Collaboration as pedagogy: Consequences and implications for partnerships between communication and disciplinary specialists

Cecilia Jacobs
Faculty of Engineering, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, PO Box 1906, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa
e-mail: Jacobsc@cput.ac.za

Abstract: This paper explores the notion of ‘collaboration as pedagogy’ from a literacy-as-social-practice approach, drawing on theorists who have applied social theories of learning to the development of literacies. These theorists speak to the need for interaction between communication and disciplinary specialists in an effort to locate the teaching of disciplinary literacies within disciplines. However, there is a gap in the literature as to how such interaction might happen and what the nature of it should be. This paper explores this gap by examining a case study where such interaction took place. The case study found that both communication and disciplinary specialists needed to re-examine their notions of pedagogy as they explored new collaborative ways of teaching disciplinary literacies. It was through the interaction of disciplinary and communication specialists that the explicit teaching of disciplinary literacies could be explored. This collaborative pedagogy required disciplinary specialists to work within their role as a disciplinary expert, while simultaneously having a critical overview of this ‘insider’ role, from outside of it. It was in engaging with communication/academic literacy lecturers, who were ‘outsiders’ to their disciplinary communities, that disciplinary specialists found themselves at the margins of their own fields, and were able to view themselves as insiders from the outside, as it were. This perspective appeared to enable the explicit teaching of disciplinary literacies.

Introduction
The research reported in this paper draws on an institutional response to the varying literacies of different academic disciplines. This response located the teaching of disciplinary literacies within disciplines by placing communication lecturers in disciplinary departments. These departmental contexts, their associated academic disciplines, as well as the literacies of these disciplines were foreign to these lecturers yet they were expected to facilitate students’ access to the disciplinary literacies. In addition, although these lecturers were de facto teaching academic literacy courses, most saw themselves as teachers of professional communication skills and technical writing. The paper engages with some of the issues that arose as a result of the partnering of nine such pairs of communication and disciplinary specialists in a ‘pedagogy of collaboration’. Issues of boundary-crossing, academic identity, power dynamics, relationships, roles, and responsibilities are raised through an analysis of the data. The paper also outlines some of the factors to be taken into consideration when communication and disciplinary specialists work collaboratively. Finally, a discussion of the process of locating the teaching of disciplinary literacies within disciplines follows, as well as how this process could inform the design of collaborative approaches to the teaching of disciplinary literacies in higher education.

Background
An institutional project provided the research site for this study and the project participants became the research participants in the study. The research reported on in this paper forms part of a larger study, reported on elsewhere (Jacobs, 2005). The research study involved collaboration between lecturers from different disciplines (hereafter referred to as disciplinary specialists) and language/communication lecturers (hereafter referred to as literacy lecturers) who formed literacy/discipline
partnerships. The partnerships spanned the following disciplines of study: Science, Radiography, Architecture, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Law, Marketing, Human Resource Management, Business Administration, and Public Administration. These partnerships became the vehicle for pedagogies of collaboration which sought to locate the teaching of technical/scientific language and communication within different disciplines by exploring the literacy practices of those disciplines.

Research design
All of the project participants were approached to participate in the study. A more detailed description of the data production methods can be found in Jacobs (2007). The primary data set comprised verbatim transcripts of 18 narrative interviews and three focus group sessions, as well as 14 pieces of reflective writing produced by the participants. The paper draws on excerpts from this data set. Conceptual categories were developed from the themes and patterns emerging from the data set. Through a process of open coding and systematic comparative analysis across transcripts, these concepts were named and defined as categories, and then developed in terms of their properties and dimensions. One theme that emerged across all interviews, focus groups and reflective writing related to the collaborative partnerships between literacy lecturers and disciplinary specialists. The paper explores this theme and the collaborative pedagogy that resulted from these partnerships.

Theoretical framing
This study draws on the work of the ‘International Multiliteracies Project’, led by researchers such as Cope and Kalantzis (1995, 2000), Kress (1990), Fairclough (1995), Gee (1992, 1998), Cazden (1992) and others, who refer to themselves as ‘The New London Group’ (1996). They offer an approach to literacy pedagogy that heralds a departure from understandings that see literacy as singular with a focus on language only, and usually a singular national form of standardised language; to broader understandings of literacies as plural. This ‘multiliteracies’ understanding focuses on modes of meaning beyond language alone, to include textual, visual, spatial, audio and behavioural; as well as a focus on socio-cultural practices embedded in a range of contexts, hence the plural form.

