.6.2.3. The relationship between perceived and actual summarising skills

In this study, I will bring together all the results and discuss the findings from a different angle. I will primarily be focusing on investigating the relationship between students' expected level of difficulty and performance in relation to the same task requirements, as stated in RQ 2.3. The aim of the study is to provide insights into first-year English majors' understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in English as a foreign language or lack of understanding thereof.

1.6.3. Overall discussion and implications

In order to be able to engage more critically in academic literacy practices, students first need a good understanding of and control over those practices (Wingate, 2012, 2014). With the aim to empower them to take more control and eventually formulate a critical stance, in Chapter 4, I discuss metacognitive awareness raising as an approach supportive of the development of novice students' academic literacy. First, students' understanding of their summarising skills in EFL will be discussed together with their awareness raising needs. Moreover, a classification of students' understanding of their academic literacy skills, based on the insights gained through the investigation on summarising, will be presented in the form of a taxonomy. The purpose of the taxonomy is to facilitate the definition of instructional objectives in designing support for first-year students' academic literacy skills development. Next, based on the

discussion in the previous chapters and overall discussion, implications for syllabus design and material development will be drawn. Furthermore, a comprehensive approach will be presented, showing how support can be designed to raise students' awareness of the academic literacy requirements at the beginning of their university studies, and to provide them with the tools to continue improving and advancing their competencies. In this chapter, I will also acknowledge the limitations of the exploratory and the main study, as well as make recommendations for future research.

1.6.4. Conclusion

In the final chapter, I will briefly summarise the research findings of this thesis and their pedagogical implications, followed by a summary of the recommendations for future research.

Exploratory study: First-year English majors' perceived metacognitive awareness of their academic reading

2.1. Introduction

In the introductory chapter, I have pointed at the need to better understand the challenges that first-year students' face with respect to their academic literacy development. I have highlighted the importance of considering students' reading deficiencies in the development of their academic literacy skills, since reading plays a fundamental role in academic writing and academic success.

In the present chapter, I will report on an exploratory study that I performed in order to gain insight into first-year English majors' perceptions regarding academic reading (as a preliminary activity to writing) after their first three months at university. More specifically, the aim was to shed more light on students' awareness of (1) themselves as readers of academic texts, (2) the factors influencing their academic reading (as a preliminary activity for writing), and (3) the strategies related to assigned reading tasks. Students' self-perceptions with respect to their reading identity and definition of reading can be glossed as declarative knowledge, whereas the process of reading with an aim can be paraphrased as procedural knowledge. To that end, after three months at university, first-year English majors were drawn into a discussion and interviewed in small groups about how they experienced academic reading. Their perceptions were collected in order to answer the first research question stated in Chapter 1:

RQ 1 What characterises first-year English majors' perceived metacognitive awareness of their academic reading?

In section 2.2 of this chapter, I will explain the methodology describing the population, the procedure, the instrument through which the research question was operationalised, as well as the analysis performed. Subsequently, I will first report (section 2.3) and then discuss (section 2.4) the findings of this exploratory study. In the last section (2.5), I will make concluding remarks and point at further research steps.

2.2. Methodology

2.2.1. Participants

The participants referred to in this study were 116 first-year English majors studying at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Antwerp (academic year 2013–2014, Flanders, Belgium). The students were predominantly native speakers of Dutch – with very few exceptions – studying English linguistics and literature in combination with another language (Dutch, French, German or Spanish) or general literary, film and theatrical theory. One-third of their study time is devoted to English language proficiency development, where an integrated-skills approach (writing-through-reading) has been adopted (12 contact hours in the first year and 12 contact hours in the second; cf. Van de Poel & Brunfaut, 2004b; Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012a). The students have to improve their overall academic literacy skills. However, writing attracts most attention, because of it being a visible and productive skill. As a consequence, the academic reading load of first-year English majors at the University of Antwerp is rather low (Brunfaut, 2008, p. 118).

2.2.2. Academic literacy treatment

In order to become more proficient in English, the students are trained mainly in writing and speaking skills, whereas no explicit training in reading academic texts is provided in the linguistics and literature programme, nor specific instructions from lecturers on how to read an assigned text (Brunfaut, 2008). In the first term of their university studies, the students take an academic literacy course (12 contact hours) aiming to guide them through the basic principles and conventions of academic writing in English (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007; Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012a). The course follows a blended approach and is taught for 12 weeks following a strict format. In the writing programme – as developed since 2006 – writing is approached through reading short text excerpts related to topics about which learners may find themselves writing in the course of their studies (Van de Poel & Brunfaut, 2004a; Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012a). The writing assignments request the students initially to summarise and paraphrase what they read, and later to write their opinion on a topic supported by argumentation. Every assignment makes use of the previously introduced skills, gradually building up the skills towards a final task in the form of a 300-word essay.

2.2.3. Instrument

In order to gather information on first-year English majors' academic reading perceptions after their three months at university, focus group interviews were organised (see Section 2.2.4 below for procedure). An interview guide, i.e. a list of questions to be used during the interview (cf. the theoretical considerations as described by Dörnyei, 2007), was designed. The interview questions were derived from the Perceived Academic Reading Preparedness (PARP) questionnaire which provides insights into how students regard their preparedness for academic reading (Van Dyk et al., 2013; see Appendix 1). The

PARP-questionnaire includes questions that cover elements of reading speed, reading comprehension, analytic reading, discourse reading (coherence, cohesion and synthesising), reading strategy (planning for reading and reading techniques), and subject-specific reading (terminology) (cf. Van Dyk et al., 2013). This questionnaire was adapted for the purposes of an international research project aimed at investigating students' perceived academic reading preparedness at the beginning of HE (Van Dyk et al., in prep.) and completed by the same student group that took part in the exploratory study of the current research.

The interview guide comprised of five general sub-questions accompanied with one to five probes to increase the richness and depth of the responses (see Appendix 2). The questions prompted students' reflections regarding their (1) academic reading comprehension, (2) analysis of the assigned reading, (3) interpretation of information, (4) synthesis of reading and writing, as well as their perceptions of (5) their academic reading preparedness after three months at university. The interview guide was designed to ensure that students' perceptions with respect to academic reading are consistently discussed with the participants.

2.2.4. Procedure

The data for the present study were collected by means of focus group interviews, a form of qualitative research design used in Applied Linguistics among numerous other fields such as market research and political opinion inquiry (cf. Dörnyei, 2007). This type of interview allows the participants to 'develop ideas collectively, bringing forward their own priorities and perspectives, to create theory grounded in the actual experience' (Berg, 2007, p. 45).

The focus group interviews took place during a writing class in a lecture hall familiar to the students. Upon entering, the 116 students were divided into 15 groups (13 groups of eight, one group of five and one group of 7 students), with each group clustered around a moderator or facilitator. Seating order was originally made for 14 groups of eight students (see Figure 2.1). The estimation of the number of students likely to participate in the interview session was made based on their regular class attendance. However, as several extra students took part, the option was to have one existing group with more than 8 students or to create an extra group. As all 15 invited moderators were present, I adapted the seating plan on the spot to have 15 groups which provided an opportunity to work with two smaller groups. The number of students per group were determined following the recommendation to work with groups of six to 10 or 12 participants in order to achieve the required depth of information (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 145). The seating arrangements were such that a group did not disturb the discussion of another group in their vicinity. The fact that students were familiar with the setting and with one another facilitated the discussion flow and their responsiveness.

R.002 – GROUPS SEATING ORDER

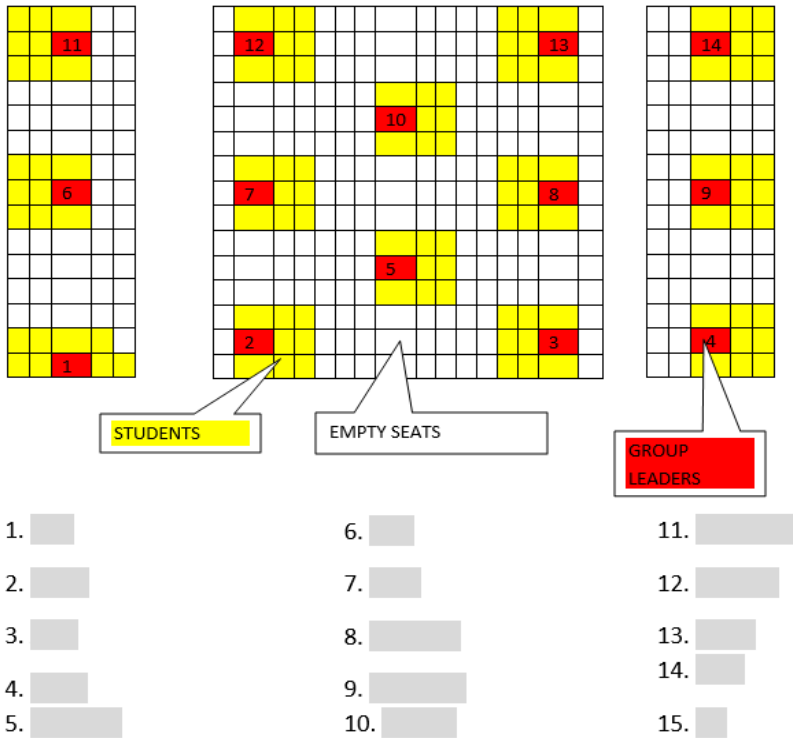


Figure 2.1. Seating order for focus group interviews (grey areas indicate moderators' names)

In order to lead the students through the five general questions and the related probes, a moderator was appointed for each group. All the moderators were junior researchers in Applied Linguistics (four Doctoral students (including the author), nine Master's students, and two Master's graduates).

Before providing a detailed description of the training for the moderators, I will explain my decision to use note-taking as a recording technique for the focus group discussions which was influenced by the contextual factors and the aim of the study. First, the number of students and moderators compared to the (un)available recording equipment was taken into account. In other words, judging by the regular course attendance, approximately 112 students were expected to participate in focus group discussions and 15 moderators were

invited to facilitate the discussions. The use of quality recording equipment was vital as the venue in which 15 group interviews took place simultaneously was a large lecture auditorium, which imposed a risk that the discussions of the groups in each other's vicinity can interfere with the quality of the recordings. This would especially be problematic when students would not speak one at a time and possibly lead to an audio-recording difficult to hear clearly and transcribe. Nonetheless, there were not enough quality digital recorders which would capture audio of appropriate quality. Options such as organising group discussions concurrently in separate rooms with equipment of lesser quality (e.g., equipment not primarily designed for this type of purpose such as personal cell phones), or organising each of the 15 group discussions at different moment in time which would require fewer recorders of better quality, were also considered. However, the former option was not feasible due to a restricted number of available venues and the latter due to students' tight class schedule. Making use of the regular class time, on the other hand, was a positive contextual factor as it created an opportunity for more students to participate in the discussion session. The decision not to audio-record the discussions was also made in line with the goal of the study being to generate an inventory of comments by gauging what students perceive as the factors important for reading academic texts and for integrating reading and writing. In order to make comprehensive and detailed notes, ensuring minimal data loss, key terms were of vital importance and during the training session examples were given. The moderators were each provided with one paper sheet per question and probe (13 pages in total).

The invited moderators were first emailed general guidelines with respect to what was expected from them during focus group interviews (see Figure 2.2). Subsequently, 30 minutes prior to the discussion session, the moderators were

trained on how to facilitate the group discussions. An instruction sheet, based on the originally emailed guidelines, was used to guide the training (see Figure 2.3).

From: Vulovic Marina
Sent: Sunday, December 15, 2013 1:08 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Thursday participation

Dear all

Here is some more information for Thursday 19th:

- We would meet at **10h** in the faculty coffee room, **R.207**.
- We will go once again through the instruction, which is really simple. After that, we will all go to the classroom (R.002).

Students will first do the replicated questionnaire on academic literacy. After that, we will do the interviews with them on academic reading.

- There will be around 8 students per group.
- You, as interviewers, would go through a list of questions (we will give it to you on Thursday), in the time provided.
- You just read the question, note down in bullet points what students say, and go on to the next one. You can only repeat the question, but not rephrase it or ask additional questions. If they do not have the answer (also valuable information for our research), you continue.
- There will be around 10 questions of this kind:
ex. What do you think influences your reading comprehension? / How do you interpret information?

If you have any questions, I will see most of you on Tuesday, and we will meet also on Thursday before the class.

For those who did not confirm, would you please do so as soon as possible? If you cannot participate, we need to find the replacement.




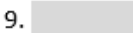



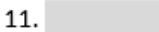
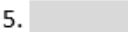
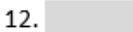





Kind regards
Marina


Figure 2.2. Instruction provided to the moderators (names not disclosed) in advance via email

Instruction:

- 10:00, R.206 – Faculty coffee room – **Instructions**
- Around 115 students – around 8 students per group

➤ **Group leaders:**

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1.  | 8.  |
| 2.  | 9.  |
| 3.  | 10.  |
| 4.  | 11.  |
| 5.  | 12.  |
| 6.  | 13.  |
| 7.  | 14.  |
| | 15.  |

Interviewers initiate questions for the group discussion and make notes per question. You should try to work your way through the list of questions in the time provided (we stop at 11:30;  will give the signal). Please do not rephrase or ask any additional questions. (You are welcome to repeat a question verbatim).

- Students are supposed to think out loud
- Interviewers note down students' words (in bullet points)
- Interviewers continue with the next question if the students are not giving an answer.

Figure 2.3. Instruction sheet used to guide the training for the moderators

The training given to the moderators covered how to keep the discussion flowing and how to deal with potential challenges; it ended with a question and answer session. The moderators were instructed to initiate the questions for the group discussion and make notes on the page for each question. In order to keep the discussions of the different groups as comparable and consistent as possible, the moderators were asked specifically not to rephrase or ask any additional

questions. If the need arose, they were allowed to repeat a question verbatim or to explain particular concepts occurring in the question. In the latter case, they had to note the fact that students had problems understanding a specific concept and could only respond after the concept was defined by the moderator. The moderators were instructed to ensure that nobody dominated the discussion by encouraging everyone to express their views, to agree or disagree with what their peers said so that the group reached a consensus or that all different answers for that group were noted down. In the case where the students in a group did not volunteer any answers, the moderators were instructed to note this down and continue to the next question.

Examples of moderators' notes have been provided in Figures 2.4 to 2.7. Figures 2.4 and 2.5 show moderators' notes taken on *sub-question 1 – probe 1*, and Figures 2.6 and 2.7 notes taken on *sub-question 2 – probe 1* (all sub-questions and probes can be found in the interview guide provided in Appendix 2). The first two screenshots show recorded verbatim from two different group discussions. The last two screenshots were chosen to show the existence of both extensive and narrow field notes taken during group interviews.

Interviewer: _____ Group: 2

U Universiteit Antwerpen **ACADEMIC LITERACY**

The overall question was:
How well have your studies in SECONDARY SCHOOL prepared you for ...

Sub-question 1:
 Do you feel you have been well-prepared to comprehend academic reading assignments?

1. What do you think influences your reading comprehension?
2. How important is it to know academic vocabulary and specific terminology?
3. How important is it to know the academic genre?
4. How do you know if you understood a text?
5. Do you think that extensive reading influences your comprehension?

1. What do you think influences your reading comprehension?
 2. How important is it to know academic vocabulary and specific terminology?
 3. How important is it to know the academic genre?
 4. How do you know if you understood a text?
 5. Do you think that extensive reading influences your comprehension?

NOTES:

- reading a lot (different authors)
- reading fiction books (history)
- studying the vocabulary
- reading readers with high level of vocabulary
- look up unknown words in the dictionary
- different styles of reading
- stuff not related to language learning / biology, history.

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Figure 2.4. Moderator's notes (group 2)

Interviewer: _____ Group: 8

U Universiteit Antwerpen **ACADEMIC LITERACY**

The overall question was:
How well have your studies in SECONDARY SCHOOL prepared you for ...

Sub-question 1:
 Do you feel you have been well-prepared to comprehend academic reading assignments?

- (1) What do you think influences your reading comprehension?
2. How important is it to know academic vocabulary and specific terminology?
3. How important is it to know the academic genre?
4. How do you know if you understood a text?
5. Do you think that extensive reading influences your comprehension?

1. What do you think influences your reading comprehension?
 2. How important is it to know academic vocabulary and specific terminology?
 3. How important is it to know the academic genre?
 4. How do you know if you understood a text?
 5. Do you think that extensive reading influences your comprehension?

NOTES:

- the reading you do in your free time
- the fact we're forced to comprehend/read academic texts being in touch every day
- reading regular texts as well
- read a lot

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Figure 2.5. Moderator's notes (group 8)

Sub-question 2:
Do you feel you have been well-prepared to analyse academic reading assignments?

1. Do you plan your reading assignments?
2. Do you identify the goal of the assignment?
3. How do you analyse assigned reading?
4. How important is it to identify a text's main point or thesis statement?
5. Do you use any strategies for analysing a text?

① Do you plan your reading assignments?

2. Do you identify the goal of the assignment?
3. How do you analyse assigned reading?
4. How important is it to identify a text's main point or thesis statement?
5. Do you use any strategies for analysing a text?

NOTES:

-No

- I try to finish them fast as possible
- I procrastinate, always have little time
- I start late, and finish in one go.

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Figure 2.6. Moderator's notes (group 5)

Sub-question 2:
Do you feel you have been well-prepared to analyse academic reading assignments?

1. Do you plan your reading assignments?
2. Do you identify the goal of the assignment?
3. How do you analyse assigned reading?
4. How important is it to identify a text's main point or thesis statement?
5. Do you use any strategies for analysing a text?

① Do you plan your reading assignments?

2. Do you identify the goal of the assignment?
3. How do you analyse assigned reading?
4. How important is it to identify a text's main point or thesis statement?
5. Do you use any strategies for analysing a text?

NOTES:

4 2
4 3

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Figure 2.7. Moderator's notes (group 3)

The focus group interview was designed as an interactive group discussion in which students were invited to think aloud on their academic reading experiences of the previous three months, and share their views and opinions. The students were invited to participate in the group discussions as a part of their writing course evaluation procedure aiming to provide insights for the upcoming curriculum reform. It was pointed out to them that their academic success would not be affected in any way by the outcome of the interviews or their decision not to partake; they were explicitly notified that the confidentiality of their involvement in the groups was assured and that at no point in this study would they be identified by name or student number.

The interviews lasted one hour in total and, being the last class of term and of the course, the students were thanked with cakes and chocolate. Subsequently, the moderators handed in their notes and a short debriefing took place. There were no reported problems and the moderators received Belgian chocolate as a thank you for helping in facilitating the group discussions.

2.2.5. Analysis

I performed an analysis of the verbatim notes from the discussions in order to provide a greater insight into the students' shared understandings and common variance (cf. Harding, 2013). For every group, I manually entered the moderators' notes on the students' responses into SurveyMonkey³ – an online survey development tool. In order to determine the size of the final dataset of notes, I first exported the dataset from SurveyMonkey into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and subsequently copied it into a Microsoft Word document which provides a word count. The final dataset of notes counted 4597 words, with the minimum of 268 words on *sub-question 4 – probe 1* (How can reading improve

³ See <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>.

your proficiency in writing, and vice versa?) and the maximum of 461 words on *sub-question 1 – probe 4* (How do you know if you understood a text?).

Next, the content of each set of responses (one set consisting of moderators' notes on students' responses from 15 groups on one question) was analysed through SurveyMonkey Text Analysis.⁴ This program allows units of data (words or groups of words) to be tagged in order to generate categories. The process of tagging responses and then categorising the tags in SurveyMonkey corresponds to the procedure of coding qualitative data (cf. Brown, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007; Saldana, 2011). When coding qualitative data, the researcher 'combs through the data several times looking for patterns, or themes, or categories' (Brown, 2014, p. 49). The iterative nature of the coding process is reflected in coding and recoding content several times which allows the researcher to replace the originally assigned and usually descriptive and low-inference codes with a higher-order codes (cf. Dörnyei, 2007, p. 250– 257). Accordingly, the responses, as noted down by moderators, went through several phases of analysis. Initially, I tagged the responses so to generate preliminary categories with the aim of forming an overall picture of the data. In the next phase, I revised the original tags by filtering out unrelated information, adding some new codes and dividing some existing codes into smaller segments in order to ensure depth of analysis. As SurveyMonkey Text Analysis allows categorising the codes only by colour-coding them, the data were exported into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet where each category was given a name in order to create a coding scheme (categories and related codes).

In order to establish the trustworthiness of the coding, I determined intercoder reliability, which is considered to be a form of inter-rater reliability (cf. Johnson & Christensen, 2015). In the context of coding open-ended data, inter-rater

⁴ See http://help.surveymonkey.com/articles/en_US/kb/What-is-Text-Analysis.

reliability refers to the extent to which raters code the same units of data in the same way (cf. Krippendorff, 2004). Establishing reliability is a multiple-step procedure. Briefly, the main steps of the process involve defining the scope of the analysis, developing a coding scheme, training coders and calculating inter-rater reliability (cf. Mouter & Vonk Noordegraaf, 2012; Weber, 1990; Syed & Nelson, 2015). I will provide more detail on each of these steps in the following paragraphs.

I first defined the scope of inter-rater reliability check by delineating the categories and codes that are most relevant to the goal of this study and thus must be checked (cf. Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005). More precisely, the aim of the study was to gain an insight into students' awareness of the factors and procedures that influence academic reading (as a preliminary activity for writing) after three months at university and to narrow down the investigation focus of the main study. Consequently, I estimated that it was essential to check the objectivity of my coding of the data on the questions regarding how students check their reading comprehension, analyse texts and interpret information (*Sub-question 1 - probe 4; sub-question 2 - probe 3; sub-question 3 – probe 1*). Furthermore, *sub-question 1 - probe 1* was also considered as it provided an insight into what students perceive as factors and procedures that influence their reading comprehension. As the current study considers reading and writing to be core practices through which students learn the language and/or content in EAP contexts, *sub-question 4 – probe 1* was also taken into account as it explored students' perceptions on the influence of reading on writing and vice versa. Finally, *sub-question 1 - probe 2* and *sub-question 2 - probe 1* were taken into account as two questions that generated variation in the number of used codes in the coding scheme. In other words, students' responses on the importance of academic vocabulary for their reading comprehension were more aligned throughout the group discussions than those on their planning of the assigned

reading, as it will be reported upon below in the results section. Moderators' notes on the 7 selected questions (out of the total of 13 questions) from all 15 groups were involved in the reliability check. More specifically, the notes on the 7 selected questions represented 54.9% of the whole data set in terms of the size of the notes (approximately 2525 words out of the total of 4597 words).

The second coder, a PhD graduate in applied linguistics, was invited to independently code the above selected data. Before coding the data, I explained to the coder the goal of the study, as well as the purpose and the procedure of inter-rater reliability check; I presented my coding scheme and welcomed any remarks regarding the codes and categories. Subsequently, the second coder individually applied the coding scheme on the data and made notes respectively. As the second coder suggested adding, removing and collapsing a few codes, we first considered those suggestions and I made a few changes to my coding scheme. For instance, I reformulated the code 'reading diverse sources' (*Sub-question 1 – probe 1*) to 'reading different types of text' as the latter better reflected the meaning of students' responses. The second coder also suggested adding the code 'ad hoc plan' to the existing scheme to code the data segment 'only come up with a plan when I'm reading a text (taking notes)' (*Sub-question 2 – Probe 1*) which I originally coded as 'no plan'.

Next, the amended coding scheme was applied individually by the two coders and the reliability of the coding was checked by calculating multi-valued alpha for nominal data (Krippendorff & Creggs, 2016). In sum, while recognising the lack of practical way to measure reliability of open-ended content that can have multiple interpretations or descriptors, Krippendorff and Creggs (2016) provide guidelines for measuring the reliability in that case. This statistic was relevant for the present study as moderators' notes of students' responses per group were assigned multiple codes. The reliability was calculated using JAVA 8 and the results of the analysis are provided in Table 2.1. With regard to what constitutes

acceptable minimum levels of reliability, (Neuendorf, 2002) concluded that ‘coefficients of .90 or greater would be acceptable to all, .80 or greater would be acceptable in most situations and below that, there exists great disagreement’ (p. 145). Or, as Riffe, Lacy, Fico and Watson (2014) indicated, the value of the coefficient which does not exceed .8 requires a detailed argument by the author with respect to the reliability and validity of the variables. In the Table 2.1, it can be seen that the values of the alpha coefficient were equal or above .95, while the percentages of agreement were equal or above 96.4%, which indicated high reliability of the coding. It should be noted that, for some questions, the number of groups that was taken into account was lower compared to that delineated above when defining the scope of the inter-rater reliability check. This was the consequence of encountering computational limits due to the complexity of the reliability data, as cautioned by Krippendorff and Creggs (2019, p. 196).

Table 2.1. The results of the inter-rater reliability check of the coding

Item	Number of groups	$\alpha_{nominal}$	Percentage agreement
<i>Sub-question 1 – probe 1</i>	7	.95	96.4%
<i>Sub-question 1 – probe 2</i>	15	.96	97.4%
<i>Sub-question 1 – probe 4</i>	15	1.0	100.0%
<i>Sub-question 2 – probe 1</i>	9	.99	98.8%
<i>Sub-question 2 – probe 3</i>	9	1.0	100.0%
<i>Sub-question 3 – probe 1</i>	15	1.0	100.0%
<i>Sub-question 4 – probe 1</i>	15	1.0	100.0%

Subsequently, a number of codes per category indicated what seemed most relevant for the target population with regard to academic reading following three months at university (see Appendix 3 for an example).

2.3. Results

The following paragraphs provide the results of the analysis of the students' academic reading perceptions. The main themes (see Section 2.2.3 above) will be presented in bullet points, followed by the key findings per theme.

1) *Academic reading comprehension*

Students were first asked what they considered influential on their reading comprehension. The discussion in 14 out of 15 focus groups pointed to reading experience as the most important factor in this regard. Moreover, the respondents indicated extensive reading as relevant, with the accent on the diversity of text types, writing styles and registers. As one of the answers illustrated, 'the more you read, the more you comprehend' (Group 5). In addition, the students perceived the knowledge of vocabulary and specific terminology as important for their reading comprehension, as shown by moderators' notes from six groups.

Later in the discussion, when asked specifically about the influence of extensive reading on their reading comprehension, students confirmed its importance and explained that more reading primarily extended their vocabulary knowledge (nine groups) but also enhanced their (general) knowledge (six groups). As some of the responses illustrate, 'reading extends [their] vocabulary which makes it easier to read even more' (Group 15); 'the more you read, the more you learn, extend your knowledge' (Group 10). Apart from extensive reading, one of the probes enquired about the importance that knowledge of academic vocabulary and specific terminology has on reading comprehension. In 13 out of 15 groups the students explicitly recognised this knowledge as (very)important. However, even if they agreed on the significance of knowing academic vocabulary and terminology for understanding academic texts, in their answers they referred to it predominantly as important for their academic (writing) expression as reported in 9 out of 15 groups. In other words, the students found this knowledge

important for writing (seven groups), conveying a message (seven groups) and their own persuasiveness (five groups). As the following examples from moderators' notes exemplify, students indicated that knowing academic vocabulary and terminology is important 'to get [their] point across' (Group 1); 'to write papers' (Group 15); 'to be understood' and 'to help [them] produce good texts (Group 9); 'to get better in debates' and 'formulate argumentation' (Group 2).

When asked about the importance of knowing the academic genre for reading comprehension, not all the participants were familiar with the term. This was indicated by the moderators' notes in 7 out of 15 focus groups. For instance, students' lack of understanding of this concept can be illustrated by the following moderator's notes: 'difficulty understanding question' (Group 7); 'students are not familiar with the term academic genre' (Group 10); 'What is an academic genre?' (Group 11); 'hesitation, silence' (Group 14). After the group leaders had explained the term, the students agreed that it is important to know and understand the concept of academic genre, relating this knowledge more to improving their academic writing skills (seven groups) and expression (seven groups) than to reading comprehension. In particular, the students emphasised that the specific text structure and academic language can support the usage of the same in their own writing assignments in the university context. One student's explanation may illustrate the respondents' agreement on the relevance of knowing the academic genre mainly for academia: 'You don't need to convince the audience when outside the university' (Group 5).

The students specified that they know they understood a text when they can explain it (in their own words) and paraphrase it. This comment was common to all 15 focus groups. 11 of the groups also added that identifying the main points in a text and summarising it is of high importance. Furthermore, in 8 out of 15 groups, the students indicated that forming their own opinion about the text,

agreeing or disagreeing with the opinion expressed in it, is another indication of their understanding of the material they have read.

2) *Analysis of assigned reading*

Even though students mostly admitted that they do not plan their reading activities (12 out of 15 groups), in some groups they explicitly acknowledged that they should do so. Students' understanding of planning their reading assignments seemed very diverse. Some of the respondents understood planning their reading as a matter of finishing the assigned reading before the given deadline, reading the text 'in one go' in order to finish sooner, or even scheduling it for the night before the due date. In several groups the students pointed out that they do have a weekly plan. According to a few groups, having more to read and more assignments to do could drive these students to plan their reading activities.

A majority of the respondents (in 12 out of 15 groups) confirmed identifying the goal of their reading assignment. Based on their answers, knowing the goal results in understanding what they have to do in order to complete the task. In seven groups, the students referred to the given instruction as relevant to this matter. Identifying the goal of an assignment is 'something the teacher should explain to you' (Group 5). As other moderators noted, 'you pay a special attention on the reading assignment instruction' (Group 10), 'if you understand your teacher's instruction, it's easier to make a good assignment' (Group 13). Some students added that they need more instruction from their teachers and a clear understanding of their teachers' expectations for an assignment.

When asked how they analyse assigned reading, in 9 out of 15 groups the students indicated that they identify, underline or highlight the text's main points, and summarise the text. However, the remainder of the responses showed great diversity in how the students analyse assigned reading. Some (six groups)

tend to highlight important parts of a text and pay more attention to its structure (paragraphs; introduction, body and conclusion), whereas others (six groups) look up the words they do not understand. Students sometimes make connections and comparisons with the background information such as other points of view on the same topic, other sources or related course theory. Reading a text multiple times, initially to understand the main idea and then to pay more attention to details such as argument and counterargument structure, is another way these students perform text analysis. When specifically asked about the importance of identifying a text's main point or thesis statement in this context, they responded in 14 out of 15 groups that it is very important relating that importance to understanding the text and the author's message (9 out of 15 groups). As two of the moderators noted, knowing the main point or a thesis statement in a text is 'essential to grasp ideas of the text' (Group 8), or 'makes it easier to understand text as a whole' (Group 9).

Finally, when discussing the use of strategies for analysing a text, the students said that they do use them. Their responses were aligned with their general approach to text analysis where they indicated that they mostly identify the main points and summarise (nine groups), highlight important ideas and underline text parts (nine groups), but also reread a text and identify its structure (five groups).

3) Interpretation of information

Students interpret information from the assigned texts in different ways. More precisely, they make connections in various ways (eight groups). Some consider the author's background and their other works, as well as numerous opinions on the topic in order to interpret a text. For instance, as the notes from two groups exemplify, it is important 'to look up the author of the text, what else he has written, his field of expertise' (Group 3); 'look up other opinions' (Group 4). Other students interpret the information from the point of view of their own

background knowledge on the topic and agree or disagree with what they read (5 groups).

4) *Synthesis of reading and writing*

When asked how reading can improve their writing proficiency and vice versa, the students assigned more importance to the influence of reading on writing than the other way around. In two of the groups they specified this by saying that '[they] don't believe writing improves reading but reading improves writing' (Group 7); 'reading helps you write, but writing doesn't help you read' (Group 11). In 13 of the groups, the students pointed to reading as most useful for extending their vocabulary. In addition, they stated that reading can improve the way they structure their texts. Apart from emphasising the influence reading has on writing, some of the groups acknowledged the mutual influence of reading and writing on each other.

5) *Academic reading preparedness after three months in academia*

In 12 out of 15 groups, the students indicated that they do feel better prepared after the initial months at university. However, they felt better prepared for academic writing than for academic reading. In relation to their writing skills, the majority felt that the way they structure their texts improved the most (10 groups). They also added that the aspects of the course they attended such as completing their academic writing tasks and receiving feedback, as well as peer review, contributed to their better writing preparedness and raised their awareness of what an academic text is. The students' clarifications from Group 5 illustrate their perceptions in this respect: 'Before I came here I had no idea what academic writing was.'; 'Now, I am really thinking about what I am doing.' 'I know how an academic text is constructed.'

