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Exploring the discursively constructed identities of a teacher-writer teaching writing

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ABSTRACT

In the light of international interest in teachers' literate identities and practices, this paper addresses the under-researched area of teachers' writing identities. It examines the multimodal interactive discursive practices at play in the writing classroom of a teacher in the UK who, in order to support the pupils, consciously positions herself as a writer in this context; seeking to model engagement through demonstrating writing in whole class sessions and composing alongside pupils in groups. Drawing on previous empirical work which explored the fluid identities performed and enacted by this teacher (Cremin and Baker, 2010), the paper, examining video material, affords detailed analysis of the multimodal interactive discourses indexed in demonstration writing and writing alongside. It maps specific instances of discursive practice onto a model for conceptualising teachers' writing identities: a teacher-writer, writer-teacher identity continuum. It reveals on-going conflict between the teacher's intended discourse positions/identities and the recognition (Gee, 2005) and acceptance of these attempts by the pupils. The paper, in contributing new understandings about the microscopic, fluid and conflictual dimensions of identity positioning in these particular practice contexts, highlights the importance of the embodied discursive voice of the pedagogue. Additionally, it offers a new analytic tool for understanding how teacher behaviour opens and constrains identity positions and argues that multimodal interaction in teaching writing deserves increased methodological attention.

Key words: discourse, identity, multimodal interaction, teachers as writers, writing.

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INTRODUCTION

Whilst there is considerable research exploring the discursive construction of students' literacy practices and identities (Bausch, 2007; Hall, 2002; Lewis, Enciso and Moje, 2007), there is less which focuses on the discursively mediated identities of literacy teachers. Yet the evidence suggests that teachers' conceptions of literacy, literate identities and pedagogic practice, frame, shape and often limit students' identities, both as readers (Hall et al., 2010; Hall, 2012) and as writers (Bourne, 2002; Ryan and Barton, 2014). Additionally, some scholars argue that if teachers see themselves as

readers/writers this will impact positively on their practice (Andrews, 2008; Commeyras, Bisplinhoff and Olson, 2003).

Studies of the identities of teachers of reading reveal that in accountability cultures marked by high stakes assessment, teachers' instructional practices and positions as educators are often compromised (Assaf, 2008; English, Hargreaves and Hislam, 2002). With regard to teachers' digital identities McDougall (2009) posits that new technologies have provoked an identity crisis for practitioners reluctant to embrace more futures-oriented identities as literacy educators. While understanding teachers' identities and related practices are recognised as important, few studies focus on teachers' identities as writers in school. There are no known studies that, like the work presented here, examine the multimodal interaction and discursive processes at play in the classrooms of teachers who consciously seek to position themselves as writers.

This paper draws on data collected in a primary phase study in the UK. The first analytic stage examined the identity work of two practitioners and the ways in which they positioned themselves and were positioned as teachers and writers in the classroom (Cremin and Baker, 2010). Some years earlier, the teachers had engaged in a professional development project, which, in a manner not dissimilar to the US National Writing Project (NWP), foregrounded practitioners' engagement in writing, encouraging them to adopt the position of 'writer' in school (Ing, 2009). Subsequently these teachers sought to sustain this and to model being writers through demonstrating writing and writing individually alongside pupils. As a consequence, their positioning as writers was studied. The earlier paper revealed that the writing classroom represented a site of struggle and tension for the practitioners as they performed and enacted their identities as both teachers and writers (Cremin and Baker, 2010). In this earlier paper, an identity cline for teachers of writing was presented from the first analytic stage (see Figure 1). It offers the analyst a conceptualisation of how teachers' emotional engagement, agency and authenticity in writing (as 'writers') can be constrained or made possible by institutional, intrapersonal and interpersonal influences.

The current paper revisits this dataset and the identity cline in order to analyse the discursively constructed identities of one of the practitioners at a more micro-level through exploring what her multimodal behaviours can tell us about her shifting identity positions. This second stage of analysis permitted a unique and sustained focus on moment-by-moment instantiations of particular multimodal discourses with sufficient detail so as to describe how the teacher's various discursive behaviours relate to her changing identity positions throughout three lessons. The research question which drove the second analytic stage of the study examined how this teacher engaged in constructing, reproducing and maintaining different discourses through multimodal interactions as she sought to model being a writer during demonstration writing and writing alongside pupils. The multimodal units of analysis chosen for examination, from Norris' (2004) framework included: the teacher's speech/vocalisation, proxemics, body posture and movement, gaze, head movement, gesture and print.

THEORETICAL FRAME AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

Teachers as writers

Arguably, the positioning of teachers as writers in school classrooms can be traced back to Emig's (1971) early work, which highlighted the potential of teachers using their own writing experiences to inform professional development. This was built upon through the process writing movement and Graves' assertion that teaching writing 'demands the control of two crafts, teaching and writing' which cannot be separated (1983:5). Whilst Graves' work has been heavily critiqued for being anecdotal and unsystematic (Martin, 1985; Smagorinsky, 1987), it appeared to prompt practitioners to use their compositions as teaching tools and, alongside Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) recommendations regarding the value of teachers modelling the writing process and Calkins' (1983) pedagogic work, spawned a number of related studies. It also prompted considerable international debate. Some scholars suggest that as teachers develop their confidence as writers and model writing in class, their attitudes to teaching writing improve (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd and Radencich, 2000; Murray, 1985). Others claim that teacher enthusiasm for writing motivates student

writers (Guthrie, 1996; Kaufman, 2002) or that when practitioners demonstrate writerly behaviour and share their compositional challenges, younger writers benefit (Root and Steinberg, 1996; Susi, 1984). However, much of this work is discursive, journalistic and anecdotal in nature and whilst appealing to common-sense views, the conclusions drawn are not always warranted. Contradictory research also exists, asserting that teachers' perceptions of the importance of writing and faith in their students' abilities are more significant indicators of efficacy than involvement as writers (Robbins, 1996), and that when teachers write, they become susceptible to exposure and reduce instructional time (Gleeson and Prain, 1996; Brooks, 2007).