The goal of the multiliteracies approach is access to and critical engagement with powerful discourses in what the New London Group refers to as the three realms of our existence, namely our working, public and private lives. For university students the working realm would constitute their studies, and the goal of the multiliteracies approach would be access to and critical engagement with powerful academic and disciplinary discourses. What would this goal mean for literacy pedagogy? The New London Group suggests that literacy pedagogy needs to respond to a new global environment where diversity is central and difference is the norm. If we see diversity as central to academic institutions and difference as the norm in our classrooms, there will be no ‘standard’ forms but rather hybrid discourses which need to be negotiated among students. The goals for literacy pedagogy therefore need to be about expanding students’ linguistic repertoires and developing their ability to negotiate dialects and variations in register and different modes of meaning.

This pedagogy is not about catering for the needs of ‘minorities’, as they call it in the US, or ‘non-traditional’ students as they call it in the UK, or ‘the disadvantaged’ as they call it in SA; it is a shift away from these deficit models towards a pedagogy that will benefit all. The New London Group proposes pedagogy as a means for designing the social futures of our students. Such a pedagogy, they suggest, could be a basis for what they term ‘cohesive sociality’, ‘new civility’ and a more ‘equitable public realm’. How then does literacy pedagogy achieve such lofty goals?

Multiliteracies theory offers an understanding of literacy pedagogy as the integration of four factors: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice. Situated practice is about immersing students in authentic literacy practices within a community which includes experts. Students master these practices experientially, over time, through practice. However, overt instruction is needed to make students consciously aware of the learning acquired in situated practice and in this way give them control of what has been acquired. This is done through scaffolded learning activities
and explicit information on the forms, content and function of the discourses of practice. However, this alone does not necessarily give rise to a critical understanding; hence the need for critical framing, where the contexts and purposes of literacy practices are critiqued and the workings of power, politics, ideology and values are articulated. Multiliteracies theory suggests that critical framing needs to denaturalise and ‘make strange’ the discourses of practice that have been learned and mastered through situated practice and overt instruction. They argue that this will lead to transformed practice, which is about the transfer and re-creation of knowledge to other contexts, putting this knowledge into action, reflecting on it, creatively extending it and innovating. In the next section, data are presented and analysed drawing on the understandings of literacy pedagogy and disciplinary discourses offered by multiliteracies theory.

Findings
The research findings showed that there were four factors that had a significant impact on the collaborative pedagogy between disciplinary and literacy lecturers:

- the collaborative interactions within the literacy lecturer/disciplinary specialist partnerships;
- the nature of the relationships within the literacy lecturer/disciplinary specialist partnerships;
- the power dynamics that emerged within the literacy lecturer/disciplinary specialist partnerships;
- the roles and responsibilities negotiated within the literacy lecturer/disciplinary specialist partnerships.

Collaborative interactions
The interaction that took place between the collaborating disciplinary and literacy lecturers led to both parties gaining new insights into the perspective of each other’s disciplines. The disciplinary lecturers felt that the process of interacting with literacy lecturers who were not from their discipline helped clarify how the literacy practices of the discipline might be ambiguous and impeding students’ access to the disciplinary discourses, as illustrated in the following excerpt from the data:

… this whole thing of clarity, … it’s so easy to be ambiguous, and suddenly you’re realising, working as partnerships, where you’re dealing with someone who isn’t from your discipline, who’s saying: ‘but I don’t understand, just explain that for me’. You thought it was quite clear, I thought I said that quite clearly, and so that component of it, that was significant (Disciplinary lecturer).

It is evident that the disciplinary specialist is attempting to name his emerging understanding of how to teach disciplinary literacies explicitly, as a ‘thing of clarity’, as his needing to be clear and unambiguous when inducting his students into the literacy practices of his discipline. This emerging understanding was realised through ‘working as a partnership’, with ‘someone who isn’t from your discipline’. The value that his partner brings to the partnership is that he is an ‘outsider’ and not of that discipline, and therefore able to identify what is unclear and ambiguous. This ‘outsider’ perspective generates a process of deepening reflection for the ‘insider’, evident in the pronoun shift from ‘You thought’ to ‘I thought’, as the disciplinary specialist repositions himself from the universalising second person, to centralising himself in the first person. Here the disciplinary specialist is articulating a thought process, as he reflects on his ability to be clear and explicit when teaching his students about the literacy practices of his discipline. This process of seeking clarity was confirmed in the interview with his literacy partner, who stated that their interactions were underpinned by a good relationship, something that will be explored in the next section:

X [disciplinary specialist] would understand if I tell him that these students don’t know this and don’t understand it, and then he would say, but I made it so clear. I’d say: ‘Yes, but they didn’t quite get it.’ There was a very good relationship between myself and X (Communication lecturer).

