

**BEING AND BECOMING A STUDENT: AN INVESTIGATION INTO
HOW A PEDAGOGIC APPROACH BUILT ON COLLABORATIVE
PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC LITERACY PRACTICES
SUPPORTS STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PRACTICE, KNOWLEDGE
AND IDENTITY**

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Abstract

Set in the context of a Post-92 university college Education Studies department, this thesis investigates how new undergraduates might be supported in the transition to Higher Education. It describes an intervention informed by research into Academic Literacies that was undertaken in a first year, first semester module. The intervention aimed to scaffold participation in academic practice, and in particular academic literacy practice, in collaborative workshops within the context of the module content. The methodological approach combines action research with aspects of ethnography to produce 'ethnographic action research'. Drawing on the work of Lave & Wenger, students working in groups are conceptualised as academic student communities of practice, and audio recordings of students engaged in collaborative activities provide evidence of their lived experience of the module in three domains: what they do; what they know; and how they position themselves in relation to academic practice.

The findings show how talk about practice, within the context of participation in practice, is instrumental to change in all three domains: the negotiation of distinctly 'academic' ways of working in groups; the construction of meaning in the relationship between what is known about academic practice and what is done; and, the construction of the self as academic. I conclude that Higher Education pedagogical arrangements need to build communities that talk about practice and consider how such an approach responds to future challenges.

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Transcription conventions

...	in the middle of a sentence: hesitation
...	at the end of a line: unfinished sentence
[...]	section of conversation has been cut
(unclear)	section of unclear talk is omitted
(describes action)	describes action or laughter
(gap x seconds)	gap longer than hesitation
<u>underline</u>	emphasis

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The impetus for research: They just don't 'get it'

In this thesis I explore the experiences of a group of Education Studies undergraduates as they undertake a first year, first semester module planned specifically to introduce them to academic practice, particularly academic literacy practice, within the context of an existing module. Conceptualising the small groups in which they work as communities of practice, I investigate students' participation in practice, knowledge of practice and academic identities, and explore how the module supports them in these three domains of 'doing', 'knowing' and 'being'.

The starting point for my research was an interest in what students thought was expected of them and how they tried to fulfil the requirements of their academic programmes, which I framed as seeking to understand the process of 'being and becoming a student'. Having taught undergraduates for almost 10 years I was concerned that, although many of the students studying on the Education Studies course on which I worked were successful in working out the 'rules of the game' (Read et al. 2001), and by the end of their studies understood what we, their tutors, were looking for when we marked assignments, and were able to meet the requirements laid out in assignment briefs, just as many others appeared to remain mystified. For some reason, they just didn't 'get it'. By their third year these

students were still unsure of what we meant in our formative feedback, and were unaware of how they might do things differently to improve. I detected a mismatch between what I and my colleagues thought ‘being a student’ entailed, and what many of the students themselves thought it entailed.

In particular, my colleagues and I were concerned that, when writing, many students simply reproduced information we had given them or had directed them to read, and struggled to construct an argument or synthesise ideas. During a meeting when tutors who had marked a particular assignment were moderating a sample of scripts, a colleague joked that much of the feedback should simply say ‘read more, think more and write better’, summing up the perceived problem for many of the students. For a significant minority, reading was minimal, the material presented in essays being largely a ‘giving back’ of lectures, with little evidence of independent thinking or ownership of knowledge. This lack contributed to writing that often seemed to be a collection of relevant information, but with no clear argument or sense of direction. The same colleague used to call such assignments ‘Elmer’ assignments after the patchwork elephant in the children’s stories by David McKee, the coloured squares randomly assembled into an elephant shape being a metaphor for the seemingly random assembly of quotes and information into an essay.

‘Read more, think more and write better’ may summarise what many of the students needed to do, but as advice it is not helpful if one is unclear about *how* to read, think or write in what are deemed to be appropriate ‘academic’ ways. As

professional educationalists we always sought to give helpful formative feedback, but our feedback was clearly not effective in supporting all students in knowing what to do to improve their work, and few ever took up the opportunity to make an appointment with their tutors to discuss feedback. If we were to support students more effectively in the transition to higher education (HE) I became convinced that we would need to teach differently. If they failed to ‘get it’ perhaps it was because we were not showing them what ‘it’ was, and I became convinced that our teaching was over focused on content rather than process, and that time needed to be made within contact hours for teaching and learning about academic practice. I planned to use a first year, first semester module to support students through the transition.

I was struck by the metaphor used by Mann (2001) of the new undergraduate as being in the position of ‘a stranger in a foreign land’ (p. 11), and by her suggestion that we can aid students by providing ‘translations and explanations of strange customs and language’ (p. 17). But, to extend the metaphor, explanations and translations still leave the stranger as an outsider, albeit a better informed one; it is only by getting involved with the locals that the stranger can begin to understand and take on unfamiliar practices appropriately. I hypothesised that, the strange customs and language of HE needed to be experienced and practiced with tutors and with other students so that through collaborative activity students might participate in and begin to understand the practices of HE. Rather than struggle through three years of confusion, students might experience the transformatory potential of HE, to see and think in new

ways. But if the stranger only really begins to understand the foreign land by being integrated into the community and having the opportunity to live like the locals, to adopt the local practices and begin to think like a local, it is necessary to consider what might it mean to be a ‘local’ in the HE community.

1.2 Thesis structure

In Chapter 2 I discuss the nature of the ‘community’ that the student is joining. The Education Studies department of St. Hugh’s¹ University College, the institution in which my research took place, is situated within a particular national, institutional and disciplinary context. I discuss the national context which in 2007, when I began my research, was dominated by government policy to widen access to HE for ‘non-traditional’² students, and locate St. Hugh’s within that context. I explain the structure of the programme in which the students who participated in the research were enrolled, and its evolution over several years from a degree which also awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) to an Education Studies degree distinct from ‘teacher training’³. I discuss the nature of Education Studies and consider its disciplinary status before locating the Education Studies course at St. Hugh’s within the wider Education Studies community.

¹ St. Hugh’s is a pseudonym, as are all names of people, institutions and places included in this thesis.

² ‘Non-traditional’ is often used to denote students who come from socio-economic or ethnic backgrounds which are ‘disproportionately under-represented’ (House of Commons, 2001). I use scare quotes here to denote that the term is contested, but throughout the rest of the thesis I use it without to enhance readability.

³ Although I prefer the phrase ‘teacher education’ to denote the learning process by which students become qualified teachers, current government terminology and the wider community use ‘teacher training’, and this also, perhaps, describes more accurately the nature of many programmes leading to QTS.

Chapter 3 provides the theoretical framework for my pedagogical intervention and analysis. As I wrote a new module for revalidation in 2008, my research into student learning led me into the field of Academic Literacies⁴, a theoretical framework which recognises reading and writing as social practices embedded in a particular cultural context including particular ways of constructing meaning, making judgments and determining what counts as valuable knowledge (Clark & Ivanic, 1997; Lea, 1998; Lillis, 2001; McKenna, 2003; Stierer, 2000). Conceptualising literacy as a social practice enables us to see the stranger in the academic land not as deficient because they lack our ‘insider’ knowledge, but as someone as yet unfamiliar with ‘how we do things here’. I discuss Academic Literacies and explain how it informed my ‘pedagogy of academic practice’, in which I aimed to make academic literacy practice visible and to provide opportunities for supported participation in academic practice within the context of the module which was the focus of my research. Students would engage with subject content through participation in collaborative literacy practices in workshops, so that the content of the module and ways to engage with that content academically could be experienced and explored together.

I explain my use of Communities of Practice⁵ as a theoretical framework for analysis of my pedagogical approach. A community of practice is a group of people who participate in shared practices with a common goal and who construct

⁴ In this thesis ‘academic literacies’ refers to both a theoretical framework and to academic ways of practising literacy. In order to distinguish the two I use capitals to refer to theoretical framework (Academic Literacies) and lower case when referring to ways of practising (academic literacies).

⁵ Communities of Practice as a theoretical framework is capitalised to mark the distinction from communities of practice (the communities that are theorised).

identities as members of the community. Practice defines the community; learning is conceptualised as a process of increasing participation in the practices of the community, and new members are seen as being on a trajectory toward fuller membership through their participation in those practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Communities of Practice provides a framework for analysing participation in practice, and provides insights into my pedagogical approach as I address the overarching research question: How does my pedagogical approach support entry to the academic community? This is explored through three sub-questions which focus on three domains of learning; participation, knowledge and identity:

1. How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate participation in academic practice?
2. How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate knowledge of academic practice?
3. How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate the development of an academic identity?

These were not my initial research questions, and in Chapter 4 I explain how they emerged from the first action research cycle, now cast as a pilot study for the purpose of the thesis. In my discussion of the pilot study I include my original research questions and explore the limitations of the original research methods for investigating participation in practice. I explain my decision to use audio recorders to record students' verbal interactions in workshops when working in small groups

in the second research cycle, now cast as the main study. Participation itself could provide the data, and I could seek to answer more interesting questions about the process rather than attempt to answer questions which I had come to see as unanswerable.

I initially saw myself as undertaking action research, and I discuss where my interpretation of action research fits in relation to existing models of action research. However, I show how, as I analysed student talk using qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2004) and sought to understand the culture, or cultures, of the student groups as they responded to their positioning as student, and specifically to the module, my research took on an ethnographic dimension. I use some elements of ethnography to create what I call ‘ethnographic action research’⁶ since action for improvement remains at the centre of the research in which pedagogical implications for future interventions are identified from the analysis of students’ lived experience of the module.

The content and structure of the module, developed in response to the perceived shortcomings of the existing module and informed by Academic Literacies research, are described in chapter 5. Findings from the pilot study are used to explain and justify modifications to the pedagogical approach for the main study, and to provide additional insights into the three themes in the empirical

⁶ Since coining the term, I have found that it has also been used by others differently: by Tacchi et al. (2003) as a way of creating a research culture within the context of UNESCO development projects, in which ‘We use ethnography to guide the research process and we use action research to link the research back to the project’s plans and activities’ (p 1), and by Bath (2009) who advocates an ethnographic period before commencing action research

chapters: the nature of participation in practice (Chapter 6), what students know and understand about practice (Chapter 7), and the academic student identity (Chapter 8). For the purposes of analysis I attempt to look through different lenses and to focus on each theme in turn. This is not to suggest that they are ontologically separate, since I see them as intrinsically connected. For example, although Chapter 7 focuses on knowledge, it examines the relationship between knowledge and participation. Rather, separating them is a way to tease out different aspects of being and becoming a student with each theme contributing different insights.

Chapter 6 examines what students do when working together in small groups using Communities of Practice as a framework for analysis. In particular I draw on Wenger's three 'dimensions of practice' (mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire) which he presents as 'the dimensions by which practice is the source of coherence of a community' (Wenger, 1998, p. 72). I explore how students establish their own communities of practice within their small groups, and through analysis of their practice identify how their participation in academic practice provides a context where talk about academic practice itself becomes a practice of the community. Talk about academic practice, I argue, is central to two specific processes: construction of knowledge of academic practice and construction of the self as academic. These processes are the foci of Chapters 7 and 8.

In Chapter 7 I draw on Wenger's (1998) model of the duality of participation and reification in the construction of meaning to explore the relationship between students' knowledge of academic practice as shown in their talk and their participation in academic practice. Reifications are ways of representing practice, and talk can be conceptualised as a reification of practice. I seek to theorise the role of talk about academic practice in the relationship between students' knowledge of and participation in academic practices. Collaborative participation in practice provides a context where the talk is embedded in the academic practices to which it refers; the speaker is not simply talking 'about' but 'within' academic practice. I conclude that through talk about practice within the context of participation in practice, students are able to use emerging knowledge of academic practice to negotiate ways of participation; and, their collaborative participation, in turn, enables them to refine their knowledge of practice.

Chapter 8 examines student identity and how, as new undergraduates, individuals seek to construct themselves as 'student' in relation to their studies, and I focus on this specific aspect, referring to students' 'academic' identities which exist alongside the classed, gendered, raced or other identity positions that they may hold. I conclude that talk about practice is instrumental in students' constructions of the self as academic and that a participatory pedagogy whereby students collaborate in academic practice serves not only to give opportunities to experience practice and to articulate aspects of practice, it also gives opportunities to position the self in relation to the academic student community. In contrast to

many studies which present academic practice as inherently alienating, the students in the study, who participate collaboratively in academic practice from the start of their studies, use talk about practice to ‘tell the self’ as a participant in those practices and to articulate their relationship to those practices.