Notwithstanding these conflicting perspectives, the adoption of a writer's stance, teacher modelling and undertaking the same tasks as pupils remain central tenets of the US NWP (Andrews, 2008) and the focus of international investigation in the UK (Cremin, 2006); New Zealand (Locke et al., 2011; Dix, 2012); the US (Whitney, 2008; McKinney and Giorgis, 2009; McCarthy, Woodard and Kang, 2014); Canada (Yeo, 2007), and South Africa (Mendelowitz, 2014). In the UK, the site of the current study, there was at the time of the research, an expectation that teachers should model their expertise as writers, using their texts as exemplars for pupils to imitate (DfES, 2006). This conception of teachers as accomplished writers, demonstrating skill mastery and genre knowledge, arguably was, and still is, underpinned by a narrow conceptualisation of schooled writing in England (Hilton, 2001; Cremin and Myhill, 2012).

In the US, considering the size and longevity of the NWP, the research base on this issue is not extensive (Prichard and Honneycutt, 2006) and whilst large-scale NWP quantitative studies indicate increases in student outcomes (Buchanan, et al., 2005), these are not solely attributable to teachers' authorial stances and practices. Additionally, NWP evaluations and studies rarely involve observation and document neither pedagogical discourse nor teachers' writer identities in classrooms. Similarly, few of the studies noted earlier include observation; most rely on self-reports, often from 'exemplary' writing teachers. Studies of pre-service teachers' perceptions of writing and of themselves as writers also rely upon self-reporting (Morgan, 2010; Turvey, 2007). There are no known studies that explore their transitions as writers into school or their identities as novice teachers of writing. Yet examining how teachers'

enact their identities as writers in school is germane to understanding their instruction, and ultimately pupils learning to write.

Teacher-writer identities

Only two of the studies noted above employed an identity lens to explore the writing identities of practising teachers (Cremin and Baker, 2010; McKinney and Giorgis, 2009). The former, our case study of two teachers teaching writing, revealed their enacted identity positions were often in conflict, influenced not only by interaction and the wider institutional context, but significantly by their spontaneous compositions produced in class (Cremin and Baker, 2010). The teachers' relationships with their unfolding writing, emotional engagement with each composition, and degree of authenticity and authorial agency experienced, impacted upon their positioning as teachers and writers in the classroom. Conceptualising this on an identity continuum (Figure 1), which sought to convey the constant oscillation and struggle involved, we selected the terms 'shift' and 'conflict' to signal particular moments of change. 'Shift' indicated where the teachers' identity positions moved across the continuum, 'conflict' was used to signify when these shifts led to discernible tension between the teacher's intended action (as recorded in their post-event interviews) and the ways the teaching context closed down possible identity positions, particularly for 'writer-teacher' engagement. On the basis of this first analytic stage, we argued that teachers oscillate along the continuum: at times their writing was more institutionally aligned (when they wrote as 'teacher-writers'), whilst at other times their writing had more personal resonance and they positioned themselves towards the 'writer-teacher' end of the continuum.

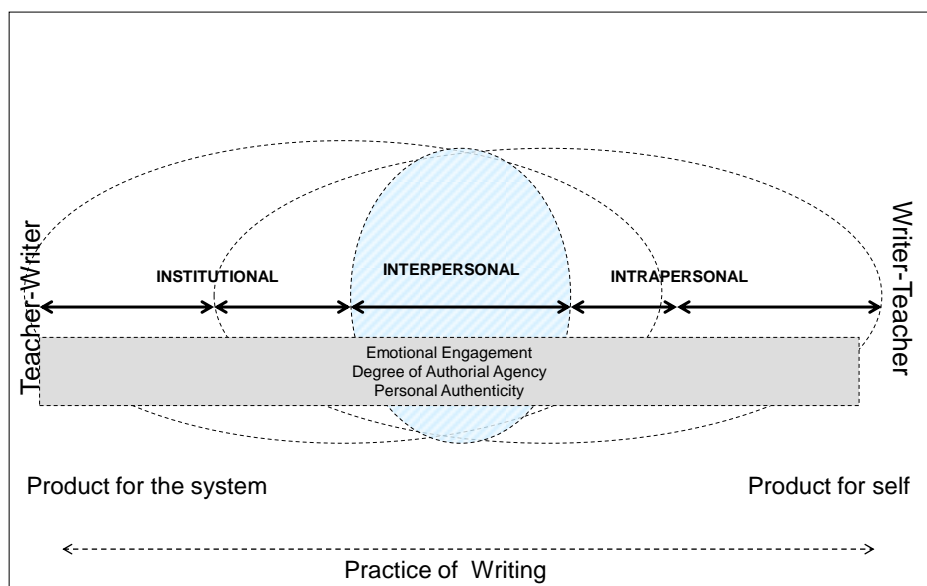


Figure 1: A teacher-writer, writer-teacher continuum (Cremin and Baker, 2010:20)

The work of McKinney and Giorgis (2009) also reveals the conflictual nature of elementary teachers' writer identities. In order to explore interconnections between literacy specialists' identities as writers and their identities and performances as teachers of writing, these researchers drew on eleven teachers' writer autobiographies (constructed in a credit-bearing class on writing instruction) and interviews (conducted one year after the class). They found multiple discontinuities exist and suggest that participants' childhood experiences of school writing have complex consequences for their identities as writers and teachers of writing. However, they acknowledge their inability to comment upon how the practitioners performed their identities in the classroom; without observation of enacted identities, the challenge of respondent rhetoric (Atkinson, 1990) remains.