The nature of these discussions seemed to play an important role in advancing the partnerships. Where the partner responded positively and was not prescriptive, the collaborative pedagogy appeared to be more productive:

… the team teaching especially … it’s nice to be able to bounce things off people and there’s always a positive feedback and then we focus on the actions all the time, you know,
what you have to do, and your partner says: ‘Try this and try that’ (Communication lecturer).

Where partners engaged with each other discursively and questioned each other, the partnerships tended to reach deeper levels of understanding regarding the explicit teaching of disciplinary discourses. This combination, of discursive engagement and a questioning partner, was found to be particularly valuable. The collaborative pedagogy was also enhanced through a focus on the teaching of joint lessons:

... the whole thing of the team teaching, was identifying the way that they [the students] interacted with what you were doing ... You [the disciplinary specialist] can’t stand back, it’s going on in a fairly short period of time, you aren’t observing yourself, the way that you’re explaining stuff to them, how is it making sense to the rest of the class, are they all understanding what you’re saying? But with the [literacy] lecturer saying, ‘I noticed that you were all sort of looking around, you didn’t seem to understand, there was a lot of you who didn’t seem to follow at all what he was talking about’ ... Sometimes I [the disciplinary specialist] just didn’t pick up, then he [literacy lecturer] would say, ‘But did you understand? Perhaps we could ask so-and-so just to explain what was meant there.’ And then I would say, ‘Hang on, of course I didn’t explain that fully’ ... that to me was invaluable (Disciplinary lecturer).

Team teaching provided the collaborative partnerships with a context of practice, within which they could explore different approaches to teaching and learning and attempt to find commonalities. Where partnerships were open to a discursive approach to team teaching, in which they engaged with their differences and followed a reasoned solution, they seemed to find synergies between their respective approaches to teaching and learning. One partnership saw their team teaching as a conversation:

There were two people and instead of teaching a lesson in class, we had a conversation in the class. We spoke to students and they began to engage with us, and if I couldn’t answer a question, she would, and if she couldn’t I would attempt. That created a very different kind of environment in the class, that to me made learners understand there are different ways of learning and real learning begins to happen when you engage. It can’t be done to you or for you. You gotta do it for yourself, and that to me was wonderful (Communication lecturer).

Another partnership saw their team teaching as a relay:

The team teaching, something totally foreign, X [literacy lecturer] and I were a little bit apprehensive at first, but then because I think we knew what we wanted to do, that helped a lot. So we said, look, we know what we have to do and then, just almost like a relay type of situation, you agree, OK right, this is what we’re going to do, the strategies, OK right, tactics, how will we tackle it and so on. And once X and I’d worked it out more or less in our minds, then it was relatively plain sailing. We clicked as a partnership. I think that was crucial. So the understanding had to be there, the confidence in one another, and also the moral support that we can lend each other, you know. If I, for example, maybe hesitate and then she would jump in, and vice versa, and that sort of understanding was fantastic to develop, and I think that’s crucial, there needs to be that, otherwise the team teaching exercise can be a little bit problematic (Disciplinary lecturer).

Where partnerships were not open to a discursive approach to team teaching, their experience of teaching joint lessons highlighted only the differences in their respective approaches to teaching and learning:

I tended to want to chime in while my partner was talking and I had to consciously try and stop myself from doing that during the lesson. They [the students] say something and I want to add to it, or I want to correct it, something that they say, and it was quite an effort for me not to do that. I think I did it once or twice, and then I just, - I - you shouldn’t do that. This person must talk. You know, the reason why I probably wanted to do that, because we were teaching a content, something about content. I tended to want to correct my partner sometimes, and help, which is not a good thing I think. It’s not a good thing ... it’s probably a bad sign on my side (Disciplinary lecturer).

In the above excerpt the disciplinary specialist saw his ‘chiming in’ as a ‘bad sign’, whereas in the excerpt before, the disciplinary specialist felt that it was ‘fantastic’ that his partner could just
‘jump in’ when he hesitated, and vice versa. He pointed to the fact that they ‘clicked as a partnership’, and indicated that this was crucial to the development of common understandings, confidence in one another, and moral support. It appears then that the nature of the relationship between the literacy lecturer/disciplinary specialist partnerships played an important role in developing common understandings.