2.4. Discussion

2.4.1. Observations

In the present study, first-year English majors' perceptions of their academic reading were investigated. A number of observations can be made with regard to their metacognitive awareness of themselves as readers of academic texts and of the factors influencing their academic reading (as a preliminary activity to writing) being their declarative knowledge, and of their strategy awareness related to assigned reading tasks being their procedural knowledge (see Table 2.2). As pointed out in the Introduction (section 1.4.1), declarative knowledge refers to awareness of oneself as a learner and the factors that might influence performance, while procedural knowledge refers to awareness of strategy (Flavell, 1979; Schraw, 1998; Schraw et al., 2006).

With regard to their declarative knowledge, first-year English majors at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (University of Antwerp) consider academic vocabulary knowledge as highly important for their academic reading comprehension. As research on reading has consistently pointed out, word knowledge is the factor having the most effect on reading performance (Alderson, 1984, 2000; Eskey, 2005; Grabe 2009; Schmitt, Jiang & Grabe, 2011), and the students show awareness of this factor. Yet, students attribute the highest significance for their comprehension to extensive reading of a variety of texts and writing styles: they believe this can extend their vocabulary and influence their general knowledge. According to Grabe (2009, p. 57), the development of L2 reading abilities is a long and complex process integrating many processing skills, along with considerable linguistic knowledge, and the only way to build mastery of the required skills for reading comprehension is reading an extensive amount of material over a long period of time. Or, as Nuttall says, 'an extensive reading programme [...] is the single most effective way of

improving both vocabulary and reading skills in general' (1982, p. 65). However, even though students are aware of the fact that extensive reading activity is important not only for their reading comprehension but also for their writing expression, they do not seem to have developed the habit of doing it. In other words, their responses show that they read just before deadline, they focus entirely on the assigned task and, in some exceptional instances, they read other sources when analysing and interpreting a text. This lack of extensive reading practice in the context of their studies needs to be addressed at the start of the students' tertiary education as it represents a cornerstone of academic writing and academic literacy development. Moreover, teachers' role seems to be important in addressing the aforementioned need, as 'extensive reading, to be reasonably successful, generally requires a significant effort to motivate students' (Grabe, 2009, p. 326).

Table 2.2. First-year Flemish majors in English perceived metacognitive awareness of academic reading

		Awareness	Partial awareness	Lack of awareness
Metacognitive requirements for academic reading	<i>Declarative knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive reading • Academic vocabulary • Reading-to-write 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic text structure • Academic argumentation • Background knowledge • Subject-specific terminology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading techniques • Writing-to-read • Reading-to-learn
	<i>Procedural knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarising • Paraphrasing • Highlighting • Identifying and studying unknown words • Agreeing/disagreeing with author's argumentation and supporting own opinion • Reading from text structure to argumentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning the reading activity • Identifying the goal of the reading activity • Identifying author's main argument and support • Making connections with background information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading academic texts extensively • Adjusting reading techniques to the purpose • Writing to support reading • Reading to inform and support academic literacy development

Another observation, from a declarative knowledge perspective, is that the students are not familiar with the concept of 'academic genre'. Academic genre

represents the principles and regularities of language in use and academic discourse conventions (Hyland, 2006, pp. 46–64). The structure and organisation of academic texts has a considerable influence on reading comprehension (Alderson, 2000; Grabe, 2002; Hyland, 2009). However, during the interview session, the students recognised the value of knowing the typical features of academic genre for their reading comprehension only after the term was explained to them by the moderators. Moreover, regarding academic text analysis, the students acknowledged the importance of identifying a main point or a thesis statement only after being specifically asked about it. In their answers, they referred to it as an important factor for understanding a text and an author's message. Consequently, the students' awareness of the structure of academic texts and related specific terminology needs to be raised in order to support students' reading comprehension. Moreover, as Hyland (2006) indicated, in the context of academic writing, students need to become familiar with academic discourse(s) and a certain way of constructing knowledge, which means that they first need to learn to recognise the communicative and purposeful features of academic genres.

The students' answers show a limited procedural knowledge of academic reading. When it comes to efficient and critical academic reading, various factors influence these complex reading processes. Two main factors leading towards efficient reading are reading comprehension and reading speed (Ahuja & Ahuja, 2007, p. 34). The students seem aware of the procedures that influence their reading comprehension being summarising a text, paraphrasing, and agreeing or disagreeing with the expressed opinion. More specifically, they refer mostly to summarising and paraphrasing as the strategies they use for different reading purposes. Also, so called 'support strategies' such as making use of dictionaries, taking notes and highlighting to aid comprehension (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001, p. 436), can be discerned in students' responses. Nevertheless, critical reading

goes beyond simple understanding of the text lines (Ahuja & Ahuja, 2007, p. 22). Critical analysis of an academic text demands an evaluation of the arguments, the supporting evidence and the relevance of information – an awareness level which these students have not yet attained, according to their responses.

In university settings, students are required to be flexible when they read: they need to read under deadline demands and adjust their reading speed accordingly, that is in turn fast and in detail. Metacognitive reading strategies that are critical for efficient reading are planning how to approach the reading of a text, revising according to purpose and time available (Devine, 1993). The students, however, do not seem to consciously approach, reflect on and plan their assigned reading activities depending on the purpose, even if they seem to understand the importance of reading for academic writing and possibly also for academic success. The majority of the students restrict their reading to the assigned materials, engaging with them just-in-time and ‘in one go’. In a few groups, students added that they consult additional sources when making connections with background information for text analysis. In addition, the students’ verbatim answers do not reflect an awareness of reading techniques such as skimming, scanning and predicting. They do not refer to them by name or implicitly, except to state in a few groups that they reread the assigned text in order first to identify the main idea and then the details when analysing a text. In their answers, the students almost never referred to reading an academic text differently depending upon the purpose of the assigned reading. This reflects a lack of awareness of available reading techniques and in turn combination of techniques that can be used depending on the purpose of the reading task. Since the ability to read in a foreign language is one of the most difficult to develop to a high level of proficiency (Grabe, 2009, p. 49), some form of systematic training and practice in specific procedures is needed in order for students to gain

efficiency in reading textbooks and academic texts in general (Ahuja & Ahuja, 2007, p. 36). Moreover, as argued by Auerbach and Paxton (1997), efficiency in strategic reading can only be gained by actively using metacognitive strategies, such as working towards a particular goal while reading. Research has also shown that proficient language students display stronger awareness of and use a wider range of metacognitive strategies in completing reading tasks than less proficient ones (Li & Larkin, 2017).

After three months at university, the fact that students perceived better preparedness in academic writing than academic reading can be seen as a result of having had more focused practice in writing and a confirmation that the students lack explicit instruction and training in reading academic texts. As for reading, they are aware of the importance of reading for academic writing and to some extent for academic success. In their answers, they emphasised the effect of reading practice primarily on writing and clear, persuasive expression, i.e. on their productive skills. Nevertheless, they persist with inefficient reading habits. Consequently, instructional contexts that develop students' academic literacy should place more emphasis on academic reading. Making reading (more) explicit is of great importance for raising students' awareness of learning to write from the reading input of various academic text types and awareness of themselves as academic readers. Moreover, it is critical to support the students in establishing routines for reading extensively, frequently and purposefully.

2.4.2. From observations towards a taxonomy of needs

The importance of academic reading for academic writing and literacy development is clear, as reading is considered to be fundamental amongst other literacy skills and one of the most important factors for academic success (cf. Van Dyk et al., 2013). A lack of awareness of the relevant knowledge can hinder students' reading output and their writing input, and should be addressed in the

initial months of students' arrival at university. A suggestion has been made to make metacognitive awareness an indispensable part of EFL reading and writing (Liu, 2013; Manchón, 2001). As a means to facilitate defining the instructional objectives in curriculum design for raising students' metacognitive awareness of academic reading, a taxonomy based on moderators notes of students' responses was developed (see Table 2.3).

In relation to academic reading activities (left-hand column), a distinction was made between declarative and procedural knowledge (centre and right-hand column). Although the respondents showed (partial) metacognitive awareness of the relevant factors for reading comprehension, text analysis and interpretation of information, the students continue to maintain an inefficient and non-strategic approach to their assigned academic reading. In addition, the students seem to lack an awareness of reading techniques (declarative knowledge) and the ability to plan their reading purposefully or to select a corresponding reading technique (procedural knowledge) that will in turn make them more strategic and efficient readers and possibly more effective writers and learners.

Table 2.3. First-year English majors’ perceived metacognitive awareness of and awareness-raising needs for academic reading

<i>Academic reading activities</i>	Metacognitive awareness	
	Declarative knowledge	Procedural knowledge
<i>Comprehension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive reading • Academic vocabulary and subject-specific terminology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarising • Paraphrasing • Identifying and studying unknown words
<i>Analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic text structure • Academic argumentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading from text structure to argumentation • Highlighting • Identifying author’s main argument and support
<i>Interpretation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing/disagreeing with author’s argumentation and supporting own opinion • Making connections with background information
<i>Outcome orientation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading-to-write 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading to inform and support writing
Metacognitive awareness needs		
<i>Strategic approach</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading academic texts extensively • Planning the reading activity • Identifying the goal of the reading activity • Adjusting reading techniques to the purpose
<i>Outcome orientation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing-to-read • Reading-to-learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing to support reading • Reading to inform and support academic literacy development

According to their responses, the first-year students majoring in English recognise the importance of extensive reading in order to improve their reading skills and even more so for their writing. However, they do not read extensively in their field of study. At the end of their first three months at university, they feel better prepared for academic writing. In other words, even when they do write from reading input, the emphasis in the instruction is on writing and students experience it as such – being supported in developing their writing skills. This clearly results in a need to place more focus on reading in instructional contexts and to raise students’ awareness accordingly.

2.5. Conclusion

The present study addressed the need to better understand first-year students’ academic literacy challenges by drawing the students into the discussion. The

results indicate that, after their first three months at university, first-year English majors can identify the declarative and procedural requirements for academic reading only to a limited extent. More specifically, students distinguish the factors that have a high impact on their academic reading performance. They also seem to recognise the procedures that have a considerable influence on their academic reading, such as extensive reading, but they do not seem to actively practise them. Furthermore, first-year students show a lack of awareness of reading techniques which results in a lack of purposeful reading practice. The main strategies that they use for various reading purposes, such as text comprehension and analysis, are predominantly in the line of summarising and paraphrasing. At the end of the first term at university, they perceive themselves as better prepared for academic writing than academic reading.

Students' answers further reflect how tightly connected academic reading and writing are in an academic literacy development context. Put differently, the responses confirm that productive and receptive skills together underpin the process of academic literacy development and should be examined as such in order to inform (potential) support design. Nonetheless, students seem to be more aware of the critical value that reading has for writing than vice versa, but they feel better prepared for writing than for reading. Since reading is shown to be a challenging, yet most foundational skill in a higher education context, supporting it may contribute to students' greater success as academic writers. From a support design perspective, it may be worthwhile to consider implementing a pilot programme in the foreign-language curriculum which makes academic reading more explicit and increases the reading practice. This pilot may provide the required experimental setting for assessing students' strengths and weaknesses in the development of their academic literacy skills with equal emphasis on reading and writing in the instruction, but also focus on raising students' awareness in order to focus on the improvement of these skills.

In sum, in this exploratory study, I looked at students' metacognitive awareness of academic reading and performed an initial analysis of their awareness raising needs, i.e. lacks in their metacognitive awareness of academic reading. I have indicated how the findings of this study can inform curriculum design in terms of supporting students' academic reading as well as creating an experimental setting for further research on the topic. The analysis, moreover, has provided insights into issues that need to be investigated in a thorough needs analysis, i.e. summarising and paraphrasing as practices predominantly used by the students for different reading purposes. Accordingly, in order to (1) define an in-depth metacognitive awareness profile of first-year English majors' with regard to their academic literacy skills, (2) point at their related needs and (3) inform the (re)design of support, students' academic reading and writing skills should be further and more thoroughly examined with an emphasis on an integrated and non-discrete skills perspective. To this end, I will investigate first-year English majors' perceived and actual skills in summarising, a representative academic literacy task that requires writing from reading input, in order to define their metacognitive awareness profile in that regard. Moreover, the aim of this part is to show how a well-defined group of first-year students' skills in writing from reading input can be examined to inform the design of support and eventually develop an overall first-year students' metacognitive awareness profile of their academic literacy skills.

Main study: First-year English majors' strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in EFL

3.1. Introduction

Students are required to manage their learning and become academically literate in order to advance in tertiary education (Wingate 2007). Junior undergraduates should, however, not be solely responsible for accommodating to and making progress at university but guided through those processes, as argued by Wingate (2007) and Van Dyk and Van de Poel (2013). In order to gain a better understanding of the challenges that students experience in their academic literacy development when starting tertiary education, I investigated their perceptions of their academic literacy skills in English as a foreign language when starting university education. More specifically, in Chapter 2, I have reported on an exploratory study that was performed in order to gain insights into first-year English majors' perceptions regarding their academic reading (as a preliminary activity to writing). The analysis of the self-reported data showed that the students use summarising and paraphrasing as the main techniques for various academic reading purposes, such as monitoring reading comprehension and analysing academic texts.

Informed by the findings of the exploratory study, in the main study I further investigated first-year English majors' summarising skills in EFL by looking at their perceived and actual strengths and weaknesses. Summarising, as pointed out in the Introduction, is an exemplary academic literacy skill, since it a)

requires a combination of reading and writing skills, b) is commonly assigned in academic settings and c) is critical for academic success (cf. Grabe & Zhang, 2013b). In addition, summarising plays an important role in more advanced and complex academic writing assignments such as synthesising information from multiple sources for writing and study purposes, argumentative writing, writing a research paper or a literature review. I investigated first-year English majors' summarising skills in EFL from various angles which I will explain in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, I sought to identify students' perceived strengths and weaknesses when summarising. To this end, students were invited to engage in a four-stage self-reflection exercise while writing a summary, including reviewing their peer's summary. The focus of the reflection stage of the task was on the specific task requirements which the students had to fulfil in order to complete the task and which will be described in more detail below in section 3.2.3 on the instrument of the study. The students reflected on:

- 1) the requirements that they expected to be easy/difficult while writing the summary,
- 2) the requirements that they found easy/difficult to evaluate in their peer's summary,
- 3) which requirements they fulfilled in writing their summary, and
- 4) what they learned in the process.

Asking the students to reflect on the process and product of their reading and writing from various angles throughout the task is intended to provide a richer insight into the perceptions of their (own) competencies. The following research question was addressed:

RQ 2.1 What are first-year English majors' **perceived** strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in English as a foreign language?

Secondly, in order to complement their perceived skills profile, I delved deeper into students' summarising skills by looking at their actual strengths and weaknesses in that regard. Students' ability to fulfil the requirements of a summarising task at the beginning of their university studies was investigated. They had an opportunity to engage with the task requirements in various stages of the task completion: within reflection exercises embedded in the task, when reviewing their peer's summary, as well as when reading the source text to write their own summary. Students' summaries, as the written product of the task activity, were then examined. The following research question was addressed:

RQ 2.2. What are first-year English majors' **actual** strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in a foreign language?

Lastly, I investigated the relationship between students' perceived and actual strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in EFL. More specifically, I looked at the association between students' expectations and performance with regard to summarising task requirements, and made systematic observations respectively. This study provides an answer to the following research question:

RQ 2.3. What is the relationship between the expected level of difficulty and performance in relation to the same task requirement?

In the following sections, I will first provide a more detailed information on the methodological aspects of the main study (3.2). I will refer to the participants in the study and the context (3.2.1), as well as the instrument (3.2.2) and the data collection procedure (3.2.3). The performed data analysis will be also systematically described (3.2.4). Next, I will report on and discuss the findings per research question (3.3). More specifically, I will report on and discuss first-year English majors' perceived (3.3.1) and actual summarising skills in EFL (3.3.1), followed by a report on and a discussion of the relationship between the two (3.3.3). I will conclude the chapter by summing up the insights gained in this study (section 3.4).

3.2. Method

3.2.1. Participants

The participants referred to in the main study consisted of students in the first year of a three-year bachelor's programme in English Linguistics and Literature (academic year 2015–2016; $N = 109$) enrolled at the University of Antwerp. Most were native speakers of Dutch (the language of instruction for at least one third of their programme in Dutch), a few are bilingual (e.g., Polish-Dutch; none with English). The students in this study were predominantly 18- and 19-year olds. Also, about three quarters of the participants were female.

3.2.2. Context

In the first term of their HE programme, the students take an academic literacy course (a credit-bearing course, an integral component of *English Proficiency* programme) aiming to guide them through the basic principles and conventions of academic writing in English (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007; Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012a). The course gradually introduces different writing skills, starting from writing for an audience, managing information from a text (summarising), formulating arguments, and building up the skills to write an essay. The course follows a blended approach and is taught for 13 weeks following a fixed structure. After engaging with a literacy topic with the related requirements and concepts in the coursebook and doing online reflection and in-class reinforcement exercises, the students complete a short in-class writing-through-reading assignment which undergoes peer review, tutor and in-class plenary feedback and has to be rewritten. In other words, for every topic, students go through different theoretical and practical steps to eventually apply what they have studied about the topic in focus.

3.2.3. Instrument

One of the in-class assignments that the students had to complete focused on writing a summary. In the students' coursebook, writing a summary is defined as writing 'a shorter version of a given text that states the author's most important points and ideas in your own words' (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007, p. 26). In the context of the main study, the students had to summarise "Go the Wrong Way" (Nussbaum, 2009), a short (95 words) Op-Ed (Opinion-Education) text published in the *New York Times*⁵ (assignment handout is provided in Appendix 4). This is one of the nine short text pieces in "College Advice, From People Who Have Been There Awhile", written by university professors, contributors to the *New York Times*, offering advice to junior undergraduates who are starting higher education.

The summary writing assignment was adapted for the purpose of the present study by adding **four explicit reflection phases** which will be described in more detail in the following section on data collection procedure. Through a number of online and coursebook reflection exercises, as well as in-class instruction and reinforcement exercises, students were introduced to and guided through the process of summarising.

In order to gain expertise, students made use of a writing scale or rubric which is a translation of the book's objectives and outcomes section as well as of the writing checklist. The writing scale represents 'the key qualities and components' that students' written product should have (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012a, p. 298). The scale also reflects the writing-through-reading approach adopted when introducing the students to the various components and

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<https://archive.nytimes.com/screenshots/www.nytimes.com/2009/09/06/opinion/06nussbaum.jpg>

aspects of academic writing (cf. Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012a). When it comes to summarising in particular, the scale invites the students to 1) determine the main topic, 2) identify primary information, and 3) identify secondary information when reading the source text, and subsequently to 4) rephrase information, 5) use linking words, and 6) restate the topic in a concluding statement when writing their summary. The last requirement is given as optional when the source text is short, which was the case in the present study. These six requirements are condensed in the scale in the form of criteria, questions, thinking pointers and references to the relevant coursebook pages where each of these requirements and related concepts are introduced (see Figure 3.1).

All Write writing scale

<i>2. Writing a Summary</i>			
<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Think about...</i>	<i>Text Reference</i>
1. Topic	Have I identified the topic in my first sentence?	Title – author – topic – context - ...	p. 29
2. Main information	Have I identified the main ideas of the original text?	Primary – secondary – arguments – declarative statements – signaling words - ...	p. 27, 29
3. Secondary information	Have I identified what is secondary information?	Deleting – detail – specificity (explanations, examples, illustrations, ...) - ...	p. 28
4. Wording	Have I rephrased the information in my own words?	Rewriting – text length – coherence – order - ...	p. 26, 30
5. Signaling words	Have I considered the steps in the text?	First, secondly, ...	p. 27
6. Final sentence	Have I restated the topic?	Different words - ...	p. 30

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Figure 3.1. Sample writing course scale for the summarizing assignment

In this study, the six scale criteria became an integrative component of the writing assignment, gauging the students’ perceptions in the different phases of textual interaction. To this end, the scale criteria were reformulated into 5-point Likert scale items, ranging from 1 (‘very easy’) to 5 (‘very difficult’) with a midpoint (‘I don’t know’ for students not being aware or feeling uncertain about what to expect). The scale was complemented with a text box for additional narrative comments. As indicated above, the assignment with self-reflection exercises can be found in Appendix 4.

3.2.4. Procedure

The summarising assignment was completed after one month at university, after the students had the opportunity to engage with the topic of summarising in the course book, as well as to do online reflection exercises and in-class reinforcement exercises. The students first made a draft of their summary in class. In four different phases while completing the assignment, the students engaged in self-reflection about the components of the summary as well as the challenges to write it. **Phase 1 (Pre-task reflection)** concerned students' reflection on the expected challenges (easy/difficulty) in writing a summary while focusing on its components. The students were explicitly asked to look at the task instruction and do the reflection exercise on the first page of their handout: that way, they would not read the text that they had to summarise (which was on the second page) before Phase 1 of the reflections was completed. In **Phase 2 (Peer-review reflection)**, students were provided with their peer's first draft, in which they not only had to identify the different requirements, but also recognise the challenges in doing so. In both phases, the students were given the opportunity to add comments regarding the task requirements in the comment box following Likert scale items. In **Phase 3 (Post-task self-assessment)**, they assessed their own writing product by reflecting on a number of statements (reformulated task requirements) after rewriting it at home. Lastly, in **Phase 4 (Declarative and procedural gain)**, they were asked to identify the overall learning gain in the form of a take-home message. Phases 1 and 2 took place in class, phases 3 and 4 were done as a post-reflection exercise at home. The students were encouraged to consult the scale and the coursebook throughout completing the task. They submitted their summaries via the university's online learning platform.

Out of 109 participants, 101 completed reflection Phases 1 and 2, 96 completed reflection Phase 3, and 94 completed reflection Phase 4. 101 students submitted their summary via the university's online learning platform. 94 students completed both the Likert scale items in Phase 1 and submitted their written summary.

Before completing the task, the students were informed that the task-generated data would be used to provide them and their teachers with better insights into the needed academic literacy support, and to improve the design of the programme's support. The students were asked for their consent on using the task generated data for the purposes of the research which was explained to them. They were further informed that the data would be treated confidentially and that at no point in the research project would they be identified (by name or student number). It was also pointed out to the students that their participation in this study would in no way influence their grades.

3.2.5. Analysis

The collected data were studied from three different angles. Students' reflections on the summarising task requirements (perceived summarising skills) were analysed first, followed by the analysis of the written summaries (actual summarising skills). Subsequently, the relationship between perceived and actual summarising skills was examined. A detailed description of the analyses of the collected data is presented below per study.

3.2.5.1. Perceived summarising skills

I analysed the collected self-reported data for each reflection phase separately. Descriptive statistics were run on the Likert scale data collected in phases 1 and 2. More specifically, percentages have been calculated. With the aim to gain a better understanding of the Likert scale self-reported data, I analysed the

narrative comments by coding and categorising the data in line with the qualitative coding procedure (cf. Brown, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007; Saldana, 2011). The labels used for coding corresponded to the task requirements/criteria and were numbered 1 to 6. If the students did not refer directly to one of the task requirements, the data were labelled as ‘other’. The coded data were grouped into 4 categories: easy, uncertain/unaware, difficult, and ‘other’ for the data segments that did not link to the first three categories. Being a multi-level procedure, the coding and categorising of the data went through several stages of review to ensure a structured data analysis and richness of insight.

The data collected in Phases 1 and 2 were further analysed by comparing the students’ comments related to a specific task requirement/review criterion to the students’ responses on the Likert scale regarding the same requirement/criterion. This was done for Phase 1 data by investigating whether a student who, for instance, expected a specific requirement to be difficult to fulfil, opted for the response ‘difficult’ on the Likert scale regarding the same requirement or not. The same was done for the peer-review reflections collected in Phase 2: it was investigated whether a student who, for example, perceived a specific requirement to be difficult to review in their peer’s text, opted for the response ‘difficult’ on the Likert scale regarding the same requirement or not. In order to do the comparison, students’ comments with regard to their perceived difficulty on a specific task requirement were assigned a number corresponding to one of the difficulty levels indicated on the Likert (for data transformation, or more specifically for quantification or ‘quantitizing’ data, see Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 268–271). For instance, if a student commented that they expected paraphrasing to be difficult to fulfil, that student was assigned 4 for paraphrasing, as 4 represented ‘difficult’ in analysing the Likert scale data. The number was then compared to what that student indicated on the Likert scale on the same requirement – in this example paraphrasing. All students’ comments’ were analysed in the same

manner and the numbers were then considered in light of with the Likert scale results for the related requirement. As quantification of the data was not possible for all the students' comments due to the difference in what they focused on, I did not perform statistical analyses which would include the transformed data. They served rather for adding insights to the quantitative data analysis.

3.2.5.2. Actual summarising skills

I analysed the summaries (N = 101) using the abovementioned writing scale as the basis for the analysis. The writing scale (described in section 3.2.3 above) was complemented with a rating scale for the purpose of the analysis. This was done because the existing writing scale provided task criteria with related questions and descriptors to guide the students when writing a summary but lacked a rating or a scoring scale. The newly designed analysis tool was a task-specific (as opposed to general) and analytic (as opposed to holistic) rubric as it laid out the expectations of the summarising task and defined scoring points for each task requirement separately (cf. Arter & McTighe, 2001). More specifically, students' performance was judged on a scale from 2 to 0: as (2) accurate/high when there were no identifiable issues, meaning that the skills displayed met the summarising task requirements; as (1) when partially accurate/partial, meaning that some minor problems were identified in the displayed skills; and as (0) when inaccurate/low, meaning that the students made critical errors that are likely to hamper their progress, such as misunderstanding the author's points or disregarding a requirement. It is important to specify that the students were asked to summarise the text—to report essential information in a shortened form—and therefore an analysis or interpretation of the ideas from the source text was treated as inaccurate. More detail on the analysis per requirement is given in Table 3.1 and the following paragraphs.

Table 3.1. Rubric for summarising

2. Writing a summary		Rating scale 2 - 1 - 0
Criteria	Questions	(Descriptors) Think about...
1. Topic	Has the student identified the main topic?	<p>Title of the original text: 'Go the Wrong Way' "Go the Wrong way"</p> <p>Author: Martha Nussbaum</p> <p>Topic: College classes: - not only about preparing you for a job - also, a chance to think about the whole of your life</p>
2. Main information	Has the student identified the main ideas of the original text?	<p>Primary information: Courses in the humanities, in particular: - often seem impractical, but they are vital - because they stretch your imagination and challenge your mind</p>
3. Secondary information	Has the student identified what is secondary information?	<p>Secondary information: ... to become more responsive, more critical, bigger. You need resources to prevent your mind from becoming narrower and more routinized in later life. This is your chance to get them.</p>

Table 3.1. Continued

4. Wording	Has the student rephrased the information in their own words?	Lexical dissimilarity	2 – high (student used own words/phrases) 1 – partial (student used partially own and partially author's words/phrases or their variations) 0 – low (student used author's words/phrases or their variations)
5. Linking words	Has the student used linking words? If yes...	Semantic completeness Use of linking words	2 – high (student accurately conveyed author's ideas) 1 – partial (student conveyed author's ideas with minor meaning issues) 0 – low (student failed to convey author's ideas) 2 – accurately used (highly appropriate linking word; clear relationship between ideas) 1 – partially accurate usage (minor issues with the choice of linking word; clear relationship between ideas) 0 – inaccurately used (not used at all; inappropriate linking word; absence of clear relationship between ideas; unclear relationship between ideas)
If not... Has the student use other devices such as relative pronouns, repetition?	Which ones? What function? Which ones?	Examples of the used linking words; Function description	2 – accurately used (highly appropriate device; clear relationship between ideas) 1 – partially accurate usage (minor issues with the choice of device; clear relationship between ideas) 0 – inaccurately used (not used at all; inappropriate device; absence of clear relationship between ideas; unclear relationship between ideas)
6. Final sentence	Has the student restated the topic to conclude?	If not restated -> If restated -> Lexical dissimilarity	NO 2 – high (student used own words/phrases) 1 – partial (student used partially own and partially author's words/phrases or their variations) 0 – low (student used author's words/phrases or their variations)

While processing information, the students were required to identify the author and the title of the original text together with the main topic in the first sentence of their summary. In formal writing, the topic sentence is typically the first sentence in a paragraph which tells the reader what the rest of the paragraph is about. Since the original text was a part of a longer article (a part of a greater whole), the formatting of the original text's title followed the related conventions of the three major citation styles used in academic writing: MLA (Modern Language Association) style, used in literature and humanities; APA (American Psychological Association) style, primarily used in social sciences; and the *Chicago Manual of Style*, used in a variety of disciplines. In other words, the title that was considered accurately formatted was the one with title case capitalisation and upright typography (as given in the assignment), enclosed in quotation marks. In this study, the use of single or double quotation marks to enclose the title was accepted as accurate.

With the aim to summarise the original text, the students were required to differentiate between primary and secondary information and leave the latter out of their summary. As suggested by their course book, 'an author's main points are considered primary information', while 'examples, details, and other support are generally considered secondary information' (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007, p. 29). These pointers were given in a shortened form in the writing scale as well, together with the related coursebook pages. In the analysis of the summaries, (2) was assigned to the students who left the secondary information out of their summaries, (1) to those who stated some of the unnecessary detail in their summaries and therefore only partially distinguished secondary from primary information, and (0) to the students who were not able to filter secondary information out of their summary.

When paraphrasing author's ideas, the students were expected to use their own words to capture the gist of the original text. Students' paraphrases were

analysed in terms of lexical similarity and semantic completeness (cf. McCarthy, Guess & McNamara, 2009). Lexical similarity refers to the degree to which a student uses the authors' words in their paraphrased sentences, regardless of syntax or semantics. Semantic completeness refers to the degree to which a student's paraphrase captures the same meaning as the sentence targeted for paraphrasing. A high degree of lexical similarity does not necessarily mean a high degree of semantic completeness, and vice versa. In order to consistently use the rating scale in which a grade (2) was assigned when the requirement was fulfilled and (0) when this was not the case, lexical similarity was renamed into lexical dissimilarity. High lexical dissimilarity was the preferred outcome in students' summary writing, meaning that they used their own words in summarising the ideas from the source text. Accordingly, a (2) was assigned to high lexical dissimilarity (use of own words), (1) to partial dissimilarity (use of some of the author's words and phrases) and (0) to low lexical dissimilarity (overuse of author's words and phrases).

In order to give structure to their text and indicate the relationship between ideas, the students were encouraged to use signalling or linking words. Examples of these words, such as first(ly), second(ly), in addition, then, next, finally, lastly, were given in the writing scale and in the coursebook.

The last requirement for this task was to restate the topic to conclude the summary. As suggested in the students' course book (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007, p. 30), restating the topic to conclude the summary is optional for very short summaries, consisting of just a few sentences, which was the case in the present assignment. In the analysis of students' summaries, it was first examined if the students restated the main topic to conclude their summary or not. If the former was the case, the restated topic was treated as a paraphrase and analysed as such, following the above analysis description.

The data generated by marking the summaries were analysed for each task requirement separately. Descriptive statistics, i.e. frequencies, measures of central tendency (mean, mode, median) and measures of variability (standard deviation,) have been calculated and presented in a table per task requirement in the results section. The analysis of the data was conducted with the aim to gain an insight into the summarising task requirements on which the students perform well, on which they need additional guidance due to partially completed requirements, and those on which they underperform.

In order to ensure the trustworthiness and objectivity of the marking result, I determined inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater or inter-scoring reliability refers to the consistency and agreement between two or more raters in their scoring of a test or a performance measure (cf. Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Paltridge & Phakiti, 2010). In students' writing more specifically, inter-rater reliability check requires that all raters agree on the scoring of the same student performance (Hyland, 2003). Accordingly, another rater was invited to independently rate students' summaries by using the same rubric that I used and explained above. I first presented the rubric to the rater and explained how I used it to mark the summaries. Next, the rater applied the rubric on 50 summaries (50% of the data) that displayed variation in my rating per task requirement. The inter-rater reliability check included the first four task requirements, namely determining the main topic, identifying primary and secondary information and paraphrasing, as the representative and defining requirements for summarising. These requirements were also considered in the later investigation of the relationship between students' perceived and actual summarising skills. Subsequently, intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was computed to indicate the level of consistency and absolute agreement in the ratings of the summaries per task requirement. In the present context, ICC was calculated using SPSS statistical package version 25.0 based on two-way random effects model and single

measures (for the decision on the correct ICC form for inter-rater reliability check, see Field, 2005).