Discourse and identities

Teaching roles (McDougall, 2009) argues, are constituted by and constitute teachers' pedagogical practice and professional identities, and are shaped by and shape the context. Similar views are adopted by McCarthy et al (2014), who employed Ivanič's (2004) conceptual framework of discourses in writing instruction to explore teachers' beliefs, practices and identities around writing. They report that the teaching

environment in the US, characterised by ‘greater accountability, testing practices, and compliance with state standards and guidelines’ (2014:87), leads teachers to adopt hybrid discourses of writing, framed by district-adopted curricula, opportunities available for professional development and teachers’ own experiences of writing. We too view teachers’ writing identities as a complex mixture of individual agency and external pressure, mediated by the institutional setting and the relational positioning that is linked to identifying, conforming with and distancing from the discourse positions and practices of others.

In the current study, we undertook observations and videoed classroom practice in order to examine the multimodal interactive discursive processes at play as a lens on the complex identity positions made available and constituted by discourse. We acknowledge that the term ‘multimodal’ connects with work exploring textually mediated poly-semiotic meaning making, but seek to clarify the distinction between multimodality (for example, Kress, 2009) and the concept of multimodal interaction (Norris, 2004) adopted in this paper. In exploring how discourses constrain and open identity positions and in turn how the identity positions adopted constitute discourses, we draw on the conceptual work of Blommaert (2005), who views discourse as comprising ‘all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns’ (2005:3). This definition extends the scope of discourse beyond talk in the classroom and acknowledges Norris’ assertion that ‘all interactions are multimodal’ (2004:1). This view of discursive behaviour emphasises the inseparability of language from other embodied modes of meaning making and communication.

Viewing literacy as social practice, we consider the classroom a place in which a variety of discursive practices and positions are made available. We share the plural, relational and positional view of identities common in much literacies and discourse research (Ivanič, 1998; Holland and Leander, 2004; McCarthy and Moje, 2002), and reject notions of an essential, fixed self; rather we recognise the fluidity and variability of identity positions inscribed in discourse. Blommaert (2005:232) captures the manifold and transient nature of identities in commenting it is:

‘...not a matter of articulating *one* identity, but of the mobilisation of a whole *repertoire* of identity features converted into complex and subtle moment-to-moment speaking positions.’

In this paper we focus on the multimodal interactive nature of these identity features through examining in depth the construction and enactment of the inhabited identities of one teacher, with reference to the interplay between her dual roles as teacher and writer in the classroom. Furthermore, we relate this analysis back to the identity cline (Figure 1) to develop our argument about how the teaching context can constrain and open possibilities for teachers’ authentic, agentic and emotionally engaged writing in the literacy classroom.

The relationally mediated nature of teachers’ identity work as writers means that the notion of ‘voice’ and its role in mediating individuals’ identity work is of particular importance in this study. We view voice as an active attempt to inhabit particular identity positions, and adopt, constitute and perform particular discourses, drawing from specific multimodal repertoires of linguistic and embodied behaviour in order to do so. The success of such attempts is dependent on these discourses being “recognised” by others (Gee, 2005). In the writing classroom, the success of the adoption of teacher-writer or writer-teacher personas relies on the other players (pupils, teaching assistants) in the room responding appropriately to the inhabited discourse position. The potential lack of uptake renders experimentation with differing writing identities a high-stakes activity, as demonstrated by our data.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The project, grounded in a qualitative interpretive methodology, was planned within the parameters of a case study (Stake, 1995). In alignment with Stenhouse, our research was concerned with understanding educational action in order ‘to enrich the thinking and discourse of educators either by the development of educational theory or by refinement of prudence through the systematic and reflective documentation of evidence’ (1985: 50). In employing an ethnographically-styled research design that involved regular engagement in the field over a period of time and two teachers, we worked to balance the emic-etic tension of their ‘insider’ insights with the

researchers' 'outsider' observations and interpretations. We adhered to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Revised Ethical Guidelines (BERA, 2011), informed consent, the right to withdraw was offered both participants and Elaine gave permission for her photograph to be used in this paper. In recognising that the attribution of meaning to discursive processes is not a neutral activity, we disclose our biases and related personal experience in this area (Sanguinetti, 2000). One of us has worked fairly extensively with teachers on projects seeking to broaden their knowledge and reflective engagement in the compositional process and regularly engages in both academic writing and journaling. The other is involved in a doctorate documenting the journeys of writers from school to university; her writing at home is predominantly academically oriented.

The sampling strategy employed in the original study included reputational selection (Goetz and Lecompte, 1984), and theoretical representativeness (Patton, 1990); the practitioners were recommended by local authority advisers who knew they continued to position themselves as writers in the classroom and were interested in reflecting upon practice. Whilst the first analytic stage focused on both teachers' identity positioning, in the second we identified Elaine as our purposive case study participant (Yin, 1984) because, in contrast to Jeff, who was a deputy head without class responsibility, Elaine had a more typical teaching role as the class teacher. Furthermore, Jeff was the school literacy co-ordinator, whilst Elaine the mathematics co-ordinator in her institution. Thus, whilst we make no claim for generalisability, we suggest her role is more representative of wider practice as a class teacher.

The focus of the second analytic stage necessitated a more detailed analysis of Elaine's teacher-writer identity positioning. We asked: how does this teacher engage in constructing, reproducing and maintaining different discourses through multimodal interactions as she seeks to model being a writer during demonstration writing and writing alongside? We also considered the consequences of these interactions, but did not seek to evaluate the pedagogic practices of demonstration writing or writing alongside pupils. Rather, we focused on the embodied discursive practices and positions adopted by the teacher in these contexts with a view to developing a richer understanding of how discourses constrain and open particular identity positions and in turn how the identity positions adopted constitute discourses.