Nature of the relationships
In the study the participants expressed the view that, like a marriage, the collaborative partnerships needed to be ‘worked on all the time’ and that there was a lot of ‘compromise and accommodating’. Different metaphors emerged in the data, to describe the various interactive processes that participants engaged in. The most common metaphor regarding the partnerships was that of marriage, pointing to the intensity of the relationships between the literacy lecturers and disciplinary specialists:

The partnership is like a marriage and incompatibilities leads to the disintegration of partnerships. I may sound rather arrogant but I survived in my partnership because I was accommodating and compromising. Is that not how all marriages survive? (Communication lecturer).

It was like a real marriage, that type of partnership and you know there were times that the other person did wonderful, I mean, he’s so creative and he writes so well. That frustrated me because you know, there were times when he would spew out these articles, and then, you know, suddenly, there was nothing, and I think I did that to him a lot of times. I’d storm into his office and I’d throw tantrums… (Communication lecturer).

In the second excerpt, a literacy lecturer uses strong wording, like ‘frustrated’, as well as clear agency, as in ‘I did that to him’, to describe her actions towards her disciplinary specialist partner. The description of her partner as someone who would ‘spew out’ articles and then suddenly leave her with ‘nothing’, points to a relationship of dependency on the part of the literacy partner, who needed the disciplinary specialist partner to provide the disciplinary content. This relationship of dependency created an inequality in the partnerships which played itself out in different ways across the nine partnerships. This will be explored further in the next section on power dynamics.

All participants agreed that the factor that had the greatest influence on the nature of the relationships, was the personalities of the individuals making up the partnerships. One partnership was described in the following way by the literacy lecturer:

We had different ways of thinking. He’s very sort of, ticking things off, and you know, record keeping, and how many students were in the class. I said, ‘Let’s just get on with the lesson, and they can do their own attendance, let’s not worry about that now’. So we had very different personalities (Communication lecturer).

In a second partnership, the disciplinary specialist felt that her efforts at a pedagogy of collaboration were negatively affected by the personality differences in her partnership:

Perhaps I was too finicky and disciplined. I want everything to run smoothly and cannot handle unpunctuality, missing meetings, etc. My gut feeling is that I would have performed better if I had a partner to suit my personality, temperament and idiosyncrasies (Disciplinary lecturer).

While she describes herself as ‘finicky and disciplined’ and wanting ‘everything to run smoothly’, she describes her literacy lecturer partner as:

He’s very nonchalant; he really doesn’t have the (self) discipline. I found him to be very nonchalant … He’s got a passion, for sure, but it’s like, tomorrow will come. Tomorrow’s another day. Why are you panicking? Maybe I panic and I want to get it done with (Disciplinary lecturer).

Her partner, on the other hand, describes himself in the following way:

I’m not a person that works from a rule-book. It makes some people very frustrated, but I’m not a rule-book person. I go on organic, I’m a process person. Some people are product driven, which is good, you need a balance, but I don’t think I would have worked better if we had something on a list, because then I’d have to check the list (Communication lecturer).
In the above excerpt, although the literacy lecturer appears to pick up on the frustration that his partner experiences as a result of the differences in their personalities, he seems reluctant to adjust his ‘organic’ approach.

A literacy lecturer from a third partnership also raised the differences in personality as a significant factor affecting the nature of the collaborative relationship:

I had to work with someone and I wasn’t really sure how to play with this person. I think probably because personalities are different, because we just went into it not really having talked about it beforehand. The two of us talking about what it meant, or what it was going to mean, where we were going and so on, and just the way in which both of us looked at teaching and learning, it was very different … I don’t think I was very confident … I doubt my abilities all the time … it did involve, who you are and who I am (Communication lecturer).

Her lack of confidence and doubts about her ability raised obstacles right from the start of the partnership. Her partner, sensing her reluctance to drive the collaborative pedagogy, proceeded to take charge:

I was excited to get going, but at the same time, coming from the background that I did, I was sort of waiting for the Communications person to pull me, or to make the first move and that didn’t happen for me. I was excited to go, and I started doing the pulling. It didn’t go well with my partner at the time … Getting this thing going was pretty important to me because at that stage I didn’t know what to do, I wasn’t sure what I was going to do. I was going to do it, but I didn’t know what to do. So I really needed guidance there and when it wasn’t forthcoming I decided to do it my way. Maybe it was wrong from me also, but maybe it’s just part of my nature. I’m like that, if I’m in a meeting and things are not happening then I want to make it happen (Disciplinary lecturer).