The inter-rater reliability check showed overall excellent reliability of the marking. More precisely, the ICC on the first task requirement, i.e. determining the main topic, was .88 using absolute agreement definition, and .89 using consistency definition, both values indicative of good reliability. The ICC on the second task requirement, i.e. identifying primary information, was .98 for both consistency and absolute agreement, indicating excellent reliability. The ICC on the remaining task requirements which were part of the inter-rater reliability check, namely identifying secondary information and paraphrasing (lexical dissimilarity and semantic completeness) was 1, indicating excellent reliability. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the marking result can be considered reliable.

3.2.5.3. The relationship between perceived and actual summarising skills

In this study, I looked at the students' reflections on the summarising task requirements and their summaries from a different angle. More in particular, I explored the relationship between the students' expected difficulty in fulfilling a task requirement (self-perceptions) and their performance on the same task requirement (objective and accuracy measurement). The data that I used for the relationship analysis were the Likert scale data collected in the Pre-task reflections phase and the summary performance scores. Six requirements of summarising were referred to in the previous two studies, namely 1) determining the main topic, 2) identifying primary information, 3) identifying secondary information, 4) paraphrasing, 5) using linking words and 6) restating the topic to conclude. The first four requirements —the elementary requirements of summarising as a reading and writing task (cf. Grabe & Zhang, 2013b; Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009)— are the focus of this chapter. The last two of the six mentioned

requirements were not taken into account when looking at the relationship between the students' expectations and performance. The reason for excluding the two requirements is related to the short length of the source text. In other words, the number of linking words that the students used was quite limited or zero, or the students used other ways to connect ideas such as repetition, personal pronouns and demonstrative adjectives (see more in Chapter 4). As for restating the topic to conclude their text, a majority of students did not add this final sentence in their summary, as reported upon in Chapter 4. It is very likely that they have based their decision on the statement from their course book that this requirement was optional in case of a short text, which was the case in this context.

I was inspired by Brown (2014) to use a matrix as a data analysis method. The matrix table, grid, or array is used to understand and display data in two dimensions; typically, one set of categories is labelled across the top of the matrix and another down the left side of the matrix (Brown, 2014, p. 94, 242). The matrix used to display and uncover the relationship between the two data sets is shown in Table 3.2. The categories in students' expected difficulty in fulfilling a specific task requirement are displayed along the Y-axis. These categories were drawn from the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('very easy') to 5 ('very difficult') with a midpoint ('I don't know' for students not being aware or feeling uncertain about what to expect). The scale was used in collecting the data on students' perceptions. In the matrix below, the answers 'very easy' and 'easy' were condensed into category 'easy', while the answers 'difficult' and 'very difficult' were grouped into category 'difficult'. The decision to categorise students' expectations in such a way was based on the fact that very few students opted for the answers 'very easy' and 'very difficult' on the scale. The categories in students' actual performance on that same task requirement are displayed along the X-axis. In each cell in the matrix, a

frequency distribution of students' expectations per different category of students' performance will be presented. The data analysis will be reported in this matrix for each task requirement separately.

Table 3.2. Matrix for the analysis of first-year English majors' expectations and performance relationship with regard to a specific task requirement

Expected difficulty \ Performance	Performance		
	Accurate	Partially accurate	Inaccurate
Easy			
I don't know			
Difficult			

In order to examine if the students' expected level of difficulty and their performance with regard to the same task requirement are related, the Chi-square test of independence was applied. Chi-square test is the most commonly used non-parametric statistic in applied linguistics and one of the few statistics that can deal with categorical data (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 228). This test was performed in order to answer the following questions:

Q1 Is there a significant relationship between expected level of difficulty and performance in relation to the same task requirement?

Q2 What can students' expectations tell us about their performance on the same task requirement?

The null hypothesis for a Chi-square independence test is that two categorical variables are independent in a particular population. In this context, the null hypothesis was that we cannot make predictions with regard to students' performance on a task requirement based on their expectations with regard to that requirement. Or, the alternative hypothesis would state the opposite. In case that the assumption for the Chi-square test was not met, that less than 20% of the cells have each expected value less than 5, the Fisher's exact test statistic was reported. In case that the test statistic was significant, the strength of association

between two categorical variables in this study was measured by calculating Cramer's V since the categorical variables had more than two categories. The results of the Chi-square independence test are reported upon in the results section (3.3.3.1) and the related SPSS output tables have been provided in Appendix 5.

3.3. Results and discussion

3.3.1. First-year English majors' perceived strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in EFL

3.3.1.1. Results

1) Pre-task reflection

Over three quarters of the respondents (77%) expected that determining the main topic would be (very) easy (see Table 3.3). Students' expectations regarding identifying primary information were almost equally divided across the three levels of the scale: 38% expected this to be easy, 33% expected it to be difficult, 30% did not know what to expect. Nearly half of the students expected identifying secondary information (41%) and paraphrasing (43%) to be challenging to fulfil when summarising. A substantial number of the students were uncertain or unaware of what to expect regarding using linking words (40%) and restating the topic to conclude the summary (42%). When looking at the requirements in more detail, we can see that students' expectations are quite divided across the three levels of the scale ('easy', 'difficult', 'I do not know what to expect when dealing with this component'), with the exception of determining the main topic. It can also be observed that, apart from the first requirement (determining the main topic), many students generally did not know whether to expect difficulty or not in fulfilling given summarising requirements.

Table 3.3. Expected challenges in summarising ($n = 101$)

Item	Mode	Very easy (1)	Easy (2)	I don't know (3)	Difficult (4)	Very difficult (5)
1. Determining the main topic	2	2%	75%	16%	7%	0%
2. Identifying primary information	2	0%	38%	30%	33%	0%
3. Identifying secondary information	4	0%	33%	27%	40%	1%
4. Rephrasing in own words	4	2%	28%	28%	40%	3%
5. Using linking words	3	1%	38%	40%	22%	0%
6. Restating the topic to conclude	3	2%	23%	42%	31%	3%

In their narrative comments, the students referred predominantly to the expected challenges in summarising a text. Out of the six requirements in summarising which the students had to consider on the Likert scale, three seemed to be of higher concern to the participants, namely identifying primary and secondary information, as well as writing the author's ideas in their own words. Most of the students who referred to a specific requirement as challenging clarified why that is the case. For instance, some of the students explained why they expect filtering information to be complex: 'I tend to think everything is important' (Student 54); 'I find it difficult to use only primary information in a summary, because I always assume that I will have forgotten something very important' (Student 20). Some students also anticipated difficulty in paraphrasing because: 'I do not want to change the meaning of the phrase' (Student 22); 'I believe it will be hard to find the right words that can convey the same message' (Student 24); 'you want to always make sure that you're still conveying the author's ideas right and his words are the perfect one's [*sic*] to do so' (Student 44).

Apart from referring directly to the task requirements they were requested to consider on the Likert scale, about a third of the students added other comments regarding their summarising skills. In most of these comments the students recognised challenges such as writing a concise summary and leaving out unnecessary detail. Or, as some of the students formulated it: 'being concise & cohesive is also a challenge for me' (Student 21); 'I think it is hard not to include too much information. I feel like I add too much unnecessary information

because I feel like if I do not I will miss a lot' (Student 18). In the remaining comments, the students expressed some uncertainties about their skills, a few of them stated that their expectations depended on the source text, while only a very small number expressed confidence in their summarising skills.

Overall, students' comments related to a specific task requirement were consistent with the assigned difficulty level on the Likert scale for that requirement. If the students indicated the middle option (I don't know) on the Likert scale, they said that the difficulty level of a specific requirement would depend on the text difficulty, on their comprehension of the text, or stated that sometimes it could be difficult and sometimes easy. However, in about one third of cases, an inconsistency was identified between the students' narrative comments and the rankings on the Likert scale. In other words, comments such as 'It is hard to identify primary information' (Student 40), 'I think it will be difficult to determine what is primary and what is secondary information' (Student 56), or 'I find it difficult to write in my own words' (Student 72) were assigned a middle point (I don't know) on the Likert scale for the expected difficulty level in fulfilling the mentioned requirements. In addition, the difficulty degrees mentioned in students' narratives such as 'quite easy' were not always given a 1 (very easy) on the Likert scale. The same applies to 'quite difficult' or 'very hard' which did not get a 5 (very difficult) on the scale. In those cases, a few students chose the ranking 2 (easy) and 4 (difficult).

2) *Peer-review reflection*

The data for the second reflection phase show that an overwhelming majority found it easy to evaluate the main topic (87%) and primary information (78%) in their peers' text (see Table 3.4). About half of the students experienced ease in reviewing the secondary information (49%), wording (paraphrasing) (49%) and the use of linking words (47%). However, reviewing the final sentence in

the peer’s text, being the restated main topic as a concluding sentence of the summary, presented more uncertainties and difficulties, with 40% of the participants undetermined or unaware of the experienced difficulty level, and 31% finding it difficult to review the concluding statement in their peer’s text. In addition, over a third of the participants were uncertain about the experienced difficulty in reviewing the secondary information (35%) and linking words (36%).

Table 3.4. Experienced challenges in peer-reviewing a summary ($n = 101$)

Item	Mode	Very easy (1)	Easy (2)	I don't know (3)	Difficult (4)	Very difficult (5)
1. Topic	2	17%	70%	8%	5%	0%
2. Primary information	2	4%	74%	13%	8%	1%
3. Secondary information	2	5%	44%	35%	17%	0%
4. Wording	2	3%	46%	23%	26%	3%
5. Linking words	2	2%	44%	36%	18%	1%
6. Final sentence	3	2%	28%	40%	29%	2%

The participants added comments focusing mostly on the experienced difficulties in evaluating their peer’s summary. About half of the students referred directly to at least one of the criteria that they had to consider on the Likert scale. Some of them struggled with assessing the peer’s summary with respect to how the (primary and secondary) information was processed. This difficulty, as a few students explained it, originates from their own lack of skills in filtering essential from non-essential information, and often results in insecurity when confronted with their peer’s different interpretation of information. The challenging character of peer review when students are not performing well enough and still participate in peer review as a part of the task can be discerned in the following comment by one of the students: ‘It’s hard to find what exactly the primary information is and what the secondary information, because my peer selected other information than I did’ (Student 25). In addition, some of the students experienced difficulties in reviewing their peer’s use of linking words, as well as the final sentence of the summary which

required restating the main idea of the source text in their own words. The students found reviewing these two criteria to be difficult because the source text that had to be summarised was short, consisting of just a few sentences (95 words). One participant commented: 'It was fairly difficult when it came to linking words and the final sentence, as these elements were hard to incorporate in such a short summary' (Student 74). Another student explained: 'It's more difficult to check on linking words and on the final sentence since we had to summarise a very short text and so the summary could only be +/- 2 sentences' (Student 17).

In some cases, the participants commented on the criteria that they found easy to review in their peer's summary, predominantly referring to processing of the information from the source text. As the students explained, they were all working on the same source text and they had already filtered information for their own summary before reviewing that of their peer. Or, as one of the students formulated it: 'Topic and main information you already had to recognise for your own summary, that's why it was quite easy' (Student 16). Another student added: 'It's easy to review if your peer had the main and secondary information right, because you already had to figure that out for yourself' (Student 30). This was especially the case when they agreed on how they processed the information from the source text. For instance, one student commented: 'My peer clearly said what the topic was and it was the same as in my head. She used the real main ideas in her text, actually the same ideas as me thus I think it is easy' (Student 57). In this comment on the peer's summary, the student perceives the correctness of the main topic and primary information with respect to the input text, as well as the clarity of written expression.

Most students referred less directly to the components and made more general remarks: they commented on their difficulties in reviewing a short summary,

and, related to that, their struggle with the use of linking words and writing a concluding sentence, which some acknowledged as optional in such a short text. Additionally, some of the students referred to their own summary in their reflections after peer review. For instance, they pointed out that they had forgotten to take a particular requirement into account or realised that they had made a mistake. Some of the students provided evaluative feedback on the peer's summary as in the following case: 'First her summary was very well written. She explained it in her own words and that was really good. The only thing I missed were her signaling [*sic*] words and a concluding sentence. Overall her summary was short and to the point' (Student 86).

When comparing students' comments on reviewing a specific criterion in their peer's text to the perceived difficulty of the same criterion on the Likert scale, an inconsistency was identified in about a quarter of the respondents' answers. This was especially the case with reviewing primary and secondary information, as well as linking words and final sentence. It was noted that, when reporting on the experienced level of difficulty in reviewing their peer's summary on the mentioned criteria, about a dozen participants indicated the middle point (I don't know) on the Likert scale while stating in their comments that they did experience difficulties. In addition, a few students who stated that linking words and/or final sentence were missing in their peer's summary or were not needed in a summary of such a short text, also indicated the middle option on the Likert scale.

3) *Post-task self-assessment*

The students were instructed to rewrite their summary at home and respond to a number of statements referring to the task requirements in order to self-assess their assignment completion. These were open-ended statements on which the students could reflect and formulate their own response. In most of the cases

they said yes or no, while some of them gave a more elaborate response. For instance, a student wrote in response to statement 4 (I have rephrased the information in my own words): ‘Yes, I did this by using synonyms’ (Student 31).

The majority of students acknowledged that they had fulfilled the task requirements, as indicated in Table 3.5. More specifically, the vast majority (more than 94%) stated that they had identified the main topic and primary information. About three quarters of the students acknowledged that they had fulfilled the remaining summarising requirements (70% or more students per requirement). Just over a quarter of the students were uncertain about how they paraphrased the original text’s ideas for the purposes of their summary (27%). 10% of the students chose not to conclude with the restated main topic. For instance, one student responded: ‘No. I think this summary is too short to restate the topic. I searched for it in the [coursebook]. And it says that restating the topic is not necessary in short texts’ (Student 57).

Table 3.5. Self-assessment on the summarising components

Item	Self-assessment			
	<i>n</i>	Yes	Uncertain	No
1. I have identified the topic in my first sentence.	98	96%	4%	0%
2. I have identified the main ideas of the original text.	98	94%	6%	0%
3. I have identified what is secondary information.	97	78%	16%	6%
4. I have rephrased the information in my own words.	97	73%	27%	0%
5. I have considered the steps in the text.	98	70%	17%	13%
6. I have restated the topic.	98	73%	17%	10%

4) *Declarative and procedural gain*

As a final step in the summarising assignment, the students were invited to reflect on what they learned from the assignment and/or peer-review process, and to formulate a take-home message consecutive with finalising the rewrite at home. In their take-home messages, the students referred directly to the task

requirements, but also commented on peer review and their realisations related to the assignment.

The focus of the take-home messages was on the experienced difficulty in paraphrasing or on the identified need for more practice in this skill. As one student formulated it: 'It's hard to formulate a sentence with the same meaning but different words as the ones in the text' (Student 39). Apart from paraphrasing, some of the students referred to delineating essential from non-essential information as challenging and demanding more practice.

Some take-home messages covered the peer-assessment experiences. Overall, the participants found looking at their peer's text helpful in terms of awareness raising of own mistakes or own lack of attention for some of the requirements. One of the students commented: 'Peer review is an amazing way to detect mistakes you easily overlook yourself' (Student 24). Another student claimed: 'The peer review process makes me aware where my faults are and how I can improve my text and writing in general' (Student 29).

Some of the students acknowledged the importance of (practising) paraphrasing for better summary writing, alongside the importance of appropriately distinguishing between main points that belong in a summary and supporting details. A few students also acknowledged the importance of rereading and rewriting for a better writing quality, as well as recognised the value of first putting the main ideas in bullet points before starting to write a summary.

3.3.1.2. Discussion

In the present study, the students were encouraged to engage in reflection exercises while completing an academic literacy task that integrates reading and writing, i.e. summarising. They had the opportunity to reflect on the task

requirements (summarising components) in different phases of the task and from different points of view.

The students expected and perceived no challenges in **identifying the main topic** throughout the task completion. In other words, the ability to identify the main topic in a text can be considered these students' perceived strength, a skill that they believe they can perform without (too much) effort, whether in their own assignments or while reviewing their peers' texts. Apart from this strength, several challenges were identified that can hinder students' effectiveness in task completion and peer review.

Distinguishing essential from non-essential information seems to be problematic for the students as it is marked with challenges and uncertainties. Initially, the participants had diverse expectations regarding the difficulty in identifying primary information in a text. However, the vast majority of students found it easy to review their peer's text on main information. Secondly, about two thirds of the students anticipated identifying secondary information to be difficult or responded that they do not know what to expect. In peer review, however, about half of the students found it easy to review the secondary information, but a third felt uncertain about assessing their peer's performance. Students' different expectations and experiences are likely to be influenced by gained insights into the components while engaging with them from different angles. This might be even stronger with students uncertain about their own capacities. It is possible that, while reviewing their peer's text, the students were confronted with their own understanding of the text, which may have provided them with additional insights into their own text interpretation. Thus, when confronted with their peer's text, the students are not only assessing their peer's performance, but also reflecting on their own. Finally, although a majority of the students stated that they had identified primary and secondary information, they

identified filtering information as a challenge and recognised its importance in summarising. Therefore, distinguishing essential from non-essential information can be labelled as a challenge in students' summarising skills, as it is likely to negatively impact their task performance and peer assessment.

Paraphrasing an author's ideas was perceived as difficult throughout all the assignment phases, mostly because of their uncertainty to remain truthful to the author's original ideas, but also because they experienced a lack of vocabulary to rephrase the original ideas and of practice in this skill. The students' uncertainty makes assessing a peer's paraphrase also a challenge. Lack of skill in paraphrasing is likely to have a detrimental effect on the final written product, which remains the main form of assessment in HE.

Furthermore, students' perceived challenges in information processing and paraphrasing can both point at students' reading comprehension as problematic: students who fail to properly understand the source text will also underperform when paraphrasing the information from that text. More specifically, students with poorer reading skills find summarising more difficult, and in turn tend to copy sentences or text segments from the original source text (Grabe & Zhang, 2013a). Since reading comprehension is often taken as unproblematic, whereas reading is 'every bit as problematic' as writing in integrated reading and writing (Grabe & Zhang, 2016, p. 339), it should not be neglected in the design of support of students writing-through-reading skills.

The students, prior to the task, had been introduced to the use of **linking or signalling words** as means to organise ideas in their texts, and completed a number of related online reflection and in-class reinforcement exercises. The use of linking words aims to show sequence and order of the ideas in a text, or to indicate different points in an author's argumentation (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007, p. 27). From their reflections, we can see that the students experience

challenges with the use of linking words. They might not have gained enough knowledge about nor enough practice in using linking words at this stage of their education. In addition, the original text excerpt was short, which limits the number and variety of linking words, as recognised by some of the students, and consequently can reinforce students' uncertainties.

According to their coursebook, the **final sentence** of the summary 'should restate the topic of the summary in different words' (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007, p. 30). However, in the case of a short summary which consists of just a few sentences and which was the case in this study, 'the final sentence is optional' (Van de Poel & Gasiorek 2007, p. 30). The students were uncertain about this task requirement and found it difficult to fulfil. As mentioned earlier, students were allowed to consult their coursebook at any point in time during the assignment completion. In addition, they were encouraged to use the writing scale, which contained descriptors of the task requirements and related page numbers in the book. Still, many students do not seem to reflect about or make proper use of the suggested guiding tools and provided support but use them rather superficially. Or, the fact that restating the topic to conclude was given as optional when summarising a short text might have sparked insecurity and the students chose to restate the topic rather than to make a decision to leave it out. Students are, however, required to 'actively and critically engage with knowledge instead of passively receiving it' (Wingate, 2007, p. 394). Consequently, the students may benefit from additional guidance in the critical use of supporting materials in order to improve their writing.

Further observations can be made with regard to **peer review** in this context. Peer-review activity is likely to have provided the students with a better understanding of the text, but also increased their awareness of their own and their peer's performance, and of the task criteria, which are recognised benefits

of peer review (cf. Falchikov, 1995; Sims, 1989; Wood & Kurzel, 2008; Wessa & De Rycker, 2010). It is important to notice, however, that the peer's summary that the students reviewed was similar but not identical to their own text. For some participants, this dissimilarity led to increased difficulty or insecurity in peer review, especially when, for instance, there was a difference in opinion about the source text, or one or more of the requirements had not been fulfilled. In this situation, peer-review feedback seems to be given by students in need of feedback which could reinforce students' dislike of peer review, which in turn is not uncommon (Brammer & Rees, 2007). Even so, it has been suggested that, by participating in peer review, students have an opportunity to be introduced to an evaluative and more critical review such as peer-assessment and marking by the teacher in a less-threatening manner (Wood & Kurzel, 2008). As Brammer and Rees (2007) indicate, peer review is collaborative learning and not proofreading, and students should be made more aware of it.

It is also important to observe students' understanding of the **middle option (I don't know)** on the Likert scale. In other words, some of the students indicated 'I don't know' on the Likert scale not necessarily because they were not able to anticipate if a requirement will be challenging for them, but rather because they recognised that their judgement depended on a number of factors. They did so, for instance, when they recognised that the difficulty level of a specific requirement would depend on the text difficulty, on their comprehension of the text, or stated that sometimes it could be difficult and sometimes easy. From a methodological point of view, and survey research in applied linguistics more specifically, it is noteworthy that there is no agreement between researchers on the use of *don't know* response as an option on a Likert item because the respondents without a stronger view on a topic tend to select this option (Wagner, 2010, p.27). This can in turn influence statistical analysis if there are many respondents who select the middle option for the mentioned reason.

However, the findings of this study show that the students chose this option when it most accurately described their response to a Likert item. This is one of the reasons, as Vogt (2007) argues, it would be inappropriate not to provide this option to the respondents. Moreover, there were no students in this study who choose only the middle option in response for each of the six requirements.

Engaging the students in self-reflection exercises aimed to help them identify areas where they need improvement in the context of a specific academic task, here exemplified through summarising, and to inform their skills development. In their take-home messages, the participants of this study verbalised what they had gained from this assignment as well as the challenges to tackle in the future. The students seem to have **acquired insights** into their own strengths and weaknesses (declarative knowledge), as well as appropriate strategies (procedural knowledge) in the context of summarising. More specifically, students found filtering information and paraphrasing challenging when summarising in EFL. Nonetheless, they recognised the importance of these procedures for improving their summarising skills. Furthermore, some participants pointed at the usefulness of peer review for gaining insights into own performance. In addition, some of the participants recognised the value of other strategies for their summary writing, such as rereading and rewriting, as well as putting the main ideas in bullet points before engaging in writing. As metacognition enables individuals to acquire insight into their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as appropriate strategies (Brown, 1994), the findings of this study suggest that engaging students in self-reflection, a fundamental metacognitive process, could increase their metacognitive awareness of summarising in EFL.

3.3.2. First-year English majors' actual strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in English as a foreign language

3.3.2.1. Results

1) Determining the main topic

In order to complete the assignment, the students were required to identify the main topic, and to state the title and the author of the original text in the first sentence of the summary. The ability to identify the main topic and to acknowledge the source are reported upon separately. It should be noted that the students' texts are quoted verbatim without correcting them.

Only 19.8% of the students accurately identified the main idea in the first sentence of their summary, as indicated in Table 3.6. For instance, one student accurately wrote: 'Martha Nussbaum says in "Go the Wrong Way" that college classes are useful to think about your life, besides your job'. Another student stated: 'College classes do not just prepare you for a job, they also allow you to think about your life as a whole'. 43.6% of the participants partially fulfilled this requirement by identifying the main topic later in their summary, or by partially stating the gist of the main idea from the source text. One student partially captured the main topic from the source text: 'College does not only prepare you for a job, Martha Nussbaum conclude in her text Go the Wrong Way.' The remaining 36.6% of the students misunderstood the original text's main topic, interpreted rather than summarised the author's main idea, or left it out. For example, one of the students condensed the author's main idea as follows: 'In Go the Wrong Way, Martha Nussbaum tells us that college classes are important for later life.' In another student's summary, the main topic was missing: 'In "Go the Wrong Way" by Martha Naussbaum we learn the importance of taking classes in The humanities.in conclusion it helps your mind from becoming narrow.'

Table 3.6. Students' ($n = 101$) performance on determining the main topic

Item	Mean	SD	Mode	Median	Accurate (2)	Partially accurate (1)	Inaccurate (0)
Acknowledging the source:							
- Title	1.09	0.09	2	1	30 (29.7%)	36 (35.7%)	35 (34.7%)
- Author	1.58	0.08	2	2	77 (76.2%)	4 (4%)	20 (19.8%)
Determining the main topic	0.82	0.07	1	1	20 (19.8%)	44 (43.6%)	37 (39.6%)

As a part of stating the original text's main topic, the source text had to be acknowledged by the students by stating its title and author. Most of the students stated the author's name accurately (76.2%), a few (4%) added it partially, while the remaining students (19.8%) made spelling mistakes, did not acknowledge the author or stated the name of the author by adding it in the title of their summary (see Table 3.6 above). With regard to citing the title of the source text, a considerable variation in capitalisation and typography was found in the students' responses. 29.7% of the students fulfilled this requirement accurately by formatting the title in line with the capitalisation of the source text given in the assignment and the original publication – title case capitalisation. In addition, they used upright typography and enclosed the title in single or double quotation marks. 35.6% of the students stated the title following other capitalisation and/or typography rules. Some of them had also mistaken the genre of the source text, naming it a book (chapter), essay, novel, etc. The remaining 34.7% inaccurately fulfilled this requirement. In their summaries, the title was absent or incorrect.

2) *Identifying primary and secondary information*

In order to summarize the given text, the students were also required to make a distinction between primary and secondary information. Put differently, they had to state the author's main points, while leaving out unnecessary detail.

Only 7.9% of the students were able to accurately discern the primary information in the source text and delineate it in their summaries (see Table 3.7). In the following example, the primary information was accurately reported: 'The

classes, in particular courses in the humanities, also give you a wider perspective on the world and make you more critical as a person.’ 49.5% of the students partially delineated the primary information: in their summaries, minor issues were identified in the reported primary information. For instance, one of the participants identified the primary information without making an appropriate link to the main topic: ‘She [author] explains that courses in humanities are important because they create critical and open-minded people.’ Finally, 42.6% of the participants did not fulfil this requirement, i.e. they inaccurately identified the primary information or left it out of their summaries. In the following example, the student inaccurately stated the main information: ‘Especially courses in the humanities are not, and do not have to be practical. They challenge the mind, give students the chance to think bigger and give them, in these classes, the help they need.’

Table 3.7. Students’ ($n = 101$) performance on identifying primary and secondary information

Item	Mean	SD	Mode	Median	Accurate (2)	Partially accurate (1)	Inaccurate (0)
Identifying primary information	0.65	0.06	1	1	8 (7.8%)	50 (49.5%)	43 (42.6%)
Identifying secondary information	1.01	0.09	2	1	42 (41.6%)	19 (18.8%)	40 (39.6%)

41.6% of the students left the secondary information out of their summaries (see Table 3.7 above). 18.8% of the students stated some of the unnecessary detail in their summaries and therefore only partially distinguished secondary from primary information. The remaining 39.6% of the students were not able to filter out secondary information. The following summaries exemplify the difference between the students who accurately (2), partially (1) and inaccurately (0) identified secondary information:

(2) In 'Go the Wrong Way' Martha Nussbaum states that attending college classes is crucial, not only for your profession but also for life. Especially courses in the humanities urge the mind to develop which is very helpful later on in life.

(1) In her text *Go the Wrong Way* Martha Nussbaum states that college classes are not only useful for finding a job in your later life. The classes you can take in college, especially in the humanities, will make you more critical and they learn to let you think for yourself. She recommends that you make good use of it.

(0) In 'Go the Wrong Way' Martha Nussbaum writes about college classes. First of all, college classes prepare you for your whole life. Especially the courses in humanities give your mind challenges and stretch your imagination. Secondly, you need resources to prevent a narrower mind and routine in your life. Now you have the opportunity to get them.

3) *Paraphrasing*

The quality of the students' paraphrases was assessed by looking into the lexical dissimilarity on the one hand and semantic completeness of their summaries on the other when compared to the original text. 49.5% of the present student population scored high on lexical dissimilarity by using their own words when stating the author's ideas (see Table 3.8). 25.7% of the respondents partially fulfilled this requirement, since they used mostly their own words, but were not able to find an alternative wording for some of the main expressions in the input text. Lastly, 24.8% of the students predominantly used the author's words and expressions in their summaries. For instance, the students had to paraphrase the following sentence: 'Courses in the humanities, in particular, often seem impractical, but they are vital, because they stretch your imagination and challenge your mind to become more responsive, more critical, bigger.' The following are examples of (2) high, (1) partial and (0) low lexical dissimilarity:

(2) She also says that courses in humanities specifically are very important because they make your mind more open.

(1) These courses, especially those in humanities, are vital since they can challenge your mind and make you become more conscious.

(0) Your imagination will stretch and your mind will get challenged, become responsive, critical and bigger.

Table 3.8. Students' ($n = 101$) performance on paraphrasing

Item	Mean	SD	Mode	Median	High (2)	Partial (1)	Low (0)
Rephrasing in own words:							
- Lexical dissimilarity	1.24	0.08	2	1	50 (49.5%)	26 (25.7%)	25 (24.8%)
- Semantic completeness	0.79	0.06	1	1	42 (41.6%)	19 (18.8%)	40 (39.6%)

41.6% of the participants accurately transferred the meaning of the sentences targeted for paraphrasing, while 18.8% did it partially, as can be seen in Table 3.8 above. However, the semantic completeness of most of the summaries (39.6%) was low. For instance, one of the students inaccurately captured the meaning of the original text's ideas as follows:

In "Go the Wrong Way" Martha Nussbaum states that when you are in college you have time to think about your whole future. College classes can widen your mind. In conclusion, college classes help you prepare for your future.

4) *Using linking words*

The students used linking words with different functions (expressing addition, contrast, result, etc.) to link ideas and build up coherent relationships in their summaries. 30.7% of the students selected highly appropriate linking words and used them accurately to connect ideas (see Table 3.9). Students used mostly *not only..., but (also), although, because, therefore*, which correspond to the relationships between ideas presented in the original text. About half (49.5%) of the participants had some minor issues with linking words. For instance, some of the students used *not only...but (also)* with different parts of speech following the two parts of this conjunction, which resulted in an imbalanced sentence (parallelism was not ensured); however, they clearly expressed the relationship

between ideas. In the following example, even though the relationship between ideas is clear, the sentence needs grammatical revision: ‘In her text about college classes, Martha Nussbaum states that they do not only ensure that you are ready for a job, but that they also make you reflect on your life.’ Finally, 19.8% of the participants inaccurately used linking words or used other ways of connecting ideas. In the latter case, the students mostly used repetition, personal pronouns and demonstrative adjectives.

Table 3.9. Students’ ($n = 101$) performance on using linking words

Item	Mean	SD	Mode	Median	Accurate (2)	Partially accurate (1)	Inaccurate (0)
5. Using linking words	1.11	0.07	1	1	31 (30.7%)	50 (49.5%)	20 (19.8%)

5) *Restating the main topic*

A vast majority of the students did not restate the topic to conclude their summary. Nevertheless, about a fifth of the participants tried, mostly incorrectly, to restate the main idea to conclude their summary. For instance, one of the students wrote:

Attending college is, according to Professor Nussbaum, not merely meant to get a job In her book “College advice” she states that it is meant as a resource to broaden one’s view on the world. Basically, college is the ultimate way to prevent having a narrow mindset.

3.3.2.2. *Discussion*

The importance of learning to write from source texts in academic settings has been recognised by teachers, institutions and students (Grabe & Zhang, 2013b). Moreover, developing students’ ability to successfully complete these tasks is a key area in academic writing instruction (Hirvela & Du, 2013) and a challenging endeavour (Cumming, Lai & Cho, 2016; Li & Casanave 2012). The findings of this study confirm that integrated reading and writing represent pervasive challenges for junior undergraduates and students’ academic literacy readiness

for university remains a persistent point of discussion. These challenges can be identified in both their receptive and productive skills. Furthermore, the findings of this study show that the students' challenges require different treatment in terms of support as it will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The results of the present study suggest that the majority of the first-year majors in English need support when **processing information from a source text**, i.e. their receptive skills. The results indicate that over 40% of the participants partially delineated the main topic and primary information. In addition, more than a third of the students were not able to identify the main topic, while almost half could not distinguish primary from secondary information. As students can experience difficulties in writing from textual sources due to their lack of understanding of the source text (Howard, Serviss & Rodrigue, 2010), the aforementioned result can point at students' receptive skills as problematic. Moreover, as main ideas are the most important elements of the source text that have to be included in a summary (cf. Grabe & Zhang, 2012b; Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009; Johns, 1988; Winograd, 1984), students' ability to identify them can determine their success in the summary writing task. The need for more practice in identification and interpretation of main ideas from source texts is not unknown; nonetheless, this ability tends to be assumed and not explicitly addressed in L2 writing instruction (Grabe & Zhang, 2013a). In the present academic context in particular, students do not often receive specific instructions on how to read an assigned text in order to complete a task (Brunfaut, 2008). The data in the current study suggest that not all students need the same kind of support in their reading skills development. For instance, the students who are able to filter information from the source text but show some minor comprehension issues are likely to need additional guidance in improving the existing skills. Other students, who misunderstand the author's ideas and are

unable to delineate main ideas from secondary detail, need to devote more attention to developing their information processing skills.