Chapter 9 draws together the findings from Chapters 6, 7 and 8 and discusses the central role of talk about practice in the process of these students’ experiences of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ a student. My research shows that talk about practice should be seen as no less important than talk about module content. Pedagogical arrangements need to build a community that talks about practice since it through such talk that students sort out what they are trying to do, how to do it, and their position in the community. Finally, I look to the future. Although my story is a hopeful one, presenting a picture of students who want to do well, and who want to be ‘academic’, I question the future conditions for a pedagogy of academic practice. In a system where higher student numbers and higher student-tutor ratios limit face to face interactions, and where higher student fees position students as consumers and HE as a business transaction, I conclude that if students need to be convinced that academic practice is worthwhile, talk about academic practice might prove to be the most important practice of all.

Chapter 2

Context

2.1 Introduction: the national, local and disciplinary contexts

My concern that many students did not ‘get it’ was chiefly a concern that they did not understand what HE study entailed, or what we, their tutors, were asking of them. Any difficulties that students were experiencing cannot be separated from the context in which they were studying; their confusion was in relation to a particular course in a particular institution, within a particular subject area at a particular historical time. In this chapter I outline the specific social conditions in which the students in my study were located. In 2007 when I began my research, ‘widening participation’ was a major flagship agenda for the Labour government which had aspirations for 50% of 18-30 year olds to participate in HE by 2010 (Blair, 1999) and I begin with a brief outline of the national context and discuss how the widening participation agenda led to a focus in the research literature on non-traditional students. This national context helps to frame the research since many of the students at St. Hugh’s have historically come from under-represented backgrounds.

Consideration of the student body leads to discussion of the local context: St. Hugh’s and the Education Studies course on which the students were enrolled. I present data on the students that attend St. Hugh’s and explore reasons for their choice, including the reputation St. Hugh’s has in the local community for teacher

training. This sets the scene for my subsequent discussion of the disciplinary context and the evolution of Education Studies at St. Hugh's from an undergraduate teacher training course. I examine the nature of Education Studies and the ongoing debate within the academic community about its status. This is a major element of the chapter as I seek to establish what, if anything, holds Education Studies together as a subject, discipline, or field. I later draw upon the notion of the 'academic community' so it is necessary to establish what this means within the context of Education Studies.

2.2 The national context: Widening participation and the non-traditional student

My research was carried out following a period of mass expansion in HE⁷ and amid growing concern that students from non-traditional backgrounds were finding the transition to HE difficult. The green paper, *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998a) outlined the Labour government's intention to rapidly broaden access to further and HE in an attempt to extend educational opportunity to people who would otherwise have been unlikely to have continued their education beyond school. The following year at the Labour party conference, Tony Blair stated "Today I set a target of 50% of young adults going into HE in the next century" (Blair, 1999). This target was never achieved, and in 2008 Ruth Thompson the director general for HE acknowledge that it was a target that would not be achieved by 2010 (Gill, 2008). Nevertheless, as the government endeavoured to

⁷ Participation rates increased from 13% in 1980 to 19% in 1990 to 33% in 2000 (Mayhew et al., 2004) and 40% by 2007 (Public Accounts Committee, 2009).

promote a knowledge economy, targets were set and monitored for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) within the widening participation agenda. Since 1999, institutions' recruitment patterns have been examined, with performance indicators being published each year comparing the number of students in various categories against benchmark targets for each institution. The benchmarked categories include numbers from state schools, from families in NS-SEC classes 4-7⁸, and from low participation neighbourhoods.

Widening participation, envisioned as a policy for social justice, became the subject of much academic research. The research literature on widening participation has expanded rapidly in recent years and an online search of journals for 'widening participation' in any part of the article, using databases Education Research Complete and E- journals, demonstrates the research interest generated (Figure 2.1).

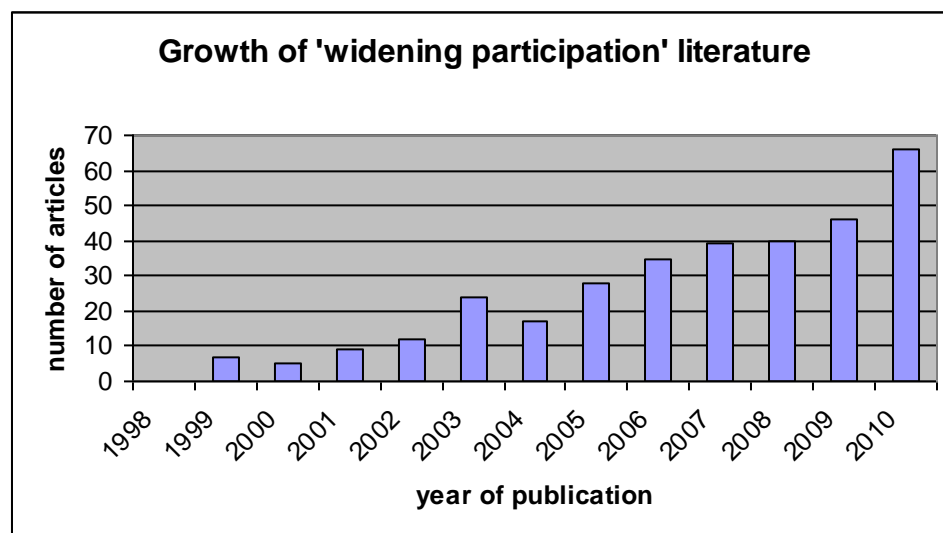


Figure 2.1: Journal articles including references to 'widening participation'

⁸ These represent those not in managerial or professional occupations or 'intermediate' occupations, and not unemployed.

The experiences of ‘widening participation’ students and implications for practice and policy became a major research topic, covering a range of aspects including: the stratification of institutions and reproduction of inequality (Archer, 2007; Crozier & Reay, 2008; Quinn, 2004; Read et al., 2003; Reay et al., 2001); the struggle for survival experienced by many non-traditional students (Bowl, 2001; Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Thomas, 2002); alienation (Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Read, Archer, & Leathwood, 2003; Thomas, 2002); and inadequate preparation for HE (Crozier et al., 2008; Haggis & Pouget, 2002; Laing et al., 2005). However, the concern that many students had little understanding of what study at university level would entail or what would be expected of them was not restricted to non-traditional students.

Student transitions and the first year experience also began to attract wider research attention, with findings suggesting that ‘not getting it’ was not limited to non-traditional students (Alston et al. 2008; Lea, 2004; Wingate, 2007; Yorke & Longden 2008). In their report for the Higher Education Academy, Yorke & Longden (2008) identified a number of factors relating to successful student transitions, and in particular to retention, but socio-economic status was seen as having only limited influence on perceptions of the first year and decisions to withdraw. Preparedness for study at a higher level was found to be more influential, with many students reportedly not understanding the discourse, practice and procedures of HE, and not knowing what standards were expected of them or what they should do differently if previous strategies were no longer successful (Haggis & Pouget, 2002; Harvey et al., 2006; Lowe & Cook, 2003;

Wingate, 2007; Yorke & Longden, 2008). However, as Walker (2006, p. 105) points out, ‘while all students have to ‘decode’ how higher education works and what is expected of them ... this is somewhat harder for working-class students lacking the familial and schooling codes which might assist successful transitions’. In the following section I discuss the local context, focusing on the institution, its students and the particular course in which my research is located.

2.3 The local context: St. Hugh’s, its students and courses

St. Hugh’s University College was founded by the Church of England in the late 19th century as a teacher training college for women. It is a small institution, having approximately 2000 students only; hence the title ‘University College’ rather than ‘University’ was conferred when, in the early 21st century, it gained taught degree awarding powers. Many students specifically choose St. Hugh’s for its location, size and perceived friendliness. Interviews I conducted in 2006⁹ showed that of the eight students interviewed, seven had made St. Hugh’s their first or only choice when applying through UCAS¹⁰ because they wanted to be in a small, friendly institution, or to remain close to home. Three stated that the warm atmosphere on Open Day or at Interview had led them to decide that it was the right place for them to study, and this is an attraction that the institution emphasises in recruitment, using comments from students on promotional literature and the university college website to highlight the friendliness and size.

⁹ Students were selected to give a representative sample in terms of sex, age and whether or not they were the first from their family to attend HE

¹⁰ Universities and Colleges Admissions Service: the body through which all university applications for undergraduate study must be made.

Students perceive St. Hugh's to be an institution where they will have tutors who know their name and with whom they can establish some kind of relationship, and where the other students will also want a small, friendly institution. I have heard prospective and existing students and their parents affectionately liken St. Hugh's to a boarding school; it feels safe and welcoming, and has historically attracted non-traditional students.

HESA (2011) shows that in 2009-10¹¹, across the whole institution, 17.8 % of young full time first degree entrants were from low participation neighbourhoods (Total UK 10.3%), 34.5% were from NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Total UK 30.0%) and 97.4% were from state schools (Total UK 88.8%). In the group of 32 that participated in my study, 25% were from low participation neighbourhoods, 34.3% were from NS-SEC classes 4-7 and all were from state schools. Many of the students on the course are the first in their family to attend HE (64% of the 2007-8 cohort, the most recent cohort for which I have full data, were first generation undergraduates), a statistic which is claimed to be more indicative of educational disadvantage than parental occupation or income (Quinn, 2004). Furthermore, the majority of the students are local and the student population is almost entirely white. 59% of the students in my main study are from within a 30 mile radius of St. Hugh's and 78% from within a 50 mile radius, and many resident students return home most weekends for work or to visit family and friends. The county in which St. Hugh's is located ranks highly on Indices of Multiple Deprivation with twenty-five wards across the county being amongst the

¹¹ The year in which my main study was conducted.

20% most deprived in England, and many well qualified young people leaving the county for HE (*Children and Young People's Plan for Midshire 2007-2010*, 2007). Those that stay and attend our institution have typically low grades; entry requirements at St. Hugh's are amongst the lowest in the sector. At the time of carrying out my research, the standard UCAS offer for the programme was CC at A-level (160 UCAS tariff points) but it was not uncommon for students to be accepted at clearing with DD at A-level (120 UCAS tariff points) or even less. St. Hugh's is a 'recruiting', rather than a 'selecting', institution (Wilde & Wright, 2007).

Although its portfolio has broadened over the years, most of the courses St. Hugh's currently offers are related to Education. These include undergraduate and post-graduate teacher training, undergraduate programmes in Education Studies and Early Childhood Studies and Foundation Degrees in Early Childhood, Children and Youth Work. St. Hugh's enjoys a high reputation in the local community and surrounding area. Many local teachers equate it with teacher training and recommend it to their students seeking a career in teaching although since 2002 only a minority of the students undertake ITT¹² courses. In 2001-2002, following the decision of the UK government in 2000 to introduce bursaries of £6000 for students undertaking a PGCE¹³, and nothing for those studying undergraduate ITT courses, St. Hugh's replaced its largest programme, a 4-year degree course, *Teaching Studies and Subject Studies with QTS*. The replacement

¹² Initial Teacher Training courses which lead to QTS.

¹³ Post Graduate Certificate in Education.

was a '3+1' programme, *Education and Subject Studies* (ESS), in which a degree would be awarded after successful completion of 3 years undergraduate study and there would be automatic progression onto the 'plus 1' part of the programme, a linked Primary PGCE course. A number of our competitors had already made the change which was driven by the need to provide a financially attractive choice for students.

Each year, students on the ESS programme studied 60 credits in Education together with 60 credits in another Subject (Art, Drama, Early Childhood, English, Geography, History, Mathematics, Music, Science or Theology. Sport was added to the portfolio during re-validation in 2008), and it is a module in the Education Studies element of the programme that is the context for my research. During the academic year 2004-2005 I became aware from informal conversations with students that many saw ESS as a teacher training course, despite the fact that QTS would not be awarded until the PGCE year, and I undertook some (unpublished) research to uncover students' understanding and perceptions on entry. In 2005, 2006 and 2007 I asked all first year Education Studies students to complete a short questionnaire during the first week of term to uncover their expectations of the course and reasons for selecting the course and institution (appendix 2.1). In all three years, the vast majority of students (94-95%) expected to use the course as a route into Primary or Secondary teaching, and in response to the open question 'Why did you decide to study for a degree?' being equipped for work was by far the most commonly coded response (87% in 2005, 95% in 2006 and 94% in 2007). The students' reasons for attending university were primarily work related, with a

degree seen as offering a promise of a job with status and a good income, a motivation shared with many students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds (Hockings et al. 2008; Lehmann, 2009; Mann, 2008). Although their perceptions may not be shared by all, students joining ESS saw teaching as high status and well paid.