In the excerpt the disciplinary specialist also alludes to ‘his background’, which earlier in the interview he described as ‘coming from industry’. He cites his industrial background as the reason why he deferred to the expertise of the literacy lecturer. This clearly influenced the dynamics of power in their partnership, as discussed in the next section. Personality differences appeared to seriously undermine the working relationships between disciplinary and literacy lecturers. The passage of time, as well as tolerance and patience, played an important role in allowing for personalities to gel. The building of good relationships between collaborating partners takes time and a context where time is not a constraint.

Other factors affecting the nature of the relationships among the collaborative partnerships were age, life experience, as well as teaching experience. A literacy lecturer, who had attempted to teach collaboratively with a number of disciplinary specialists, expressed the view that lecturers with less teaching experience were more open to changing their practices and engaging with new approaches. His experience of the factors affecting the nature of the relationship in a collaborative pedagogy was articulated as:

I think it’s with people who are new to the whole environment of education and who are excited about it still. I know that might sound a terrible thing to say, but I think a lot of people who’ve been around for a while just aren’t excited anymore. They’ve lost enthusiasm, and you see it in comments that they make (Communication lecturer).

A common vision regarding educational issues as well as a shared commitment seemed to underpin the more successful collaborative relationships. In one such case the literacy lecturer felt that her partner was ‘asking similar (educational) questions to me. She was also energised and creative in what she was going through’. In one less successful partnership the literacy lecturer felt that the lack of commitment from her partner had a detrimental effect on their efforts at collaborative pedagogy:

I got frustrated with him at times. I would want to get some kind of enthusiasm and commitment from him and it was almost like I was driving what was happening and I didn’t want to be driving what was happening, I wanted to be collaborative. The moment I showed any sign of frustration, he would react as if I was trying to tell him what to do. And then I just decided, listen, I’m not going there, I’m not going into that, I’m not going to get to the stage where I end up fighting with this guy, and arguing with him. So I just decided to get on and
do it on my own and ask questions when I felt I couldn’t really answer them. But I did feel that that actually was detrimental in terms of what I was capable of doing, because I’m not a Z [disciplinary specialist] (Communication lecturer).

Even though the literacy lecturer in the above extract was aware that ‘doing it on her own’ was detrimental to the pedagogy of collaboration since she lacked the necessary disciplinary expertise, she opted for this rather than show her frustration or argue with her partner. She chose not to talk to her partner about his apparent withdrawal from the collaborative work, yet she hated having to work on her own:

It was almost as if the moment I’d ask why he was withdrawing or why he had withdrawn, I was scared I would then be making it an issue, like I would almost be accusing him of withdrawing, and I wanted him to feel free to be there when he wanted to be and not there when he didn’t want to be, and unfortunately he chose often not to be there … I felt like often I was working completely on my own and I didn’t know, I mean I was supposed to be doing this integrated text with X [the discipline], and I was taking pot luck. I felt like I wasn’t really being guided (Communication lecturer).

Earlier in the interview this participant had pointed to a real need for guidance from her partner because the disciplinary content was so foreign to her. However, even though the content matter created a real need for them to work collaboratively, it did not contribute to a more successful partnership, as psychological issues such as personality, commitment and common educational vision, as well as broader socio-political issues such as disciplinary expertise and the status of different disciplines, appeared to have a greater impact on the success of the collaborative relationships.

Power dynamics

Another factor that influenced the partnerships between disciplinary and literacy lecturers was the dynamics of power operating within the partnerships. When literacy lecturers constructed themselves as experts in the partnerships, they undermined the expertise of their partners and weakened the collaborative relationship. The power dynamics in the partnerships were largely influenced by factors such as understandings of collaborative ways of explicitly teaching disciplinary literacies, the status of disciplines such as Science and Engineering in relation to Education and Languages, as well as notions of disciplinary expertise, all of which underlie broader institutional policies and practices. The partnerships thus tended to mirror the socio-political context of the institution.