About two thirds of the students are in need of guidance in **acknowledging the work of another author** in their texts. One third of these students correctly recognised the title of the original text but needs guidelines in capitalisation and typography when citing a title in their texts. Since the students in the present context were not yet introduced to the existence and the use of different referencing styles when citing an author's work, we can assume that there are at least two other reasons why they partially fulfilled this requirement. Since these are first-year students at the beginning of tertiary education, they have probably not encountered this requirement in secondary school. Or, they were aware of the existence of formatting requirements and styles for in-text citation but were not able to make appropriate use of them. A more complex issue was identified when the students (about a third) failed to recognise the title of the original text or left it out of their summary. The causes for such an outcome can yet again be diverse: being unable to recognise the correct title, disregarding the instruction and requirements, or simply forgetting to state the title as required. Consequently, the way in which students need to address this challenge is different.

Paraphrasing is an important skill to master as it 'can be used to aid comprehension, stimulate prior knowledge, and assist in writing-skills development' (McCarthy, Guess & McNamara, 2009, p. 682). The results suggest, however, that the majority of the students need support in their paraphrasing skills, both in terms of lexical similarity and semantic completeness. More specifically, about a half of the respondents were partially or mostly copying author's words or using their variations, which confirms that paraphrasing, the basic textual borrowing strategy for avoiding plagiarism together with citing sources, remains a pervasive issue in academia (Perry,

2010). Howard (1995, p. 799) makes a distinction between three forms of plagiarism: cheating, non-attribution of sources, and patchwriting. The results of this study indicate patchwriting in the summaries of some of the students, i.e. unacceptable paraphrasing in the final written draft even when the original source has been acknowledged (Howard, 1995). These students who did not sufficiently reword the ideas from the source text, together with the students who used mostly author's words, are at risk of plagiarising. Moreover, patchwriting can indicate that students lack familiarity with the language and content of academic genre (Li & Casanave, 2012; Pecorari & Shaw, 2012). Furthermore, more than half of the students did not capture the gist of the author's ideas or did so partially. This was the case after having the opportunity to read about paraphrasing, complete online exercises, attend reinforcement practice in class, followed by an explicit requirement to use their own words when paraphrasing an author's ideas.

As paraphrasing in HE “provides insight into how well students read (since comprehension is the first step toward paraphrasing) as well as write” (Hirvela & Du, 2013, p. 88), it can be observed that these students need additional support in both their receptive and productive skills. Students' needs regarding their paraphrasing skills are once again of a complex nature: they need either additional guidance focusing on the improvement of already existing skills or support that has to cater for the individual lack of this skill. For instance, it could be pointed out to the students that, instead of using a variation of the author's word in their effort to use their own words, they can search for synonyms as one of the paraphrasing techniques, what some of the students did correctly.

Since the text that the students had to summarise was short, the number of **linking words** that they used was quite limited. Some of the students chose to use repetition or relative pronouns to link the ideas in their summaries. Nonetheless, about a third of the students who used linking words to show the

relationships between the ideas expressed in the source text did so accurately. The results further indicate that about half of the students who used linking words did so with some minor issues such as not applying the grammar rules regarding the use of *not only... but (also)*. In sum, English majors starting HE would benefit from an additional training in the use of linking words, which in the present academic literacy course comes later in the instruction (cf. Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007).

The results further show that the majority of the students did not **restate the topic to conclude** their summary. The students might have done so because they were able to recognise that the last task requirement was optional for the present assignment as it was indicated by the provided support materials. In other words, for such a short source text, restating the topic to conclude would mean having secondary information as part of their summary.

3.3.3. The relationship between first-year English majors' perceived and actual strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in EFL

3.3.3.1. Results

In the following paragraphs, I will summarise the results of the analysis under 4 subheadings where each subheading represents one of the summarising task requirements in this study. Under each subheading, I will first present a matrix displaying the data regarding the related requirement followed by the summary of the data analysis results for that requirement.

Requirement 1 – Determining the main topic

Table 3.10. First-year English majors’ expected difficulty and performance on determining the main topic when summarising in English as a foreign language

Performance Expected difficulty	Accurate	Partially accurate	Inaccurate	<i>n</i> (% of total)
Easy	17 (18.1%)	31 (33%)	24 (25.5%)	72 (76.6%)
I don't know	2 (2.1%)	6 (6.3%)	7 (7.4%)	15 (16%)
Difficult	0 (0%)	4 (4.3%)	3 (3.2%)	7 (7.4%)
<i>n</i> (% of total)	19 (20.2%)	41 (43.6%)	34 (36.2%)	94 (100%)

Just over three quarters of the students expected identifying the main topic in a text to be easy (72 out of 94). However, when looking into students actual summaries, only 17 of them accurately identified the main topic from the source text, while 31 fulfilled this requirement partially and 24 inaccurately. From the 15 students who did not know what to expect with regard to the difficulty in determining the main topic in the source text, 2 accurately determined the main topic, 6 partially accurately and 7 inaccurately judging by their summaries. Only 7 students expected this requirement to be difficult to fulfil: 4 of them performed partially accurately and 3 inaccurately.

The Fisher’s exact test revealed no association between students’ expected difficulty and their performance on this task requirement (N=94, $\chi^2=2.871$, $p=.59$). Consequently, the alternative hypothesis that we can make predictions with regard to students’ performance on a task requirement based on their expectations with regard to that requirement is rejected.

Requirement 2 – Identifying primary information

Table 3.11. First-year English majors’ expected difficulty and performance on identifying primary information when summarising in English as a foreign language

Performance Expected difficulty	Accurate	Partially accurate	Inaccurate	<i>n</i> (% of total)
Easy	7 (7.4%)	19 (20.2%)	9 (9.6%)	35 (37.2%)
I don't know	0 (0%)	16 (17%)	12 (12.8%)	28 (29.8%)
Difficult	1 (1.1%)	13 (13.8%)	17 (18.1%)	31 (33%)
<i>n</i> (% of total)	8 (8.5%)	48 (51.1%)	38 (40.4%)	94 (100%)

The students who expected identifying primary information when summarising to be easy to fulfil (35), performed mainly partially accurately (19), while a similar number of them performed accurately (7) and inaccurately (9) on this requirement. Out of the 28 students who did not know how difficult it will be to identify primary information, 16 performed partially accurately and 12 inaccurately on that same requirement. The students who expected this task requirement to be difficult to fulfil (31), performed partially accurately (13) and inaccurately (17) in completing the summarising task, while only one student accurately fulfilled this requirement.

The Fisher’s exact test revealed that there is a significant association between students’ expected difficulty and their performance on this task requirement ($N=94$, $\chi^2=11.734$, $p=.01$). In other words, the null hypothesis that students’ expectations are independent from their performance with regard to identifying primary information is rejected. For this requirement, the Cramer’s *V* statistic is 0.26 out of a possible maximum value of 1. This result represents a medium association between the two observed items, following Cohen’s (1988, 1992) commonly used suggestions about what constitutes a large or small effect. This

value of the Cramer's V is significant ($p < .001$) indicating that it is unlikely to have happened by chance, and therefore the strength of the relationship is significant.

Requirement 3 – Identifying secondary information

Table 3.12. First-year English majors' expected difficulty and performance on identifying secondary information when summarising in English as a foreign language

Performance Expected difficulty	Accurate	Partially accurate	Inaccurate	<i>n</i> (% of total)
Easy	9 (9.6%)	10 (10.6%)	11 (11.7%)	30 (31.9%)
I don't know	13 (13.8%)	3 (3.2%)	9 (9.6%)	25 (26.6%)
Difficult	17 (18.1%)	5 (5.3%)	17 (18.1%)	39 (41.5%)
<i>n</i> (% of total)	39 (41.5%)	18 (19.1%)	37 (39.4%)	94 (100%)

The performance of almost one third of the students (30 out of 94) who expected that it will be easy to identify the secondary information when writing a summary, was accurate (9), partially accurate (10) and inaccurate (11). From the 25 students who did not know what to expect with regard to this requirement, 13 performed accurately, 3 partially accurately, and 9 inaccurately. Most of the students expected this to be difficult to fulfil (39 out of 94). 17 of them performed accurately, 5 partially accurately, while the remaining 17 underperformed on this requirement (inaccurate performance).

No association between students' expected difficulty and their performance on this task requirement was revealed by the Chi-square test of independence ($N=94$, $\chi^2=6.601$, $p=.16$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was accepted: students' expectations are independent from their performance on identifying secondary information.

Requirement 4 –Paraphrasing

When looking at the relationship between the students' expectations with regard to paraphrasing information from the source text in own words and their related performance, the difference was made between their performance on lexical dissimilarity and that on semantic completeness (cf. McCarthy, Guess & McNamara, 2009). Briefly, higher lexical dissimilarity means that the students used their own and not the author's words in their paraphrased sentences. Higher level of semantic completeness reflects more the meaning of the sentence(s) targeted for paraphrasing.

Table 3.13a. First-year English majors' expected difficulty and performance on paraphrasing (lexical dissimilarity aspect) when summarising in English as a foreign language

Performance Expected difficulty	High	Partial	Low	<i>n</i> (% of total)
Easy	16 (17%)	4 (4.3%)	8 (8.5%)	28 (29.8%)
I don't know	8 (8.5%)	12 (12.8%)	7 (7.4%)	27 (28.7%)
Difficult	22 (23.4%)	8 (8.5%)	9 (9.6%)	39 (41.5%)
<i>n</i> (% of total)	46 (48.9%)	24 (25.5%)	24 (25.5%)	94 (100%)

Table 3.13b. First-year English majors’ expected difficulty and performance on paraphrasing (semantic completeness aspect) when summarising in English as a foreign language

Performance Expected difficulty	High	Partial	Low	<i>n</i> (% of total)
Easy	3 (3.2%)	16 (17%)	9 (9.6%)	28 (29.8%)
I don't know	5 (5.3%)	17 (18.1%)	5 (5.3%)	27 (28.7%)
Difficult	2 (2.1%)	23 (24.5%)	14 (14.9%)	39 (41.5%)
<i>n</i> (% of total)	10 (10.6%)	56 (59.6%)	28 (29.8%)	94 (100%)

The students (28 out of 94) who expected paraphrasing to be easy to fulfil when writing a summary performed differently on the two aspects of paraphrasing, namely semantic completeness (Table 3.13a) and lexical dissimilarity (Table 3.13b). Only 3 students accurately transferred the meaning of the source text, while 16 did so partially accurately and 9 inaccurately. These students scored better on lexical dissimilarity where 16 students used their words when paraphrasing the information from the source text, while 4 did so partially, and the remaining 8 used mostly the author’s words in their summaries.

27 students could not anticipate the difficulty in paraphrasing when writing a summary. 8 of them paraphrased the ideas from the original text in their own words, 12 paraphrased mostly in their own words, while 7 students scored low on lexical dissimilarity by overusing the author’s words. These 27 students scored similarly on semantic completeness of their summaries with regard to the source text: 5 achieved high semantic completeness in their summaries, 17 partial, and 5 low.

39 out of 94 students anticipated difficulty in paraphrasing. Most of them (22), however, used their own words in their summary of the source text, while 8 used some of the author’s words and 9 overused author’s words. These 39 students

mostly partially succeeded in transferring the meaning from the source text: only 2 summaries had high semantic completeness, 23 had partial, while 14 had low semantic completeness.

The Chi-square test of independence revealed no association between students' expected difficulty with regard to paraphrasing when writing a summary and their performance on lexical dissimilarity in their summaries ($N=94$, $\chi^2=8.636$, $p=.07$). In other words, the null hypothesis has been accepted: students' expectations and their performance in this observed aspect are independent.

No association between students' expectations related to paraphrasing and level of achieved semantic completeness in their summaries was revealed by the Fisher's exact test ($N=94$, $\chi^2=4.435$, $p=.36$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was accepted: students' expectations are independent from their performance in this observed aspect.

3.3.3.2. Discussion

The above findings suggest that first-year English majors' tend to misunderstand their strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in English as a foreign language or lack knowledge thereof. This was inferred from the lack of established relationship between the students' expected levels of difficulty with regard to a summarising requirement and their performance on that same requirement. The existence of association between students' expectations and performance regarding summarising requirements has also not been confirmed by the Chi-square test of independence of Fisher's exact test.

More specifically, the students believed that **determining the main topic** will be an easy summarising requirement to fulfil. The results showed, however, that less than one third of these students performed well on this requirement while most of them slightly overestimated this skill or had mistaken it for strength. The

students seem to believe that this requirement is their strength, that they are cognisant of its character and the likelihood of their success when fulfilling it, whereas the opposite has been shown by their performance. The results of this study can be interpreted in line with the study by Macbeth (2006) which shows that L2 students are unable to state the main idea of the source text in the first sentence of their summary when instructed to. She found that students' underperformance on this requirement was related to both their literacy abilities and what she names 'curriculum of judgements' which refers to the way that the summary task was assigned. The latter seems to have driven her students into paying more attention to the mechanical process of summarising than understanding the purpose of summary writing. Added to these possible explanations of students underperformance, the students in this study seem to have incorrect beliefs that they have this skill under control.

The analysis of students' expectations regarding **identifying primary and secondary information** shows some similarity in the expected level of difficulty. In other words, their expectations with respect to these two requirements were similarly divided across the three categories of expectations. However, the students' performance on these requirements was different. It can be noticed that vast majority of the students partially and inaccurately identified primary information in their summaries. Amongst them, there are many who did not know what to expect or expected this requirement to be difficult to fulfil, and for whom their performance result would likely not be surprising from the point of view of their expectations. When it comes to identifying secondary information, however, majority of the students who believed that this requirement would not be challenging (slightly) underperformed and vice versa, i.e. the ones who were uncertain or expected difficulty performed (partially) accurately. For the students who were uncertain and anticipated challenges in identifying secondary information, being the majority in the participants of this

study, the feedback on their performance would likely be positive and motivating. If the results on identifying secondary information are further observed in light of the results on determining the main topic, it is possible that secondary information might have been a less understood concept for some of the students making them more uncertain in their expectations.

Majority of the students expected **paraphrasing** to be difficult to fulfil or were uncertain about what to expect. However, almost half of the participants in this study performed well in using their own words when paraphrasing the ideas from the original text. It could be implied that the students who were uncertain and expected difficulty in writing in their own words were very focused on the use of their own words in their summaries and, by doing so, tried to perform better in this task. Nonetheless, the results also show that the vast majority of the participants partially succeeded or did not succeed in capturing the gist of the source text in their summaries.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reported on the dissertation's main study in which summarising was taken as a basis for the investigation of first-year English majors' skills in writing from reading input. When looking into students' summarising skills, I have separately examined their perceived and actual skills as well as explored the relationship between the two. The findings confirm that writing based on textual sources, i.e. summarising, remains a challenging enterprise for junior undergraduates as they (1) report struggle in this core academic literacy activity, (2) show under-preparedness in writing a summary and (3) lack an understanding of their skills. The findings, however, shed more light on the complex nature of students' summarising skills at the beginning of HE and highlight the need for support that can cater to an array of needs.

In their reflections, students do not only acknowledge challenges in summarising, but also express uncertainty about their own competencies, which becomes apparent when they are required to process a textual source, write a summary and/or review someone else's text. When looking at the requirements of summarising more specifically, students differentiate determining the main topic in the source text as their strength, i.e. they expect no challenges in fulfilling this requirement in summarising nor in reviewing it in their peer's text. In other words, they claim not to experience any problems productively (when writing a summary) or receptively (when reviewing). However, distinguishing primary from secondary information and paraphrasing seem to be challenging for first-year English majors in EFL. Despite the fact that these two requirements are situated at different levels of attainment, i.e. identification of type of information vs. productively reworking basic information, in both cases they expect difficulties when having to fulfil the requirements or they express that they cannot anticipate the difficulty level in fulfilling these requirements. Overall, they show considerable uncertainties in reviewing them in their peer's text. Students' perceived challenges in information processing and in paraphrasing can point at their reading comprehension in the foreign language being deficient, underdeveloped, and the like. Additionally, some of the students' explanations of their uncertainties and difficulties seem to be grounded in their lack of understanding of summarising requirements. For instance, students who are reluctant to paraphrase author's ideas because they believe that they cannot formulate those ideas better than the author themselves may need to understand that they are not supposed to say it better than the author, but that they just have to convey the same message in other words and that there are techniques to do so. Similarly, first-year EFL students' lack of knowledge and proficiency in peer review makes them uncertain about reviewing their peer's

summary which seems to be their major weakness when they engage in peer review.

The investigation of students' performance on the summarising task has shown that students starting HE need support in both their receptive and productive skills. When processing information from a source text, students display both minor issues in reading comprehension as well as a complete misunderstanding of the author's ideas and inability to delineate main ideas from secondary detail. In addition, the majority of the students need support in their paraphrasing skills, both in terms of lexical similarity and semantic completeness. Students tend to copy partially or mostly author's words or use simple and slight variations; also, more than half of the students fails to capture the gist of the author's ideas or do so partially. Some of the requirements in summarising are possibly first introduced to students when they start HE, such as acknowledging the work of another author, paraphrasing an author's words, etc. In these areas they seem to need additional guidance which can be easily provided. Not only do they seem to need guidance and support based on the self-reported findings, there seem to be areas that students have not commented upon because of ignorance or a lack of awareness. This is the case, for instance, when a considerable number of students failed to acknowledge the title of the original text or left it out of their summary. This, however, requires a different approach. In sum, the nature of students' needs in summarising is multi-layered, rather complex and demands support which involves additional guidance in improvement of already existing skills and development of skills which are lacking.

After having investigated students' perceived and actual skills in summarising, I have explored the relationship between these two aspects in students' skills. The findings show that students' expectations with regard to the summarising requirements do not match their performance on those requirements. For

instance, students tend to partially or inaccurately fulfil summarising requirements which they expect to be easy but they also partially or inaccurately fulfil summarising requirements which they expect to be challenging. Also, their performance varies on the requirements on which they cannot anticipate the level of difficulty. Students' understanding of their academic literacy competencies when they start tertiary education seems to be deficient and inconsistent which I will further discuss in the next chapter.

Overall discussion and implications

4.1. Introduction

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I reported on first-year English majors' perceived metacognitive awareness of their academic reading (as a preliminary activity for writing) and identified students' awareness-raising needs. Subsequently, in Chapters 3, I provided an account of the investigation of first-year English majors' perceived and actual strengths and weaknesses in their summarizing skills in EFL, as well as the relationship between them. The results of the collected data analyses have been discussed per performed study. In this chapter, I will discuss first-year English majors' understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in EFL (section 4.2). I will do so from the perspective of declarative knowledge, a component of metacognitive knowledge or metacognitive awareness. Next, I will discuss the implications of the present research from the background of curriculum and syllabus design (CSD), which will be systematically introduced (section 4.3.1), and explain how the findings may inform foreign language teaching and learning in early HE (section 4.3.2). Lastly, I will refer to the limitations of the present and make recommendations for future research (section 4.4).

4.2. Overall discussion

4.2.1. First-year English majors' declarative knowledge of their summarising skills in English as a foreign language

In the present research, summarising is regarded as the procedure or strategy used for different reading purposes such as monitoring reading comprehension and analysing academic texts. It is also a basic literacy skill, or, as Sarig (1993) puts it: 'summarising tasks are junctions where reading and writing encounters take place and it is here that a complex composing process begins' (p. 161). Summarising is also a challenging skill for many students in second language, as pointed out in the literature (Grabe & Zhang, 2013a). When considered as a cognitive enterprise, the question that we can ask is what do the students know about their own summarising competencies. In that regard, students' person and task knowledge were identified. In line with the detailed description in the Introduction (section 1.4), students' knowledge about oneself as a learner, and about what factors influence their own performance is considered their declarative knowledge (Schraw, 1998; Schraw et al., 2006). This knowledge also corresponds to Flavell's (1979) *person* and *task* knowledge.

In the previous chapter, different dimensions of students' knowledge of their competencies in summarising or lack thereof have been pointed out. In other words, some students displayed self-knowledge which was accurate or inaccurate, while others showed lack of self-knowledge. When describing the subcategories of person knowledge, Flavell (1979) points out that one can understand universal properties of cognition in various degrees and ways. He (1979, p. 907) continues by adding that '[one] can fail to understand something or someone in two different ways: (a) by not achieving any coherent representation at all, or (b) by understanding incorrectly, that is, misunderstanding.' Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters and Afflerbach (2006) state

that metacognitive knowledge can be correct or incorrect. They further point out that this knowledge may be resistant to change and, if incorrect, prevent students from amending their self-knowledge (2006, p. 4).

When looking at students' understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in summarising, a distinction can be made between the students who seem to possess correct self-knowledge, i.e. to correctly understand their skills. These students can be further sub-categorised as the students who have a correct knowledge of their a) strength or b) weakness. When displayed in the previously introduced matrix (Table 3.2, section 3.2.5.3), these are the students who expected a summarising task requirement to be easy to fulfil and accurately fulfilled that requirement when writing a summary, or who expected it to be difficult to fulfil and inaccurately performed on that task requirement (coded green in Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Dimensions in students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses

Performance Expected difficulty	Accurate	Partially accurate	Inaccurate
Easy	Correct self-knowledge (understanding) of own skill ➤ Awareness of strength	Partially correct self-knowledge (understanding) of own skill ➤ Slightly overestimated skill (or partial lack of awareness of own weakness)	Incorrect self-knowledge (understanding) of own skill ➤ Overestimated skill (or weakness mistaken for strength)
I don't know	Lack of self-knowledge (understanding) of own skill ➤ Lack of awareness of strength	Lack of self-knowledge (understanding) of own skill ➤ Lack of awareness of strength and weakness	Lack of self-knowledge (understanding) of own skill ➤ Lack of awareness of weakness
Difficult	Incorrect self-knowledge (understanding) of own skill ➤ Underestimated skill (or strength mistaken for weakness)	Partially correct self-knowledge (understanding) of own skill ➤ Slightly underestimated skill (or partial lack of awareness of own strength)	Correct self-knowledge (understanding) of own skill ➤ Awareness of weakness

Another category of students are those who seem to misunderstand or incorrectly understand their skills (cf. Flavell, 1979), i.e. their self-knowledge is incorrect

(cf. Veenman et al., 2006). This category of students can be further subcategorised as students who a) overestimated their skills or b) underestimated their skills. Put differently, the students who overestimated their skills seem to have an incorrect knowledge of their strength or mistake their weakness for strength, while students who underestimated their skills seem to have an incorrect knowledge of their weakness or mistake their strength for weakness (coded orange in Table 4.1). A distinction should be made, however, between the said subcategories and the students who partially fulfilled a task requirement, in which case they either a) slightly overestimated or b) slightly underestimated their skills (coded blue in Table 4.1).

The group of students that should be observed separately are the ones who did not know if fulfilling a specific summarising requirement would be easy or difficult. In line with Flavell's (1979) description of ways of failing to understand something or someone, these students seem not to have achieved a coherent representation of their skill. In other words, since they did not know what to expect with regard to a task requirement, it can be assumed that they lack awareness of their strengths (accurate performance) or weaknesses (inaccurate performance), or both (partially accurate performance). However, these students seem to acknowledge this lack of knowledge (coded yellow in Table 4.1).

Yet another interpretation of the declarative knowledge of this latter group of students can be made from the perspective of some of their explanations of their choice of 'I don't know' option on the Likert scale in relation to the expected difficulty on a task requirement. More specifically, some of the students commented that the difficulty level of a specific task requirement would depend on a number of factors such as the text difficulty, their comprehension of the text, their vocabulary knowledge, or they stated that sometimes it could be difficult and sometimes easy (as reported in more detail in Chapter 3). For example, one of the students, who opted for 'I don't know' response on the

Likert scale with regard to expected difficulty in paraphrasing, commented that paraphrasing ‘can be difficult sometimes when you do not know the right words’ (Student 31). These students show a different dimension of awareness of their skills or lack thereof. They seem aware of the existence of several different factors that can have an impact on the perceived difficulty in fulfilling some of the presented summarising requirements. Nonetheless, by doing the tasks they are likely to become more aware of their strengths and the skills they need to improve.

First-year students’ awareness-raising needs with respect to their understanding of their summarising skills in English as a foreign language have been presented in Table 4.2. The needs have been identified based on the reported relationship between students’ expectations and performance regarding summarising task requirements (as elaborated upon in Chapter 3, section 3.3.3), and the above described dimensions is students’ awareness of their competencies. The requirements in summarising are displayed in the far-left hand column of the table, while students’ different understanding of their competencies with respect to the presented requirements are displayed towards the top. Overall, it can be observed that first-year English majors misunderstand or lack awareness of their summarising skills in English as a foreign language. More specifically, three thirds of the students show awareness-raising needs in this regard as can be seen in the far-right column of Table 4.2. However, the characteristics of their needs are different per requirement and request different intervention in supporting students’ academic literacy skills development. The observations with regard to the four summarising task requirements will be made in the following paragraphs for each requirement separately.

Table 4.2. First-year English majors’ awareness-raising needs of their summarising skills in English as a foreign language (N = 94; frequencies and percentages)

Summarising requirements	<i>Awareness raising needs</i>							
	Frequency (%)							
	<i>Slightly overestimated skill</i>	<i>Overestimated skill</i>	<i>Slightly underestimated skill</i>	<i>Underestimated skill</i>	<i>Lack of awareness of strength</i>	<i>Lack of awareness of weakness</i>	<i>Lack of awareness of strength and weakness</i>	<i>Students with awareness raising needs</i>
Determining the main topic	31 (33.0%)	24 (25.5%)	4 (4.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.1%)	7 (7.4%)	6 (6.4%)	74 (78.7%)
Identifying primary information	19 (20.2%)	9 (9.6%)	13 (13.8%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0%)	12 (12.8%)	16 (17%)	70 (74.5%)
Identifying secondary information	10 (10.6%)	11 (11.7%)	5 (5.3%)	17 (18.1%)	13 (13.8%)	9 (9.6%)	3 (3.2%)	68 (72.3%)
Paraphrasing (semantic completeness)	16 (17.0%)	9 (9.6%)	23 (24.5%)	2 (2.1%)	5 (5.3%)	5 (5.3%)	17 (18.1%)	78 (83%)
Paraphrasing (lexical dissimilarity)	4 (4.3%)	8 (8.5%)	8 (8.5%)	22 (23.4%)	8 (8.5%)	7 (7.4%)	12 (12.8%)	69 (73.4%)

Determining the main topic is a summarising requirement that these students understand as a strength. However, most of them seem to overestimate this skill (highlighted darker grey in Table 4.2). There is a difference, however, between those who have slightly overestimated their skill and those who have mistaken their weakness for strength. The overestimated skills could explain why students experience receiving their first grades at university as ‘a shock and reality check’, as reported by De Geest (2012). According to the findings of this study, they would expect a more positive feedback on their performance.

First-year students’ awareness-raising needs regarding **distinguishing between primary information and supporting detail** in the source text are very diverse. In other words, they tend to both (slightly) overestimate as well as (slightly)

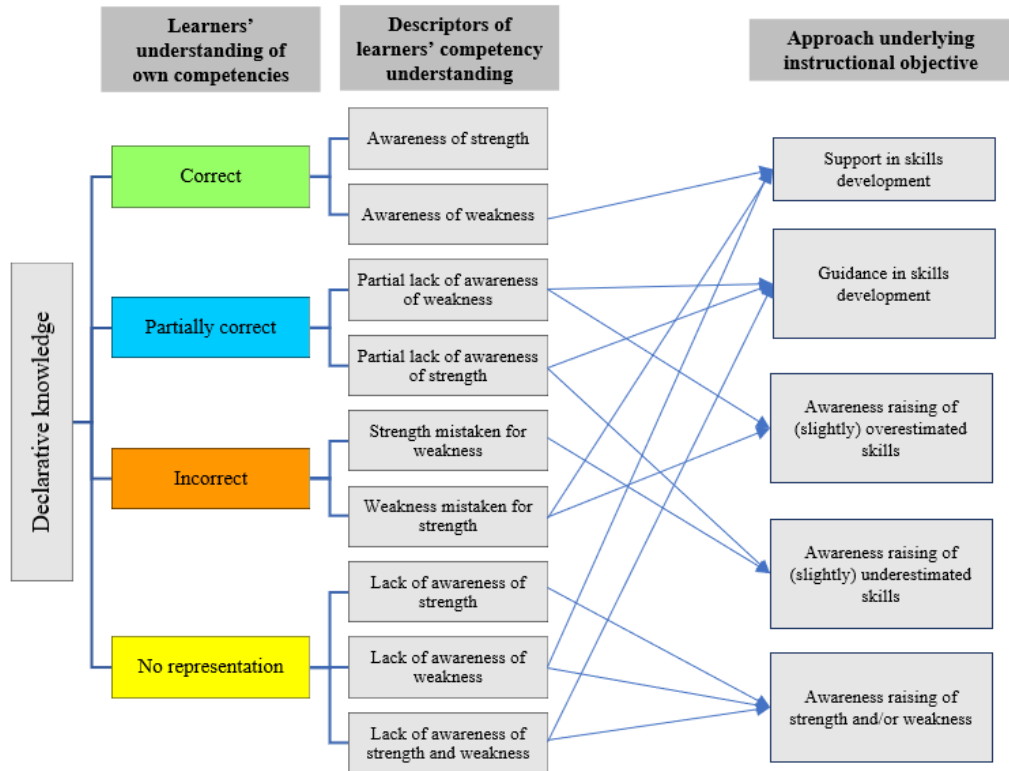
underestimate their own skill. It can be observed however, that many students have mistaken their strength for weakness when it comes to identifying secondary information. There is also a considerable number of them who show lack of awareness with respect to this skill. In the latter case, some of the students also recognised the influence of a number of factors on their perception of difficulty in fulfilling this task requirement.

When looking at **paraphrasing**, students have different awareness-raising needs with respect to their competency to achieve high semantic completeness in their paraphrase of the source text and their ability to use their own words when doing so. Many students with very diverse expectations partially transferred the meaning of the source text in their summaries. At the same time, numerous students used their own words when paraphrasing in order to summarise. Consequently, they need to become aware that not all of them achieved high semantic completeness, judging by their performance on that aspect of paraphrasing. When the students realise that there is a mismatch between their summaries and the text targeted for summarising, they are likely to feel very overwhelmed, as Hyland (2001) describes it. Also, confidence level in being able to use own words when paraphrasing the ideas from a source text is a crucial element having an impact on students' decision to directly quote or paraphrase in textual borrowing practices (Shi, 2008). Accordingly, it is necessary to support first-year students in their paraphrasing skills development and raise their awareness of their improved skills along the way which is likely to increase their confidence, and make the choice between paraphrasing and quoting in summarising less threatening.

4.2.2. From observations to a taxonomy of students' metacognitive awareness of their literacy skills

Based on the presented example of summarising, a prototypical academic writing-through-reading task, it can be observed that first-year students' metacognitive awareness of their academic literacy skills in English as a foreign language is multi-dimensional. Students' understanding of their own competencies and the descriptors thereof are classified and displayed in Figure 4.1. Each of the descriptors of learners' understanding of own competencies points at the connection between learners' perceived and actual strengths and weaknesses in their competencies. For instance, the descriptor *Strength mistaken for weakness* suggests that a student has a skill or a strength which they believe is a weakness.