Data collection

Elaine was assigned a researcher and visited four times across a month. Initially, recognising the need for an understanding of the context of the situated social practices observed (Rex et al., 2010), an extended semi-structured interview (an hour and a half) was conducted to gather information about her literacy history and perceptions of self as a writer. Three literacy sessions (one per week) were then video-recorded in her classroom, capturing demonstration writing and writing alongside. The digital camera was directed towards the teacher with a sufficiently wide angle to capture the pupils seated in front of her during ‘demonstration writing’, (the term used when Elaine was simultaneously thinking aloud as she wrote in front of the class). During ‘writing alongside’ (the term employed when Elaine sat next to pupils, following the same writing remit), the camera captured both Elaine and the pupils seated at the table. Whilst these two modelling activities were considered part of her normal pedagogic practice, as it was the start of the academic year, Elaine explained to the 7-8 year olds (and the teaching assistants) that she intended to teach writing differently from how they might have experienced it before and that she would sit among the pupils to write alongside them. Immediately after the sessions, (each lasting around an hour and a half), Elaine was interviewed and provided with an opportunity to reflect on her practice in the session, on associated issues and what it means to be writer and teacher in the classroom. The work was planned in this way to support ‘reflection on action’ (Schon, 1983).

The recorded observations were employed in a later session for the purpose of video-stimulated review (VSR), another tool for reflection (Walker, 2002), enabling Elaine to re-view her engagement as writer and as teacher. She was invited to select significant extracts to stimulate discussion; the non-participant observer who had filmed the sessions also identified extracts to prompt reconstructions of practice and consideration of roles adopted. Five extracts were viewed in all; three chosen by Elaine, two by the observer, each of these was analysed. Two brief excerpts from two of the extracts, both chosen by Elaine, are presented here. In order to increase coherence, these two short excerpts are taken from the same session: the third video-recorded session. Through these ‘telling cases’ (Mitchell, 1984:239), we seek to make visible the discursive practices and identity positions that Elaine adopted.

Three months after the data collection, the categories arising from the first analytic stage (on her identity positions) were shared with Elaine as a form of member checking, enabling her to correct, confirm or extend these (Merriam, 1998). Following the second stage of analysis, over a year later, Elaine was again afforded the opportunity to comment on the emerging categories and to consider whether she recognised the identity positioning described and our interpretations of the sorts of relationships which particular pieces of discourse may have been seeking to enact. The feedback elicited largely affirmed our portrayal, enhancing credibility (Eisenhart, 2006).

Data analysis

The data analysis in this study encompassed two main stages and several processes. Initially, all the spoken interaction in the interviews and classroom observations was recorded and transcribed by the researchers in order to generate a relationship within and between the data and the analysis. This process facilitated the emergence of categories regarding the two teachers' relational identity positioning which were grounded in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Using the iterative process of categorical analysis (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996), the whole dataset was then inductively analysed in relation to these categories. For more detailed description of the first analytic stage on identity positioning see Cremin and Baker (2010).

Thus the first analytic stage sought to explore the emerging identities of two practitioners as they positioned themselves and were positioned as teacher-writers in the literacy classroom. The second analytic stage however focused down on the discursive practices which constitute the identity positions described. In the second stage, following the decision to case study Elaine and having selected the five key extracts for analysis, both researchers separately immersed themselves in the data, re-viewing the video recordings multiple times and re-reading the interview data. Although like others (e.g. Erikson 2006), we recognise that video recordings are only a representation of the data, as one researcher had not visited the site, they provided an essential window on Elaine's identity enactments. Supplemented by field notes, they helped to document the moment-to-moment interactions and made visible subtleties of action and interaction. In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the

analysis, (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), each researcher made detailed notes on the practices enacted; paying close attention to the seven modes of discursive behaviour adapted from Norris (2004) (see Table 1) and annotating the transcripts. Later, these notes were shared and interpretations discussed; the examination of the data was cross-moderated.

Through constantly reviewing the video material during the second analytic stage, our interest in the physical and gestural elements and other multimodal representations of Elaine’s ‘voice’ developed. Our attention was drawn to the role Elaine’s head movements and gaze played in her meaning making and communicative processes, this prompted us to examine further modes of discursive practice rather than focusing solely on the spoken word. Whilst recognising the contribution of Bourne and Jewitt (2003), who explored literary text construction through analysis of secondary aged pupils’ multimodal interaction, we sought to expand upon their focus, which was limited to speech, gesture, gaze and posture. Following the work of Norris (2004) and Rowe (2010, 2012) on multimodal interactional analysis, we took a broader view of what constitutes interaction. We then sought to develop a form of coding, adapted from Norris’s nine modes that would allow us to analyse and present the interconnections of the seven most relevant modes of interaction in the two writing contexts (see Tables 2 and 3). The two modes not utilised in this analysis were music and layout which were omitted from our analysis on the basis of their relative irrelevance to the study described here; music was not a constitutive part of Elaine’s literacy classroom and we view layout as being more salient to textual analysis, something we have not engaged with specifically in this paper. The five extracts chosen for analysis were watched and transcribed in relation to each of the seven modes (see Table 1).

Speech/vocalisation	Generally sequentially structured. Interactions often overlap. Lower level action: intonation unit. Higher level actions: specific utterances can help construct higher-level actions on various levels
Proxemics	The distance that individuals take up with respect to others and relevant objects. Proxemic behaviour is tightly integrated with the higher-level actions that are being performed. Gives insight into the kind of social interaction that is going on.