Across the partnerships, both literacy lecturers and disciplinary specialists appeared to have weak disciplinary identities. Literacy lecturers generally did not construct themselves as language experts, preferring to identify themselves as experts in educational matters such as teaching and learning, while disciplinary specialists generally did not construct themselves as experts in their disciplinary field, preferring to identify themselves with the practice of their respective disciplines in the world of work.¹ In the excerpts below, a literacy lecturer asserts his educational expertise, while a disciplinary specialist defers to the expertise of his literacy partner:

A person with a degree perhaps but with no educational background, gets a post, and a senior post at that level … that’s why they have so many problems with the students. You know I have been taught method of teaching … I could go to town about this. We had to do method of teaching a subject, not only method as a general thing … I was in that area where they said, ‘method of teaching Science, method of teaching Maths’ and so on. I had to do it. It’s wonderful because you picked up so many things that you can apply … you can’t come in here with an MA degree and don’t know how to manage a class (Communication lecturer).

I was constantly left thinking, what is actually required of me as a content lecturer? … such things were more obvious to X [the language partner] and also maybe people with teaching experience, and formal teacher training you know, whatever formal teacher training (Disciplinary lecturer).

I have argued elsewhere (Jacobs, 2008), that the literacy lecturers constructed themselves as educational experts, while the disciplinary specialists saw themselves as lacking expertise in
educational matters. This had a significant effect on the dynamics of power operating in the collaborative pedagogy. In one partnership the literacy lecturer saw herself as ‘educationally switched on’ and her partner as lacking ‘an educational background’, which set the scene for how the power relations played themselves out in the partnership. She expected him to ‘come to her’ and consult her about how ‘to help the students to access’ the disciplinary content ‘conceptually’. He never emerged as the expert in this partnership and constantly deferred to her educational expertise. She appeared to pick up on the reason for his reticence, when later in the interview she commented: ‘Maybe he felt intimidated by the fact that I had all this educational background’, yet she responded to the situation by stepping further into the disciplinary domain. This literacy lecturer failed to see how this further undermined the expertise of her partner and weakened the collaborative relationship.

Equality was generally not achieved in most of the partnerships. Where literacy lecturers felt unequal it tended to be related to either psycho-social issues such as age difference, ‘he’s got all this power, he’s older than me, everybody in the faculty knows him and so I had to be tip-toeing around him’, and being new to the tertiary environment, ‘I had to be very diplomatic because I couldn’t really moan about him, because I’m new … not knowing how much to step over that mark and then only later on getting that kind of dynamics right’; or it had to do with broader socio-political issues such as being kept outside of the practices of disciplinary specialists, disciplinary expertise and the status of disciplines in higher education. Although the power dynamics in the collaborative partnerships pointed to inequalities on both sides of the partnerships, the pattern of literacy lecturers playing a more dominant role tended to play itself out across most collaborative partnerships. One literacy lecturer saw the experience as having more value for disciplinary specialists:

More broadly, I believe it really meant a lot to subject lecturers, of whom most have not had training in teaching methodology, theory, psychology etc. The techniques revealed … were eye-openers for many of them (Communication lecturer).

While a disciplinary specialist felt less knowledgeable than the literacy lecturers:

The content lecturers maybe should’ve been given an informal lecture or informal seminar, workshop or something like that, just to put them into the education part of it, tell them that in education, I don’t know if you could do it as simply as this, education has these theories. This is what the theories are about; this is what this whole thing is about. So you come in with your content background, but that we have to abide by the education theories, or whatever. We should have been given some knowledge on that. I felt there was no knowledge, and suddenly they were talking about this and, I thought, God, what is this? (Disciplinary lecturer).

In the above excerpt the disciplinary specialist expressed the need to be ‘given’ knowledge that the literacy lecturers appeared to have. She felt disempowered by her perceived lack of knowledge regarding educational theory and pedagogy, and as a consequence deferred to these theories as well as the literacy lecturers who were assumed to be knowledgeable. This set up a relationship based on inequality and demarcated a clear ‘them’ and ‘us’ grouping among disciplinary and literacy lecturers.

Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities within the partnerships were influenced by institutional discourses and practices, which framed literacy lecturers as being responsible for developing the disciplinary literacies of students. Literacy lecturers generally felt that they were playing a bigger role and carrying greater responsibilities within their partnerships. This seemed to be linked to the fact that their collaboration was based on pedagogy and the writing of teaching materials to support pedagogy. These areas were assumed to be the expertise of the literacy lecturers. It appears that role definition determined the nature of the relationship and established power relations in the partnership. A disciplinary specialist, in her interview, confirmed that she ‘looked a lot towards the communication person for direction’. The fact that the disciplinary specialist looked to the literacy lecturer for guidance placed him in a position of power. Initially he was comfortable with this position of power, until it led to what he considered unfair division of labour in the partnership.
and ‘added responsibilities’. In most of the partnerships it was the literacy partner who assumed responsibility and initiated processes, even when this was considered detrimental to the integration process:

*I felt blocked because I didn’t understand the discipline … I would have liked the discipline person to be more directing, and see what I can bring to the learning and the materials … giving me some context, so that I’m able to help by integrating various methodologies and various activities with a particular area of work, and make the teaching come alive, help to make the teaching come alive, but I can’t go in there and, and be a specialist … that whole role with X [disciplinary specialist], trying to get him involved and yet feeling like I was becoming a domineering character because he wasn’t responding, he wasn’t moving forward with me. And if I dragged him along it would be like heavy-handed, so I was trying to be in a role of ‘come, if you don’t want to take a bit of leadership here, I’ll try and lead a little bit.’… I don’t like really being in the leadership role, I like to be part of the team, so when nobody else leads, I’m the kind of person who says, ‘for goodness sake, we’re gonna sit here all day’ and then I’ll actually lead, but it’s not something that I prefer doing (Communication lecturer).

In the above excerpt, although the literacy lecturer wanted the disciplinary specialist to be more directing and realised that he was better suited to provide the context for the collaborative pedagogy, she assumed the leadership role when he did not respond, because she was ‘the kind of person’ who wanted to get the process started. This was similar to another partnership where the disciplinary specialist felt that the literacy lecturer was better able to lead the process and provide him with guidance, but when such leadership was not forthcoming his personality exerted a stronger influence than his perceived lack of expertise (see previous sections). He too adopted the leadership role, reinforcing the notion that personality influenced roles and responsibilities within partnerships.

Another factor that influenced roles and responsibilities within partnerships was the division of labour. In the data it emerged that there was an unequal division of labour in most partnerships. The unequal division of labour was linked to notions of expertise and how participants understood the nature of their collaboration. There seemed to be an expectation among most of the disciplinary specialists that the literacy partners would take primary responsibility. One disciplinary specialist felt that his contributions were constrained by his lack of schooling in language teaching, implying that he would have felt better equipped had he had some qualification or training in language teaching. Once again notions of expertise influenced how partnership roles were defined. Where there was a more equal contribution to the collaboration and where the literacy lecturer was not regarded as ‘the expert’ in the partnership, role reversal occurred. In one partnership the disciplinary specialist felt that:

*Rather than being two separate inputs, we were changing roles. I was much more conscious of language, of the way I used it, so that it engaged the learners rather than alienating them. This process of the team teaching has enabled me to become much more reflective on my teaching practice and equally significant to look at how I was assessing my students to see what it was that they understood (Disciplinary lecturer).

His literacy partner felt equally comfortable assuming the role of disciplinary specialist in a team teaching situation, ‘*Now I seem to replace X [the disciplinary specialist]. If X isn’t there, then I just continue for the two hours*’. In this partnership the disciplinary specialist played a primary role in the writing of the teaching materials. The role that disciplinary specialists played in writing the teaching materials seemed to be an important factor. Where disciplinary specialists were primary writers they owned the teaching materials and valued it as a classroom resource. It appears that when the disciplinary specialist is the initiator and produces the teaching materials, the explicit teaching of disciplinary literacies is more successful and the literacy practices of the discipline become more accessible to students. In partnerships where this did not happen, and where literacy lecturers assumed the role of primary writer, the explicit teaching of disciplinary literacies was less successful and the teaching materials (such as the case studies referred to in the quote below) lacked authenticity, as the following excerpt indicates:

*My case studies that I wrote were based on what happens when people bring personal
problems and worries into the workplace, and the kinds of things that can arise as a result … and so I try to draw on what I know, and bring it into a context that the students would be able to relate to … I sat there and thought what could you investigate in a Z [workplace where the discipline is practised] … so I made the whole thing up. So it’s an entire fiction, made up … and then I run it by X [disciplinary specialist], ‘does this sound feasible? Read my case studies, is this realistic, is this what would happen?’ Now if they had to write their own stuff, I don’t know whether it would be different, whether they would now maybe write about, get more into the nitty-gritty of the Y [referring to a more technical aspect of the discipline] … that’s how I did it. Under the circumstances I did what I felt I could do. I would have loved to have been a complete fundi on the subjects myself … but that wasn’t the idea (Communication lecturer).