Figure 4.1. Taxonomy including principles for understanding learners’ declarative knowledge in academic literacy as related to the pedagogical approach in the instructional design



With the aim to support students in problem-solving when they engage in literacy activities, it has been suggested in the literature to make metacognitive instruction ‘a much-valued’ component of literacy instruction (Griffith & Ruan, 2005, p. 12). The above taxonomy can be used to define students’ metacognitive awareness-raising objectives taking into account that each of the awareness dimensions requests to be addressed differently in teaching and learning and thus also in the underlying curriculum design. In case of the above example, related to the descriptor *Strength mistaken for weakness*, a student needs to be made aware of their strength. In the case of the descriptor *Weakness mistaken for strength*, a student not only needs to understand that they overestimate their skill, but also to be additionally supported in that skill development. It is important to

mention that the taxonomy represents an in-depth but not an exhaustive classification of students' understanding of their own competencies presented in Figure 4.1.

In sum, learners' metacognitive knowledge is highly subjective and not always representative of their real competencies (Brown, 1987), as substantiated by the findings of this research. Consequently, students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in EFL, as well as their awareness of their overall academic literacy skills, should be raised in order to help them delineate and correct inaccurate self-knowledge and focus their skills development. In what follows, implications of the present research in that regard will be systematically introduced.

4.3. Implications for foreign language teaching and learning in early HE

4.3.1. Curriculum and syllabus design

Given the wealth of literature on curriculum and syllabus⁶ design in language learning, it is rather challenging to find a straightforward way to describe the theoretical framework in light of which I seek to present the implications of this dissertation. A pathway in rethinking teaching and learning support to bring innovation is not a simple one as it is paved with many considerations. As argued by Weideman (2017), the future of language teaching requires ensuring contextually-appropriate innovation through *eclecticism* or a combination of methods and styles of teaching (see Appendix 8 for the review of Weideman, 2017). Brown (1995) defined *eclecticism* as:

⁶ In this study, curriculum is considered to be a broader concept than syllabus (cf. Nation & Macalister, 2010; Richards, 2001)

the practice of (or belief in) making informed choices among the available approaches, syllabuses, techniques, and exercises in order to adapt to a particular group of students in a particular situation for the purposes of most effectively and efficiently helping them to learn language. (p. 17)

A tradition of innovation in language teaching through *eclecticism* gained momentum after a realisation that ‘there never was and probably will never be a method for all’ (Nunan, 1991, p. 228). In other words, research showed that language students in different domains come across specific tasks, genres and discourse practices which in turn ‘discredited’ a *one-size-fits-all* approach (Long, 2005, p.1). Over the years, continuous innovation in language teaching considerably enhanced the blending possibilities in contemporary language teaching compared to those at the end of the 20th century or earlier. For instance, recent literature is bringing to the fore the benefits of collaborative learning and digital media for foreign language learning (cf. Ludwig & Van de Poel, 2017). Nonetheless, Ludwig and Van de Poel (2017) emphasise the requirement for careful curricular reflections when creating a collaborative learning environment which involves more than technology alone. In sum, innovation in modern language teaching is based on blending from a vast range of methods to teach a topic and careful curricular reflections.

Making informed choices in rethinking teaching and learning support goes together with making responsible choices. The latter implies designing and applying language teaching solutions to the benefit of all involved: the students and the teachers as the main beneficiaries, as well as other stakeholders such as universities, parents, government, scholarship providers, graduate employers, society at large (Van Dyk & Van de Poel, 2013, p. 6). Or, as Brown (2016) states:

A defensible curriculum is one that satisfies most of the language learning and teaching requirements of the students and teachers within the context of the particular institution(s) involved in such a way that it can be successfully defended to and accepted by all stakeholder groups. (p. 4)

Building a defensible curriculum requires different types of analysis. Defining and validating such a curriculum through systematically collecting and analysing all necessary information (e.g., subjective and objective; quantitative and qualitative) from all the relevant stakeholders is referred to as needs analysis (Brown, 1995, p. 36; Brown, 2016, p. 4). In his recent publication, Brown (2016) clarifies that the term needs means ‘so many different things to different people and in different contexts’ (p. 12). A useful distinction between necessities (what the learner has to know to function effectively), lacks (what the learner knows and does not know already) and wants (what the learners think they need) has been made by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). In order to realise a “balance between ‘what is needed’ and ‘what is possible’” (Singh, 1983, p. 156), both the needs of the target group and the constraints arising from the relevant context need to be acknowledged (Brown, 2009; Nation & Macalister, 2010). Investigating constraints in curriculum design refers to examining contextual variables or factors of the learning and teaching environment that can be both positive and negative and can strongly affect the design process (Nation & Macalister, 2010; Purpura & Graziano-King, 2004). For instance, having a highly trained teacher, open and willing to innovation and changes in their teaching, can ease the design by involving that teacher in some aspects of the process. Whereas, limited course time that cannot accommodate necessary changes is a rather negative contextual factor. Nonetheless, analysing and acknowledging constraints is the basis of designing a usable course (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 14) while neglecting these factors can as a result have a detrimental effect on curriculum design. Thus, this feasibility criterion is crucial in the larger picture.

The curriculum design process can start at any of its components, whether needs analysis, constraints or environment analysis, or the evaluation of the usability of the course, and so forth (cf. Nation & Macalister, 2010). It is noteworthy that

the process provides a constant opportunity to re-evaluate the design. A simplified schematic representation of the process can be found in Figure 4.2 below showing the language curriculum design model and its components by Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 3). The authors judged the adequacy of their model by comparing it to other different models of curriculum design to establish to which extent they overlap. They found considerable similarities between the models in terms of components, where their model encompassed all the components of the other observed models or included a few more (cf. Nation & Macalister, 2010, pp. 136–148).

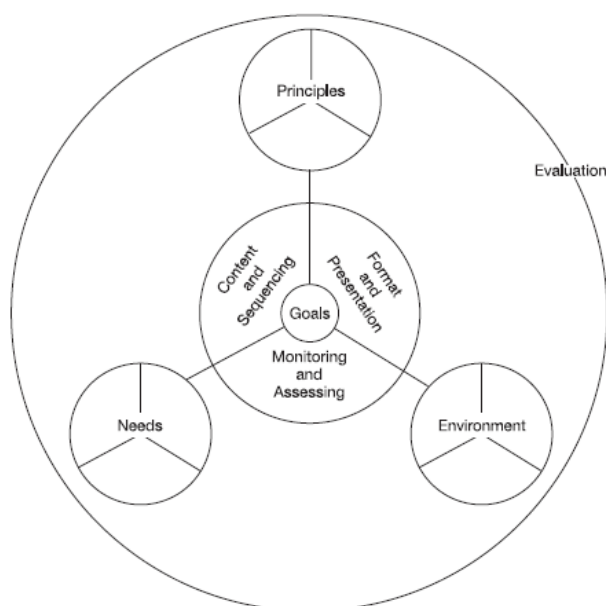


Figure 4.2. A model of the parts of the curriculum design (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p.3)

Considering the above presented requirements for building a defensible curriculum and different steps of language curriculum design, various implications can be drawn from the present research project. These implications will be presented in the following sections, while making a link between the aspects of this research to its corresponding counterpart in language curriculum

design process. I will first foreground the study's implications for supporting junior undergraduates' summarising skills development in EFL followed by suggestions relevant for peer review, both in the present and wider context. Finally, I will present an intervention grounded in the current research approach and argue its benefits for supporting first-year students' academic literacy development in EFL.

4.3.2. Implications for supporting first-year English majors' summarising skills in EFL

Primary implications of the present dissertation are associated to the needs analysis aspect of language curriculum design. The main study of this research project was designed to investigate students' awareness of their summarising skills in EFL and point at their needs thereof. The inspiration to tap into this specific research niche came from the issues identified in the literature which are described in detail and referenced in the Introduction. In sum, the issues that came to the fore are the following:

- students often start university education inadequately prepared in terms of both language and learning skills;
- they do not always understand what the teaching staff is expecting from them in terms of academic writing;
- they experience writing from textual sources as challenging while writing from reading input has been recognised a critical for academic success;
- likewise, basic skills such as summarising and paraphrasing represent a stumbling block for beginner students while considered to be an essential task in EAP.

For many students, starting HE remains challenging because of the enumerated issues.

In this thesis, I approached the above issues from the perspective of action research, a rich concept with different approaches to it. Kemmis and McTaggart (1982), as cited in Nunan (1990, p. 63), define action research as ‘trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching and learning’. The goal of action research is to answer day-to-day, real problems and to bring about immediate change in practice for participants (Given, 2008, p. 4) which can in turn enhance instruction and students’ achievement. Action research is a part of practitioner research which is ‘possibly more *alive and kicking* than ever’ in educational institutions and universities worldwide (Ludwig et al., 2017, p. 3).

The main investigation of this thesis was preceded by an exploratory research phase in which first-year English majors’ were interviewed about their perceptions of academic reading after three months at the University of Antwerp. Students’ metacognitive awareness-raising needs in academic reading in EFL are presented in Table 4.3. These results are immediately relevant for the present context in which students are often not explicitly guided in assigned academic reading (Brunfaut, 2008). The results can be used to inform the changes in the existing curriculum by catering to students’ awareness-raising needs in procedures and outcomes underlying effective and efficient academic reading. Moreover, they can be used as a rationale for designing a form of systematic training and practice in specific procedures if the students are to gain efficiency in reading textbooks and academic texts in general. As reading is one of the most important skills for acquiring language and accessing the wealth of information recorded exclusively in the language (Eskey, 2005, p. 563), it is important that students are properly guided in becoming better readers from the very beginning of HE.

Table 4.3. First-year English majors’ perceived metacognitive awareness-raising needs of their academic reading in EFL

<i>Academic reading</i>	Metacognitive awareness-raising needs	
	Declarative knowledge	Procedural knowledge
<i>Strategic approach</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading academic texts extensively • Planning the reading activity • Identifying the goal of the reading activity • Adjusting reading techniques to the purpose
<i>Outcome orientation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing-to-read • Reading-to-learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing to support reading • Reading to inform and support academic literacy development

In the main study, I identified a discrepancy between students expectations and performance with regard to the summarising task requirements in EFL. An in-depth investigation of this discrepancy showed that junior undergraduates’ awareness of their summarising skills in EFL is multi-layered, i.e. they start HE with varied understanding or lack of understanding of their skills. In line with the *discrepancy* philosophy in needs analysis (cf. Brown 1995, p. 38), the discrepancies are seen as needs that have to be addressed. In Table 4.4, the needs are presented per summarising task requirement in terms of both students’ awareness raising needs and related underlying issues in their task performance.

Table 4.4. Overview of first-year English majors’ awareness raising needs in summarising in EFL

Summarising task requirements	Perceived skills (person knowledge)	Performance issues (task knowledge)
Determining the main topic	Slightly overestimated Overestimated	- Not stated in the first sentence of the summary; - Meaning from the source text partially captured; - Misunderstood, interpreted rather than summarised, or left out;
Identifying primary information	Slightly overestimated Slightly underestimated Lack of awareness of: - Strength - Strength and weakness	- Decontextualized (link with the main topic missing); - Inaccurately identified or missing;
Identifying secondary information	Slightly overestimated Overestimated Slightly underestimated Lack of awareness of: - Strength - Weakness	- Some unnecessary details present in the summary; - Secondary information not filtered out from the summary;
Paraphrasing (semantic completeness)	Slightly overestimated Overestimated Slightly underestimated Lack of awareness of strength and weakness	- No alternative wording for some of the author’s main expressions; - Predominant use of author’s wording;
Paraphrasing (lexical dissimilarity)	Underestimated Lack of awareness of: - Strength - Strength and weakness	- Meaning of the source text partially captured; - Mismatch in meaning between the source text and student’s summary.

First and foremost, the identified needs can inform the existing language curriculum in the context where this research took place, i.e. the Faculty of Arts at the University of Antwerp. It is deemed appropriate to address these needs since students are otherwise likely to continue to develop their academic literacy skills with an inappropriate awareness of their own competencies from the very start of HE and from the core academic literacy skill such as summarising. In line with Brown’s (1995) goals and objectives formulation guidelines, two broad goals can be formulated based on the identified students’ needs:

By the end of the unit on summarising in EFL, the students should be able to:

1. define with accuracy their strengths and weaknesses in summarising.
2. formulate objectives with regard to improving their summarising skills.

When mapped onto the summarising task requirements presented in this research project, the above two broad goals could be operationalised through the following more precise and observable instructional objectives:

By the end of the unit on summarising in EFL, the students should be able to tag the following requirements in summarising as their a) strength or b) weakness:

1. Determining the main point;
2. Identifying primary information;
3. Identifying secondary information;
4. Paraphrasing in own words;

Based on their identified strengths and weaknesses with regard to the summarising task requirements, the students should be able to formulate objectives with regard to improving their summarising skills.

The goals and objectives could supplement the already existing ones which are formulated with the focus on enabling the students to perform the above-mentioned requirements (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007) leading to the following complete overview:

Studying the reflection tasks and text examples in this chapter will enable you to:

1. Filter information (primary vs. secondary);
2. Recognise structure in texts;
3. Use summary for review and exam purposes.

(Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007, p. 25)

By engaging in the self-reflection exercises integrated in the summarising task, you should be able to tag the following requirements in summarising as your a) strength or b) weakness:

1. Determining the main point;
2. Identifying primary information;
3. Identifying secondary information;
4. Paraphrasing in own words;

Based on your identified strengths and weaknesses, you should be able to formulate objectives with regard to improving your summarising skills.

The take-home messages in this study show that, at the end of the summarising task which involves completing self-reflection exercises and engaging in peer review, first-year students are likely to gain a better understanding of their skills. They can clearly formulate the challenges they should address with regard to their skills development, come to relevant conclusions regarding task demands, and refer to the value of the gained skills, as the following examples corroborate:

- (1) I have to try harder to rephrase the sentences and write them in my own words.
- (2) I have to read more carefully and with more attention. At first I kind of misread it so my first summary was completely incorrect.
- (3) I need to use more linking words. I am also happy that I learned how to summarise texts, this will come in handy during the exams.

In line with the above goals and objectives, suggestions can be made for consideration of introducing changes into the course materials, namely in the writing scale used as a guiding tool for the summarising task (described in Chapter 3). The questions which are part of the scale and relate to the task criteria can be enriched with the gained insights regarding students' task knowledge presented in the third column of Table 4.4 above. The aim is to help students better assess their own mastery of the task at hand, focus their skills development and perfect their knowledge. The distinction can be made with regard to receptive and productive skills to reflect the integrated reading/writing nature of the task. The suggested changes are presented in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5. Suggested changes to the *All Write* writing scale

Summarising task criteria	Existing question	Added question	Additional aspect
1. Topic	Have I identified the topic in my first sentence?	- Have I acknowledged the author(s) of the source text?	- Requirement for acknowledging the source made more explicit;
2. Main information	Have I identified the main ideas of the original text?	- Have I captured the meaning of the main ideas from the original text in my summary? - Have I done so in the context of the main topic?	- Distinction made between receptive and productive skills in the task; - Ideas in the summary connected to reflect the connections made in the source text.
3. Secondary information	Have I identified what is secondary information?	- Have I left unnecessary detail out of my summary?	- Distinction made between receptive and productive skills in the task;
4. Wording	Have I rephrased the information in my own words?	- Have I done so by finding alternative wording for authors' expressions? - Have I retained specific terminology from the source text? - Have I captured the meaning of the paraphrased sentence?	- Distinction made between lexical similarity and semantic completeness; - In lexical similarity, distinction made between general and subject-specific wording.

The overall presented changes provide students with a reading and writing checklist for summarising based on which they can review their own and their peer's summary with more focus on additional aspects of the task criteria. The proposed changes have been based on the gained insights into students' (under)performance on the summarising task (detailed in Chapter 4) and formulated with an awareness-raising aim.

The implications regarding the last two criteria from the scale, namely signalling words and final sentence, are treated separately. These two criteria seem to have caused uncertainties in students due to a short text excerpt that they had to summarise (see more in Chapter 3). In particular, when these criteria were missing in their peer's summary which was quite short, students were uncertain

as to how to approach peer review in that situation. Accordingly, a suggestion can be made to take the two criteria out of the writing scale. This suggestion is based on the fact that linking words, which include many signalling words, are treated in detail in the course book in a later chapter and can be more explicit in that part of the materials. Also, one of the added questions in Table 4.5. refers to the importance of the connections between ideas in the text (third question from the top in the third column). The same suggestion can be made regarding the final sentence criterion. Since it is presented to the students as optional when summarising a short source text, which is the case in this context, the scale draws attention to this criterion and seems to create uncertainties in students. An alternative change would be to make use of a longer text excerpt as an input text for summarising in the present context.

4.3.3. Implications for peer review in academic literacy skills development in EFL

Peer review is a frequent activity in HE settings and a prominent feature of process-oriented writing instruction (Rouhi & Azizian, 2013) and fostering students' capabilities for critical thinking and self evaluation (Wood & Kurzel, 2008). It has been suggested that, by participating in peer review, students have an opportunity to be introduced to an evaluative and more critical type of review such as peer-assessment and marking by the teacher in a less-threatening manner (Wood & Kurzel, 2008). Nonetheless, pitfalls of peer review have also been discussed in the literature. For instance, when feedback is given by students in need of feedback, they tend to develop a dislike of peer review (Brammer & Rees, 2007). This is a particularly unfavourable starting-point for first-year students who bring to the process a complex variety of beliefs. Although peer review was not the primary focus of the present study, it was a part of the summarising task that the students had to complete. The leading implication, stemming from students' self-reflections on the peer-review task phase, is that

many students consider themselves to be insufficiently proficient to engage in peer review at the beginning of HE. In other words, the findings of this study confirm that it is essential that peer review is introduced to the students in a proper manner.

This implication is directly important for peer review in the context of a summarising task. As ‘two sides of the same coin’, when students agree on how they processed information from the source text, they regard reviewing the related criteria in their peer’s text as easy and vice versa. Briefly, it is important to notice that this difficult/easy dichotomy is mostly related to the part of the task focused on receptive skills, i.e. processing information from the source text. For a teacher who seeks to avoid pitfalls of peer review by introducing the process to their students, it might be of value to raise students’ awareness that it is likely that their peer’s performance can be similar to that of their own or different. Instead of sparking an uncertainty, the teacher can explain that this difference in task completion can be used as grounds for an inspiring discussion over specific task requirements. By engaging in such a discussion with their peer, students can only become more aware of task requirements and identify areas where they need additional guidance from their teacher. Furthermore, teachers could consider engaging students in collaborative writing which promotes reflective thinking and knowledge pooling, as indicated by the research (cf. Elola & Oskoz, 2010, Lin & Maarof, 2013).

In addition, the above implication is relevant for peer review in any other task where students will review a text which is likely different from that of their own (e.g., supporting an argument, synthesising information from multiple sources). In order to improve classroom practice by overcoming the above presented dichotomy in students’ experiences of peer review, it might be effective to organise a group peer review in supporting students’ academic literacy skills development. Since one of the major constraints in curriculum design is limited

contact time, having larger groups of peers working together is likely to render the process less efficient and more difficult to manage in university classroom settings (quite often large auditoriums to accommodate numerous first-year EFL students). Nonetheless, a group of at least 3 students would allow for each one of them to have an insight in at least two peers' summaries. By doing this, the students are likely to be exposed to different work by their peers and become more aware of themselves and their peers in this context. In other words, their declarative knowledge —their person knowledge encompassing their beliefs about themselves and other people as cognitive processors, and an understanding of interindividual differences (Flavell, 1979)— would additionally be informed. Moreover, the review threshold could be additionally lowered, a consequence that first-students certainly can benefit from.

4.3.4. Bridging the gap between students' interpretation of academic literacy demands and teachers' expectations

Another need that requires to be addressed in the present context is a gap identified between teachers' expectations and students' interpretations of those expectations (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2013): teachers who assume students' familiarity with the conventions of academic discourse do not always explain what they expect from the students. In turn, students who are rather unacquainted with the said conventions, encounter difficulties in interpreting academic discourse demands. The findings of this study indicate that self-reflection exercises generate helpful information to bridge this gap. The benefits for the students have been presented above. Besides, students' reflections gathered through self-reflection training can be used to help teachers to better grasp students' needs and understanding of the course demands. As 'the academic prose of students is a reflection of the gap between secondary and post-secondary contexts' (Guinda & Hyland, 2012, p. 6), better understanding first-year English majors' summarising skills in EFL can be beneficial not only for university but

also secondary education teachers. From an action research perspective, teachers can make use of self-reflection exercises as a tool for gaining knowledge about students' experiences of course content, and enhance their teaching and learning, which are recognised objectives of action research (cf. Given, 2008; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982; Ludwig et al., 2017).

The self-reflection output can be used as input for awareness' raising feedback for the students with respect to task criteria, course content that triggers uncertainties, and peer-review processes, as elaborated upon above. Since first-year of university studies comprises a large number of students whose tasks are not always graded in the present nor in the wider context, this feedback can be an added value in supporting students' academic literacy skills and learning skills development. After looking into students' performance on a particular task, teachers can identify students' struggles and competencies, as well as assess students' awareness of their own skills, and design support and instruction accordingly. As Long (2005) points out, 'discussions of perceived and/or actual needs among teachers and students can also raise the level of awareness of both parties as to why they are doing what they are doing' (p. 26). This would be an ideal but likely less feasible procedure in providing feedback to the numerous students enrolled in the first year of university. Since the first-year courses count often more than a hundred students, it is not easy to provide individual feedback to each student. Consequently, if feasible, this could be done on a number of core tasks of the course while the rest of the tasks and exercises can rely on group feedback. In sum, teachers' feedback is important as it will help students both in monitoring their own progress and identifying areas that need to be improved (Hedge, 2000).

The summarising task handout used for the purpose of this dissertation which illustrates how self-reflection exercises were integrated in the task is given in Appendix 4. The handout has been condensed into a template that can be used

for designing self-reflection exercises for other academic literacy tasks (see Figure 4.3). In the template, square brackets are used to indicate where the content of the template needs to be adapted for another skills-based task, representative of a problem-solving activity that integrates reading and writing apart from summarising. The template further indicates in which phases of the task self-reflection exercises should be embedded, namely pre-task phase, post-peer-review activity, and post-task reflections after students rewrite their text. The template can be used as an awareness-raising tool for students with respect to their competencies, and for teachers with respect to students' competencies and understanding of the course materials.

1. PRE-TASK REFLECTIONS

- For this assignment, you will have to [Task].
- How easy/difficult do you expect it will be to fulfil the following requirements in this assignment?
- Please highlight the appropriate response.

1. [Task requirement]	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
2. [Task requirement]	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
...	

- Try to formulate some of the challenges you expect to face in the comment box below.

Comments:

2. [TASK] (Draft)

- [Instruction]
- [Textual input]
- [Reference to course materials provided as support]

3. PEER REVIEW

- Exchange your text with your peer.
- Take [Time] to review each other's text on the given task requirements. Highlight problems.
- Discuss your reviews.
- Please fill in the peer review reflections below.

4. PEER-REVIEW REFLECTIONS

- How easy/difficult was it for you to evaluate your peer's text according to the following criteria?
- Please highlight the appropriate response and add comments.

1. [Task requirement/criteria]	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
2. [Task requirement/criteria]	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
...	

Comments:

5. REWRITE

- [Instruction]

6. POST-TASK REFLECTIONS

- Please, respond to the following statements.
 1. I have [task requirement]
 2. I have [task requirement]

...

- Please formulate a take-home message.

What I learned from this assignment and/or the peer review process:

Figure 4.3. Template for scaffolding self-reflection exercises in an academic literacy task

4.3.5. Self-reflection intervention as a support vehicle for academic literacy development in EFL

Originally, making self-reflection exercises part of a task intended to serve as an approach to investigating students' awareness of their summarising skills in EFL. Nevertheless, based on the valuable insights generated by taking this approach, I propose an intervention in which self-reflection is seen as a support vehicle for academic literacy development in EFL and teaching the ways and processes of learning. Put differently, I would like to bring another approach to the fore relevant for innovation in language teaching in HE through eclecticism. The approach is grounded in a number of steps in curriculum and syllabus design.

As defined in the Introduction (section 1.4.2), self-reflection is an act of self-conscious consideration and evaluation that can raise one's awareness of oneself and others in specific social settings, and in turn change one's thought or behaviour (cf. Bandura, 1986, p. 21; Danielewicz, 2001, pp. 155–156). Promoting students' reflective thinking 'as a route to optimal learning' gained on importance but there are still few examples of its practical application (Granville & Dison, 2005, pp. 99–100). In the local context, self-reflection intervention was applied to the language curriculum as follows:

- The training became an **integral part of the academic literacy course in EFL** that students followed in the first term of their university studies at the University of Antwerp.
- The content of the course was presented as a **skills-based syllabus**, i.e. the materials are ordered around six academic literacy skills, namely writing for an audience, writing a summary, constructing, structuring and supporting an argument, and writing an essay (cf. Van de Poel & Gasiorek 2007; 2012a). The skills are sequenced in such a way that each newly introduced skill builds-up on the previously introduced ones.

- Self-reflection exercises were **embedded in the in-class writing-through-reading assignments** representative of the aforementioned six academic literacy skills that the students had to complete over a three-month period as a part of the course.
- The students engaged in **self-reflection in three stages per assignment** and reflected on task requirements from different angles (explained in detail in Chapter 3).
- **The combination techniques** (Likert scale items and open-ended narratives) within the self-reflection exercises yielded a rich reflection output in terms of valuable insights into students' thinking and experiences regarding a typical academic literacy activity (summarising) at the beginning of their HE.

The self-reflection intervention described above is grounded in careful curricular considerations. In language curriculum design and having adopted the feasibility criterion introduced above, an existing course can either be modified or a new course can be developed (cf. Brown, 1995; Nation & Macalister, 2010). Modification of existing courses is often considered to be the most frequent starting point in curriculum design (Nation & Macalister, 2010). In other words, developers will focus on adapting only those aspects of the course that need innovation or change (Nation & Macalister, 2010, pp. 141–142). In the present context specifically, each skill is presented to the students through a number of online reflection and in-class reinforcement exercises. However, students are not explicitly required to step down from the literacy activity they are engaged in and reflect about their competencies regarding that activity. In order to become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses with regard to a specific task, the students need to be engaged in a specific learning experience (Granville & Dison, 2005). That means that they both engage in high-level cognitive activities as well as stand back and oversee the thinking process related to these activities (Tishman, Perkins & Jay, 1995, p. 67). Moreover, as Granville and Dison (2005) suggest, 'different types of learning situations produce different orders of

reflection' and more significant results of reflection can be achieved if the students are 'immersed' in a particular learning experience over a period of time rather than generally reflecting and commenting about the course content (p. 100). As a consequence, self-reflection exercises were added to all writing-through-reading assignments that the students had to complete within the course. Since the course took 12 weeks, the tasks together with the self-reflection exercises were completed every second week as a final learning phase on a specific skill. The output of this approach is deemed to be a valuable input for raising students awareness of their skills and of underlying principles of peer review. Moreover, teachers can also become aware of their students' competencies and experiences of presented materials. The insights gained can be used to inform the changes in the curriculum that seeks to design opportunities for students to better understand their strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills and direct their skills development accordingly.

Although this research project is very localised, the present context shares many common points with other university settings in terms of the need for additional support of students' academic literacy skills development in a foreign language. Students' lack of awareness of their skills in summarising identified in this dissertation provide a glimpse into students' complex understanding of their competencies at the beginning of HE which is one of the reasons why it is challenging for them to advance in their academic literacy skills. Teachers who seek to help their students to engage with academic discourse can consider introducing the self-reflection intervention described above in their language teaching. Moreover, since reading/writing integration is a commonplace across various academic settings and critical for academic success (Ferris, 2009; Grabe & Zhang, 2013b; Hirvela, 2004), academic literacy courses are highly likely to have skills- or task-based syllabi. Such contexts are favourable for applying the above mentioned intervention to their course content, the benefits of which have

been presented throughout this chapter. Moreover, the aim of embedding self-reflection training into typical academic literacy tasks does not only aim to support students' academic literacy skills development through integrated reading and writing but also to encourage them to actively embrace a learning strategy after being exposed to it over a longer period of time (i.e. the duration of the course).

A lack of learner autonomy in the students of linguistics and literature at the University of Antwerp was pointed at in a study by Ruelens, Van deneynde and Vermandere (2017). As suggested by Ruelens and Vulovic (2018), integrating self-reflection in the course content can serve as a first step in empowering the students to take more responsibility in their academic literacy skills development (see more in Appendix 7). Students with a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses as learners and of the demands of the specific tasks are identified as more skilful in academic self-regulation (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006, p. 39). This can be done by embedding self-reflection training in the first-year academic literacy course, as outlined above, and self-regulation training in the follow-up second-year academic literacy course (cf. Ruelens & Vulovic, 2018). In both phases, the students engage in reflection exercises with a different focus. The first-year students identify the challenges that they experience while completing common academic literacy tasks that helped them to focus their skills development. The second-year participants first identify their weaknesses with regard to the skills practised in an assignment and formulate objectives; subsequently, they reflect on what they had learned, what they still wanted to learn, and whether they had attained their objectives for that assignment. The gradual build-up of the reported intervention seems to cater for both the students' language and learning needs (as identified in Van de Poel & Gasiorek 2012a).

4.3.6. Implications for support design

In order to address first-year students' academic literacy needs which are diverse, as shown in this study on the delineated and specific skill of summarising, it is necessary to design support that can cater for those complex needs rather than *one-size-fits-all* support. Figure 4.4 presents a holistic approach to enhancing first-year students' academic literacy skills. In other words, the model suggests supporting students' writing from textual resources as a context-dependent technique by relying largely on the existing course design, complementing it with additional guidance and support materials, and giving an appropriate degree of responsibility to all the students and their teacher.

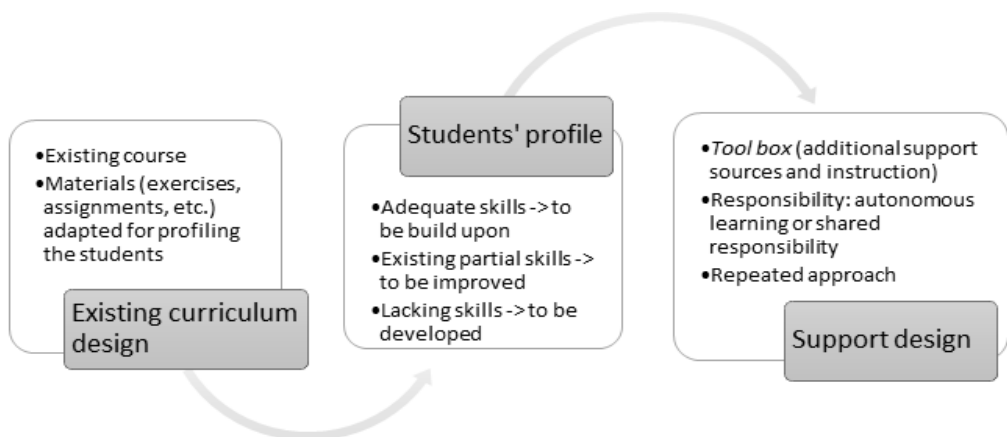


Figure 4.4. An approach to designing support of first-year students' academic literacy skills

In the approach, the existing course materials are used to identify the challenges in students' academic literacy skills in order to profile them and to inform the design of the support. For instance, course exercises and assignments that integrate reading and writing can be adapted for investigating students' receptive and productive skills rather than be used for the sole purpose of assessment and final grading. Once their skills profile has been established, students' awareness of the identified challenges should be raised. The awareness-raising phase should consist of providing the students with general feedback on their skills,

complemented with a *toolbox* with additional support sources and instruction on how to use it. The design of the *toolbox* largely depends on the needs of the students and contextual factors such as available course materials, available classroom size and time, as well as previewed study time at home and online. The students should make use of their *toolbox* to take a critical look at their own work (and that of their peers). They can, for instance, engage in self-reflection exercises on their work, followed by peer review and discussion, to finally look back at their own work with a better focus on their skills and more aware of the additional support sources. Finally, this support requires that every student takes part in the process and critically engages with their text and that of their peer.

The importance of the development of learner autonomy —learner’s ability to take responsibility for their learning process— has been widely recognised (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). In higher education, the students are expected ‘to manage their learning and acquire academic literacy independently’ (Wingate, 2007, p. 392). As Fazey and Fazey (2001) point out, the students starting tertiary education have the potential to be autonomous learners, but it is the responsibility of the teacher to enhance the supporting metacognitive skills. Accordingly, the suggested model requires from the students to take responsibility for their skills development after the awareness-raising phase. It is important to make the expected autonomous-learning aspect of students’ skills development explicit to the students. Also, students’ awareness of the challenges in their skills is crucial in assuming responsibility of their own skills development. Based on the complexity of the challenge that they are facing, it could be expected from the students either to grasp the issues regarding their skills with a limited involvement from the teacher and to autonomously work towards the improvement of those skills, or to engage in more reflection and seek more peer/teacher assistance in developing the skills that are lacking.