Students' knowledge of what Education Studies entailed was quite limited, with 13% in 2005 and 2007, and 30% in 2006 either stating that they did not know what the course would be about or leaving blank the open question 'What do you expect the Education modules to cover in your first year?' The students who gave an answer that could be coded as 'how to teach' in response to the same question decreased over the three years, from 55% in 2005, to 39% in 2006 and 21% in 2007. This suggests that our interactions with potential students through our prospectus, online and at open days and interviews were communicating more successfully that the course was not a teacher training course. Barnett (1997) draws a distinction in the disciplinary context of Business Studies between study *of* business and study *for* business, the latter providing what the business community thinks is desirable in graduates, the former offering critique of business. The same parallel can be drawn in Education Studies, and students who thought they were studying *for* education might reject the study *of* education; we needed to ensure that the nature of the course was communicated to potential students, and that aspiring teachers who joined the programme were able to see the value of what we were teaching and did not feel that they had enrolled on an inappropriate or irrelevant course. Institutional data shows that, in 2008, 51% of

respondents to the *Destination of leavers* survey progressed to post-graduate teacher training, and 27% were working in Education (as learning support assistants or on the Graduate Teacher Programme¹⁴). Of those training to be teachers, approximately one third went into Secondary teaching and two thirds into Primary teaching. The automatic right of progression onto the Primary PGCE was removed during a re-validation in 2005 so that the programme was no longer ‘3+1’ but was still, and continues to be, marketed as ‘a route into teaching’, providing a flexible alternative to the Primary Education programme at St. Hugh’s.

Throughout all the changes to ESS, St. Hugh’s portfolio has also included a 3-year *Primary Education with QTS* programme. This has always been completely separate from ESS, taught by a different team and, with no subject component, offering students a different experience. Primary Education has always been a much smaller programme, recruiting 30- 50 students in each cohort in comparison to 150-190 recruited to ESS during the time that ESS was evolving from a 4-year programme to a 3+1 and finally a 3-year programme. Competition for places has always been higher for Primary Education, and a number of those rejected from the Primary Education programme, either at interview or at clearing, join the ESS course each year, resulting in some perception of ESS as a ‘second choice’. However, the ESS programme in all its incarnations has been popular. Many students make a positive decision to enrol on ESS in preference to Primary Education, often because they are considering a career in teaching or a teaching

¹⁴ Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP): a school-based post-graduate programme in which QTS is obtained whilst training and working in a paid teaching role.

related pathway and want to use their undergraduate study to help them decide. Others particularly want to continue to study a subject that they enjoy (alongside Education), or want to become Secondary school teachers. A few each year state their intention to work in ‘education related’ fields, for example Museum Education or Educational Psychology. Although ESS might not have been the first choice for all those enrolled on the programme, module reviews show that student satisfaction is high, and many comment that they are glad they took ESS rather than Primary Education. In summary, most students on the Education Studies programme have low entry grades in comparison to the sector average, and choose the course as a potential route into teaching rather than for its inherent value or interest. Most initially have little idea of what Education Studies entails and in the next section I discuss the nature of Education Studies, beginning with its evolution from ITT.

2.4 The disciplinary context

2.4.1 The legacy of ITT

As institutions replaced undergraduate ITT courses with Education Studies, tutors were freed from restrictions imposed by having to meet government standards laid down for teacher training (DfEE, 1998b; DfES, 2002). Education Studies, funded by the HE Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was also not

subject to the strict guidelines imposed on ITT courses, funded by the TTA¹⁵ and inspected by OfSTED¹⁶ (Ward 2002). The study of educational theory had largely disappeared from ITT courses, a move that can be attributed to the Department of Education and Science revised criteria for ITT (DES, 1989) which included ‘‘subject studies’, ‘curriculum studies’ and ‘subject studies application’, but made no mention of wider educational studies’ (Crook, 2002, p. 67). However, its disappearance intensified in the late 1990s as Government policy ensured that ITT courses became more concerned with implementing government directives, leading to a curriculum dominated by ‘what works’ rather than with the study of education more broadly (Richardson, 2002, p. 47). This policy change included the imposition of ‘competencies’ in 1998 together with a change in language from Initial Teacher Education to Initial Teacher Training and documentation that referred to students as trainees. At St. Hugh’s, the introduction of the non-QTS Education Studies programme meant that tutor dissatisfaction with what was perceived as ticking boxes and jumping through hoops could be replaced by enthusiasm for a more critical and theoretically informed approach, in which ‘being a student’ would involve engagement with theory and critique. The mismatch between student and tutor perceptions of ‘being a student’ is perhaps not surprising when tutors are embracing newfound freedoms to develop a more critical curriculum and students are anticipating being told ‘how to teach’.

¹⁵ Teacher Training Agency: former name of the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), most recently established as the Teaching Agency in April 2012.

¹⁶ Office for Standards in Education: the body responsible for the inspection and regulation of education provision in schools, colleges, and ITT providers.

Richardson (2002, p. 29) notes, in relation to the development of ITT, that the failure to 'nurture pedagogy as a core and unifying component of the formal study of education' contributed to the artificial separation of theory and practice. This separation continues to be used by the UK government to justify prioritizing school-based training for ITT students, including the claim in the green paper *Training our next generation of outstanding teachers* that some 'university based trainees see their training as too theoretical' (DfE, 2011), although the green paper provides no analysis of the value of theory, or consideration of how it might be taught in ways that its value could be communicated more clearly. The student perception is presented as adequate analysis of theory in their courses, and theory is deemed irrelevant compared to the relevance of training programmes led by schools. It is interesting that, whilst pedagogical theory is seen as unnecessary, subject based theory is valorised in the same document in which a funding model is proposed whereby PGCE students with first class degrees would receive higher bursaries than those with lower classifications (DfE, 2011). For the UK government, being analytical and critical in handling theory is apparently important only in disciplinary study, not in relation to pedagogy, which is positioned as essentially practical, a craft or skill. Theory and practice are set in opposition to each other, but Education Studies brings them together to critique policy and practice, and at St. Hugh's the distinction between Education Studies as a critical practice and ITT courses which are limited to some extent by government requirements is seen by Education Studies tutors as a defining attribute of the subject. When the 4-year programme became a 3+1 programme, tutors working on Education Studies were largely keen to develop the course in a new direction, and

institutional staffing changes meant that those who preferred to work within an ITT context were able to move to the Primary Education programme. Those who remained welcomed the freedom to extend students' opportunities to engage critically with educational issues. We aimed to prompt students to question their own beliefs about education and their own experiences of education, as pupils and as adults working in educational establishments. The younger students had known nothing but the National Curriculum, testing and targets; we wanted them to see that their beliefs, whatever they were, had come from somewhere and to understand education as contested.

2.4.2 What is Education Studies?

When talking about Education Studies departments and the academics working in them I am specifically referring to the 'new Education Studies', a term coined by Bartlett and Burton (2006, p. 7) as they discuss the emerging programmes 'evolving from the pedagogical background of teacher training and being situated in the new universities that are at the forefront of developing wider access to HE'. The location and backgrounds of the students distinguish these new Education Studies departments from the established Education departments in older universities, but so too do the tutors' backgrounds. Many of the academics working in new Education Studies had a background in school teaching rather than in an academic discipline, and working in teaching intensive institutions limited opportunity to engage in research. At St. Hugh's our contracts were predominantly teaching contracts, and our backgrounds were in teaching, but the new Education

Studies courses had fewer contact hours and were about much more than teaching. As Bartlett and Burton (2006, p. 7) note ‘for many academics their initial introduction to the subject [Education Studies] still proves a steep learning curve as their newly validated programmes grow rapidly’. Each institution had to grapple with questions about the nature of Education Studies, what education as an academic subject might include, what theoretical frameworks might inform development of new courses, and at St. Hugh’s we were also seeking to decide how to involve ourselves in the research opportunities that had been made possible by reduced contact time, and which had become an institutional expectation, prompted by the RAE¹⁷.

Academics from these new departments formed the British Education Studies Association (BESA) in 2005 and the aim at BESA’s first conference in that year was ‘to allow Education Studies professionals to share ideas and perspectives about the nature of the subject’. Papers were organised into themes including ‘What is Education Studies?’, ‘What different kinds of curriculum does it have?’, ‘What is the theoretical basis for the subject?’ and ‘What is the role of the subject disciplines?’ (BESA, 2005). Similar topics had already been explored in journals (Davies & Hogarth, 2002, 2004; Tubbs & Grimes, 2001), and although many fruitful questions were raised, prompting much debate, answers were less forthcoming and four years later similar questions were still being asked; Patrick Ainley’s keynote speech at the BESA conference in 2009 was entitled ‘What

¹⁷ Research Assessment Exercise: a national exercise undertaken periodically to assess research quality in HEIs (Currently called the REF; Research Excellence Framework)

Education Studies is and what it might be’, and he noted at the outset that his presentation of the version of Education Studies in his institution was ‘without any assertion of how typical this is’ (Ainley, 2009, p. 3). Other papers in the conference journal asked ‘How does Education Studies see itself?’ (Griffin & McDougall, 2009) and looked ‘Towards a definition of Education Studies’ (Hodkinson, 2009).

Education Studies, it seems, is hard to define, and the QAA¹⁸ benchmark statements offer little guidance as to what it might entail. The benchmark statements for education were first published in 2000 and were revised in 2007. After the 2000 version Davies and Hogarth’s (2004, p. 430) evaluation was that; ‘This rather bland characterization does little to explain or discuss the nature of Educational Studies ... It allows a great deal of flexibility as to the way in which the field is developed by individual institutions’. But the corollary of such freedom was little guidance for those developing courses, and Davies and Hogarth went on to argue for ‘broad parameters of education studies [to avoid] academic incoherence, misunderstandings on the part of applicants to degree programmes and low status’ (p. 437). However, the 2007 benchmark statement did not address their concerns and instead made the heterogeneity of courses explicit:

There are differing theoretical models for education studies. It can be seen as a ‘subject’ defined by its curriculum content and drawing selectively upon the methods of the contributory disciplines ... Others regard education studies as a ‘discipline’

¹⁸ Quality Assurance Agency for HE: an independent body responsible for assuring standards in UK universities.

with its own academic community, its own distinctive discourses and methods of enquiry. (QAA, 2007, p. 2)

Debate about the relationship of Education Studies to the contributory disciplines can be traced back to R.S. Peters' (1963) inaugural lecture at the Institute of Education, London when he sought to bring some structure to the study of Education (at that time located within teacher training courses) and claimed 'education is not an autonomous discipline, but a field, like politics, where the disciplines of history, philosophy, psychology and sociology have application' (McCulloch, 2002, p. 200). However, the disciplines were often taught without their relevance for education being made clear. Teaching the disciplines separately from pedagogy failed to provide a context for the study of sociological, psychological, historical or philosophical themes and so they were seen as irrelevant for aspiring teachers and had largely disappeared from ITT courses by the late 1990s (Burton & Bartlett, 2006; McCulloch, 2002). More importantly in recent years, the disciplines were marginalised in response to concerns that a government desire to focus more on practical skills would relocate teacher training away from the universities and into schools if they appeared to be too theoretical (Burton & Bartlett, 2006; Richardson, 2002), a concern that continues to this day. Education Studies, however, provides a space for the contributory disciplines in the study of education, although their presence and place is contested and in the next section I outline the debate and position St. Hugh's within the field.

2.4.3 The presence and place of the contributory disciplines in Education Studies

If Peters (1963, p. 273) in his inaugural lecture was endeavouring to overcome the ‘undifferentiated mush’ of educational theory by approaching the study of education from disciplinary perspectives, forty years later a similar point is made by a number of scholars; Education Studies is in danger of academic incoherence as institutions interpret Education Studies in disparate ways, some drawing overtly on contributory disciplines and others making an explicit decision to reject the disciplines as an overarching structure (Davies & Hogarth, 2004; Hodgkinson, 2009; Palaiologou, 2010; Ward, 2006). Other departments have no clearly articulated theoretical framework on which to draw and Ward (2006, pp. 7-8) concludes from his research with subject leaders and heads of department or faculty in nine HEIs:

[M]ost found difficulty in responding to the question [about the theoretical framework for Education Studies] and did not have to hand a ready theoretical model [and] ... while the disciplines are included in all programmes, they do not form the most immediate theoretical framework for Education Studies in the perception of its subject leaders.