Posture and body movement	The ways that participants position their bodies in a given interaction. People may display open or closed postures, and they display directionality through posture. Postural behaviour gives insight into the involvement of participants with others. Culturally habituated.
Gesture	“Deliberately expressive movement” (Kendon, 1978: 69). Often interdependent and concurrent with spoken language to realise imagery.
Head movement	The ways that individuals position their heads. Head movement in interaction has a range of functions from conventional to novel.
Gaze	The organisation, direction and intensity of looking. Gaze may play a subordinate role in interaction when people are conversing and not engaged in other activities or a superordinate role when people are simultaneously engaged in other activities while conversing.
Print	An embodied mode when individuals use tools (pen, paper, computer) to express their perceptions, thoughts or feelings. A disembodied mode when people react to the print developed by others.

Table 1: Seven communicative modes of discursive multimodal interaction (adapted from Norris, 2004: 15 - 49)

In order to analyse the dynamic interplay of multimodal discursive practices in Elaine’s identity work, the data was broken into meaning units (MUs) with the MUs allocated at perceptible pauses across modes (see Tables 1 and 2). We rejected framing the data according to turns between speakers (as is commonly done in discourse analysis) as this would privilege the spoken mode. Instead we sought to present the data in MUs, in a way that illustrated all seven of the modes in Elaine’s interaction and in order to capture the fluidity involved, avoided numbering the MUs. We argue that an analysis of the paralinguistic and behavioural manifestations of discourse positioning provides a more holistic understanding of the discursive processes at play in the compositional contexts of demonstration writing and writing alongside pupils, as opposed to a sole focus on the language of these interactions. Working from this detailed analysis of seven modes of Elaine’s embodied discourse positioning, (her ‘voice’), we align this moment-by-moment exploration with the positions available on the identity continuum.

In what follows, we offer an introduction to Elaine and the lesson context, considering the way in which she framed the session under scrutiny. Then we present and analyse

two short excerpts of the identified extracts from the practices of demonstration writing and writing alongside pupils.

THE FINDINGS

Introduction to Elaine and the lesson context

Elaine is an experienced practitioner working in a school for 5-11 year olds in England. At the time of the research, she had been teaching for 12 years. Although responsible for the mathematics curriculum, she was in the process of undertaking a Masters in Literacy. As noted, some years before she taken part in a writing project, in which she had considered her experience of composition and written alongside practitioners, professional writers and pupils.

As an adult, Elaine maintains a writing persona in her private life; keeping a weekly journal and finding “real pleasure” in writing poetry, though her memories of reading as a child were more positive than writing. Her early teaching experience was framed by the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (DfEE, 1998) in England. In considering her writing history and multiple later enactments, Elaine strongly identified herself as someone who finds satisfaction in writing. Although she did not view herself ‘as a writer’ as she did not publish her work, she commented “I feel like a writer when I am fully engaged in a piece of writing in which I’m keenly trying to communicate a message or feeling”. As the first stage of the study indicated, Elaine’s emotional engagement with each piece of writing composed in class appeared to influence her sense of herself as writer in this context, as represented on the writer-teacher end of the identity continuum (Cremin and Baker, 2010).

Elaine’s focus for the observed literacy unit was ‘Ourselves and our Community’. In the lesson selected for presentation in this paper, drawn from week three (Monday), Elaine commenced by sharing photos of her trip to ‘Go Ape!’ (an adventure centre) and then demonstrated the process of brainstorming words and phrases on the flipchart in front of the class. Next, the pupils shared photographs they had brought in, before individually brainstorming words in their books. Then they gathered on the carpet whilst Elaine undertook a second demonstration, modelling the process of moving from brainstorm to continuous prose. After this pupils wrote about their chosen places,

with Elaine writing alongside one group. The session concluded with a class plenary with pupils reading their work aloud.

Initially, Elaine framed the activity by defining the objective “to produce good writing, that is descriptive writing”. In this way she commenced the session firmly positioned as a teacher-writer, observing “we need to brainstorm our ideas before we start writing”, though it is unclear whether her use of the pronoun ‘we’ was an acknowledgment that she too as a writer needed to generate ideas or whether, casting herself in the role of authoritative expert, she was offering a point of instruction. Elaine recorded a number of descriptive words and phrases (e.g. “terrifyingly tall trees, loose looking nets, high-pitched squealing, rough ropes”) on the flipchart and sought to use this language in her second demonstration. She observed later this was difficult; whilst she had intended to model the use of the senses and “tried to use lots of adjectives and similes”, she felt “the senses formula just didn’t work, so I ended up going with my own personal flavour”. In the plenary, revisiting the objective, she invited the class to be ‘adjective detectives’ as they listened to each other’s work, though she commented “I still feel lots and lots of pressure to focus on targets and success criteria... you’re constantly torn between the objective, the target... and the connections, the juicy bits”. For Elaine, who was seeking to position herself as a writer, this balancing act created tension.

Analysis of demonstration writing

At the start of the second demonstration, Elaine stood next to the flipchart, the pupils sat facing it. To one side, pinned to the wall was the paper with her recorded brainstorm. She explained her intention to “build on my brainstorm to write about ‘Go Ape!’”, and made it clear that afterwards the pupils would do likewise “using lots of your descriptive words”. She then proceeded to compose, speaking out loud as she did so, as can be seen in the excerpt (Table 2) taken from near the beginning of this 10 minute demonstration.

INSERT Table 2: Multimodal transcript from the second excerpt of Elaine’s demonstration writing

In this brief excerpt we can see Elaine adopting different positions and conflicting voices as she seeks to compose aloud in the public forum of the classroom. Almost immediately, with just a few lines of prose on the paper, her back to the pupils and her gaze directed towards her writing, Elaine ceased writing. Turning her body and her gaze towards the pupils, she positioned them as her writing advisors and sought their views. The multimodal analysis suggests that Elaine experienced a disjuncture at this moment in her writing, although it cannot explain why this was the case. Some pupils were fidgeting, so it is possible she felt obliged to adopt the position of teacher-writer in order to assert control. It may also have been the case that she was not emotionally engaged in her writing, was seeking distraction or genuinely wanted support as a writer. When the vote was ambiguous, Elaine, obliged to choose, enacted a writer-teacher identity position and exerted her authorial agency by observing, “I think I am going to stick with stretching actually”. She then proceeded to stretch upwards and directed the class to imitate her in order, as she explained in the video review, “to help me visualise the trees” (Figure 2). The pupils cheerfully complied, but whether they appreciated her expressed writerly intention here is uncertain, Charlie commented “It’s good for your exercise”, suggesting he perceived this as a physical activity, not a writer’s visualisation strategy. She made no comment on his observation.