A literacy lecturer, without a disciplinary specialist in the driving role, can achieve only a limited exploration of the literacy practices of the discipline. Literacy lecturers are often unable to deal with the more technical disciplinary content, where students really need linguistic access. The solution is not for literacy lecturers to become inducted into the literacy practices of the discipline, because this would be crossing into the disciplinary domain of the collaborating disciplinary specialist. Literacy lecturers attempting to become ‘experts’ in the discipline of their collaborating partners undermine the disciplinary expertise that these lecturers bring to the collaborative partnerships.

Implications
Data from the research findings reported on in this paper have shown that ‘situated practice’ requires expert knowledge of an academic discipline; however ‘overt instruction’ is difficult for disciplinary specialists, as they hold this knowledge at a tacit level. This also leads to difficulties with ‘critical framing’, as these experts are so immersed in their disciplinary discourses that they often are unconscious of the workings of discourses within their disciplines. Data from this study have shown that ‘overt instruction’ and ‘critical framing’ in literacy pedagogy is enhanced through a collaborative pedagogy between disciplinary and literacy lecturers.

Although few literacy or disciplinary lecturers articulated their understanding of a collaborative pedagogy in terms of giving students access to the workings of disciplinary discourses, some shifted towards this understanding as they engaged in collaborative teaching over a period of time:

The content lecturers generally were perhaps hesitant at the beginning as we had perhaps not had the depth of pedagogical practices and teaching methodology that the language lecturers had had. I think this changed over time (Communication lecturer).

Two levels of interaction occurred between communication and disciplinary specialists, interactions around pedagogy, and interactions around the literacy practices of the discipline. When the focus of the interaction was on teaching and learning, it elevated the role of the literacy lecturers and downplayed the expertise of the disciplinary specialists. On the other hand, when the focus of the interaction was on the literacy practices of the discipline, it elevated the role of the disciplinary specialists and downplayed the expertise of the literacy lecturers. The power relations in the partnerships were affected by the focus of the interaction between the collaborating partners. In partnerships where a balance was achieved, both the literacy lecturers and the disciplinary specialists were able to expand their identities and develop new understandings of what it meant to locate the teaching of technical/scientific language and communication within different disciplines by exploring the literacy practices of the discipline. These were the more successful partnerships where deeper understandings were reached about explicitly teaching disciplinary literacies.

The data point to the following factors as being significant in determining ‘successful’ partnerships: similar age, compatible personalities, shared life experiences, common educational vision, comparable levels of commitment, previous collaborative engagement, disciplinary expertise, and disciplinary status. The way in which these factors interacted with each other impacted on both the balance of power within the collaborative partnerships and how the collaborating partners developed their understandings of what it meant to locate the teaching of technical/scientific language and communication within different disciplines by exploring the literacy practices of the discipline. The data further seem to indicate that collaborative interaction which balanced and recognised the
different types of expertise between literacy lecturers and disciplinary specialists, allowed for literacy lecturers to play a vital role in unlocking the tacit knowledge that their partners had regarding the workings of discourses within their disciplines.

**Conclusions**
Returning to the goals of literacy pedagogy, which suggest that integrating ‘situated practice’, ‘overt instruction’ and ‘critical framing’ will ultimately lead to ‘transformed practice’, the data suggest that pedagogies of collaboration among literacy and disciplinary lecturers, where the explicit teaching of disciplinary literacies are explored, enables the integration of these factors. This collaborative pedagogy requires disciplinary specialists to work within their role as disciplinary experts, while engaging with literacy lecturers who are ‘outsiders’ to their disciplinary communities. This engagement allows for disciplinary specialists to bring their tacit knowledge of the rules underpinning the literacy practices of their disciplines, to an explicit level and then to collaboratively translate this into ‘overt instruction’ which allows students access to the discourses of the discipline. This engagement with literacy lecturers further allows disciplinary specialists some critical distance from the disciplinary discourses in which they are so immersed. This critical distance and the ‘outsider’ perspective of the literacy lecturer, brings to the ‘overt instruction’ a ‘critical framing’ which allows students to critically engage with the powerful disciplinary discourses. The challenge for higher education is to consider how this process of partnering literacy and disciplinary lecturers could inform the design of collaborative approaches to the teaching of technical/scientific language and communication within different disciplines by exploring the literacy practices of the disciplines.

**Note**
¹ This could be ascribed to the fact that they were University of Technology lecturers and generally drawn from industry rather than from academia, as is generally the case at traditional universities.