Ward draws on Bernstein’s typology of educational knowledge codes (Bernstein, 1974) to describe the approaches taken in the development of Education Studies programmes: ‘collection code’ in which ‘discrete disciplines [are] explicitly identified within the subject’ and ‘integration code’ in which ‘disciplines permeate the subject, but are not explicitly identified’ (Ward 2006, p.

7). This difference is exemplified by the following two case studies selected from the many different interpretations of Education Studies. Ward (2002, p. 9), in an example of collection code, is clear that in his institution's Education Studies programme the disciplines are central:

[I]t was fundamental to our principles that modules should draw rigorously upon all four disciplines as methods of analysis ... It is intended, then, that students will have a grasp of the methods in the disciplines and to understand the nature of their contribution to Education Studies.

In contrast, Tubbs and Grimes (2001, p. 5) exemplify integration code and reject any dependence on the disciplines. They describe their Education Studies programme and its evolution to a point where it 'no longer relies on the integrity or otherwise of the disciplines for its own coherence and relevance'.

If these two alternatives lie at the extremes of the spectrum, the middle ground is still shifting, for example Griffin and McDougal (2009, p. 31) describe developing an Education Studies degree that took an 'interdisciplinary, thematic and highly reflective approach' including a deliberate intention not to 'train' students in the existing discourses of the disciplines. Yet they report in first-year work: 'the "ungrounded" nature of student reflections ... isolated and abstracted from any critical, analytical or research perspective' (ibid.) and identify the need to revise their programme to include a new module designed to introduce the disciplines explicitly to the first-year students. As Burton and Bartlett (2006, p. 394) conclude; 'Paradoxically ... Education Studies is only able to lay claim to its

discrete subject status as a consequence of drawing upon the intellectual tools and analytical perspectives provided by these root disciplines'. Without the analytical framework of the disciplines, it is not clear what analytical tools Education Studies academics or students should draw on. Whether or not the contributory disciplines are explicitly taught, they are necessary to provide analytical perspectives.

At St. Hugh's the contributory disciplines are integrated into the Education Studies course. Many, but not all modules can be identified as being grounded in one of the contributory disciplines, but they are education-centred rather than discipline-centred and there is no explicit introduction to disciplinary discourses. Rather, students are encouraged to focus on the educational issues and to examine how, for example, psychological or sociological theory can support understanding and analysis of that educational issue. This reflects the backgrounds of the tutors who have all taught in the UK state primary or secondary sector and see themselves as educators with an interest or expertise in a specific discipline rather than as members of an academic discipline applying disciplinary knowledge to education. But this raises questions about what it means to be an academic or student within Education Studies and whether or not any distinctive 'ways of thinking and practising' can be identified. McCune and Hounsell (2005, p. 275) use 'ways of thinking and practising' to describe disciplinary or subject specific ways of engaging with subject content and suggest that it might include:

coming to terms with particular understandings, forms of discourse, values or ways of acting which are regarded as central to graduate-level mastery of a discipline or subject area ...

[potentially] anything that students learn which helps them to develop a sense of what it might mean to be a part of a particular disciplinary community.

In the next section I discuss how ways of thinking and practising can be framed for Education Studies.

2.4.4 Ways of thinking and practising in Education Studies

Given the different disciplinary influences, it might seem an impossible task to define ways of thinking and practising in Education Studies. Courses from different institutions are diverse and Ward (2006, p. 13) notes the tension arising from the need to ‘establish Education Studies unique methods which are not simply a collection of disciplinary silos’. However, he makes no suggestion about what these ‘unique methods’ might look like, and Palaiologou (2010) presents an alternative model in which, rather than seeking new ‘methods’ she proposes a new way of using existing ways of thinking and practising. She proposes a ‘trans-disciplinary approach’ where disciplines are brought together, so that new ways of working can emerge rather than different theoretical perspectives being used in parallel. Like Ward, she does not explore what this might look like in practice, nevertheless, her suggestion that the disciplines might provide a basic toolkit which Education Studies can use in new ways is an appealing one. Such an approach places the spotlight on Education Studies and educational issues: the contributory disciplines can help to illuminate educational issues, but they do not dictate how they should be understood.

Although Palaiologou (2010) presents trans-disciplinarity as a new phenomenon in Education Studies, I suspect that, rather, it is a new analysis, and new terminology for a pragmatic approach that already underpins most Education Studies departments, including St. Hugh's. Whatever theoretical frameworks are employed in relation to educational issues, what defines the Education Studies community is critical analysis of educational phenomena (Burton & Bartlett, 2006; Hodgkinson, 2009), and this provides a starting point for the illumination of ways of thinking and practising in Education Studies.

Anderson and Hounsell (2007, p. 466) propose a list of ways of thinking and practising in History based on interviews with history academics, which reflect critical engagement with historical phenomena. Although they are presented as disciplinary specific, I reproduce them here, substituting education for history:

- Appreciation of education as socially constructed and contested
- Skilled interpretation/ synthesis/ evaluation of educational evidence
- Placing particular topics within broader contexts
- Alertness to interconnections among phenomena
- Ability to view events and issues from different perspectives
- Readiness to separate out one's own preconceptions
- Communicating representations of subject matter in appropriate forms of expression and argument

These ways of thinking and practising underpin a critical approach to educational issues and I suspect that, were Education Studies academics asked to define the ways of thinking and practising in Education Studies their responses would not be very different from those that I have created above. I additionally believe that other subjects could be substituted for history without causing too much disagreement amongst scholars: interpretation, synthesis and evaluation of evidence, placing topics in the broader context, being alert to interconnections among phenomena and viewing events and issues from different perspectives are applicable across the academy. Although the specific nature of these attributes might look different in different subjects, my substitution indicates that core elements of thinking and practising in HE are perhaps more common across disciplinary boundaries than is sometimes suggested in the current concern for disciplinarity. Education Studies may be approached from different disciplinary perspectives, and written from those perspectives, using different literacy practices; however, when analysis is at the level of ‘ways of thinking and practising’, there would be little disagreement.

Disciplines can be characterised as communities of practice, since their ways of thinking and practising define the community (Jones, 2009; Parker, 2002). Although Education Studies is perhaps best described as a field, rather than as a discipline, the ways of thinking and practising outlined above provide a framework for understanding the Education Studies community of practice, whilst recognising that these things might look different in different departments. Later in the thesis when I talk about the Education Studies community of practice I am referring

specifically to the ‘new Education Studies’. Although some ways of thinking and practising identified are, I believe, shared with those in established departments in older universities, our newness, our location in primarily Post-92¹⁹ institutions, our students and our background in teaching, for the time being at any rate, position us differently in the academic community.

It was within the context of the Education Studies department at St. Hugh’s that I planned and implemented the module that is the focus of my research. Although the module was psychology-based, it was not a psychology module. Rather, I hoped that students would use the content of the module to begin to question their taken for granted assumptions about learning, and critically examine the education that they had experienced as pupils and that they observed on placement in a Primary school. Additionally, academic literacy practice would be threaded through the module, embedded within the subject content so that students who had little knowledge of what HE would require of them could be supported through the transition. The module and its ongoing development following the pilot study is described in Chapter 5, but first I explain the theoretical frameworks that guided my thinking as I planned the intervention, gathered data and developed my analytical approach (Chapter 3) and the methodology underpinning my research (Chapter 4).

¹⁹ HE Institutions awarded university (or university college) status since 1992

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework: Academic Literacies and Communities of Practice

3.1 Introduction

I have found the metaphor of students as strangers in the foreign land of HE helpful for understanding the confusion experienced by many new undergraduates, and recently Turner (2011, p. 41) has suggested that ‘Languaging in the academy is for many like learning to operate in a foreign language, whether or not the language is foreign’. Students have first to realize that they are in a foreign land; that the literacy practices of the academy are something different from that with which they are familiar, and literacy practices that were successful in previous study contexts will not necessarily be successful in the university context.

Academic Literacies research conceptualises academic writing, not as a relatively simple technical skill but, as a social practice embedded in a particular academic context and this helps to explain why so many students find the transition to HE difficult. Literary practices reflect the wider practices of the community, for example, how it constructs meaning, makes judgments and determines what counts as valuable knowledge.

In this chapter I introduce Academic Literacies as a theoretical framework and then explain how I have used the framework to understand the difficulties

faced by new undergraduates in ‘being and becoming’ students and to inform my pedagogical approach. Two key themes emerge in the discussion of Academic Literacies: identity and power. I discuss how the writer’s identity formation and power relations operating within a particular academic context can make it difficult for students to appropriate academic literacy practices. I also discuss why, despite the potential for exclusion inherent in identity and power relations, I do not seek to reject academic literacy practices. Rather I aim to support student participation in practice so that those who might otherwise be excluded can construct identities as participants and be empowered through their participation.

The importance of participation is further explored as I discuss why many students struggle to understand what it is that they are required to do in order to succeed. Making requirements explicit does not necessarily lead students to construct meanings which match those of their tutors. There is a limit to what can be made explicit and I explain how the relationship between abstract and experiential knowledge leads me to propose a practice-based pedagogical approach in which students engage collaboratively in academic literacy practices.

Throughout the early part of the chapter, I use ‘academic community’ unproblematically, and this is addressed in the second half of the chapter where I discuss different ways that the academic community can be understood and explain my justification for positioning students as members of the academic community. I show how Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), a theoretical framework which places the analytical lens on

participation, allows understanding of what students do, what they know and their identity positions. I explain how these three domains of learning- doing, knowing and being- form the basis for my research questions and structure my analysis.

3.2 Academic Literacies

For all first-year students the undergraduate context is new and so they must learn new ways of writing, which many find difficult (Clark & Ivanic, 1997; Ivanic, 1998; Lea, 1994; 2004; Lillis, 2001; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Read et al., 2001; Somerville & Creme, 2005; Wingate, 2006) Responding to this difficulty, most HEIs have dedicated units offering support for literacy and other learning needs, which sit outside the disciplinary departments. Traditionally, departments have offered generic induction and ‘study skills’, a model that is based on a technical view of literacy which focuses on acquiring skills which, it is assumed, will be transferable once learnt. However, following Lea and Street (1998) a growing body of scholars, including some institutional learning support departments now claim that study skills presents an inadequate ‘deficit’ model of students based on assumptions that difficulties with literacy can be solved unproblematically by the learning advisor identifying and remedying the student’s deficiencies. They also draw attention to limitations in the ‘socialisation’ model which, in seeking to induct students into the academy, ‘appears to assume that the academy is a relatively homogeneous culture ... [and] tends to treat writing as a transparent medium of representation’ (Lea and Street, 1998, p. 158). Instead they draw on Academic Literacies research which recognises that literacy practices

cannot be divorced from the construction of meaning within a subject, and therefore cannot be reduced to generic skills (Gimenez, 2008; Haggis, 2004, 2006; Lea, 2004; Lea & Street, 1998; 2000; Lillis, 2001; Saltmarsh & Saltmarsh, 2008; Stierer, 2000; Wingate, 2007).

3.2.1 The contribution of New Literacy Studies

Academic Literacies research needs to be contextualised within the broader field of New Literacy Studies (NLS). NLS arose from within a wider movement in the 1980s, reaching across disciplinary boundaries. This movement was informed by a wide range of theory, in particular sociocultural theory in the social sciences and post-structural approaches in the humanities, and was part of a move away from behaviourism and cognitivism and towards an examination of people within their environments interacting with each other and the artefacts of their society (Gee, 2000; Haggis, 2009; Lea, 1998). As part of this wider movement, NLS shifted the focus from particular literacy skills acquired to the use of literacy in social and cultural contexts, based on anthropological and ethnographic studies of how literacies are learned, used and understood in different contexts. Such contexts range from Street's (1984) seminal work on the learning of literacy practices in religious schools in Iran, to working-class children in small town America (Heath, 1996) and the Amish community in America (Fishman, 1991), demonstrating how literacy practices reflect beliefs, values and ideological assumptions that are rarely made explicit. From the NLS perspective, Street (1984, p. 43) argues that literacy 'is always embedded in some social form ... and it is

always learnt in relation to those uses in specific social conditions'. He contrasts this 'ideological model', in which it is recognised that different ideological positions will privilege different literacy practices, with the 'autonomous model', in which literacy is seen as unitary, communicating unchanging meaning which will mean the same to the reader as it meant to the writer (Lillis, 2001; Street & Lefstein, 2007). If literacy is understood not as a transparent form of communication but rather as a social practice which is embedded within power relations and cultural practices, historically situated and dynamic (Barton & Hamilton, 2000), then there is no single 'academic literacy' but many, reflecting different subject and disciplinary cultural practices and epistemological positions.