Figure 2: Meaning Unit 6 from Table 2 (0.37-8)

In moving from the sights to the sounds of ‘Go Ape!’, Elaine arguably asserted her authorial agency as a writer-teacher as she looked beyond the pupils and used gestures to reflect the mayhem and unsettling noises, asking herself aloud “How did I describe the screaming?” The pupils misinterpreted this linguistic cue; many raised their hands to ‘answer’ their teacher’s question and Naomi, scanning the flipchart, responded “squealing”. The class, not used to teachers enacting their identities as writers, failed to recognise Elaine’s intended position and she lost voice. Their expectations and lack of uptake drew her back momentarily from her writer-teacher position, she verbally deflected Naomi’s contribution and used her hands to convey the same message, “Oh I’m fine thanks. I’m just thinking aloud, I’m going back to my ideas and I’m thinking aloud” (Figure 3). Having sought to negotiate this misunderstanding by offering a meta-description of her discourse, Elaine re-read the phrase from her brainstorm so as to re-assert her intended discourse position of writer-teacher. The repetition of this phrase “so high pitched squealing, so high pitched squealing overhead”, the turning of her body away and the steady avoidance of the gaze of the pupils evidence the authenticity of her compositional engagement. Her words at this point were also slower and she seemed to be thinking through her compositional options, though her writer-teacher position appeared to be rejected by Ashlin, who suggested “Or squeaking?” Initially, Elaine still gazing into space swept her arm over her head for a second time as she sought to make an authorial decision and turned to commit this to the flipchart. But then, in a segment of arguably hybrid discourse, she re-oriented her body towards the pupils and connected to Ashlin’s contribution. Positioned perhaps as a teacher-writer at this moment, Elaine explained why ‘squeaking’ would be an inappropriate choice, “Squeaking is gentle like so if they were like (imitates squeaking) I might have been like ‘Oh where’s are the mice? Oh are there some squirrels?’ Whereas it was like squealing...., it was like (loud squealing noise), in fact, it was more like shrieking”. Alternatively, it could be argued she was authentically commenting on her own authorial perspective and was thus positioned as a writer-teacher at this moment. However, when the pupils noisily imitated her squeaking and squealing vocalisations, Elaine used another rhetorical question to re-assert the discourse position of teacher-writer, evoking in a stage whisper “Oh do you know what? It sounded like a siren. An emergency siren”, in order to regain control.



Figure 3: Meaning Unit 14 from Table 2 (1.02)

Analysis of writing alongside pupils

At the end of the second demonstration period, Elaine signalled that the pupils should return to their tables to build on their brainstorm and write continuous prose. She took her place at a table opening her own writing book; thereby mirroring her pupils' practice. The excerpt (Table 3) was taken from the beginning of the writing alongside period which lasted 12 minutes.

INSERT Table 3: Multimodal transcript from an excerpt of Elaine writing alongside pupils

Again we can see that Elaine took up and inhabited several identity positions, which sometimes produced tension. By sitting amongst the pupils, she attempted to inhabit a writer-teacher position engaging in the same task that she had set them, albeit slightly differently in that she was copying/ redrafting while the rest of the class were translating their brainstorm into compositions. Through this simple act of sitting among them on a chair designed for smaller individuals, Elaine inhabited multiple identities: writer-teacher at work, fellow-writer and potential response partner to those who sat alongside her. In this position she was physically more accessible to the young writers at the table than sitting at her desk beneath the whiteboard. As she settled and began to write, several pupils observed her with interest, in part perhaps because this

was not common practice in the school. Two pupils at the table followed her sightline as she began to copy from the flipchart, others showed a degree of confusion, frowning and exchanging glances. Elaine commented afterwards she was vaguely aware of this, but felt engaged in her writing at that moment and wanted to re-shape it.

In this excerpt (Table 3), Elaine's initial embodied enactment of writer-teacher was interrupted by a child seeking spelling support. Elaine fought to retain this position that she was actively seeking to inhabit by ignoring or rejecting Will's request for help, keeping her head down, her body bent over her writing and her gaze focused upon it (Figure 4). It was not until Will made his request specific that Elaine shifted momentarily to attend to him, albeit in a way he may not have expected, saying "Can you sound it out please..." She then quickly returned her focus to her writing, because as she observed "I'm in the middle of doing my writing..." This arguably aided Elaine in marking out her discursive territory; she not only declined to take part as the expert, but also explained that she wanted to write, thus maintaining her discourse position of writer-teacher. Interestingly, Josh recognised that this left an available space for him to step in and occupy the position of 'teacher as knowledge bearer' that Elaine had rejected. In commenting that he knew how to spell the word 'dictionary' it is possible Josh was reflecting a degree of discomfort in the vacuum left by Elaine's response, and wished to restore more commonly experienced interaction. Similarly, we can speculate that Josh felt authoritative enough (in terms of the orthographic knowledge he possessed that Will did not), to try to adopt the 'teacher' voice. Elaine appeared to recognise Josh's intention to occupy this space and rebuffed his attempt by intervening, positioned as a teacher-writer she sat up oriented her body towards Will while shaking her head briefly at Josh saying "That's alright" then directed her gaze at Will observing "If you sound it out right now and I'll look at it at the end." Therefore we can argue that even though Elaine rejected Josh's offer of help, (perhaps because she wished to retain her sense of writer's focus), his fleeting attempt to inhabit the 'teacher' discourse was successful in that she recognised it. She then sought to refocus herself: looking up at the flipchart and down to her writing, leaning on her elbow and re-reading her work before continuing to write.