Eventually, consistently applying this approach throughout the course should not only support students' reading and writing skills development, but also create an interactive learning space based on awareness raising, peer-collaboration, teacher consultation leading to more responsible and autonomous undergraduates.

4.4. Limitations of the present and recommendations for future research

4.4.1. Limitations

There are several limitations of this research. First, in the exploratory study, attention was paid to meeting all the necessary preconditions for receiving genuine answers from the students during the interview session. Even if the collected focus group responses show a variety of opinions, the possibility exists that students did not always express their thoughts and views honestly, especially if their thoughts were opposed to those of their peers – a limitation which is inherent in focus group discussions. However, the data collected in the separate groups show consistency in students' responses and allow to make appropriate observations about students' perceptions. Another limitation of the exploratory study, methodological in nature, is that focus group discussions were not audio- and/or video-recorded next to taking field notes by the moderators. This decision was based on the goal of the exploratory study which was to generate an inventory of what students perceive as important factors for reading academic texts and integrating reading and writing, and subsequently to narrow down the focus of the main study. In addition, the moderators were trained to deal with the aspects of focus groups which are recognised as their inherent limitations such as outspoken individuals who are likely to dominate the discussion. The moderators notes showed both different and similar views of the students.

One of the limitations of the main study could be the choice of the short text excerpt for the summarising task. First, it is an excerpt of a newspaper article and therefore not per se an academic text (although it is making use of academic style, vocabulary and argumentation). Further, it is a short text (shorter than students would normally be confronted with for study purposes later in their study), even though it contains all the elements of a complete text. My decision to use this text was based on several considerations. I first took into account the goal of the study which was to look at first-year students' perceived and actual strengths and weaknesses in their summarizing skills in EFL, and the relationship between them, in order to be able to identify their awareness-raising needs. As every needs analysis is contextualized and has to be as feasible as possible, I decided to use the excerpt that the students summarise in the present academic context, given that it should be dealt with within the given time constraints. Despite these limitations, I specified in the implications section, how the insights gained are relevant for different texts and wider contexts and thus can inform students' academic literacy development and the required curriculum and syllabus design. The selection of this short extract from the *New York Times* was further supported by some of the students' responses in the exploratory study, stating that an indication of their understating of a text is their ability to form their own opinion about the text, or agree or disagree with the expressed opinion. I therefore estimated that it would be valuable to gain a better understanding of the students' ability to summarise an opinion in their own words. Furthermore, I estimated that summarizing this short text excerpt by paraphrasing the expressed ideas was representative of the task requirements that the students have to fulfil when engaging in more advanced writing tasks such as synthesizing information from multiple sources and that it would provide information of the categories required to be considered to improve the

instructional design for academic literacy development as exemplified in the case of summarising.

Making use of a marking rubric to rate students' summaries may always leave room for subjectivity in the marking procedure. Although the marking rubric used in the main study was designed to provide a clear outline of the criteria on which the performance was judged and the descriptors to the rating scale, the subjectivity in marking might pose limitations on the main study and, more specifically, the investigation regarding students' actual summarising skills in EFL.

A limitation related to both exploratory and main study lays in the nature of the sample, which is very localised: first-year Dutch-speaking students majoring in English at the same university. In other words, the conclusions of this study apply primarily to first-year English majors at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (University of Antwerp). However, observations that have been made are highly relevant to other first-year students studying English as a foreign language in a non-native speaker context and can be further investigated in situ.

4.4.2. Recommendations for future research

This dissertation is exploratory in nature and it forwards several recommendations for further research. First, in order to draw a complete taxonomy of first-year English majors' awareness of their academic literacy skills in EFL at university of Antwerp, it would be relevant to analyse the data collected from other skills-based tasks (e.g., supporting an argument) in the course. This would particularly ratify the results of the present investigation by shedding more light on students' complex understanding of their academic literacy skills in EFL. In addition, insights relevant for peer-review process and course materials related to other observed academic literacy skills next to summarising can be gained. Moreover, it is worthwhile replicating the study in

other contexts in which teachers are looking for ways to support their academic literacy skills development in the second and foreign language. The above intervention can be applied to the course seeking to a) provide insights into first-year students' perceptions of specific task requirements from various angles; b) identify their awareness raising needs in a foreign or second language; and c) inform curriculum innovation.

Second, the approach taken in this study has yielded valuable information regarding students' experiences and their understanding of the presented content. As explained above, gained insights provide a solid basis for designing group and individual feedback. However, such a feedback was given in the present context only after students finalised the summarising task. In other words, the students did not have an opportunity to incorporate the given feedback in their rewritten task. It would, therefore, be worthwhile replicating this study including a control and treatment group where the latter group of students would be provided with the feedback on their identified challenges and experiences before they would rewrite their text at home. The aim would be to examine the difference in performance between the two groups in terms of value that feedback grounded on students' reflections has on their performance. In case that students in the treatment group perform better than those in the control group, the approach could be used to overcome the challenge in grading a large number of students' written text in the first year of HE by providing feedback that has an impact on students' performance. It would also be interesting to analyse if students' expectations with regard to task requirements become better aligned to their performance on those requirements as they advance in the self-reflection training.

Third, and related to the above recommendation, analysing data for the purposes of feedback is still time consuming, especially if a teacher has to grade a considerable number of written tasks. Consequently, this provides an

opportunity to refine the approach and innovate from the perspective of time efficiency. For instance, in this study, students' reflections from the pre-task and after peer-review phase were collected in-class and on paper, while their post-task reflections were submitted online via the university's learning platform. As a consequence, a considerable amount of data collected in class had to be imported into an analytical and statistical tool such as Microsoft Excel. In order to economise on time spent in importing the data, it would be interesting to consider how to add computer-assisted component to the self-reflection training.

This study does not pretend to provide theoretical and practical guidelines for the ultimate design for raising first-year students' awareness of their summarising skills in EFL and that way supporting them in their academic literacy development. It is to be hoped, however, that some of the findings reported in this dissertation inspire replication in other contexts where similar issues have been identified. Making use of the suggestions made in the sections above, 'better-conducted needs analyses, after all, will enhance the quality of language teaching programs based upon them and, thereby, success rates for language learners' (Long, 2005, p. 12). Based on the presented findings, I cannot make claims that the drawn implications for change and innovation will yield desired results, but I can speculate that will be the case.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

To conclude this dissertation, I will first summarise the findings of this research project (section 5.1) by systematically providing answers to the research questions formulated in the Introduction. Next, I will briefly refer to the overall discussion of the findings (section 5.2), immediately following up with a summary of the teaching and learning implications as well as the implications for language curriculum and syllabus design (section 5.3). Lastly, based on the findings and acknowledged limitations of this study, I will recapitulate the recommendations for future research (5.4).

5.1. Summary of the findings

This thesis contributes to our understanding of applied linguistics in two ways. On the one hand, it studied some of the aspects of academic literacy development in EFL, more in particular summarising as a foundational component of integrated reading and writing in an academic setting. On the other hand, it considered problem-solving in the area of syllabus design taking into account the nature and approach of potential academic reading and writing support. In other words, the aim of this dissertation was to gain an insight into students' metacognitive awareness of their academic literacy skills in EFL at the start of HE and, more in particular, identify their awareness-raising needs as part of their academic syllabus. I have adopted the perspective that reading and writing are

central literacy practices through which knowledge about a specific discipline is being acquired (cf. Lea & Street, 1998, p. 157), and through which acculturation into the discipline’s discourse conventions can be acquired (cf. Van Dyk & Van de Poel 2013). Visual representation of the considerations underlying this thesis is provided in Figure 5.1.

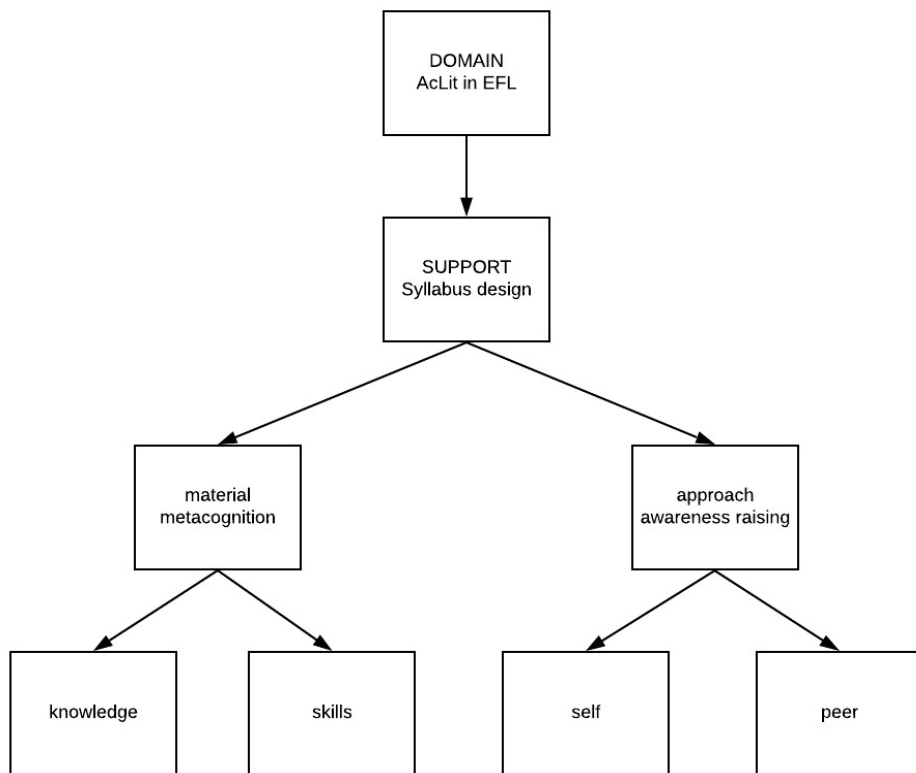


Figure 5.1. Visual representation of the theoretical framework underlying this thesis

The dissertation consists of an exploratory and a main study which have addressed the following overarching research question:

RQ What is first-year English majors’ metacognitive awareness of their academic literacy skills in English as a foreign language?

In order to answer the above question, several sub-questions were formulated. Below, I will systematically provide answers per sub-question and then answer the overarching RQ.

5.1.1. Exploratory study

RQ 1 What characterises first-year English majors' **perceived** metacognitive awareness of their academic reading?

After three months at university, first-year English majors can identify the declarative and procedural requirements for academic reading (as a preliminary activity for writing) to a limited and rather basic extent. More specifically, students can indeed delineate some of the factors and procedures that have a high impact on their academic reading performance. Two components stand out: students recognise knowledge of academic vocabulary as a highly important component for their academic reading comprehension, but indicate extensive reading as the most contributing procedure in that respect. Both knowledge of academic vocabulary and extensive reading have been recognised in the literature as the most influential on academic reading comprehension (cf. Alderson, 1984, 2000; Eskey, 2005; Grabe 2009; Nuttall, 1982; Schmitt et al., 2011). However, even if they acknowledge the influence of extensive reading on their vocabulary and general knowledge, students do not seem to actively practise it. Put differently, despite their awareness of some of the requirements in academic literacy development, students seem to lack practice in the acknowledged procedures which could be the consequence of not being motivated enough or pointed in the right direction. This provides a rationale for drawing a discrepancy model and informing academic literacy development of first-year EFL students.

While acknowledging the above factors and procedures, the students show a lack of awareness of other relevant contributors to their academic reading. This

becomes clear when delving deeper into students' knowledge and noticing that they are not fully aware of subject-specific terminology, such as the concept of academic genre. Academic genre represents the principles and regularities of language in use and academic discourse conventions (Hyland, 2006, pp. 46–64). The structure and organisation of academic texts has a considerable influence on reading comprehension (Alderson, 2000; Grabe, 2002; Hyland, 2009). Even though students recognise the importance of academic genre knowledge for their reading comprehension, they do so only after the term has been explained to them. Moreover, the importance of identifying the main point when analysing a text is more explicitly acknowledged once students are specifically asked about it. In the context of reading, however, students' awareness of the factors that might affect reading ability is representative of their declarative knowledge (Cross & Paris, 1988). Since many of the EFL students will become teachers or, will generally be expected to function as experts in EFL in the labour market, they have to be able to approach language at a (meta)cognitive level, think analytically and be aware of specific terminology. Furthermore, the main strategies that first-year students use for various reading purposes, such as text comprehension and analysis, are predominantly in line with summarising and paraphrasing. However, students display a lack of procedural knowledge as they do not refer to other reading techniques and strategies recognised as important for purposeful and efficient reading practice such as skimming, scanning and predicting, and fail to mention evaluation of arguments and supporting evidence for the purposes of critical reading (cf. Grabe, 2009). Consequently, first-year students in EFL need more knowledge of factors and procedures that are important for reading textbooks and academic texts in general, to be able to better regulate their skills development.

Another important finding is that, after three months at university, students perceive themselves as better prepared for academic writing than academic

reading. They recognise the importance of reading for academic writing and to some extent for academic success, even though they persist with inefficient reading habits such as reading just before the deadline, reading without recapitulating. However, they do not seem aware that writing can improve their reading comprehension. Students' responses do, however, reflect that academic reading (receptive skills) and writing (productive skills) are integrated in an academic literacy development context and should be examined as such in order to inform (potential) support design.

Consequently, this study confirms the earlier findings that instructional contexts that develop students' academic literacy should place more emphasis on academic reading as one of the most contributing factors to academic success (Grabe & Zhang, 2013a; Van Dyk et al., 2013). Making reading instruction (more) explicit is of importance for raising students' awareness of learning to write from reading input and of themselves as academic readers. Moreover, it is critical to support the students in establishing routines for reading extensively, frequently and purposefully from the very beginning of HE.

5.1.2. Main study

Since first-year students identify summarising and paraphrasing as the primary skills for the purpose of academic reading comprehension and source text analysis, I investigated their summarising skills in EFL in more detail. The end goal was to gain insights into junior undergraduates' skills in writing from reading input through a representative task, i.e. summarising, as well as gain insights with respect to their awareness of their own summarising skills. The main study was designed to address research questions 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 as formulated in the Introduction, which will be answered separately in the following paragraphs.

RQ 2.1 What are first-year English majors' **perceived** strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in English as a foreign language?

Overall, first-year English majors perceive processing information from a source text challenging, except for determining the main topic which they perceive as their strength. They do not expect this last requirement to be difficult to fulfil when summarising a text nor when reviewing a peer's text. However, distinguishing primary from secondary information and paraphrasing seem to be challenging. Students' expectations with regard to these requirements and their experiences when reviewing their peer's written assignments on these requirements are marked with difficulties and uncertainties. Overall, the perceived weaknesses relate to both receptive (reading) and productive (writing) skills which are critical for academic literacy development. Students who fail to properly understand the source text will also underperform when paraphrasing the information from that text (McNamara, 2007). The higher/lower level of students' perceived difficulty in fulfilling summarising task requirements has been illustrated in Figure 5.2.

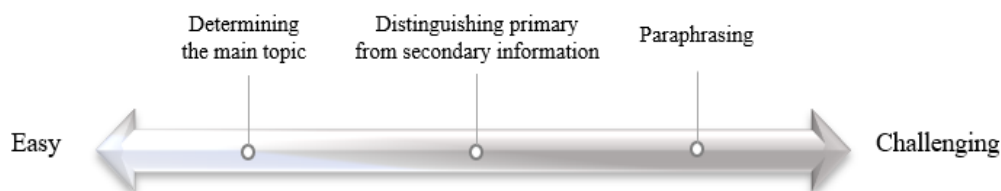


Figure 5.2. Continuum representing level of students' perceived challenge in fulfilling summarising task requirements

Two requirements for summarising that the students were presented with in the instruction, namely the use of linking or signalling words and restating the main topic to conclude the summary, seem to have caused confusion. Judging from their perceptions, students found it difficult to fulfil the former requirement when summarising a short source text which limited the amount of linking words that can be used. They were also uncertain about reviewing their peer's text with

respect to linking words, especially when the peer used very few or no linking words. A similar kind of conclusion can be drawn about the latter requirement. Restating the topic to conclude was optional in this assignment, since the source text was short, as pointed out to the students in their support materials which they could consult at any point in time. Still, students' expectations as well as their peer-review reflections show that they were uncertain about this requirement and found it difficult to fulfil. This could be justified by students' insecurity when they have to make a decision when presented with different options or, possibly, rather superficial use of the provided guiding tools and support. Consequently, the students may benefit from additional guidance in the critical use of supporting materials in order to improve their writing. The fact that academic writing is often guided by rules-of-thumb rather than strict rules creates uncertainty. This can especially be pronounced in the case of students who just finished secondary education and who are generally less independent due to being 'spoon-fed' the required knowledge by their teachers (cf. Smith, 2008).

The above presented weaknesses in turn make reviewing a peer's summary challenging. In other words, first-year students' engage in peer review with a perceived lack of knowledge and proficiency in summarising which makes them uncertain about reviewing their peer's summary since they have to rely on their limited knowledge. Moreover, they seem not to entirely grasp the purpose of peer review which, instead of inciting an awareness-raising inquiry with respect to the presented task requirements, tends to spark additional uncertainty in the process. Students, therefore, need to gain both experience in peer review and understanding of the process and its purpose.

RQ 2.2 What are first-year English majors' **actual** strengths and weaknesses in their summarising skills in English as a foreign language?

First-year English majors' summarising in EFL remains a challenging skill as they underperform on both their receptive and productive skills. Furthermore, the findings of this study show that students' need support that can cater for their complex needs which are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

First-year students' actual weaknesses in summarising in EFL can be identified in processing information from a source text and producing information in their summary. More specifically, many students fail to accurately delineate the main topic from a source text and distinguish primary from secondary information. Instead, they process textual input partially or inaccurately, which in turn suggests that not all students need the same kind of support in their academic reading skills development. For instance, a distinction should be made between the students who are able to filter information from the source text with some minor comprehension issues and those who misunderstand the author's ideas and are unable to delineate main ideas from secondary detail. The former need additional guidance in improving the existing skills while the latter need to develop their information processing skills which can range from being deficient to totally lacking. When summarising, it is also important to acknowledge the work of the author of the source text and avoid potential plagiarism issues. The findings of this study show that many junior undergraduates in EFL need guidelines in capitalisation and typography when citing a title in their texts, but mostly respond to the instruction to acknowledge another author's work. However, quite a number of them fail to recognise, understand and acknowledge the title of the original text. Accordingly, the way in which students need to address this challenge is different.

When producing information in their summary, most of the students seem to need support in paraphrasing skills. More precisely, students' partial or complete copying of the original ideas suggest that the lexical similarity between the

source text and students' summary is high. That does not imply, however, that the students captured the gist of the author's ideas, which was the case in this study where they conveyed the original message partially or failed to do so. Consequently, more practice in paraphrasing techniques and related knowledge are crucial in writing from reading input in students' academic literacy development.

Definite conclusions with regard to students' use of linking words cannot be made based on the findings of this study. This is the consequence of having to summarise a short source text (95 words) which limited the use of linking words. Nonetheless, the results indicate that students who used linking words would benefit from an additional training in that respect, which in the present context comes later in the instruction. Similarly, conclusions with regard to first-year students' critical thinking and decision making are inconclusive based on the results of this study. Nevertheless, students seem to be able to follow the provided support judging by the fact that the majority of the students in this study did not restate the topic to conclude their summary. Moreover, the students seem to have understood that, when summarising such a short text as was the case in this context, restating the topic to conclude would mean having secondary information as part of their summary.

RQ 2.3 What is the relationship between the expected level of difficulty and performance in relation to the same task requirement?

After examining first-year students' perceived and actual summarising skills in EFL, I investigated the association between the students' expected level of difficulty and their performance with regard to the same summarising task requirement. The results of the analysis indicate that students' expectations do not predict their performance.

More specifically, students perceive determining the main topic as their strength while less than one third of them perform well on this requirement. Furthermore, students' expectations regarding identifying primary and secondary information are lower compared to those regarding distinguishing the main idea from the source text. Overall, students are uncertain about these requirements and expect difficulties which shows that they perceive them as their weakness. However, their performance on these requirements is different. The vast majority of the students who partially and inaccurately identify primary information in their summaries have diverse expectations with regard to this requirement. Nevertheless, when identifying secondary information, most of the students who believe that this requirement will not be challenging (slightly) underperform and vice versa. Accordingly, receiving feedback on their performance in summarising can have a diverse effect on the students with such a spectrum of perceptions of their competencies. This feedback can be both positive and motivating as well as negative and demotivating. Furthermore, a somewhat opposite tendency in comparison to that in the case of determining the main topic, can be identified in the relationship between students' perceived and actual paraphrasing skills: the majority of the students who expect paraphrasing to be difficult to fulfil or feel uncertain about what to expect perform well in using their own words when paraphrasing the ideas from the original text. Nonetheless, students partially succeed in capturing the gist of the source text or fail to convey the author's message.

5.2. Main points of the overall discussion

The findings of this research have been further discussed from the perspective of students' understanding of their skills, particularly their understanding of own competencies in summarising in EFL. First-year students in EFL start HE with a complex understanding of their summarising skills which requires a design of

support that is carefully tailored, which I thoroughly discussed in Chapter 4 and will briefly elaborate upon below.

Students overestimate or underestimate their skills completely or partially, or they are unaware of their strengths and weaknesses. Each of these aspects in students' summarising skills requires support which includes awareness-raising and/or an appropriate skills development intervention. For instance, students who underperform in summarising requirements but do not expect difficulties in fulfilling those requirements are in need of support which, at the same time, focuses on raising their awareness of their overestimated skills and on the development of those skills. Moreover, this support needs to be motivating for the students as the clash of their positive beliefs and underperformance is likely to be overwhelming for the students. In contrast, when students underestimate their skills, they need to become aware of their existing competencies and focus their skills development on the aspects which are less developed; at the same time, they might get a positive increase in their motivation when realising that they are performing better than expected.

In summarising more specifically, first-year students in EFL need to become aware that determining the main topic is a summarising requirement that they understand as a strength which, in reality, is their weakness. Furthermore, as students tend to both (slightly) overestimate as well as (slightly) underestimate their competencies in distinguishing between primary information and supporting details in the source text, their awareness should be raised respectively, and their skills development supported accordingly. Students further display different awareness-raising needs with respect to paraphrasing. These needs involve raising the awareness of students' with very diverse expectations that they do not all achieve high semantic completeness when trying to convey the message from the source text by using their own words. For some

of them, realising the mismatch in meaning between their summary and source text can yet again be demotivating which should be taken into account when designing support. The others should be made aware of the exiting skills that they underestimate which is likely to increase their confidence in using their own words when summarising.

The investigation of first-year English majors' summarising skills in EFL provided a glimpse into students' awareness of their academic literacy skills at the beginning of HE. The results of the present research suggest that junior undergraduates start university studies with a complex understanding of their academic literacy skills or lack of understanding thereof. Aspiring members of academic communities, students are, however, required to manage their learning and become academically literate in order to advance in tertiary education (Wingate, 2007). They need to acculturate to academia which requires their ability and motivation to assimilate, understand, embrace, interact and engage with academic discourse in all its diversity (Van de Poel & Van Dyk, 2015, p. 3). Taking into account their lack of understanding or misunderstanding of their competencies, this research reinforces the stance that junior undergraduates are not ready to be solely responsible for accommodating to and making progress at university but in need of guidance and support through those processes (Wingate, 2007; Van Dyk & Van de Poel, 2013).

5.3. Summary of the implications

In order to be able to engage more critically in academic literacy practices, students first need a good understanding of and control over those practices (Wingate, 2012, 2014). Several implications of the present research, supportive of students' better understanding of their skills, were drawn.

First of all, present research is relevant for local and wider context with respect to raising first-year students' awareness of their summarising skills in EFL. In the local context in particular, it was explained how the findings of the present study can inform language teaching and materials design within the existing academic literacy course. The suggested changes focus on raising students' awareness of factors and procedures underlying effective and efficient academic reading. Moreover, the identified discrepancy between students' expectations and performance with regard to the summarising task requirements in EFL needs to be addressed. To that end, goals and objectives complementary of the existing ones have been formulated and changes related to the course materials have been proposed.

Further implications stemming from the present research are relevant for peer review in the context of a summarising task. In order to avoid pitfalls in peer review, awareness-raising points which can be added when introducing peer review to the students, as well as suggestions how to improve classroom practice regarding peer review have been provided. The final goal is to raise students' awareness of themselves and their peers in their academic literacy development, and to additionally lower peer-review threshold.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that self-reflection exercises generate helpful information that can be used to bridge the gap between students' interpretation of academic literacy demands and teachers' expectations. It was suggested that teachers can make use of self-reflection exercises as a tool for gaining knowledge about students' experiences of a specific course content, and in turn enhance language teaching in that context. In addition, it was suggested to use the self-reflection output as input for an awareness' raising feedback for the students with respect to task criteria, course content that triggers uncertainties, and peer-review processes. The overall awareness-raising

feedback can be complemented with feedback on individual student's performance on a particular task and identified understanding of their skills. Nonetheless, it was acknowledged that it is not always feasible to provide individual feedback to each of the students which are numerous in first-year academic literacy courses. Instead, it was suggested to do so on a number of core tasks of the course while the rest of the tasks and exercises can rely on group feedback.

In line with what has been said above, making self-reflection exercises part of a task was initially regarded as a methodological design for investigating students' metacognitive awareness of their summarising skills in EFL. Nevertheless, as this design generated valuable insights into students' competencies and needs, the instrument used in this study has been adapted into a template (presented in Chapter 4, section 4.3.4) that can be used for designing self-reflection exercises for different academic literacy tasks that require writing from reading input. Moreover, an intervention was proposed in which self-reflection is seen as a support vehicle for academic literacy development in EFL and teaching the ways and processes of learning. Detailed account of the suggested intervention was provided in Chapter 4. The intervention is grounded in careful curricular considerations and promoted as an integral part of an academic literacy course in EFL. Moreover, the intervention is a practical application of a support model which was presented in the previous chapter and which utilizes the existing course materials to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in their academic literacy skills in order to profile them, as well as to inform the changes in the curriculum and the design of support.

5.3.1. Model for informed curriculum and syllabus design for academic literacy development in English as a foreign language

The findings from the different studies gave rise to a schematic representation of how a curriculum can be developed or adapted to the academic literacy needs of novice language learners in HE. The model, as presented in Figure 5.3, should be understood as a model for responsible and informed curriculum design (cf. Weideman, 2017) as it is grounded in a) theoretical considerations with respect to academic literacy development in EFL as reflected in the literature and arising from the current data, b) insights with respect to (improved) teaching and learning approaches suggested in this research, and c) language curriculum design requirements as stated in the literature and considered in the present empirical setting. Since the model is meant to provide theoretically founded but practical guidelines for (re)designing a curriculum supportive of first-year students' academic literacy development in EFL, the design process takes an existing (and/or already adapted) academic literacy curriculum as a starting point and critically approaches its foundations by systematically going through several checklists. The checklists are a blueprint and are meant to be inspirational rather than exhaustive, since language curriculum and syllabus design is a process involving various components and considerations, and is cyclical in nature, i.e. the insights generated can inform the existing curriculum design but in turn require continuous consideration of the teaching and learning contexts and accommodation of new insights.

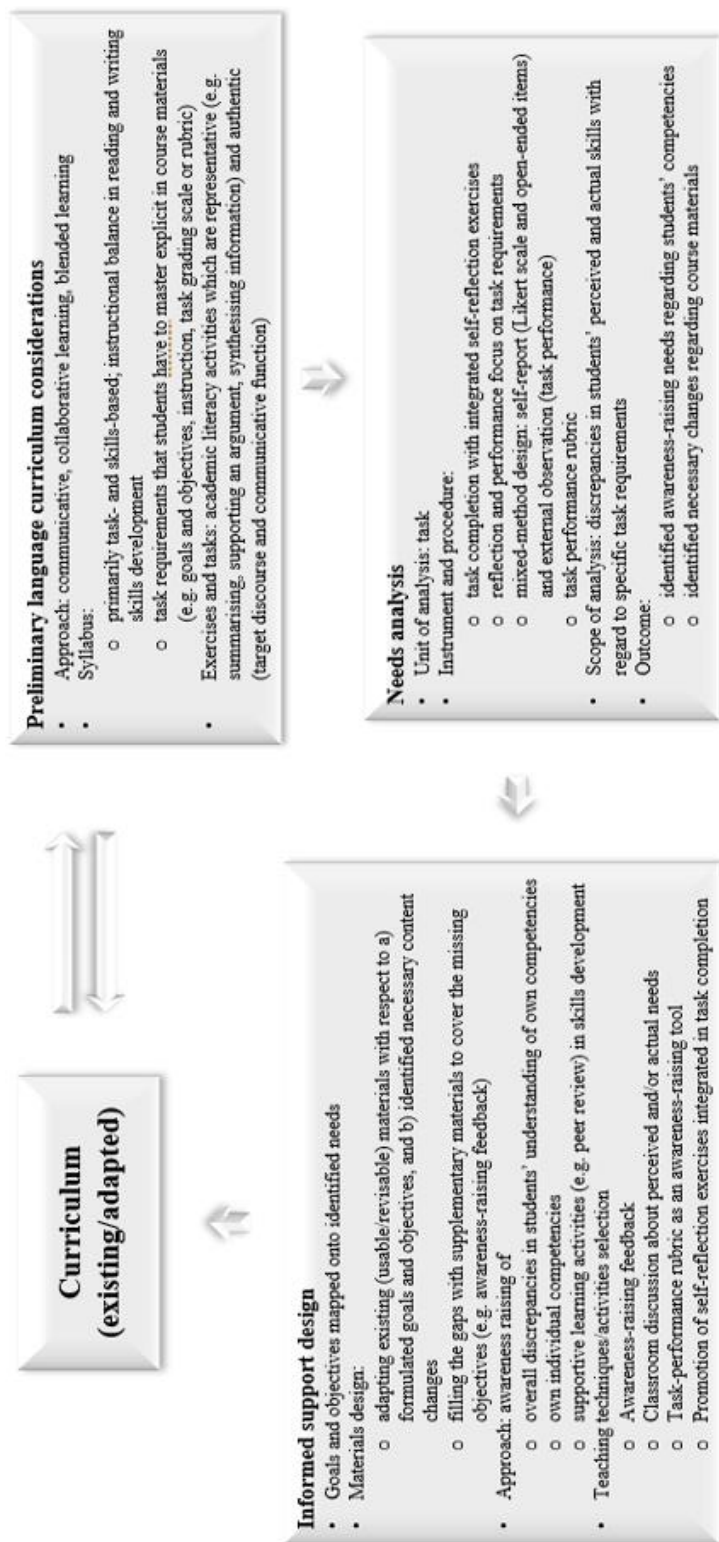


Figure 5.3. Curriculum design model for academic literacy development in EFL

The curriculum development process in Figure 5.3 consists of three main phases: a **foundational considerations** phase in which the curriculum is being analysed from different angles (political, pedagogical, didactical, social and psychological). In other words, the existing policies are critically approached in this phase. This foundational framework provides the basis for carrying out a thorough **needs analysis**, taking into account teaching activities as well as the constraints of the teaching and learning context. Building on policy (considerations) and reality (needs), **support** can be designed, encompassing defining goals and objectives to approach and materials.

In more detail, *Preliminary language curriculum considerations* is a first phase which focuses on considering the language teaching and learning foundations of an academic literacy course prior to establishing the environment's and stakeholders' needs. As Brown (1995) suggests, language teaching activities which are important to consider are approach, syllabuses, techniques and exercises as the factors that have an impact on the course materials' development (p. 4, 140). These activities will impact the language teaching and learning activities and thus impact the main stakeholders of the learning context, i.e. teachers and learners. In the present study, academic literacy development of first-year students in EFL was supported through an integrated reading and writing approach in which raising students' **awareness** of their competencies through skills-based reinforcement is foundational. Moreover, a **collaborative** approach, which is both constructivist and presents a low threshold for learners trying to meet joint objectives, underlines the importance of peer review in the process of students' awareness raising. In this context, a **skills-based** syllabus, based on authentic tasks, provides students with an opportunity to systematically and extensively practise focused academic literacy activities. The activities make use of short text excerpts and a well-thought out instructional design which together, although short and concise, still underpin the activities that the learners

will engage in throughout their further studies (other types of approaches will require different types of syllabus; cf. Brown, 1995, 2016). The third type of basic considerations concerns exercises. Exercises, as a category of language teaching activities, are defined as ‘those types of activities that could probably be used to test or assess the students after the lesson or unit is finished (Brown, 1995, p. 17). There are different types of exercises, such as reflection, reinforcement, and training exercises assignment. Given the availability of new media and toolboxes, exercises can be tailor-made and adapted to individual learner needs. In essence, the preliminary curriculum considerations are both theoretical and contextual and can immediately inform the existing curriculum and define the type of curriculum under scrutiny.