3.2.2 Disciplines and epistemological distinctions

Academic Literacies literature often focuses on the disciplinary level and is concerned with the relationship between the nature of knowledge in a discipline and how that knowledge can be written about; acceptable ways to write about knowledge are determined by how the discipline constructs meaning and the underlying epistemology (Baynham, 2000; Gimenez, 2012; Hoadley-Maidment, 2000; Ivanic & Simpson, 1990; Lea, 2004; Lea & Street, 1998; 2006; Northedge, 2003; Wingate, 2007). For example, empiricist scientists will tend to write in terms of cause and effect, and present a unitary reality, whereas postmodernist feminists will tend to write in terms of discourse and power relations, and recognise multiple realities. However, there is no simple relationship between disciplines and academic literacies; even within a single discipline there may be

different contexts and epistemological positions which privilege different academic literacies. The disciplinary level may not always be the most helpful level of analysis. For example, the Biology student writing a lab report and writing a review of a journal article must use different literacy practices, and for all students, different epistemological positions may be reflected from module to module or even from assignment to assignment. This is particularly apparent in a subject such as Education Studies since different disciplinary literacy practice may come to the fore at different times and Education Studies is written in different ways for different purposes.

Whilst it is possible to examine academic literacies at the ‘micro’ level of module or assignment, and focus on difference, it is also possible to draw back to a broader ‘academic’ level. A focus on disciplinary or subject discourse can conceal the commonalities (Ivanic, 1998), and Barnett (1997, p. 31) claims that all academics subscribe to the same set of rules for rational life, whether they realise it or not; ‘Their overt discourse and their elaborated code vary; but these are just surface phenomena’. Common elements can be identified across disciplines and it is possible to recognise as ‘academic’ the writing in journals as diverse as *Nature* and *Gender and Education*. The epistemologies underpinning the writing may vary, the methodological approaches will differ, the writing may be more or less ‘objective’, but they are both recognisable as academic. The different academic literacies are located within the current socio-historic context of the academy, and academic practice more broadly. By identifying whatever it is that makes HE (in all its guises) ‘higher’, it is possible to provide the broad context for writing that

can be deemed ‘academic’ and to define shared characteristics of academic literacies.

Although ‘academic’ may look different in different disciplinary contexts, the over-arching requirement for ‘critical thinking’ is common, and is often presented as being what makes HE ‘higher’ (Hammer & Green, 2011; Marshall and Case, 2005; Moon, 2005). While there is some variation in how scholars describe critical thinking, there is agreement that it involves argument based on evidence (Clark & Ivanic, 1997; Graff, 2003; Jones, 2009; Stierer, 2000). The academic context provides a ‘culture of ideas and arguments’ (Graff, 2003, p. 2) in which analysis, criticism, use of evidence and argument, the ‘traditional intellectual competencies of the academy’, can be demonstrated (Stierer, 2000, p. 180). In the same way that ‘ways of thinking and practising’ represent a shared understanding of critical engagement that is nevertheless applied differently in different disciplinary contexts, these competencies demonstrate the academic practices underpinning academic literacies and there is wide acceptance that these characteristics are intrinsic to academic writing as shown by their presence in national credit level descriptors (SEEC, 2003).

Whether approaching academic writing at the level of discipline, module or assignment, different academic contexts will demand that these characteristics are demonstrated in particular ways, and so academic literacy practice needs to be learned within the context of the subject being studied. Different contexts for writing also entail different identity positions. For example, the science student

might construct an identity including ‘impartial seeker of truth’, while the gender studies student might construct an identity including ‘partial seeker of justice’, identities which reflect the epistemological positions of their subject. Yet, disciplinary distinctions aside, all academic writing entails taking up a position as ‘academic’, a position which might not fit easily with existing identity positions.

3.2.3 Academic literacies: a clash of identities?

Students can see academic literacy practices as alien, as being activity that people with other identities than their own would take part in, and some students find the requirement to write with an academic ‘voice’ conflicts with the ways that they would choose to portray the self through writing:

Writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody. (Ivanic, 1998, p. 32)

Ivanic suggests that the ‘self’ students wish to portray through their writing may be ‘other’ than that supported by the academic literacy practices in which they must participate. In particular, she sees certain raced and classed identities as being excluded by academic writing, and argues that academic literacy practices are privileged because it is in the interest of those in power to sustain them.

A number of authors record students' resistance to having to write in ways that compromise their identities and make them feel that they are using an inauthentic voice (Burn & Finnigan, 2003; Ivanic, 1998; Lillis, 2001), and reveal significant negative outcomes for the students: Ivanic (1998, p. 168) describes a student called Rachel who 'had difficulty in playing these games and, sadly, even more difficulty in challenging the conventions and presenting herself as she ideally would like to appear'; Lillis (2001, p. 104) quotes another student, Sara, as saying, 'But they're not changing me, are they? 'Cause I've got my own views.' and then goes on to note that, 'she decided to leave HE because she felt there was little space for her and her interests' (ibid.). It appears that Rachel and Sara could not accept 'academic' as an aspect of their identities, and the same sense of incompatibility of an academic identity with existing identity positions is presented by Bowl (2001, p. 158), who asks whether a group of black, working-class, mature women students survived their courses because they 'adopt[ed] coping strategies which involve[d] denying or submerging their 'real life' identities'.

Although I accept the conflict inherent in having to write with what feels like an inauthentic voice, I question the perception among some that an 'academic' identity is necessarily 'middle-class' (Burke, 2005; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003). An academic identity need not be incompatible with a working-class, black or mature identity. Brine and Waller (2004, p. 97) in their work with mature access students conclude 'we challenge the assumption that a changing learner identity necessitates a corresponding shifting class identity'. Identities are always in

progress, reflecting different aspects of the self at different times and in different contexts; ‘The reflexive project of the self ... consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives’ (Giddens, 1991, p. 5).

It appears that the students in Brine and Waller’s study were more adept at revising and sustaining coherent biographical narratives than those in Lillis’ and Ivanic’s studies, and other research suggests that the ability to manage hybrid identities might be a significant factor in student resilience. Working-class students who, unlike Sara, were continuing with their courses are described as engaging in identity work, deconstructing and reconstructing identity positions; ‘Some distance themselves from the old version but most seek to manage multiple versions of themselves, creating hybrid identities’ (Crozier & Reay, 2008, p. 3).

Pedagogical approaches that enable identity shift in relation to the academic, as learner and knower, could contribute to students’ ongoing construction of the self as ‘academic’ alongside the many and varied other aspects of their ever-changing identities. Such an approach could help students to disentangle ‘academic’ from ‘middle class’, and might bestow on them the confidence and power to act in a world usually dominated by the middle classes. From this perspective informed by social justice, tutors should prioritise attempts to make it possible for all students to begin to construct the self as academic, recognising that academic identity can exist alongside black, working-class, female or any other raced, classed or gendered identity. HE can then contribute to a transformation of being, addressing growing concerns that in focusing on what

students know and can do, HE has tended to marginalise the question of who students are becoming (Barnett, 2007; Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007).

Academic literacy practices need not be seen as undermining student identities, rather as offering possibilities for new ways of being, alongside existing ways of being. Ivanic (1998, p. 67) claims that students are in a vicious circle in which, 'In order to take on these new aspects to their identities, they need to engage in these practices; in order to engage in these practices they need to be people of this sort'. Yet I see possibilities for a virtuous circle: pedagogical approaches that support student participation in practice help them begin to see themselves as 'people of this sort', their new identity position as 'academic' supporting greater participation in academic practice. Through academic engagement, new possibilities for identity can emerge as the student takes up academic discourses as though they were their own, in an ongoing process of self formation where identity is constantly under negotiation.

Many authors express concern that academic literacies are privileged (Clark & Ivanic, 1997; Lea and Stierer, 2000; Read et al., 2001; Satterthwaite, 2003): their power to define what counts as knowledge and how it can be said is seen as reinforcing existing power relations and reproducing social inequalities by privileging those already familiar with academic literacy practices and positioning those not already familiar with the discourse as 'other' (Burn & Finnigan, 2003; Street, 1984). However, if students can be helped to access those practices and to position themselves as academic (or potentially academic) the power that resides

in academic literacy practices can be something they aspire to rather than something that excludes.

3.2.4 Academic Literacies: power and privilege

Academic literacy practices are embedded in academic sociocultural contexts, including power relations, disciplinary discourses and institutional practices (Clark & Ivanic, 1997; Lea and Street, 1998; Lillis, 2001; McKenna, 2003; Stierer, 2000). The nature of discourses employed in HE define what is and is not scholarly and determine what is said, and how it can be said, in a given academic context; abstract propositional knowledge is privileged and academic writing often includes stylistic characteristics such as long noun-phrases, abstract nouns, passive verbs and front-loaded sentences, and it often portrays the writer as objective and impersonal through the use of the third person (Clark & Ivanic, 1997; David, 2007; Haggis, 2006; Ivanic & Simpson, 1990; Lillis and Turner, 2001). However, from an Academic Literacies perspective, the ways of writing deemed acceptable merely reflect the socio-historic development of academic writing and they are contested.

Clark and Ivanic (1997) claim that it is possible to reject sociocultural conventions and expectations, and cite the successes of playwright Trevor Griffiths and poet Benjamin Zephaniah, who have challenged the dominant discourse in their fields in order to give value to ‘other’ ways of writing. However, in their argument for challenge and change they acknowledge that:

There is a difficult tension between, on the one hand, enabling learner writers to access the powerful forms of language and writing so that they develop the cultural capital that is perceived as necessary for success in education and in the world beyond school or university, and, on the other hand, opening up for them the possibility of challenging those prescriptions. (Clark & Ivanic, 1997, p. 240)

In my opinion, there is an obligation on tutors to give students access to privileged forms of literacy and the associated cultural capital and I take Graff's view (2003, p. 248) that:

We ought not to pretend to give people access to this [academic] power by admitting them to college and then prevent them from really attaining it by not admitting them into the academic discourse community ... teachers who fail to teach academic discourse are withholding a form of power that they themselves take for granted.

I believe that HEIs have a responsibility to show to students possibilities that they did not know existed and to support them in accessing powerful ways of knowing, doing and being. Established playwrights, poets and academics can make a conscious choice to write in a non-standard way only because they already understand the alternatives available and the consequences of choosing to use a particular written form in preference to another. Such choices might consequently lead to alternative literacies being deemed acceptable; for example, although for many years academic texts were written in the third person, many academics, including feminist writers, now choose to write in the first person, making their

value positions and subjectivities explicit and arguing that using an impersonal ‘objective’ voice merely seeks to deny the subjectivity inherent in all research (Bryman, 2004; Francis & Skelton, 2005; Ivanic & Simpson, 1990; Marshall & Young, 2006). In this example feminist scholars introduced alternative literacy practices that reflected their ideological positions, including a rejection of hegemonic power relations and cultural practices. However, they could only make such a choice because they already enjoyed the power associated with their status within their academic community. As English (2011, p. 208) acknowledges, ‘it is only the powerful who can challenge genre conventions’.

If participation in academic literacy practices conveys privilege and power, those who already possess that privilege and power cannot decide for others that they do not need it; students themselves can make the choice to reject academic literacies only once they understand what it is they are rejecting, and the possible consequences of making that choice. Furthermore, access to the literacy practices of a given community gives insight into the ways of thinking and practising of that community. Whilst I would not disagree with Wingate (2007), who argues that students need to understand the academic discourse of the discipline and the underlying epistemology in order to write essays, the reverse is also true; students need to write in order to understand the discourse of the discipline and the underlying epistemology.

If literacy practices are embedded in particular social contexts, in learning to write in an academic way, students are also learning the ways of thinking

associated with that academic context. Writing is not simply the representation of thought; it is part of the thinking process and a way to construct knowledge (Bloxham & West, 2007; Britton, 1980; Clark & Ivanic, 1997; Kamler & Thomson, 2004; Richardson, 1998; Somerville & Creme, 2005; Wingate, 2006). From this perspective, academic literacies are not just culturally constructed conventions; they are a way of beginning to understand academic culture, discourse and ways of constructing meaning. Students are not simply practising academic literacies because they must; they are practising them because academic literacies give insight into academic ways of knowing.