Figure 4: Meaning Unit 5 from Table 3 (10.51)

DISCUSSION

Whilst acknowledging that the analysis is only a synchronic snapshot within Elaine's ongoing and historically constructed identity work as a teacher of writing, it can be seen that throughout she employs language and behaviour to mark out and occupy multiple discourse positions. As she draws on her repertoire of multimodal behaviours, she articulates two primary identity positions: teacher-writer and writer-teacher; these are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated, and appear to work both with and against each other at different moments in the interaction.

This multimodal analysis, adopted from Norris' (2004) framework, offers a new analytic tool for understanding how teacher behaviour opens and constrains identity positions. Through microanalysis of moment-by-moment discursive enactments and interactions of the seven communicative modes selected, the researcher is able to make stronger claims about what these identity positions look like in the classroom, what behaviours can lead to a lack of uptake from others involved in the interaction, and how the privileged mode of speech can be affirmed or contradicted by other behaviours.

As with many elementary practitioners, Elaine is physically active and uses her body as part of her teaching. Throughout the second demonstration, when standing at the flipchart before her seated pupils, Elaine enacted particular aspects of her composition, demonstrating the height of the tall trees, the act of climbing, and gasping in mock terror as she described starting to climb. Arguably, Elaine's overt enactments of her memories, which she used to contextualise her writing, index a discourse of 'teaching as performance'. This was recognised by the pupils who echoed her movements and joined in with her vocalisations as Elaine built a visual picture of her experience. Elaine also 'performed' in her less-emphatic behaviour; she was momentarily silent as she pondered on words. Her stillness and intense gaze that at times rested beyond the pupils, functioned as a writerly pause suggesting that she was manifestly engaged in thinking. In these focused moments, the discourse position she was trying to adopt appeared to be that of writer-teacher. This was less well received by the pupils who continued to speak into the space left empty, offering suggestions or chattering amongst themselves. Perhaps, rather than perceiving Elaine's intended authentic modelling of a writer's compositional engagement, the pupils perceived her as acting out a loss for words. At several points they failed to recognise her writer-teacher discourse and rejected her writerly pauses, and she was pulled back to a teacher-writer role in order to reinstate order. Ultimately, Elaine's pedagogic aim in this demonstration context was to produce writing in order to model the processes of writing and the crafting of text, thus connecting with 'writing as a product for the system' on the teacher-writer end of the identity continuum (Figure 1).

In writing alongside pupils, Elaine's behaviour was markedly different. Significantly, she was seated at a table with pupils, the act of sitting amongst the pupils signalling that she was aligning herself with them as a fellow writer. Elaine's postural behaviour also indicated that she was 'closed' from her fellow writers, which was concurrent with the message communicated in her talk, she was engaged in writing as a 'product for herself' and positioned herself as a writer-teacher on the identity continuum (Figure 1). Additionally, by physically positioning herself at 'their level', she resisted adopting the more authoritative positions of 'teacher at desk' or 'roaming instructor' that are probably more common amongst practitioners. While engaged in her composition, Elaine continued to 'perform' her adopted role of writer-teacher: she chewed on her pencil, frowned and stared thoughtfully at the ceiling. However, this

was challenging for some pupils who failed to recognise the identity position Elaine was seeking to inhabit. In this context Elaine also resisted the conventional structure of gaze and interaction whereby speakers typically look toward the hearer (Norris, 2004: 37). Instead her gaze remained focused on her writing in an attempt to retain her writer-teacher identity position. Harnessing the power in her teaching role, Elaine attempted to open up this new writer-teacher subject position although this was not always taken up by the pupils and at times whilst writing alongside, she used her power to limit pupils' attempts to occupy the new subject positions left available by her fluctuating multimodal interaction.

The shifting multimodal discourse dynamic in both demonstration and writing alongside contexts was thus a site of on-going conflict between Elaine's intended discourse positions/ identities and the success of these. Furthermore, Elaine perceived she was under pressure to foreground the skills and process discourses of writing and learning to write instantiated in the NLS (DfEE, 1988), while at the same time wanting to draw on the creativity discourse (Ivanič, 2004) that underpinned her experience in the professional development project (Ing, 2005). Arguably, Elaine was caught between competing institutional discourses, both the dominant and the more marginal, around teaching writing.

Additionally, her writer-teacher identity position was often compromised by the discursual expectations of her audience. In Gee's (2005) terms there was no 'take up' of her position of 'writer-teacher', no 'recognition' on the part of the pupils that she was reflecting aloud as she composed. In offering a summary of the consequences of such 'risky' behaviour Blommaert (2005:77) observes:

'Whenever the resources people possess do not match the functions they are supposed to accomplish, they risk being attributed other functions than the ones projected, intended, or necessary. Their resources fail to fulfil the required functions; speakers lose voice.'

The consequences of this loss of voice meant that the perceived purpose of positioning herself as a writer was compromised and the intended meaning of Elaine's modelling and engagement remained unclear/was misinterpreted.

In acknowledging all forms of semiotic activity, in this paper we focused on the ways that Elaine embodied the discursive spaces she was seeking to occupy and constructed an analysis of the paralinguistic and behavioural manifestations of her discourse positioning. We looked at the way Elaine moved her body and directed her gaze allowing us to delve into the meaning making significance and potential for positioning implied by such communicative modes. These physical enactments of discourse worked to support, often unconsciously, the linguistic work Elaine was doing in indexing particular ways of doing and being in the classroom. Therefore, we adopt a view of embodied action as constitutive of particular genres of role and identity. This also echoes the notion of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1991) in that through her experience of being a teacher, Elaine is predisposed to act in certain ways, this can be seen through both her language use *and* her corporeal behaviour.