The following phase in the design cycle is *Needs analysis* (NA). The unit of analysis, in line with the preliminary considerations, is an academic literacy activity or a task. A task is a recurrent unit of analysis in contemporary NAs (Long, 2005), and essentially ‘an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective’ (Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2001, p. 11). It is important to notice that tasks focusing on making meaning may or may not be focused on language features such as vocabulary and grammar. Nonetheless, as Nation and Macalister (2010) point out, in case of a task-based syllabus, ‘it is particularly important that there are other ways of checking the coverage of content, particularly vocabulary, grammatical items and types of discourse’ (p. 81). In the current study, self-reflection exercises were embedded in a summarising task which was an integrated part of the course materials (see Chapter 3 for a detailed description of the instrument and procedure). The mixed-method research design used in this study combined self-reported and external observation data, the analysis of which aimed to profile the students in terms of their perceived and actual skills regarding specific task requirements. Moreover, as the final goal of the NA, the study identified

discrepancies in students' awareness of their skills as well as their (lack of) understanding of the supporting course materials.

Based on the preliminary considerations of the teaching and learning context and an identification of the students' (and the context's) needs, the *Support* needed can be defined. This support is labelled as responsible since it is theoretically informed, and eclectic as it aims to ensure contextually-appropriate language teaching through a principled combination of techniques (cf. Weideman, 2017). The focus of the support design is on the formulation of goals and objectives, materials design, pedagogical and didactic approach, and subsequent selection of teaching and learning activities.

The results of any needs analysis are translated into **goals** (broad statements), **objectives** (precise statements) which represent the basic units of the syllabus (cf. Brown, 2016). Brown (2016) refers to students learning outcomes (SLOs) as 'statements of what the needs analysis shows the students should be able to do by the end of their training (that is, by the end of the course or program)' (p. 155). Nation and Macalister (2010) emphasise the value of breaking down goals into a number of smaller objectives, particularly for monitoring students' progress. In the present study, goals and objectives have been formulated based on the identified students' awareness-raising needs of their summarising skills in EFL (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.2). Their focus is, as here exemplified on summarising, on raising students' awareness of a) the nature of their understanding of academic literacy skills, b) their understanding of their individual competencies with respect to the topic or task at hand, and c) the learning activities and steps supportive of their academic literacy skills development (e.g., peer review).

Based on the outcome of the NA and formulated goals and objectives, a curriculum designer can analyse to which extent the existing **materials**

(mis)match the formulated course objectives (Brown, 1995). This analysis should indicate which materials can be developed/adapted or adopted, and what the gaps are in the existing content that have to be complemented with supplementary materials. In the present context, suggestions have been made on how to adapt the existing materials in order to raise students' awareness of the discrepancies in their understanding of their summarising skills in EFL. Briefly, it was suggested to complement the existing materials with self-reflection exercises and a template has been provided with guidelines on how to integrate self-reflection exercises in different writing-through-reading tasks (Chapter 4, section 4.3.4). Moreover, the analysis of the data gathered through self-reflection exercises and task performance can be used to inform formative feedback, aiming to raise students' awareness of their competencies and help them focus on their skills development. In addition, the existing materials or some of their aspects could be amended in order to enhance students' learning. In the present context in particular, changes have been suggested for the existing summary writing scale. It is important to take into consideration contextual factors that could have a strong impact on the process of curriculum design and which in turn ensure designing a usable course (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 14).

The goals and objectives, or students' learning outcomes, are further used to select **teaching practices**. In the present study, teaching activities that could raise students' awareness of their summarising skills in EFL and supportive learning activities have been suggested. For instance, students can be provided with an awareness raising feedback of both their skills and their understanding of academic content. Moreover, the purpose of this feedback is more than providing a student with information specifically related to the task performance and discrepancies in their understanding of their competencies. 'Feedback is information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain

knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies' (Winne & Butler, 1994, p. 5740). In addition, a classroom discussion can be organised about students' perceived and actual skills with the aim to raise students' awareness of their skills, help them better understand task requirements and focus their skills development.

When the four components —goals and objectives, teaching approach, materials and activities— have been well-defined and supported through theoretical considerations and needs and constraints analysis, they connect into the curriculum as it will be used in situ. Only by evaluating the outcomes through follow-up studies will it be possible to reconsider the value of the curriculum for the teaching and learning context at hand.

5.4. Summary of the recommendations

Methodologically, setting up a mixed-method research is a daunting process and for me it was a learning curve. In hindsight, I could have undertaken some of the research steps in a different way, and I have pointed at the limitations of this research related to both methodology and local context of the study (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.1). However, according to Brown (2016), every needs analysis is contextualised, and I adhere to that credo. Taking into account the limitations of the exploratory and main study, a number of recommendations for future research were made.

First, analysing the data collected on other skills-based tasks throughout the course in which the research was carried out would provide an opportunity to draw more conclusive findings with regard to first-year English majors' awareness of their academic literacy skills in EFL at the University of Antwerp. Moreover, peer-review process and course materials related to those observed academic literacy skills could be additionally informed. As pointed out earlier,

the present study provides an indication of first-year students in EFL metacognitive awareness of their academic literacy skills. Accordingly, replicating the study in other academic literacy contexts would further generalise the findings of this research and additionally inform support of academic literacy skills development in second and foreign language. Another recommendation is to further research the impact of feedback based on students' experiences and their understanding of the course content gathered through self-reflection exercises on students' performance. If proven effective, the proposed intervention could be used to overcome the challenge in grading a large number of students' written texts in the first year of HE. Lastly, it was recommended to explore different possibilities in collecting and analysing self-reflection data, such as making use of computer assistance, in order to gain on efficiency.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. PARP questionnaire

<p>17. In die vorige vraag was die fokus op vermoëns wat belangrik is vir akademiese sukses. In hierdie vraag is die fokus op hoe goed jy meen jy <u>voorbereid is vir studies aan 'n universiteit</u>. Beoordeel jou <u>voorbereidheid</u> op 'n skaal van 1 tot 5 (1 = glad nie voorbereid nie en 5 = baie goed voorbereid):</p> <p><i>In the previous question the focus was on the importance of abilities that contribute to academic success. In this question the focus is on how well you believe you are <u>prepared for studies at a university</u>. Rate your <u>preparedness</u> on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not prepared at all and 5 = very well prepared):</i></p>					
My studies, tot dusver, het my voorberei om ... / <i>My studies, thus far, have prepared me to ...</i>	1	2	3	4	5
teen 'n gepaste spoed te kan lees / <i>read at an appropriate speed</i>					
voorgeskrewe leeswerk te verstaan / <i>comprehend assigned reading</i>					
voorgeskrewe leeswerk te ontleed / <i>analyse assigned reading</i>					
die doel van voorgeskrewe leeswerk te bepaal en dit dan te beplan / <i>determine the goal of, and then plan assigned reading</i>					
voorgeskrewe lees- en skryfwerk met mekaar te sintetiseer / <i>synthesise assigned reading and writing with one another</i>					
vakterminologie te internaliseer (dit vir jouself verstaanbaar te maak) en dit dan toe te pas / <i>internalise (make it comprehensible to yourself) and then apply subject-specific terminology</i>					
'n hoofpunt of stelling te ontwikkel / <i>develop a main point or thesis</i>					
korter, maar samehangende teksdele te lees / <i>read shorter, but coherent, pieces of text</i>					
langer, maar samehangende teksdele te lees / <i>read longer, but coherent, pieces of text</i>					
inligting te interpreteer en dit later te onthou / <i>interpret information and recall it at a later stage</i>					

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Appendix 2. Focus group interview guide

Interviewer: _____

Group: _____



**METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS:
PERCEIVED ACADEMIC READING NEEDS**

The overall question was:

How well have your studies in SECONDARY SCHOOL prepared you for ...

Sub-question 1:

Do you feel you have been well-prepared to **comprehend** academic reading assignments?

1. What do you think influences your reading comprehension?
2. How important is it to know academic vocabulary and specific terminology?
3. How important is it to know the academic genre?
4. How do you know if you understood a text?
5. Do you think that extensive reading influences your comprehension?

Sub-question 2:

Do you feel you have been well-prepared to **analyse** academic reading assignments?

1. Do you plan your reading assignments?
2. Do you identify the goal of the assignment?
3. How do you analyse assigned reading?
4. How important is it to identify a text's main point or thesis statement?
5. Do you use any strategies for analysing a text?

Sub-question 3:

Do you feel you have been well-prepared to **interpret** information?

1. How do you interpret the information?

Sub-question 4:

Do you feel you have been well-prepared to **synthesise** assigned reading and writing?

1. How can reading improve your proficiency in writing, and vice versa?

Sub-question 5:

Do you feel the last few months have helped you feel better prepared?

1. How?

Appendix 3. An example of students' responses per group and generated categories

Q9 How important is it to identify a text's main point or thesis statement?

Answered in: 15 groups

Group	Students' responses	Categories
1	If you read carefully, you will automatically understand; it is important to understand the text; it influences your answers to the questions: it has to be correct	Important To understand the text To answer questions
2	Most important part of previewing a text; very: in order to comprehend the text; understanding helps to find holes in the argumentation (find out whether author contradicts himself); know main point of the author	Important To understand the text To assess author's argumentation To understand author's message
3	Very, otherwise you won't get the main point of it; you won't be able to summarise it if you don't	Very important To summarise
4	Very important (x7); depends if it is for an assignment vs. home; important to know so as to focus on the main points and not on the examples; I think you automatically get the main points, if not, you can't understand; if you get the main points, you get the whole	Very important To understand the text Depends in which context To focus
5	Very important	Very important
6	Very important (all students agree), otherwise you get lost	Very important
7	Very important; if you don't understand the statement, you don't get the text; what the text is all about; it makes it easier to understand the text as a whole	Very important To understand the text
8	Essential to grasp ideas of the text; meaning, understanding; to get the structure and what writer wants to say; a good text builds up on the main point	Very important To understand the text To understand authors' message To identify the structure
9	Important; easy to understand	Important To understand the text
10	Really important; you can't understand, see the meaning; need to know where the author is going, read between the lines	Very important To understand the text To understand authors' message
11	Very important; yes, very, otherwise you cannot understand text; so that you do not focus on non-important stuff; I always keep main point in my head	Very important To understand the text To focus
12	Very important; essential for understanding, opinions, summary	Very important To understand the text To build own opinion To summarise
13	Very important	Very important
14	You need to pick up more than the main point	Need more than the main point
15	Very: otherwise, you don't know what you are reading	Very important To understand the text

Appendix 4. Summarising assignment including self-reflection incentives

All Write 2015-2016

Assignment 2 – In class hand-out

NAME:

1. PRE-TASK REFLECTIONS

For this assignment, you will have to write a summary.

- How easy/difficult do you expect it will be to fulfil the following requirements in this assignment?
- Please highlight the appropriate response.

1. Determining the main topic	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
2. Identifying primary information	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
3. Identifying secondary information	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
4. Rephrasing information in own words	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
5. Using linking words	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
6. Restating a topic to conclude	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>

- Try to formulate some of the challenges you expect to face in the comment box below.

Comments:

NAME:

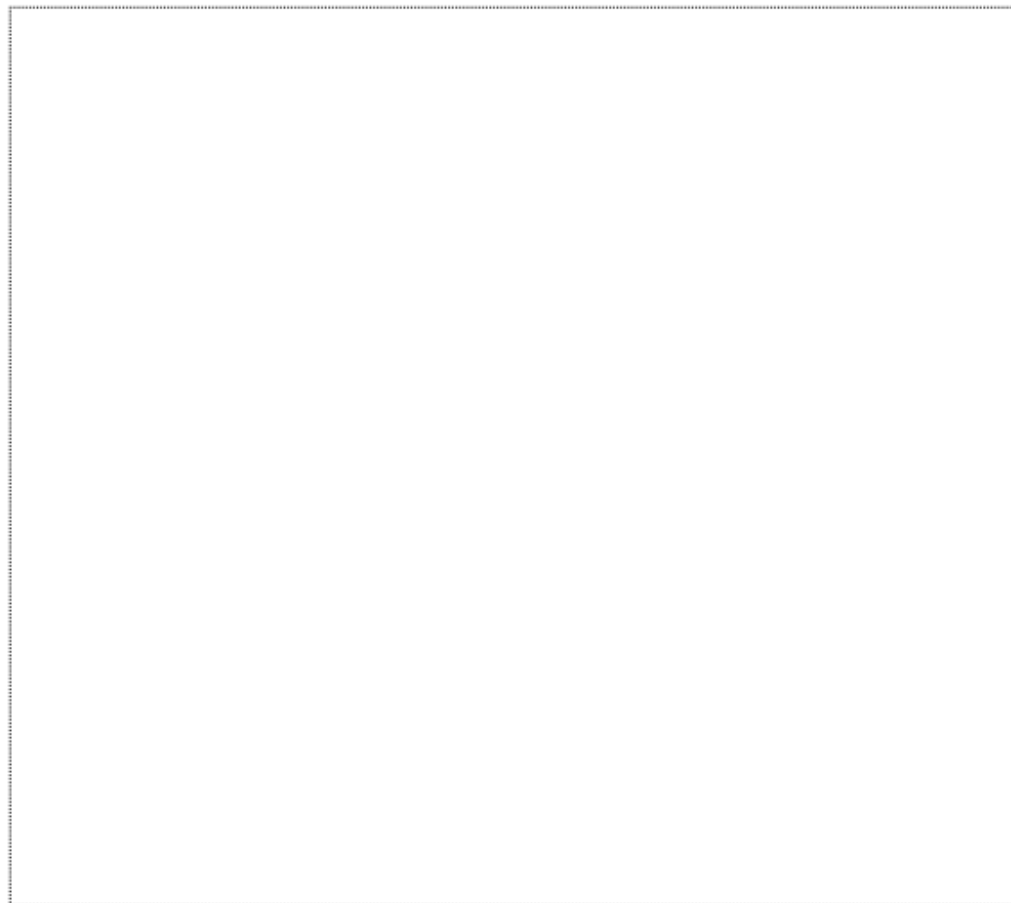
2. WRITING a SUMMARY (Draft)

- Summarise the following text (first bullets, then text).
- Use the *All Write* scale for guidance and support.

Go the Wrong Way**MARTHA NUSSBAUM**

It's easy to think that college classes are mainly about preparing you for a job. But remember: this may be the one time in your life when you have a chance to think about the whole of your life, not just your job. Courses in the humanities, in particular, often seem impractical, but they are vital, because they stretch your imagination and challenge your mind to become more responsive, more critical, bigger. You need resources to prevent your mind from becoming narrower and more routinized in later life. This is your chance to get them.

Martha Nussbaum, a professor of philosophy, law and divinity at the University of Chicago, has been teaching since 1975. NYT, Op-Ed Contributor, September 5, 2009 College Advice, From People Who Have Been There Awhile <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/06/opinion/06collegeadvice.html>



All Write writing scale

2. Writing a Summary			
<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Think about...</i>	<i>Text Reference</i>
1. Topic	Have I identified the topic in my first sentence?	Title – author – topic – context - ...	p. 29
2. Main information	Have I identified the main ideas of the original text?	Primary – secondary – arguments – declarative statements – signaling words - ...	p. 27, 29
3. Secondary information	Have I identified what is secondary information?	Deleting – detail – specificity (explanations, examples, illustrations, ...) - ...	p. 28
4. Wording	Have I rephrased the information in my own words?	Rewriting – text length – coherence – order - ...	p. 26, 30
5. Signaling words	Have I considered the steps in the text?	First, secondly, ...	p. 27
6. Final sentence	Have I restated the topic?	Different words - ...	p. 30

NAME: _____

3. PEER-TO-PEER REVIEW

- Exchange your text with your peer.
- Take 5 minutes to review each other's text using the *All Write* scale. Highlight problems.
- Discuss your reviews.
- Fill in the peer review reflections below.

4. PEER REVIEW REFLECTIONS

- How easy/difficult was it for you to evaluate your peer's text according to the following criteria?
- Please highlight the appropriate response and add comments.

1. Topic	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
2. Main information	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
3. Secondary information	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
4. Wording	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
5. Linking words	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
6. Final sentence	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>

Comments:

NAME:

5. REWRITE

- Summarise Martha Nussbaum's text (see above).
- Upload the final version of your text and your final reflections on BB before next class.

6. POST-TASK REFLECTION

- Please, respond to the following statements.
 1. I have identified the topic in my first sentence.
 2. I have identified the main ideas of the original text.
 3. I have identified what is secondary information.
 4. I have rephrased the information in my own words.
 5. I have considered the steps in the text.
 6. I have restated the topic.

- Formulate a take-home message.

What I learned from this assignment and/or the peer review process:

Appendix 5. relationship between students' perceived and actual summarising skills in EFL: Chi-square Test of Independence results

Requirement 1 – Determining the main topic

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.225 ^a	4	.521	.527
Likelihood Ratio	4.603	4	.331	.396
Fisher's Exact Test	2.871			.594
N of Valid Cases	94			

a. 4 cells (44.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.41.

Requirement 2 – Identifying primary information

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.116 ^a	4	.011	.009
Likelihood Ratio	14.451	4	.006	.008
Fisher's Exact Test	11.734			.014
N of Valid Cases	94			

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.38.

Symmetric Measures				
		Value	Approximate Significance	Exact Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.374	.011	.009
	Cramer's V	.264	.011	.009
N of Valid Cases		94		

Requirement 3 – Identifying secondary information

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.601 ^a	4	.159	.163
Likelihood Ratio	6.286	4	.179	.199
Fisher's Exact Test	6.021			.197
N of Valid Cases	94			

a. 1 cells (11.1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.79.

Requirement 4 –Paraphrasing

a) Lexical dissimilarity aspect

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.636 ^a	4	.071	.071
Likelihood Ratio	8.538	4	.074	.084
Fisher's Exact Test	8.261			.081
N of Valid Cases	94			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.89.

b) Semantic completeness aspect

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.463 ^a	4	.347	.359
Likelihood Ratio	4.590	4	.332	.359
Fisher's Exact Test	4.435			.349
N of Valid Cases	94			

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.87.

Appendix 6. Template for scaffolding self-reflection exercises in an academic literacy task

1. PRE-TASK REFLECTIONS

- For this assignment, you will have to [Task].
- How easy/difficult do you expect it will be to fulfil the following requirements in this assignment?
- Please highlight the appropriate response.

1. [Task requirement]	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
2. [Task requirement]	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
...	

- Try to formulate some of the challenges you expect to face in the comment box below.

Comments:

2. [TASK] (Draft)

- [Instruction]
- [Textual input]
- [Reference to course materials provided as support]

3. PEER REVIEW

- Exchange your text with your peer.
- Take [Time] to review each other's text on the given task requirements. Highlight problems.
- Discuss your reviews.
- Please fill in the peer review reflections below.

4. PEER-REVIEW REFLECTIONS

- How easy/difficult was it for you to evaluate your peer's text according to the following criteria?
- Please highlight the appropriate response and add comments.

1. [Task requirement/criteria]	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
2. [Task requirement/criteria]	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
...	

Comments:

5. REWRITE

- [Instruction]

6. POST-TASK REFLECTIONS

- Please, respond to the following statements.
 1. I have [task requirement]
 2. I have [task requirement]
- ...

- Please formulate a take-home message.

What I learned from this assignment and/or the peer review process:

Appendix 7. Supporting English majors' autonomous learning through self-reflection and self-regulation training

Abstract

The skills of self-regulation have to be mastered in an iterative process of reflection and increased self-awareness (Zimmerman, 1989; Isaacson & Fujita, 2006). In this study, we discuss how to guide students gradually towards becoming more autonomous in their language learning by introducing self-reflection and self-regulation training in the first and second year of university studies respectively. This teacher-initiated self-regulation is a powerful approach to foster learner autonomy in language learners in higher education. More particularly, this article reports on the introduction of self-regulation as the dominant approach in delivering course assignments in academic literacy to groups of English majors studying English as a foreign language at the University of Antwerp (Belgium). We first address the integration of self-reflection practice into a first-year academic literacy course aimed at raising students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in their L2 and also at supporting them in their skills development. To this end, reflection prompts, adapted from the course's writing-scale descriptors, were embedded in five writing-through-reading assignments which students had to complete over a three-month period. We then report on the use of self-regulation strategies as a means of enabling students to take control of both their skills development in L2 academic literacy and their learning process. Awareness raising about and training in the use of self-regulation skills (goal-setting, planning, monitoring, reflecting, evaluating and amending, peer review) were integrated into a second-year academic literacy course, in which students were encouraged to use these strategies actively when completing their assignments. The data suggest that this

two-tier approach, i.e., self-reflection both as a foundation for and a contributing component of self-regulation, enhances learners' awareness and directs their learning en route to becoming autonomous.

Key words: *learner autonomy, self-regulation, self-reflection*

1 Background

The importance of the development of learner autonomy – that is, a learner's ability to take responsibility for their learning process – has been widely acknowledged (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). Research has also shown that learners exhibit varying degrees of autonomy (Little, 1991; Nunan, 1997). Nunan (1997, as discussed in Benson, 2007), for instance, distinguishes between five levels of autonomy, namely awareness, involvement, intervention, creation and transcendence. Each of these stages is characterised by an increasing level of responsibility taken by learners in the various aspects of their learning process.

It has been contended that learners need support or training before they feel sufficiently comfortable and competent to assume greater responsibility for their learning, and thus can proceed from one stage of learner autonomy to the next (cf. Holec, 1981; Machaal, 2015; Nakata, 2014; Reinders, 2010). In other words, becoming more autonomous should not be the sole responsibility of learners; it should rather be teacher-initiated and -supported (Candy, 1991; Littlewood, 1997; Thanasoulas, 2000) so that teachers and learners become co-owners of the process. Numerous approaches can be adopted to support learner autonomy (cf. Scharle & Szabo, 2000); this article will explore training in self-reflection and self-regulation as one such approach.

The aim of this study is to support learner autonomy in young university students, who are at a critical stage of their educational lives, studying English

as a foreign language (EFL). In their transition from secondary to tertiary education, students are required to engage with new ways of teaching, learning and using language, a transition that many of them experience as challenging and stressful (Cazan, 2012; Hyland, 2009; Lowe & Cook, 2003; Van de Poel & Gasioerek, 2012; Van Dyk et al., 2013). The first year at university may be an especially challenging period, often resulting in academic under-achievement and high drop-out rates (Brinkworth et al., 2009; Van Dyk et al., 2013). New undergraduate students display a number of lacks, among which under-preparedness for university studies in terms of both learning and language skills (cf. Brinkworth et al., 2009; Hellekjaer, 2009; Hyland, 2009; Van Dyk et al., 2013; Wingate, 2007). In particular, due to insufficient practice, language students face a range of challenges in performing typical academic reading and writing integration tasks such as summarising and synthesising information, critically responding to text input, and writing a research paper (cf. Grabe & Zhang, 2013). In order to handle specific academic tasks successfully, students have to engage in higher-level thinking processes (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006). The literature suggests that language and learning, embedded as they are in a background of academic acculturation, need focused attention (cf. Van de Poel, 2008). Consequently, we have investigated supporting both academic language skills and learner autonomy in the initial stages of students' university studies by fostering their self-reflection and self-regulation skills.

2 Framework

2.1 Self-regulation as a stepping stone to learner autonomy

As with learner autonomy, self-regulation embraces the idea that the learner should take greater responsibility for the learning process (cf. Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Zimmerman, 1990). To take such responsibility, learners should be aware of the various aspects of the learning process and apply strategies to

regulate their learning. These include metacognitive strategies such as goal-setting, planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluating (cf. Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Zimmerman, 1990), and social strategies such as seeking social assistance (Zimmerman & Pons, 1986), asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathising (Oxford, 1990, p. 145). The main difference between self-regulation and learner autonomy lies in the initiation of the learning process. Whereas in learner autonomy, learners decide on their learning activities, in a self-regulatory learning environment the teacher sets a learning task (Murray, 2014). Within the parameters of a set task, learners are then encouraged to be active participants in their learning process by applying various cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies (ibid.).

It has been argued that training in the use of self-regulation strategies as part of foreign language learning can support the development of learner autonomy (Nakata, 2014). In such training, learners' awareness of how metacognitive strategies can be applied to take charge of the learning process is raised, and opportunities are provided to practise these strategies. When students experience success in this environment, they may feel motivated to transfer the use of these strategies to other learning tasks and environments (cf. Nakata, 2014; Nunan, 1997). In sum, self-regulation training is said to support the ability and indirectly, through experiencing success, the willingness to take responsibility for the learning process.

Recent research supports the assertion that explicit training in self-regulation strategies can simultaneously support the development of learner autonomy and content learning (cf. Machaal, 2015; Nakata, 2014). Studies set in tertiary education contexts have found that training in metacognitive strategies improves students' use of them (e.g., Nguyen & Gu, 2013; Roohani & Asiabani, 2015; Sarafianou & Gavriilidou, 2015), therefore suggesting that metacognitive strategies are teachable. Strategy training has also been suggested as having a

positive effect on students' performance. Nguyen & Gu (2013) found that students' writing scores significantly improved after they had engaged in a writing course that adopted metacognitive strategy-based instruction as an approach to teaching academic writing. Furthermore, Wischgoll (2016) found that combined training in a metacognitive and a cognitive strategy was more effective in improving academic writing skills than training in cognitive strategies alone.

2.2 Self-reflection as the basis of self-regulation

As described above, engaging students in self-regulation can be used as a means of supporting the development of language learner autonomy and content learning. An integral part of self-regulation is (self-)reflection: in other words, university students' ability to self-regulate their learning depends both on their ability to reflect critically on themselves as learners and on the demands of academic tasks (cf. Isaacson & Fujita, 2006; Little, 1991).

Self-reflection is the capability that is most 'distinctly human' through which people evaluate and alter their own thinking and behaviour (Bandura, 1986, p. 21). Various self-referent processes fall under the umbrella concept of self-reflection. For instance, Bandura (1986) distinguished two of those processes: self-judgement and self-evaluation. Furthermore, next to forethought and performance or volitional control, self-reflection is a third phase in Zimmerman's (1998) distinction of self-regulation processes. In the self-reflection phase, Zimmerman (1998) differentiates between self-evaluation, attributions, self-reactions and additivity as the most studied self-reflection processes under the umbrella of self-regulation to date. Even though the third phase is explicitly named 'self-reflection', the act of self-reflection underpins the overall process of self-regulation and is critical to mastering the content being learned. Or, as Zimmerman (1998, p. 5) puts it, 'the self-reflective processes

influence subsequent forethought and prepare the learners for further efforts to achieve mastery'. In skilful self-regulators, self-reflection processes will positively influence the forethought phase and the overall learning process (Zimmerman, 1998).

In the present study, self-reflection refers to an act of self-conscious consideration and evaluation that can raise one's awareness of oneself and others in specific social settings, and in turn change one's thought or behaviour (cf. Bandura, 1986, p. 21; Danielewicz, 2001, pp. 155–156). In a university language-learning context in particular, integrating self-reflection training into regular language courses can raise students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in terms of specific academic task requirements, help them identify areas that need improvement, and inform and direct their learning. Moreover, the training can help learners to become better at self-regulation, since students with a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses as learners and of the demands of the specific tasks are identified as more skilful in academic self-regulation (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006, p. 39).

In the development of learner autonomy, awareness raising is often identified as an initial stage, with every subsequent stage requiring more responsibility over one's own learning (Nunan, 1997; Scharle & Szabo, 2000). Furthermore, mastering self-regulation skills is an iterative process of reflection and increased self-awareness (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006; Zimmerman, 1989). Therefore, with the aim of gradually guiding students towards becoming more autonomous in their language learning, self-reflection training was introduced to the first-year English majors and self-regulation training to the second-year students.

3 Aim of the overall study

The present study considers a two-phase training, in which self-reflection (phase 1) is seen as the foundation for self-regulation (phase 2), as an approach to support the development of learner autonomy in higher education. In the first phase, self-reflection was integrated into a first-year EFL academic literacy course with the aims, first, of raising students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in academic literacy skills and, second, of helping them to focus their skills development. In the second phase, self-regulation training was integrated into a second-year EFL academic literacy course with the aim of raising students' awareness of and providing them with training in the use of strategies (goal-setting, reflecting, evaluating and amending, peer review) to regulate their learning. In the following paragraphs, we explain the operationalisation of the training and analyse the self-reported data for each phase respectively.

4 Research context

The present study is semi-longitudinal. In the academic year 2015–2016, self-reflection and self-regulation training was integrated in two first-semester courses that introduce academic discourse to English majors at the University of Antwerp. *All Write* (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007, 2012) is taught in the first year and is designed to guide students through the basic principles and conventions of reading and writing in an academic context. *Scribende* (Van de Poel, 2006; Van de Poel & Brunfaut, 2004), which is taught in the second Bachelor's, extends these skills. Both are blended learning courses in which online remedial training components are combined with 12 contact sessions. The two groups of students, which share similar characteristics, were predominantly native speakers of Dutch.

The self-reflection training was embedded in the in-class writing-through-reading assignments that the students had to complete over a three-month period. These assignments required the students to write in an academic register, summarise a text, construct and support argumentation, and write an essay. In three stages per assignment, the students reflected on the task requirements from different angles. In the pre-task stage, the students were asked to reflect on which of the requirements they expected to be easy and/or difficult for them in completing a task. They were also given the opportunity to add comments on any challenges they foresaw. After finishing the first draft, the students engaged in peer review. Subsequently, they were asked to look at the same requirements again (reformulated into criteria) and reflect on what was easy or difficult for them to assess in their peer's text, as well as to provide additional comments. After rewriting their text at home, they were asked to reflect on whether they had fulfilled the task requirements, and finally to formulate a take-home message (what they had learned from the task and/or peer assessment). The self-reflection prompts aimed to help the students look critically at their own and their peer's texts, and identify the challenges with regard to the task requirements.

In the second phase of this study, self-regulation training was introduced in *Scribende*. Students were engaged in reflection exercises before, during and after each of the assignments. Before each assignment, students were instructed to identify their weaknesses with regard to the skills practised in that assignment and to formulate two objectives. During and after the assignments, the students reflected on what they had learned, what they still wanted to learn, and whether they had attained their objectives for that assignment.

Furthermore, special attention was given to the social strategies: during the contact sessions, students were engaged in collaborative tasks, and before handing in take-home assignments they were required to engage in peer review. The aim of introducing peer review was to encourage the students to cooperate

and to improve their critical analysis skills (cf. Towle & Cottrell, 1996). Before the participants reviewed each other's assignments for the first time, one class was devoted to presenting an approach to reviewing academic texts. Finally, in an attempt to activate the students in taking up responsibility for their learning process, they were encouraged to draft a plan of action (i.e., content and temporal planning of writing) before starting on their writing assignments.

5 Phase 1: Self-reflection training

5.1 Data set

The self-reported data analysed in this study were collected as a part of the summarising assignment which the students completed at the end of October, after one month of attending classes at university. Summarising is one of the common tasks across various university settings that integrate reading and writing (Grabe & Zhang, 2013). In this particular assignment, the students were asked to summarise a short text excerpt. As explained in their course book, summarising a text requires determining the main topic of the original text, identifying primary and secondary information, rephrasing information in one's own words, using appropriate linking words, and restating the topic to conclude (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2007). These requirements were presented to the students in the form of a writing scale that was provided to them as a supportive tool when completing the assignment. Apart from the required features of a summary, the scale contained references to the pages of the course book that the students could consult at any point while completing the task.

The abovementioned writing scale was used as a basis for the design of the self-reflection prompts for the task (see Appendix 1). The scale descriptors were reformulated into Likert scale items. The students were also invited to provide additional narrative comments. Out of 132 students enrolled on the course, the

self-reflection exercises were completed by 83; the remaining students, who did not hand in all the reflection exercises, were excluded from the analysis. A descriptive analysis of the collected self-reported data was performed to gain insights into the data trends. Modes, medians and frequencies were calculated per item in each stage separately. In addition, narrative comments were coded and categorised and then analysed with the aim of gaining more insight into these students' perceptions of their own strengths and weaknesses.