Practising academic literacies is therefore intrinsic to the project of being and becoming a student. However, as noted previously, many students experience difficulties with academic reading and writing. In the next section I discuss those problems and explain how Academic Literacies research leads me to propose a ‘pedagogy of academic practice’, a pedagogical approach in which students participate in collaborative academic literacy practice in teaching time. Although such an approach would not be at odds with an academic socialisation perspective, or ‘Writing in the disciplines’ (WID), an approach popular in the USA in which writing development is embedded within subject teaching (McKenna, 2003; Mitchell, 2010; Somerville & Creme, 2005), the principles underpinning decisions are informed by Academic Literacies rather than an academic socialisation or WID perspective. In particular, I take account of the importance of students’ identity positions, and a concern for power relations has informed my approach. I also seek to problematise literacy practices, rather than to simply present them as genres to

be acquired as socialisation and WID approaches tend to do. However, the problematisation of literacy practices is implicit, through an approach that invites discussion and exploration, rather than as an explicit element of the approach. I take this approach in the belief that the priority for new undergraduates is to recognise that literacy practices of the academy will be different from what they have previously encountered, and to explore them in specific contexts. As Lillis (2001, p. 166) notes, there is a tension between ‘pedagogy which seeks to provide students access to the privileged symbolic resources of HE ... whilst at the same time problematising such resources’. There is a time to explicitly address those tensions with undergraduates, as I explain in chapter 9, but I do not believe that the first semester of the first year is the right time.

3.3 Developing a ‘pedagogy of academic practice’

Despite assignment briefs and written assessment criteria, many students experience difficulty interpreting what it is that they need to do to be successful in their assignments (Bloxham & West, 2007; Ivanic et al., 2000; O'Donovan et al., 2004). Moreover, Lea & Street (1998, 2000) describe how tutors themselves can find it hard to be explicit about what constitutes a good piece of writing, are not always clear about what terms such as ‘structure’ and ‘argument’ mean, and do not recognise that they can mean different things in different contexts, a phenomenon also noted by Parry (1998) in relation to doctoral students and their supervisors.

Much tutor knowledge is implicit, their understandings of what is acceptable ‘bound by their own individual, disciplinary perspective’ (Lea and Street, 1998, p. 162). Student problems with writing reflect problems with accessing the cultural practices and beliefs of the particular academic community within which literacy practices are embedded. Difficulties with academic literacy can be recast as difficulties with academic practice more broadly, including those elements of academic practice noted previously as ‘competencies of the academy’: analysis, criticism, evidence and argument as practiced within specific academic contexts. However, there are also other cultural practices reflecting beliefs about learning and study that Cant and Watts (2007, p. 9) call the ‘bread and butter practices of academic life’, such as accessing texts, note-taking, managing time, independent research, and attending, listening to and partaking in lectures and seminars. My use of ‘academic practice’ refers to both of these types of practice, and indeed any other practices which a community of scholars might engage in as part of their study, for example the specific practical technique that the scientist must perfect, and the painstaking search of an archive that the historian must undertake. When those students for whom the academic cultural context is unfamiliar encounter academic practice of any kind, there is no guarantee that they will understand it in the ways that their tutors do.

Tutors have understandings about the purpose of study and what it means to engage in academic practices, but students’ perceptions can be different from their tutors’, including their perceptions of teaching-learning interactions (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Richardson, 2005); seminars (Fejes et al., 2005; Mann, 2003);

reading (Mann, 2000); student-led projects (Hockings, 2009); and independent study (Longden, 2006). Even the seemingly uncontroversial reading list can be understood in different ways. Tutors see reading lists as guidance to support students as they research topics, but students are unclear about how many of the texts they should read and in what detail, and can misunderstand their intention and simply read the core texts, assuming that will be sufficient (Christie et al., 2008; Stokes & Martin, 2008). The purpose of reading and its relation to the other aspects of study may be understood differently because of the different assumptions and expectations that are brought to the reading by tutors and students:

It may seem obvious to lecturers that pre-lecture reading, and ‘reading around the subject’, will ‘activate schema’ relevant to understanding a difficult lecture, thereby making it easier to understand. For students ... however, this is not necessarily obvious at all. (Haggis, 2006, p. 529)

Many of these examples of different student and tutor perceptions can be understood as representing different perceptions of the nature of learning. Tutors perceive learning as being about making connections, recognising how evidence supports an argument and the personal construction of meaning, features which characterise the ‘deep’ approach to learning (Marton & Säljö, 2005; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Ramsden, 2003). Deep and Surface are two ways of describing approaches to learning. They are characteristics of approach rather than of the individual who may adopt either approach at different times and for different purposes. A deep approach is associated with the intention to understand and focus

on the meaning. A surface approach is associated with the intention to complete the task and focus on memorising facts. Much has been written on how pedagogical strategies such as active learner engagement, collaboration, and aligning assessment with making meaning rather than reproducing facts, might seek to foster a deep approach in students, (Gibbs, 1992; Hockings, 2009; McCune & Reimann, 2003; Norton and Crowley, 1995; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Richardson, 2005; Singleton & Newman, 2009), and such pedagogical strategies are integral to the module ES1A that is the focus of this thesis. However, the deep/surface paradigm is not usually associated with Academic Literacies, and Haggis specifically proposes Academic Literacies as an alternative, claiming that the approaches to learning research ‘has constructed a model of student learning which is based upon a set of elite values, attitudes and epistemologies that make more sense to HE’s ‘gatekeepers’ than they do to its students’ (Haggis, 2003, p. 102). I accept her point that the values, attitudes and epistemologies may make little sense to students, but I do not see it as a reason to reject what I see as a helpful conceptualisation. Haggis is critiquing the assumption underlying the approaches to learning research that tutors can influence students’ approaches to learning by adopting particular learning and teaching strategies (Gibbs, 1992; Prosser et al., 2003; Richardson, 2005) without consideration for the ‘complex, contested, specific, and ... contextualised’ nature of academic literacy practices (Haggis, 2003, p. 100). Other scholars researching in this field agree that it is not easy to change students’ approaches to learning unless their perceptions of their learning contexts also change (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Richardson, 2005), but my response is different from Haggis’. I contend that those practices that

characterise a deep approach- focusing on meaning, making connections, seeking to understand- are part of the cultural context and values in which academic literacies are embedded and which students should be helped to access. Norton's work, although inconclusive, suggests that it may be possible to encourage a deep approach through giving students metacognitive awareness of their own approaches (Norton and Crowley, 1995; Norton et al., 1999). It is sensible to make students aware of the possibility of taking a deep approach, particularly since it has been shown to be linked to academic success (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). If students have only ever understood learning as acquiring knowledge to be reproduced as required, they would have no conception of learning as active construction of meaning.

Many researchers have shown how students' interpretations of learning experiences in secondary or tertiary education provide them with implicit theories about study, knowledge and expectations of learning which affect how they experience and make sense of HE (Booth, 2005; Case and Marshall, 2008; Haggis & Pouget, 2002; Honkimäki et al., 2004; Laing et al., 2005; Longden, 2006; Lowe & Cook, 2003; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Scott, 2000; van der Meer et al., 2010). Often, students' existing discourses, in particular those acquired from their school experiences, have led them to see learning simply as gaining and subsequently reproducing knowledge (Haggis, 2006; Mateos et al., 2007). Such students will struggle to achieve good marks, and will not understand why, unless they can be helped to understand knowledge as 'constructed, debated and

contested' (Wingate, 2006, p. 462), and what that means in their subject or disciplinary context. Mann outlines the challenge for HE:

[T]he question for HE is whether our own educational practices simply compound these schooled responses or whether we are actually doing something in order to 'de-school' our new students and enable them to enter into a more creative, co-operative, critical and autonomous experience of learning. (Mann, 2008, p. 90)

It is necessary to identify and make visible a range of academic practices, and in particular academic literacy practices, which we may assume to be transparent, but which, because of their location within an unfamiliar sociocultural context, cause misunderstandings between students and tutors. Many students find themselves needing to learn what Bourdieu calls 'the rules of the game' without explicit communication of what those rules are (Crozier et al., 2008; Read et al., 2001; Watson et al., 2009), in what Lillis (2001, p. 58) calls 'the institutional practice of mystery'. It is necessary to make academic practice visible in a way that students can interpret, and I draw on the work of Basil Bernstein to explore the tensions between what is implicit and what can be made explicit.

3.3.1 Making visible the invisible

In recent years there has been increasing concern amongst scholars that successful participation in HE requires understanding of tacit knowledge about academic practices, including expectations, values and beliefs (Crozier et al., 2008; Haggis, 2006; Haggis & Pouget, 2002; Lillis, 2001; Lillis & Turner, 2001;

Mann, 2008; McAlpine, 2004; Turner, 2011; Watson et al., 2009) and this can be further theorised using Bernstein's (2003) conceptualisation of visible and invisible pedagogies. These pedagogies result from the 'classification' (what is to be learnt) and 'framing' (how what is to be learned is selected, taught and evaluated) of the curriculum. Clear boundaries between categories, for example between curriculum subjects and between what does and does not count as valuable knowledge in a given context, are associated with strong classification. In strong framing the control lies with the teacher who draws boundaries for the learner; 'The issue is the locus ... and degree of control over organization, selection, sequencing, pacing, and criteria for the evaluation of knowledge to be acquired, as well as teacher/student relations' (McLean & Abbas, 2010, p. 3).

Bernstein distinguishes between invisible pedagogies, resulting from weak classification and framing, and visible pedagogies resulting from strong classification and framing, and he suggests that students from disadvantaged backgrounds will find it more difficult than others where invisible pedagogic practices predominate:

An invisible pedagogy ... is likely to create a pedagogic code intrinsically more difficult, initially at least, for disadvantaged social groups (from the perspective of formal education) to read and control. (Bernstein 2003, p. 79)

Although Bernstein is talking about children, his conceptualisation of invisible pedagogy also provides an additional interpretation of the institutional practice of mystery and the student trying to make sense of the 'rules of the game' without

any clear explanation of what those rules are. It also offers a possible way to address the problem by strengthening classification and framing. The recognition of legitimate knowledge in a given context is established and maintained through power relationships that determine what is and is not legitimate. Strong classification can be seen as excluding, since it is only in the insulation of a subject or discipline from any other that the subject itself carries a distinct identity; ‘What preserves the insulation is *power*’ (Bernstein, 2000, p. 7). In terms of academic literacies, the insulation between what is seen as legitimate and what is excluded demonstrates the power relations operating. Yet pedagogic arrangements, conceptualised here as strong framing, can enable individuals to access powerful discourses. Framing regulates how students acquire legitimate knowledge and their realisation, in for example writing, of that knowledge. Bernstein explains the relationship in his conceptualisation of recognition and realisation rules, in which:

[R]ecognition rules regulate what meanings are relevant and realisation rules regulate how the meanings are to be put together to create the legitimate text ... In this system a text is anything which attracts evaluation. (Bernstein, 2000, p. 18)

Although strong classification makes clear the nature of the discipline and what is to be learnt, leading to recognition rules, if students are to be successful they also need to be able to realise that knowledge, to practise appropriately. Crozier and Reay (2008, p. 152) report that, for the working-class students in their study, strong framing ‘helps to create the conditions through which students are enabled to access the realisation rules. Weak framing, by contrast, undermines the possibilities to do so’. Invisible pedagogies arising from weak framing lead to

anxious, dependent students, unsure of how to act upon their knowledge of the recognition rules in what would be seen as a legitimate way.