Through the analysis it is possible to appreciate the complexity, riskiness and fluidity of teachers’ (and pupils’) identity positioning in the writing classroom and how such positioning is co-constructed through interaction. The dialogic nature of context is made evident in this examination of the particulars of demonstration writing and writing alongside pupils, both of which are features of everyday practice in Elaine’s classroom. The stage one analysis of the wider institutional context also indicates that Elaine experienced conflict as she sought to inhabit a writer-teacher space and felt constrained by dominant policy discourses and requirements (Cremin and Baker, 2010). The more micro-level stage two analysis highlights the volatility of the discourse dynamic, as Elaine moved between teacher-writer and writer-teacher positions, constantly negotiating and re-negotiating her identity in the process.

We suggest that the discourse positions inhabited by Elaine, map onto the teacher-writer, writer-teacher continuum (Figure 1) and as such, submit that this continuum can help teachers and researchers to better understand how multimodal behaviours, practices and discourses operate in complementary and often conflicting ways: to open and constrain different identity positions. The analysis serves as a reminder for teachers to be mindful how their behaviour – physical and linguistic - in the classroom creates particular positions that are recognised and validated in particular ways. Elaine’s overt gesturing and performance of demonstration writing arguably falls into

the teacher-writer end of the continuum, where the act of writing is used as a pedagogical tool. It therefore indicates that when teachers intend to engage authentically as writers in the classroom, the practice of demonstration writing requires careful consideration; it represents a risk as ‘performative’ teaching can lead to the teachers ‘voice’ being misunderstood. In contrast, Elaine’s discursive behaviour as she wrote alongside pupils, tended more towards the writer-teacher end of the continuum, she was attempting to continue her writing for herself and engage in a genuine writing opportunity. There was however, as noted, constant fluctuation and hybridity in her discourses as a result of the level of recognition and uptake by the pupils which again suggests this aspect of modelling needs sustained commitment in order to become a recognised practice and identity position within the writing classroom. If teachers are to model their engagement as writers, taking such risks is arguably a necessity, though more work is needed to ascertain the risk-reward ratio of such positioning for pupils.

CONCLUSION

This research offers a novel contribution to an emerging analytic field in relation to literacy teachers’ identities. In applying Norris’ (2004) framework, it contributes new understandings about one teacher as a writer, her identity positions and multimodal interactive discursive practices. Whilst we acknowledge it is inappropriate to generalise from a single case analysis, we believe that in building on a conceptualisation of identity as positional, multiple and enacted in interaction, our analysis of the discursive processes at play during demonstration writing and writing alongside contributes a fresh analytic perspective on teachers’ discourse and identities.

Significantly, it reveals the layered, hybrid and conflicting nature of the identity work of this teacher who, in tune with other practitioners internationally, sought to position herself as a writer in the classroom. The study shows that her multimodal behaviour indexed different discourses which in turn drove her practice and therefore made available and constrained possible identity positions. The work not only illustrates the microscopic, fluid and conflictual dimensions of identity positioning in the practice contexts of demonstration writing and writing alongside pupils, but also highlights the importance of the embodied discursive voice of the pedagogue, and affords new

understandings of embodied action as constitutive of particular genres of role and identity.

Whilst participants' oral language practices are still considered key representations of cultural and social structures, this research, recognising that images and video constitute core components in data collection, analysis and presentation, sought to avoid privileging the spoken word. Our focus on multimodal interactive discursive practices affords a potentially useful device for exploring how teachers perform and enact their identities as teachers and writers in the classroom. Thus we argue that the teaching of writing would benefit from being recognised and researched as multimodal interactive practice, and that the social practice of writing would benefit from being reconceptualised as encompassing 'those events and practices in which the written mode is still salient yet embedded in other modes' (Heath, Street and Mills, 2008:21).

Furthermore, the findings reinforce work suggesting that macro-level discourses of writing and learning to write which underpin educational policies and many teachers' experiences of teaching writing, are significant in making particular discourse positions available to teachers in action (Ivanič, 2004; McCarthy et al., 2014). In this respect we acknowledge Ivanič's assertion that whilst 'teachers are to a large extent at the mercy' of discourses privileged by those who stand to gain from them, they also 'have the intellectual freedom to be aware of the way in which these forces privilege one discourse at the expense of others and to compensate for this...' (2004: 241). Whilst we recognise that writing alongside pupils is not common in classrooms, we suggest that this practice and actively attempting to occupy a writer-teacher identity could be construed as embodiment of such 'intellectual freedom'. It may hold potential to challenge the dominance of institutional and policy directives and may enhance teachers' creative mediation of even the most highly regulated policies.

In terms of implications, we consider it would be valuable for pre-service and practicing teachers to reflect upon how their identity work impacts upon their teaching of writing, and how language and multimodal interaction index different discourses of writing, positioning both pupils and themselves as writers in the classroom. In this way, and in tune with the work of Comber and Kamler (2004), practitioners may come

to recognise that identities are situated in relationships and that the discursive positions and ‘voices’ they adopt and perform can be both limiting and helpful.

In addition, we argue that multimodal interaction in teaching writing deserves increased methodological attention, and that the use of gesture, facial expression and pause as well as other forms of corporeal behaviour need to be recognised and understood as part of teachers’ identity performances. Future work could valuably explore the ways in which teachers’ identities and discursive processes shape students’ identities as writers and how teachers’ often hybrid instantiations of discourse as teacher-writers and writer-teachers influence students’ understanding of writing and what it means to be a writer.

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