5.2 Results

Pre-task stage

In order to summarise the short text excerpt, a large majority of the participants (77%) expected determining the main topic to be the easiest requirement to fulfil (see Table 1). At the same time, a considerable amount of uncertainty and difficulty was identified with regard to the other requirements. For each of the remaining requirements, there was always a majority of students (63% or more) who expected they would struggle or who were unable to determine the expected level of difficulty they would experience in completing the task. The minor exception to that trend was using linking words in summarising a text, which 58% of the participants expected to be difficult or were uncertain about the level of difficulty they would experience.

Item	Mode	Median	Very easy		Very difficult		I don't know
			1	2	3	4	
Determining the main topic	2	2	1 (1%)	63 (76%)	5 (6%)	0 (0%)	14 (17%)
Identifying primary information	2	2	0 (0%)	31 (37%)	25 (30%)	0 (0%)	27 (33%)
Identifying secondary information	3	2	0 (0%)	30(36%)	31 (37%)	1 (1%)	21 (25%)
Rephrasing information in own words	3	2	1 (1%)	22 (27%)	32 (39%)	2 (2%)	26 (31%)
Using linking words	2	2	1 (1%)	34 (41%)	18 (22%)	0 (0%)	30 (36%)
Restating topic to conclude	0	2	1 (1%)	22 (27%)	23 (28%)	2 (2%)	35 (42%)

Table 1: Students' responses in the pre-task stage (n = 83)

In the pre-task narrative reflections, the students mostly commented on their struggles and expected difficulties. Distinguishing between primary and secondary information in the original text, as well as leaving the secondary information out of the summary were recognised as being the most challenging requirement of summarising. In addition, the students expected to experience difficulties in rephrasing information in their own words.

Peer-review stage

The students' responses after engaging in peer review (Table 2) reveal less uncertainty. More than three-quarters of the participants found reviewing the main topic (86%) and main information (76%) in their peers' text either very easy or easy. About one-half of the students thought so with regard to the identification of the secondary information and wording. More challenges were identified in reviewing the final two criteria. Just over half of the students (53%) experienced challenges and were uncertain about reviewing linking words in their peer's summaries. 35 students (42%) were undetermined about their ability to assess the final sentence in their peer's text. In total, 60 out of 83 students

Item	Mode	Median	Very easy		Very difficult		I don't know
			1	2	3	4	
Topic	2	2	12 (14%)	60 (72%)	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	7 (8%)
Main information	2	2	1 (1%)	62 (75%)	7 (8%)	1 (0%)	12 (14%)
Secondary information	2	2	2 (2%)	38 (46%)	13 (16%)	0 (1%)	30 (36%)
Wording	2	2	2 (2%)	39 (47%)	21 (25%)	3 (4%)	18 (22%)
Linking words	2	2	1 (1%)	38 (46%)	15 (18%)	0 (0%)	29 (35%)
Final sentence	0	2	2 (2%)	21 (25%)	23 (28%)	2 (2%)	35 (42%)

(72%) experienced difficulty and uncertainty with regard to this last requirement.

Table 2: Students' responses in the peer review stage (n = 83)

As in the pre-task narrative reflections, the students focused mostly on the challenges they experienced in this reflection stage. However, they perceived using the linking words and formulating the final sentence of the summary as the

most challenging to review in their peer’s summary. This result aligns with the Likert-item analysis on these specific task requirements.

Post-task stage

For the purposes of the post-task reflection exercises, the requirements were reformulated as statements (see Appendix 1). The students were invited to reflect on which of the requirements they had responded to in the task. In the open-ended responses, they were predominantly brief in their answers, saying either ‘yes’ or ‘no’. A few students complemented their short responses with a justification or an explanation; the remaining participants were uncertain or hesitant (‘I am not sure’, ‘I think so’, ‘sort of’, ‘kind of’, etc.).

Item	Responses		
	yes	no	uncertainty
I have identified the topic in their first sentence.	79 (95%)	0 (0%)	4 (5%)
I have identified the main ideas of the original text.	77 (93%)	0 (0%)	6 (7%)
I have identified what is secondary information.	65 (78%)	3 (4%)	15 (18%)
I have rephrased the information in their own words.	62 (75%)	0 (0%)	21 (25%)
I have considered the steps in the text.	57 (69%)	11 (13%)	15 (18%)
I have restated the topic.	61 (73%)	9 (11%)	13 (16%)

Table 3: Students’ self-assessment in the post-task stage (n = 83)

Most of the students acknowledged fulfilling the requirements of the summarising assignment (Table 3). In the first two task demands the least uncertainty and no negative responses were reported on. More uncertainty was identified with regard to the remaining requirements. When identifying the secondary information, 15 of the participants (18%) had doubts; 21 out of 83 students (25%) were uncertain in paraphrasing the original text’s ideas. Furthermore, 15 respondents (18%) were doubtful about considering the logical steps in the text, and therefore about choosing appropriate linking words in their assignment. In the case of the last two requirements, 11 and 9 students respectively responded that they had not fulfilled them.

As the final step of this assignment, the students were asked to formulate a take-home message. They commented on what they had learned while completing the assignment and/or the peer review. In their responses they highlighted the value of peer review and specified that they had learned how to summarise a text, and to identify primary and secondary information. About a quarter of the students commented on the requirements that they experienced as challenging: paraphrasing remained the most challenging requirement in summarising a text.

5.3 Discussion

The participants in this study engaged in self-reflection exercises in order to gain better insight into their own strengths and weaknesses regarding their academic writing skills, and to direct their development accordingly. They experienced different levels of difficulty with regard to the requirements of the summarising task. For instance, 62 out of 83 students considered identifying primary information in their peer's summary easy, whereas only 31 students expected it to be easy to fulfil in their own tasks. In other words, the uncertainty and level of difficulty regarding distinguishing primary information in the original text was considerably lower when they engaged in reviewing the primary information in their peer's text. The students' perceptions of paraphrasing also differed. They found it easier to assess paraphrased ideas in their peer's text than to paraphrase for the purposes of their own summaries. A possible explanation for these experiences might be the fact that the students were gaining more insight into their own strengths and weaknesses by reflecting on the same task requirements from a different angle and in multiple stages.

Peer review in particular seemed to be favourable for raising students' awareness of the task requirements. One student noted: 'Peer review is an amazing way to detect mistakes you easily overlook yourself.' In addition, some of the students realised that they had forgotten to fulfil one or more requirements in their own

assignments. For instance, one of the students wrote: ‘While reviewing my peer's summary, I realised I hadn't used any linking words in my own text, so it is very useful to know that for when I am re-writing my summary.’ Another student added: ‘The peer-review process also helped me value the criteria more.’

In other words, when students engage in peer review, they are likely to gain more insight into the requirements not yet fulfilled in their own assignments and to identify the challenges they need to address. Or, as one of the students formulated it, ‘I feel I have improved [sic] by actually writing a summary and paying attention to the criteria, than by just reading and trying to memorise the different points of the chapter’.

While completing the assignment, the students had the opportunity to reflect on the challenges from various angles. Among other challenges, leaving out secondary information was perceived as a difficulty. The justification that the students gave for this struggle was the assumption that ‘I will have forgotten something very important’ or ‘I miss a lot’. An additional requirement the students struggled with was paraphrasing. The students ‘do not want to change the meaning of the phrase’ and also ‘the original words [...] seem more correct’. Paraphrasing persisted as the challenge throughout all the stages of the assignment and should receive greater support in the development of students’ academic literacy skills in English.

As pointed out earlier, engaging the students in the self-reflection exercises aimed to help them identify areas where they need improvement in the context of specific academic tasks, and to inform their skills development. In the take-home message, the participants in this study verbalised what they had gained from this assignment as well as the challenges to tackle in the future, as can be seen in the following responses:

‘I have to try harder to rephrase the sentences and write them in my own words.’

‘I have to read more carefully and with more attention. At first I kind of misread it so my first summary was completely incorrect.’

‘If you want to summarize it is very important to first analyse the text, you cannot summarize while reading a text.’

‘I need to use more linking words. I am also happy that I learned how to summarize texts, this will come in handy during the exams.’

In sum, after actively engaging in self-reflection and peer review while completing the task, the students clearly formulated the challenges they should address with regard to their skills development, came to relevant conclusions regarding task demands, and referred to the value of the gained skills.

6 Phase 2: Self-regulation training

6.1 Data set

The participants in the second phase of the study were second-year English majors partaking in *Scribende* (N = 69). Six students were excluded from the data analysis because they failed to hand in all the assignments.

The data set includes all the products students handed in as part of their second assignment (writing a response essay), including a first draft with their peer’s feedback (qualitative data), the final assignment (qualitative data), and the section of their reflection task that revolved around learning gain (self-reported, qualitative data). The feedback provided by the assessor who graded the students’ assignments was also part of the data set. These data were collected in the fourth and fifth week of the ten-week course.

The learning needs (identified by students before sending their first draft to a peer; see below) and the feedback given by students were categorised in accordance with the assessment scale used by the assessor. The criteria used in this scale are structure at text level, argumentation, academic form, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling and punctuation. Subsequently, the categories were

assigned to two superordinate categories: the formal aspects of writing (academic form, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation) and content-related components (structure at text level, argumentation). This enabled the researcher to quantify these qualitative data and perform statistical analysis on them.

The self-report data on learning gain were analysed as follows: the main messages of the students' reflections were extracted, then coded, and subsequently grouped into categories.

6.2 Results

Identifying learning needs

As part of the assignment, the students sent the first draft of their essays to a peer for review. A majority of the students (70%) communicated the aspects of their writing product/process they experienced as problematic, thus influencing the focus of their peer's feedback. More than a third of the students (36%) requested feedback on formal aspects of their writing, such as register, spelling, grammar, and the style of quotations and references. Less than a third (32%) identified content-related aspects of writing as being problematic. These included structure, argumentation, (an appropriate) title, and text coherence. The remaining 32% asked for feedback about both the content and the formal aspects of their writing products.

Social (peer-review) strategies

Three strategies could be discerned in the participants' feedback: integrating explicit positive feedback, hedging, and using emoticons – three-quarters of the students (75%) used one or more of these strategies when giving feedback. Almost half of the students (48%) mentioned aspects in their peer's text that they evaluated positively (e.g., 'good use of linking words', 'nice word choice', 'clear

introduction', 'excellent conclusion'). About two-fifths (41%) formulated their comments in a tentative way by using hedging phrases (e.g., 'I am not sure ...', 'perhaps ...', 'I would (rather) ...', 'I would suggest ...'). Finally, eight students (13%) used emoticons (e.g., :, ;) in their feedback, especially when they pointed at spelling mistakes or typographical errors.

Reflecting and evaluating

After having received their peer's comments, the students had to reflect on whether or not integrating the feedback would improve their essays. The vast majority of the students integrated at least some of their peer's comments. Only four students did not adapt their text after receiving feedback. A minority (17%) integrated every comment when rewriting their essays.

Furthermore, the participants reflected on their perceived learning gain after completing the assignment. One student reported that identifying her learning needs was her learning gain. Approximately a quarter of the participants (28%) linked their learning gain to writing proficiency. Three-fifths of the participants (61%) related their learning gain to peer review. A tenth of the reports on learning gain could not be identified as relating to learning needs, writing proficiency or peer review.

Of the participants who related their learning gain to peer review, three expressed a negative opinion: one student reported on their peer's poor review; another participant did not receive the comments before the deadline, and the third student expressed the fear that her peer had copied part of her essay. More than nine-tenths (92%) of the participants who linked their learning gain to peer review expressed positive views about peer review and/or collaboration with their peers. The content of these comments was categorised as follows:

Engaging in peer review ...

... taught students how to critically review and evaluate an academic text (35%).

... helped students gain insight in and improve their argumentation (15%).

... improved their writing proficiency because participants learnt from their peer's writing style (15%).

... led students to gaining new insights in the content of their essays (12%).

... helped students identify mistakes they had previously overlooked (9%).

The remaining 10 comments (29%) could not be assigned to any of the abovementioned categories, nor could they be collapsed into another category.

6.3 Discussion

The analysis shows that the students applied three types of self-regulation strategy that are considered indispensable to autonomous learning: identifying learning needs, seeking social assistance, and reflecting and evaluating. These strategies were prompted by the task requirements. However, the students self-initiated the use of additional social strategies in the way they provided feedback to invest in their relationship with their peers.

Identifying learning needs

Identifying learning needs is an essential component of self-regulation and autonomous learning, as these needs underlie the entire learning process. Self-regulating students view ongoing learning activities in terms of their own needs, and therefore commit to self-chosen subgoals (cf. Boekaerts, 1999, p. 451); autonomous learners will decide on learning activities based on their self-

identified learning needs (cf. Holec, 1981, Reinders, 2010). In order to identify their learning needs accurately, the participants had to be aware of the conventions of academic writing (e.g., academic genre, academic register, ...), the assessor's expectations, and also of their own ability to adhere to these conventions and to meet the assessor's expectations.

Almost three-quarters of the participants (70%) identified their learning needs, thus directing their peer's feedback. In doing so, they expected to receive comments which they found relevant. Even though the results indicate that many students are aware of the importance of a well-developed argumentative structure in a successful, convincing academic essay and, furthermore, are aware that they struggle with the content element of writing, there is still a minority of students (36%) who seem solely concerned with the so-called surface-level aspects of writing (e.g., spelling and grammar). This might suggest that these participants did not accurately appraise the importance of the content aspect of this particular assignment. Since the assignment was set immediately after the class in which the instructor had discussed text flow and argumentation in academic texts, the students should have been able to deduce that the assessor would pay special attention to the argumentative structure of their essays. An alternative interpretation is that some students did not realise that their argumentation and structure were flawed. This interpretation can be questioned, however, as it can be assumed that students who recognise the importance of well-structured argumentation will ask their peers to focus on content, even when they are fairly confident that they have adequately rendered their point of view.

The assessor's feedback on the final assignments indicates that argumentation and text coherence remain major issues in students' writing; a considerable majority of the students (70%) received negative feedback that related to their essay's argumentative structure or text coherence. These results imply that

students could benefit from individual support in identifying their needs more accurately. In this course, such support was provided by the assessor, who gave individual written feedback to each student.

Social strategies

As pointed out before, autonomous learners display the ability and willingness to cooperate with others (cf. Dam, 1995). In self-regulation, seeking social assistance is one of the strategies used to take charge of the learning process (cf. Zimmerman & Pons, 1986). Asking questions, cooperating, and empathising have also been identified as social learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). In the present study, the participants were required to apply social strategies by engaging in systematic peer review.

The data showed that most students (75%) not only engaged in the required peer review, but also applied strategies that reduce the face-threatening nature of (negative) feedback, thus investing in their relationship with their peer. These strategies were self-initiated, since they were not part of the training in which they were presented with an approach to systematically reviewing academic texts. Three strategies could be discerned in the students' feedback: integrating explicit positive feedback, hedging, and using emoticons.

The use of these strategies indicates that the students are well aware that feedback can be taken very personally, and that they actively search for means of conveying their feedback in non- or less face-threatening ways. Furthermore, several students took the time to discuss further with their peer the feedback they had given or received. One student explicitly mentioned, at the end of her feedback, that she would elaborate on any feedback if her peer thought this desirable. Also, in the reflection task, several students reported that they had discussed review comments further. This illustrates that these students have truly cooperated with their peers to successfully complete their assignment.

Since this was not a comparative study, it is impossible to claim conclusively that students would not have cooperated with their peers to complete the assignment successfully if they had not been required to engage in peer review. However, it is likely that many participants would not have included time to engage in peer review in their task planning if it had not been a requirement. This view is substantiated by some students' comments, in which they report that what they have gained from the assignment is positive experiences with peer review.

Reflecting and evaluating

Reflecting and evaluating play a pivotal role in (the development of) learner autonomy (cf. Dam, 1995; Little 1991, 2007). Reflection underpins the entire learning process, because it is the basis of identifying learning needs and setting goals, it helps students plan their learning, and it helps them assess their progress and learning outcomes. Therefore, any attempt at supporting learners' autonomy should include activities that encourage purposeful reflection.

In the present assignment, the students reflected on several aspects of the writing process. In the following paragraphs, two additional instances of reflection are discussed briefly: the students' evaluation of their peer's feedback, and their reflection about what they gained from completing this assignment.

After having received their peer's feedback, the students considered whether the feedback was relevant and whether they agreed with the comments. In other words, they evaluated their peer's opinions of their writing. The vast majority of students integrated (part of) their peer's review. A couple of students chose not to adapt their essays on the basis of their peers' feedback; this might be due to the nature and relevance of the comments. In one case, for instance, it was apparent that none of the suggestions would improve the essay. As only a few students integrated every comment when adapting their essays, the results

indicate that the students critically evaluate the peer feedback and reflect on which feedback will help them improve their essay.

The participants' reports on their learning gain suggest that, overall, they have come to appreciate the help that peer review can provide them with. This was the case not only with regard to their academic writing proficiency, but also in (more) accurately identifying their struggle with writing. The students who did not feel that they had benefited from peer review relate this directly to their peer's poor performance or, in one case, to the fear that their peer would plagiarise their writing.

Reflection plays an important role in taking responsibility for the learning process, mainly because it raises students' awareness. In this case, the explicit reflection exercise has contributed to students' awareness of the benefits of engaging in peer review and may encourage them to review each other's assignments for other courses as well.

7 Limitations

The current study used two groups of students who share the same characteristics and were enrolled in two academic literacy courses, one of which (*All Write*) is assumed to be foundational for the other (*Scribende*). This makes this study semi-longitudinal. This assumption, however, has to be investigated in further research. Furthermore, additional research on this topic should be longitudinal and make use of control groups to extend the data. Finally, given the restrictions of the learning environment, the intervention was rather limited and the data were mainly self-reported. The data could be enriched by objective data in the future.

8 Conclusion

The current study was inspired by a lack of learner autonomy in the students of linguistics and literature at the University of Antwerp (cf. Ruelens, Van deneynde, & Vermandere, 2017). In the present study, we showed how English majors can be guided to become more autonomous in their approach to academic language learning, in this case academic writing, through first engaging in self-reflection training and then in self-regulation training. The gradual build-up of the reported intervention seems to cater for both the students' language and learning needs (as identified in Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012). The first-year students identified the challenges that they experienced while completing common academic literacy tasks that helped them to focus their skills development. Their awareness of the task requirements was positively supported by peer review, which was considered useful in the self-regulation training also. Overall, the second-year participants were fairly accurate in identifying their learning needs and goals. However, they are able to gain more insight into their real needs through individual feedback.

In this study, it has been shown that language learner autonomy can be effectively supported by engaging students in self-reflection and self-regulation. The integrated self-reflection and self-regulation training encouraged the students to embrace actively two learning strategies: (1) the metacognitive strategy, through reflecting about needs and tasks, identifying learning goals and evaluating process and product; and (2) the social strategy by cooperating and engaging in peer review.

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Appendix 1: The self-reflection prompts for the task

1. PRE-TASK REFLECTIONS	
For this assignment, you will have to write a summary.	
• How easy/difficult do you expect it will be to fulfil the following requirements in this assignment?	
1. Determining the main topic	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
2. Identifying primary information	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
3. Identifying secondary information	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
4. Rephrasing information in own words	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
5. Using linking words	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
6. Restating a topic to conclude	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
• Comments:	
2. PEER-REVIEW REFLECTIONS	
• How easy/difficult was it for you to evaluate your peer's text according to the following criteria?	
1. Topic	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
2. Main information	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
3. Secondary information	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
4. Wording	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
5. Linking words	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
6. Final sentence	<i>Very easy – easy – I don't know – difficult – very difficult</i>
• Comments:	
3. POST-TASK REFLECTIONS	
• Please, respond to the following statements.	
1. I have identified the topic in my first sentence.	
2. I have identified the main ideas of the original text.	
3. I have identified what is secondary information.	
4. I have rephrased the information in my own words.	
5. I have considered the steps in the text.	
6. I have restated the topic.	
• Take-home message	

Appendix 8. Review of Responsible Design in Applied Linguistics: Theory and Practice by Albert Weideman

Albert Weideman, *Responsible Design in Applied Linguistics: Theory and Practice*. 2017. Cham: Springer International Publishing Switzerland.

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Reviewed by Ward Peeters, John Linnegar, Marilize Pretorius & Marina Vulovic (University of Antwerp)

In this volume, it is Albert Weideman's declared intention to help the reader discover the philosophical foundations of the theoretical endeavours of applied linguists and appreciate applied linguistics as a discipline of design – a discipline which is to be primarily concerned with developing responsible, or theoretically informed, solutions to concrete language problems. He does so by taking us on a journey that traces the phased historical development of the discipline which takes into account, systematically, the various turning points in that history. Both historical and systematic perspectives form what he terms the theoretical backbone of his text.

Just as the author takes us through the systematic development of applied linguistics as a design discipline, we will take the reader through the different chapters of the volume. In our review, we will discuss the various philosophical theses and assertions that lie at the foundations of the field and offer our evaluation of the author's proposed framework.

Summary

The foundations of a discipline

In his first chapter, Weideman introduces several questions and reflections which form the basis of the volume's eleven chapters. He deals with the "foundations and philosophical undertow" of applied linguistics that, he contends, are sometimes inappropriately peripheral to the interests of practitioners (p. 1). In attempting to arrive at a definition, he limits his investigation to the discipline's traditional concern with language teaching, learning and the assessment of language ability, a limitation which he adheres to throughout the book.

In the first chapters, the author brings the underlying philosophy and theory from the periphery into the core of applied linguistic research, which is aimed at solving the challenges of teaching a second or foreign language. This means, first, acknowledging that applied linguistics is a discipline of design that helps to formulate plans for resolving language problems. Secondly, because applied linguistics has to be both socially and academically (theoretically) accountable, Weideman guides us towards a direction for and a professional approach to the discipline by reflecting on the "starting points and assumptions" from which designs are derived (p. 5).

Is applied linguistics a mere extension of linguistics, is it a separate part of it, or is it a distinctive discipline? In chapter 2, Weideman concludes that the two are distinct, both historically and systematically, although the linguistic view of applied linguistics is and will remain pervasive (p. 33). In his opinion, applied linguistics is as much in need of a principled, systematic clarification of its foundations as linguistics is (Weideman 2009, cited in 2017, p. 14). But what, he asks, if the notion that applied linguistics is necessarily founded upon

linguistics is itself contestable? Or if any definition of linguistics may become equally contestable? In view of the difficulties in arriving at a foundational definition of linguistics itself (p. 15), however, attempting one for applied linguistics is not unproblematic.

In the post-1960 period, we learn in chapter 3, the call grew for applied linguistics to embrace the interdisciplinary bases of the field. Since concrete problems in this sphere are themselves multifaceted, only an interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving can be effective. For Weideman, what stands out in the apparent intangibility of the definition of applied linguistics is how complex the concepts attached to it are (p. 46). This conceptual complexity has placed applied linguistics above purely linguistic conceptualisation, formulating its insights independently – a sign, he says, that applied linguistics had matured by the 80s.

Chapter 4 is essentially a reflection on the difficulties encountered by theorists and researchers of second language learning and acquisition when trying to claim scientific status for applied linguistics. Claiming this scientific status revolves around a “complex of knowledge, skill and experience, and operates in a field [...] potentially far more involved than general theorizing” (p. 53). Weideman cautions (p. 54) that applied linguistics is more than the pure, undiluted application of linguistic analyses. In the discussion that follows, a central issue is whether practice informs theory or whether theoretical work is carried out with the purpose of application or use before the task is actually adopted and carried out (p. 64). Finally, in this chapter, Weideman illustrates the scope, strengths and weaknesses of one of the source disciplines in applied linguistic concept-formation: psychology, or more precisely, psycholinguistics. He concludes: “The psychology of language appears most useful [...] if the kind of information

it yields makes the teacher and designer of language teaching less prone to become a victim of theory” (p. 70).

Applied linguistics as a discipline of design: Definitions and limitations

In the fifth chapter, Weideman first discusses the limitations of applied linguistics as a discipline of design. He reminds us that scientific and pedagogical activities are fundamentally different, which is an important realisation if one is to understand the limitations of the field. Language teaching is pedagogical by its nature and thus the application of theoretical insights to concrete language problems is limited by the nature of those problems. However, the intervention of applied linguistics in language problems, resulting in tailored and “sophisticated” solutions (p. 77), is not without areas of neglect either. There is a lack of generally accepted ways of assessing proposed applied linguistic solutions and designs; there is also an absence of pedagogical assumptions underlying applied linguists’ work; and, in addition, applied linguistic intervention in the area of first language instruction has long been neglected. Subsequently in this chapter, the author concludes that applied linguistics is essentially concerned with design, that is, with developing a theoretically informed solution to a concrete language problem. This characterisation of applied linguistics as a discipline of design is reflected in both modernist and postmodernist conceptions of the discipline – regardless of their disagreement on the critical features of applied linguistics – which the author discusses thoroughly. In a critical, philosophical manner, the author scrutinises the process of design in light of the different interpretations and characterisations of applied linguistics. The process of design consists of several successive phases, which are followed by its practical execution. In that overall process, innovation, imagination and flexibility are as important as the subsequent interpretation.

In chapter 6, the author reviews design responses to the limitations of applied linguistic interventions in language teaching in the last quarter of the 20th century. Initially, he highlights the difference between the audio-lingual method, on the one hand, and communicative language teaching on the other. The audio-lingual method is depicted as the approach that was discredited mainly on the same grounds as those that authorised it. Moreover, with this method, the creativity and innovation of both designer and teacher were undermined. In contrast, the communicative language teaching approach provided a different response to the limitations of the applied linguistic interventions, partially reacting as it was against audio-lingualism. Two directions in particular are illustrated: the mainstream, which strongly relies on learners' language needs, and the humanistic, which is concerned with emotional aspects of learning. Weideman rounds off the chapter by emphasising the value of the flexibility gained in second and foreign language designs as it allowed for more creativity and imagination, which in turn led to more appropriate designs.

In chapter 7, Weideman outlines how the postmodern turn led to an ethnographic approach to applied linguistic research. As a result, researchers sought alternative interpretations of unique phenomena in individual contexts, rejecting prescriptive, definitive and 'scientific' methods of design. Also, the author shows how the design criteria that developed at that time have a strong link to existing methods and techniques, and how they can be combined and reinterpreted to solve unique problems in different contexts.

An important point in Weideman's discussion of the postmodern era is the political questions that arise. These questions constitute a critique on the inequality that exists in education, as well as its causes and effects, which is evident in language learning and teaching. This critique ideally, but mostly ineffectually, as Weideman shows, sought to challenge and redress the

inequalities at an institutional level. Although this critique was somewhat ineffective, it did raise the issue of social and political accountability for the design of applied linguistic solutions by means of theoretical defensibility. This appears to be one of the key features in Weideman's own philosophy of applied linguistics.

Weideman argues in chapter 8 that it is important to understand the history of approaches to applied linguistics design for at least two reasons. First, it should enable applied linguists to avoid continually reinventing the wheel. Secondly, it provides newcomers to the field with an introduction and overview so that they can make decisions about their own orientation towards the discipline. The author takes us through seven successive traditions in the practice of applied linguistics, starting with the linguistic and behaviourist tradition (8.2), followed by the social extension of the linguistic paradigm (8.3), which later gave way to a more multidisciplinary approach (8.4). Next, research into second language acquisition rose to prominence (8.5). Constructivism (8.6) then became popular and was followed by postmodernism (8.7). Weideman finally discusses the newest challenger in the field: dynamic systems theory (8.8).

The full thrust of Weideman's argument in tracing the continuities and discontinuities between successive traditions in the way applied linguistic research is conducted comes at the end of the chapter (8.9). Here, the (dis)continuities between the various approaches to applied linguistics illustrate how each of them both reacts to and builds upon previous approaches, giving rise to new developments. However, the author contends that applied linguists generally remain loyal to a particular tradition. He also points out that their practice often (unknowingly) consists of a combination of approaches and methods from different traditions in the field. The author further asserts that, for various reasons, applied linguists often also have no idea how their interpretation

relates to other traditions, nor do they even question or criticise the tradition they adhere to. He argues, therefore, that we can and should systematically and critically study the different paradigms of applied linguistics; that, in order to be responsible practitioners, we should identify design principles from the various traditions that applied linguists can use in their designs. Weideman's concluding remarks seem to be: do not simply choose what is fashionable or familiar – be critical and responsible.

The future of applied linguistics

From chapter 9, Weideman looks forward. He addresses the need for innovation, scrutinising the various orientations and traditions that are conventionally used to provide a rationale for responsible design in the paradigm of applied linguistics. The author argues that the future of applied linguistics, and of language teaching in particular, should be characterised by eclecticism. For him, the eclecticism of “principled combination of techniques” ensures innovation that is “contextually appropriate” (p. 185), underpinning the notion that no classroom setting, learner or teacher is the same. Moreover, the success of any innovation depends on the designers' commitment to sophistication, i.e. how deliberate and coherent their motivation is, resulting in theoretical justification. Weideman comprehensively summarises the choices that teachers and designers can make in order to be innovative. As stated above, innovation builds on what is already available, but at the same time it is dependent on discontinuity. The author, therefore, points out that innovation is often less disruptive than one might think in the areas of language teaching, language assessment and language policy.

When conceptualising applied linguistics in chapter 10, Weideman returns to his initial claim that one should acknowledge the multi- and inter-disciplinarity of the field, rather than think of it as a mere “unadulterated application of linguistic

theory to the solution of language problems” (p. 198). The notion that applied linguistics emancipated from linguistics implies that we should move away from the modernist, structuralist approaches that support the notion of applying scientific theory to the solution of problems (p. 199). In his discussion on “what is linguistics” and “what is applied linguistics”, Weideman affirms that the latter is not a broad church with an “anything goes” policy: “Applied linguistics is definable by the technical dimension of experiences, its main task is to design, devise and plan solutions to large-scale, pervasive language problems” (p. 206). In this regard, it is essential to determine what language is, because without a clear perspective or definition of how language is conceptualised in the fields of linguistics and applied linguistics, it is unlikely that the two can even be distinguished.

When discussing the future of applied linguistics and tackling the question of its design principles in the final chapter, Weideman makes a case for transparency, accessibility and accountability in the process of designing language interventions. Even though an identifiable theory of applied linguistics, comprising all of its different paradigms, interpretations and approaches, is not yet within reach, the author distinguishes three applied linguistic artefacts: language courses, language tests and language policy. Using these artefacts, he presents a framework of design principles for applied linguistics based on how effectively a plan for language development, measurement or management can be put into practice. Within the philosophical framework of the book, the author pleads for systematic, consistent approaches to these artefacts which revolve around the elementary applied linguistic concepts of differentiation, appeal and rationality, each of them yielding different technical features of design, such as implementation, utility and accountability. The author ends his exploration of the field by specifying the conditions for responsible applied linguistic design. With these conditions, Weideman summarises the conceptual framework

required for those who wish to design language policies, assessments and instructional interventions responsibly. In this sense, applied linguistics, indeed, does not fit under the umbrella of linguistics, as it has the nuclear function of designing, shaping, planning and forming.

Evaluation

This volume aims to help the reader discover the philosophical foundations of applied linguistics, and can yield general conditions for responsible designs. The discussion is wide-ranging and the author brings together the old and the new in the field of applied linguistics in order to present the reader with a philosophical, comparative and contrastive account of how the discipline has developed. An important aspect of the author's approach to the topic is a constant reference to the limitations within the design choices made throughout the field's developmental history.

As the discussion allows the reader to make sense of the historical development of applied linguistics, it enables them to gain a more balanced view on the future of the field. The fundamental discussion and the recommendations present designers of language policies, tests and courses with a number of challenging questions on their approach to design. As pointed out by the author himself, he presents "a first, preliminary formulation of a framework of principles for responsible design" (p. 226) as a solution to dealing with these questions. However, the applicability of this framework is not immediately apparent and examples of good practice would have been valuable.

When considering other publications by the author which deal with the same topic (Weideman 2003, 2006, 2007, 2013), it becomes apparent that in this volume he opted for a more complex and sometimes convoluted writing style. Some of the chapters of the present volume, such as chapter 2, unfortunately

contains a number of grammatical and other errors which have eluded the proofreader's scrutiny.

It is the reviewers' belief that this densely written volume will be considered daunting by newcomers to the discipline. However, the envisaged target audience, consisting of applied linguistic theoreticians, language philosophers and those interested in the foundations of applied linguistics, will find this a valuable addition to the literature on the subject.

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