In recent years HEIs have attempted to make ‘the rules of the game’ more explicit in assignment briefs, with assignment specific criteria and lists of indicators of success, set within the national context of subject benchmarking statements. However, strong classification which makes expectations explicit by providing written documents does not necessarily make them more accessible or understood by students (Haggis, 2004; Lillis, 2001; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Read et al., 2001). Not everything can be made explicit in a document, and attempts to do so can result in more specific language and detailed documents which are ultimately less intelligible (O'Donovan et al., 2004) and which can encourage students to write to fulfill criteria rather than to think or to create meaning (Bloxham & West, 2007; Mitchell, 2010). As Lea (2004, p. 750) observes; ‘it is easy to be apparently explicit about the discourses or written genres students are expected to engage in ... but more difficult to help students to work with their own meanings and constructions of knowledge’. The recognition rules acquired from strong classification are insufficient without the realisation rules; simply giving students more and more information about what they ought to be doing will prove unsuccessful if they do not know how to act to produce the legitimate text. Brown et al. (1995, p. 317) argue that trying to make as much as possible explicit results in ‘wholly inappropriate methods of teaching’ and they suggest that pedagogy needs to be informed by ‘a convincing account of the relationship between explicit

knowledge and implicit understanding' (ibid.). A helpful way of conceptualizing that relationship is as a negotiation of gaps:

The demands for explicitness and transparency have been shown to be futile as the terms of reference in which pedagogic and disciplinary goals are expressed will always be subject to reinterpretation, or redesign, on the part of the students ... The difficulty is knowing more than we can tell ... students can never be privy to the kind of understanding [for] 'successful essay writing' ... simply because they are student ... How then can they negotiate their way without experiencing difficulties? The answer is that they cannot ... [and] it is in negotiating the gaps between 'design' and 'distribution' that learning takes place. (English, 2011, p. 62)

Negotiation of gaps takes place when students participate in practice, and participation in practice traditionally takes place alone as independent study, because lectures and seminars focus on teaching subject content rather than academic practice. I believe that the pedagogic focus needs to lie in the negotiation of the gaps and in the stronger framing that is possible in a pedagogic approach that actively supports students as they negotiate those gaps, and one way to do this is to make more time available in teaching sessions for supported participation in practice, including academic writing. Such an approach not only addresses the recognition rules, but also the realisation rules; it is not only concerned with what should be done, but with how it can be done. Supported participation not only makes unspoken expectations visible but it provides a context for students' constructions of meaning.

Practices are located within specific sociocultural contexts, and so although articulating and providing written documents which make expectations, values and beliefs explicit might be helpful to some degree, if such information is not located securely within the context of the practice to which it refers, there can be no confidence that students will understand what it is that they are trying to achieve; ‘Only by first spreading the practice in relation to which the explicit makes sense is the circulation of explicit knowledge worthwhile’ (Brown and Duguid, 2001, p. 204). I propose a pedagogical approach that combines explication of academic practice (making it visible) together with the opportunity to participate collaboratively in academic practice (negotiating the gaps) within the context of the subject in ‘workshops’. In particular, making academic writing practices visible and giving students the opportunity to work collaboratively on a piece of academic writing positions students as participants in academic writing practice, addressing what they ‘know’ explicitly about writing practice explicit, what they ‘do’ as they write together, and also their identity positions as writers. This approach reflects the suggestion that curricula should seek to integrate the domains of knowledge, action and self (Barnett, 1997; Barnett et al., 2001). I use the term ‘pedagogy of academic practice’ to refer to my approach.

3.4 Justifying a pedagogy of academic practice

Academic practices, which are situated within a particular academic context reflecting values and assumptions, need to be experienced within the disciplinary context of module content, so that the socially and culturally produced

knowledge that results is not divorced from the contexts in which it is ordinarily used. Talking about analysis and criticism as generic practices does not examine what they look like in practice in any particular discipline, subject or module, or in any particular assignment. The situation in which something is learnt has a profound effect on the way it is understood. From a sociocultural perspective, knowledge can be seen as being jointly constructed through interaction with others and with the cultural tools of the community (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1995; Bruner, 1996; Gee, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Mercer, 2002; Northedge, 2002, 2003; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Stetsenko & Arievidt, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells & Claxton, 2002). Informal learning experiences are grounded in participation in the activities of the community where, as participants in shared endeavour, the learner and competent practitioner together achieve mutual understanding. Brown et al. (1995) criticise much formal teaching for divorcing learning from the context in which it is ordinarily used and claim that learning should be through ‘authentic activity’, or the ‘ordinary practices of the culture’ (p. 306), because it is through repeated situated use that understanding develops.

However, there is a contrary view. Laurillard (1993) argues that such an approach to teaching and learning is mistaken; the resulting situated cognition leaves students tied to context in which something was learned, and she observes that ‘Academics want more to be learned than that which is already available from experiencing the world’ (p25). She distinguishes ‘articulated’ and ‘experiential’ knowledge, echoing similar distinctions presented by others using different terminology: the uncommonsense knowledge of school and the commonsense

knowledge of family and peer group (Bernstein 1974); and spontaneous and scientific concepts (Vygotsky, 1986). Although not talking about exactly the same thing, they are all alluding to the separation between formal, schooled knowledge and experiential knowledge learned from participation in the community and there is agreement that education should aim to bring the two forms of knowledge together; ‘Academic teaching must address both the direct experience of the world, and the reflection on that experience that will produce the intended way of representing it’ (Laurillard, 1993, p. 29), an approach that also responds to Ryle’s (1949, p. 59) concern for the distinction between ‘knowing that’ and ‘knowing how’, and his argument that ‘Truths [knowing *that*] can be imparted, procedures [knowing *how*] can only be inculcated’. Although a modern text might not have used ‘inculcated’, suggesting as it does an approach where the teacher is positioned as actively inculcating the learner who is the mere object of the teacher’s action, the sentiment of this text is clear; both ‘knowing that’ and ‘knowing how’ are important as shown in Ryle’s example:

A man (sic) knowing little or nothing of medical science could not be a good surgeon, but excellence at surgery is not the same thing as knowledge of medical science; nor is it a simple product of it. The surgeon must indeed have learned from instruction ... a great number of truths; but he must also have learned by practice a great number of aptitudes. (Ryle, 1949, p. 49)

It is necessary to approach the learning of academic practice not simply from an ‘articulated knowledge’ perspective but from an experiential perspective in which ways of thinking and practising that have been made explicit can be

explored through participation in practice (Anderson & Hounsell, 2007; Haggis, 2003; O'Donovan et al., 2008). These principles guided the development of the module that is the basis of my research, and which is described in chapter 5.

Despite the body of literature supporting a participatory pedagogy, and clear arguments in favour of embedding academic writing in module teaching, there is little research on the implementation of such an approach, two notable examples being Mitchell and Evison (2006) and Wingate et al. (2011). Their findings are largely in relation to design (Mitchell and Evison) and feasibility (Wingate et al.), although Wingate et al. also show that the intervention was largely viewed as useful by students and tutors. In seeking to explore my own intervention, I use Communities of Practice to analyse the approach and to understand how embedding practice within modules might lead to beneficial outcomes. Practice is at the heart of my pedagogical approach, it is also the defining feature of a community of practice, and so Communities of Practice offers a useful theoretical perspective. Barton and Hamilton (2005, p. 32) have suggested that Literacy Studies and Communities of Practice have a 'common endeavour'; both are concerned to understand learning as socially and culturally situated and involving the construction of identities. The two frameworks can be used together without any paradigmatic conflict, Academic Literacies as the basis for intervention and Communities of Practice as the analytical framework.

3.5 Communities of Practice

Lave & Wenger's (1991) conceptualisation of 'Communities of Practice' draws on ethnographic examples of apprenticeships including midwives, tailors and recovering alcoholics in their seminal text *Situated Learning*, in which 'the practice of the community creates the potential "curriculum"' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 92-93). They see learning as being situated in the social practices of the community, including not only the formal public knowledge associated with the practices, but tacit knowledge inherent in those practices and the values and beliefs of the community. Through participation in community practices, learners move from 'peripheral' participation to full participation, gradually taking on more responsibility for tasks or aspects of a task, learning to use the cultural tools associated with the practices of the community and constructing an identity as a member of the community of practice. Lave & Wenger (1991, p. 40) suggest that their work provides 'an analytical viewpoint on learning' and I use it as such to examine the nature of students' participation in academic practices, and to understand their learning experiences, where the students are positioned as legitimate peripheral participants in the academic community.

Legitimate peripheral participation is a weakly defined term which 'obtains its meaning, not in a concise definition of its boundaries, but in its multiple, theoretically generative interconnections with persons, activities, knowing, and world' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 121). The strength of this definition is that such imprecision allows it to be explored and developed for different contexts and

purposes where newcomers to a community of practice can be conceptualised as initially participating in a limited way, on the periphery, and gradually participating in more complex practices, or more independently, as they move toward fuller participation. Its flexibility as a model is evident in the range of contexts in which it can be used, from the apprenticeships originally outlined by Lave & Wenger, to the later business models developed by Wenger (1998; 2002), to the work of Paechter (2007) who developed the framework to explore how children learn masculinities and femininities through legitimate peripheral participation in gendered communities of practice. In the same way, students can be conceptualised as legitimate peripheral participants in the academic community. Positioning students as legitimate peripheral participants in the academic community is contested (Ashwin, 2009) but, as I explain terms and my use of them in the academic context, I justify my reasons for doing so and show that Communities of Practice is a useful model for examining students' knowledge of and participation in academic practice within a particular academic context.

3.5.1 Defining the Community of Practice

Like legitimate peripheral participation, and despite the centrality of the concept to Lave & Wenger's work, 'community of practice' itself is weakly defined as 'a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98), leaving the reader to intuit what can and can not be classified as a community of practice. Although Lave & Wenger (1991) discuss

how communities of practice might develop (p64), reproduce (p99) and change over time (p117), claim that a community of practice is an ‘intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge’ (p98) and define identity in terms of community of practice (p53), they choose to leave the concept of community of practice ‘largely as an intuitive notion, which serves a purpose here but which requires a more rigorous treatment’ (p42). This weak definition has led to the appropriation of the term for many kinds of group resulting in ‘considerable variation in how communities of practice are described and characterized’ (Handley et al., 2006, p. 646).

Although some scholars have responded to Lave & Wenger’s suggestion that the definition requires more rigour and have proposed ways of refining the conceptualisation of communities of practice (Amin & Roberts, 2008; Handley et al., 2006), Amin and Roberts (2008, p. 353) observe that, more commonly, a lack of engagement with how communities of practice might be conceptualised in particular contexts has led to a lowest common denominator conceptualisation consisting of ‘formulaic distillations’ and ‘instrumentalist applications’ which have replaced ‘the original emphasis on context, process, social interaction, material practices, ambiguity, disagreement’. If presented as a simplistic model, Gourlay (2009) is justified in her criticism that Communities of Practice is an inadequate framework for analysing the messiness of real life contexts, yet Lave & Wenger’s weak definition allows for such messiness and invites scholars to engage with the problematic nature of multiple definitions and explore the different meanings which ‘community of practice’ might have in different contexts. I have

found it helpful to make use of Wenger's later work (Wenger, 1998) and I draw on his analytical models of 'dimensions of practice' and 'participation and reification' as constituents of meaning which he introduced to address the under theorisation of communities of practice.

The three dimensions of practice: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, provide a model that gives Communities of Practice a theoretical structure whilst retaining a broad applicability. *Mutual engagement* in the practices of the community is the way that the members do things together, the relationships that are entailed, and the effort that goes into maintaining the community with all its complexity and diversity. The *joint enterprise* of a group of participants is 'a negotiated response to their situation' (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). It involves finding ways to work together to achieve a particular end, despite any differences. *Shared repertoire* refers to the ways of doing things that the community adopts or creates and can be seen as those ways of practising that define the community. This framework for understanding the community in terms of its practices makes no demands on the specific structures or relationships within the community, rather 'practice is the source of coherence of a community' (Wenger, 1998, p. 72). It is practice, then, that defines the community, and this can be understood more fully by considering the relationship between participation in practice and reification of practice.

Participation, defined as 'a process of taking part and also ... the relations with others that reflect this process' (Wenger, 1998, p. 55) and reification, defined

as ‘the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into “thingness”’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 58) are conceptualised as a ‘duality of meaning’ since it is through their interplay that meaning is created. Together, participation and reification shape each other in the negotiation of meaning; both are inadequate on their own, but together each compensates for the limitations of the other. Reifications can take on many forms including the ‘abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 59) that all communities of practice use to reify aspects of their practice. Communities will not only participate in those practices which define them, but will find ways to reify those practices which members of the community will use in the negotiation of meaning. The ‘duality of meaning’ provides a useful analytic tool for examining the relationship between what can be made explicit and what is only learned through participation in the negotiation of the ‘gaps’. I now consider the appropriateness and usefulness of conceptualising students’ learning experiences in HE within the framework of Communities of Practice.

3.5.2 Communities of Practice in HE

Researchers into HE draw frequently on the discourse of Communities of Practice; an online search, using databases Education Research Complete and E-journals, for peer reviewed articles containing ‘higher education’ and either ‘communities of practice’ or ‘community of practice’ identified 132 articles published in the twelve months from January 2011- December 2011. These articles do not necessarily use Communities of Practice as a major analytical tool, but the

frequency with which it is invoked demonstrates its presence in the HE discourse. Scholars use Communities of Practice as an analytical tool to examine academics' experiences (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005; Blanton & Stylianou, 2009; Malcolm & Zukas, 2000; Murray & Newton, 2009; Spronken-Smith & Harland, 2009) or to investigate the undergraduate or postgraduate experience including a range of types of teaching-learning interactions: seminar participation, assessment practices, transitions, and literacy practices (Fejes et al 2005; Lea, 2004; Lindberg-Sand & Olsson, 2008; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007; O'Donnell et al., 2009). However, its adequacy as an analytical framework has been questioned.

Ashwin argues that students and tutors cannot be positioned as members of the same community of practice since to do so relies on mistaken assumptions that the purpose of HE is about preparing the next generation of academics which 'seems an inappropriate assumption in a mass system of HE, where students' career choices often bear no direct relation to the disciplines they study' (Ashwin, 2009, p. 44). Nevertheless, although, as Ashwin claims, HE study rarely provides an 'apprenticeship' for an academic career, students and tutors can be positioned as part of a community of learners, the tutors as 'expert learners' and students as 'novice learners' (McLean & Barker, 2004, p. 410). The academic community of practice is one where there exists a culture of ideas and arguments, where analysis, criticism and evidence are deployed and assumptions are questioned, and this is the academic community of which students can be seen as legitimate peripheral participants. As Graff (2003, p. 9) claims, 'The point is not to turn students into clones of professors but to give them access to forms of intellectual capital that

have a lot of power in the world'. It does not matter that students' career choices are often unrelated to their degree; HE gives access to a culture of ideas and arguments that promotes the ability to exert control over one's life so that individuals can make 'reflective, informed choice of ways of living that they deem important and valuable' (Walker, 2006, p. 21). What the researcher does in research and what the student does in study begin to look more alike, and Communities of Practice begins to look like a valid analytical tool: a useful heuristic for understanding 'a social model of learning as participation in practice' (Lea, 2004, p. 183). In Chapter 6 I expand my justification for using Communities of Practice as a theoretical framework for examining student participation in the sometimes confusing and hidden practices of the academic world, as they are experienced in their local context.

3.6 Communities of practice as an analytical tool

A student is a member of many different communities of practice. The particular community of first-year undergraduates participating in academic practices as part of a departmental community of practice, which provides the focus for my research, is constituted in relation to any number of other academic and non-academic communities: other first years on the programme, involved in similar practices but within different groups; wider student communities in the institution, from a range of programmes and involved in a range of academic and social activities; national and international student communities, on social networking sites and as represented in the media; and, a range of other non-student

communities outside the university college, such as family and workplace, which nevertheless influence the way that individual students understand and participate in practice.

For many students, family, work and other commitments impinge directly upon the time available for study and on the students' attitudes and motivation for study (Crozier et al., 2008; Elliot & Brna, 2009; Hager & Hodgkinson, 2009; Heath et al., 2008; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003), and external factors such as prior experiences and cultural capital also mediate students' decision making (Brennan & Osborne, 2008; Byrne & Flood, 2005; Case, 2007; Case & Marshall, 2008; Hockings et al., 2008; Hounsell & McCune, 2002; Houston & Lebeau, 2006; Read et al., 2003; Thomas, 2002; Vermunt, 2005). However, it is not only external factors that affect students' participation; the institutional context also structures much of the student experience in the way that teaching is organised, assessments are set and marked, departments are structured, documentation is provided and support services are provided and promoted (Brennan & Osborne, 2005; Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009; Hounsell & McCune, 2002; Mann, 2008). More difficult to capture, but still significant is the ethos of an institution or department, and the relationships and expectations that are encouraged or discouraged which also provide a context for the community of practice. Students' lives and memberships of other communities of practice within and beyond the institution will overlap in different ways with the academic community of practice, and although the specific details of these other communities of practice cannot be known, analysis must be mindful of how this overlap is demonstrated and the

relationships between the academic and other communities of practice. Within this broad context, Communities of Practice provides the analytical framework which I use to explore students' participation in relation to each of the three domains: doing, knowing, and being.

To explore the domain of 'doing' I draw on Wenger's (1998) 'dimensions of practice': mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. I examine what students do when working together, their relationships, the ways they find to achieve their goals and the practices that become part of their repertoire. For the purpose of exploring 'knowing' I distinguish between articulated and enacted knowledge. The pedagogical approach of the module explicitly seeks to bring symbolic representation of practice and participation in that practice together, and the relationship between the two is explored using Wenger's duality of meaning: reification and participation. 'Being' is explored more broadly, drawing on the wide body of literature exploring identity which I shall introduce in Chapter 8.

3.6.1 Communities of Practice and Academic Identity

Communities of Practice conceptualises learning as increasing participation in the practices of the community, and in the same way that Academic Literacies sees the adoption of particular literacy practices as involving identity work, so engaging in academic practices more broadly has consequences for the person the learner is becoming. Lave & Wenger (1991, p. 53) claim that:

[L]earning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities.

Paechter (2007) uses Communities of Practice as a framework to explore how children learn to ‘do boy’ or ‘do girl’ and I suggest that it can be used similarly to explore how students learn to ‘do student’ through legitimate peripheral participation in overlapping student communities of practice, with concomitant construction and reconstruction of student identities. To successfully ‘do student’ involves being recognised by others as performing appropriately, and so is dependent on feedback from others to show where performance has been successful. Through participation, identity is constantly being formed and reformed, with teaching-learning interactions providing a site for the ongoing negotiation of a student identity. The potential for conflict, as students appropriate or reject new aspects of identity, has already been noted.

Contextual factors, both external, such as students’ relationships outside HE, and internal, such as institutional practices, may support or mitigate the formation of an academic identity. Analysis of student identity must examine what different student communities of practice include in their conceptualisations of ‘appropriate performance’ and how successful performance is recognised by the community. Practices of other student communities of practice might conflict with practices of the academic student community and the practices of wider institutional academic communities might also affect students’ formation of

academic student identities. Choosing to reject ‘academic’ as an aspect of identity may lead to alienation from study and consequently result in negative outcomes for students in terms of academic achievements, as discussed previously in relation to academic literacies, and so whilst students must be free to reject, they must also be free to choose to adopt ‘academic’ as an aspect of their identity. Having the freedom to choose to adopt it may rest in part with the institution in the way that it enables students to feel that they belong:

As individual students interact over time with these constantly enacted practices some will experience their identities as confirmed, some redefined, others as undermined and excluded, and others as crystallised to counter the norm ... The question is to what extent the sense of belonging is possible and actively enabled by the institution. (Mann, 2008, p. 81)

In my analysis of student identity I examine how students present the self in relation to the academy and academic practices and in relation to other student and non-student communities, and discuss how the pedagogic approach supports construction of the self as academic. As discussed earlier, Academic Literacies draws attention to power relations within in the academy and the identity positions available to individuals. Power is implicated in all three domains, what students do, what they know and the kinds of identities that are available to them and an awareness of power relations overlays my analytical approach.

3.6.2 *Communities of Practice and Power*

The power to legitimate students' participation rests with the existing members of the community. This power is particularly evident in assessment practices, and academic writing often acts as a gatekeeper to the academic community, positioning students as permanent novices (Lea, 2004), but they need not remain on the periphery; 'Legitimate peripherality entails complex power relations. When peripherality is a position from which an individual can move forwards toward fuller participation, it is an empowered position' (O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007, p. 326).

Power is often presented negatively, as excluding, yet without the power to determine what is or is not an appropriate practice the community would have no meaning. Using one of Lave & Wenger's examples, recovering alcoholics must have the power to exclude drinkers or those who would seek to disrupt their meetings by belittling others' attempts to tell their stories as recovering alcoholics, otherwise their community has no meaning. Practices define a community and without 'gatekeepers' there can be no community. For the academic community, too, the 'power' that resides in the academic community is necessary if there is to be any distinctive 'academic practice'. However, it need not exclude; pedagogic arrangements can seek to disrupt the *status quo* and give access to powerful ways of knowing and doing. Through legitimate peripheral participation, which involves both participation in and reification of practice students can be supported on a trajectory to fuller participation.

A pedagogical approach designed to enable fuller participation in academic practice can contribute to the empowerment of students (Cant & Watts, 2007), however power does not always rest with the tutor and the institution. Within a group of students working together (be that the online discussion community of practice, the seminar community of practice or another subgroup), students may themselves begin to adopt 'fuller' roles that contribute to the support (or exclusion) of those more peripheral than themselves. And this may extend beyond purely academic practices since the student group may establish a community where the practices of the 'community' diverge from the purely 'academic'.

Communities of practice are not static and they change as members adopt or reject practices. What is deemed to be a community practice will depend on how the community establishes itself and how participation in the practices of the community is negotiated by the members. Benwell & Stokoe (2002) describe their findings that, from across a range of courses, year groups and institutions, tutors accommodate resistant behaviour in seminars with politeness and irony, permitting students to 'save face' in order to 'redeem the scholarly enterprise whilst maintaining the social need to orient to other kinds of [anti-intellectual] identity' (p451). Although the tutor is the 'fullest' member, and therefore the one who initially determines the practices of the community, groups of students might establish an 'alternate' community with alternative practices in addition to, or instead of, those which were intended. If students refuse to participate, rather than a community of would-be scholars they might become a community whose aim is to complete a module with the least possible effort, with the tutor effectively

excluded from the community they have created. Communities of practice created by the student group, and the power relations that legitimate participation might or might not resemble academic communities of practice.

Additionally, some students might choose to remain on the periphery, rejecting the possibility of participating more fully in the academic community and exerting ‘power’ in their refusal to ‘perform’ as a particular kind of student. However, as previously discussed, a choice can only be a real choice if made from an awareness and understanding of the alternatives and possible consequence of choosing one alternative rather than another. Power is also implicated in identity positions, both in relation to student resistance of academic identities and in relation to the identity positions that individuals recognise as being available to them.

My pedagogy of academic practice is built on the premise that, from a social justice perspective, it is important to help students to access powerful academic ways of thinking and practising which support the construction of an academic identity and bestow the capabilities to make reflective and informed decisions about one’s life. In my analysis my focus is mainly on student-student power relations since the communities of practice that I explore are the small groups in which the students work and my data is almost entirely of student-student interactions. However, tutor-student and institutional power relations are noted where they help to give a sense of the wider context.

3.7 Conclusion

Academic literacies research provides the theoretical framework which has guided my thinking about how to respond to the needs of students who experience difficulties with academic reading and writing. Responsibility cannot be delegated to study support services or generic courses on reading and writing since academic literacies are embedded within the cultural beliefs, values and attitudes of the discipline or subject that they represent; participating in academic literacy practices is not merely a skill to be acquired, it also involves the negotiation of power relationships which determine who decides what can be said and how it can be said in any given context, and identity positions which might or might not correspond to the ‘academic’ reader or writer. My response to the imbalance of power is not to reject academic ways of reading and writing but to seek to empower students by giving access to the powerful ways of practising since they also give access to powerful ways of constructing meaning and cultural capital. Enabling access to academic practice also needs to be sensitive to questions of identity, and should seek to support students in constructing identities that include academic alongside existing identity positions. These principles inform my ethical response and Academic Literacies research also guides the practical action.

Academic literacy practices are embedded within a particular academic sociocultural context that students and tutors, from their different positions within the academic context, understand differently. Communicating tutor understandings and expectations is not straightforward; much knowledge is implicit and, although

it is helpful to make practices explicit, trying to make everything explicit results in ever more detailed explanations and documents that can prove to be even more confusing. Interpretation of the meaning of such definitions and explanations needs to be experienced within the context in which they are required to be used, leading me to propose a pedagogy of academic practice involving collaborative participation in academic literacy practices in teaching time. Students working together in this way can be conceptualised as a community of practice and my research questions reflect this conceptualisation.

Although initially conceived as an evaluation of the pedagogical approach, as I explain in chapter 4, my research became more ethnographic, seeking to explore students' week by week experience of participating in collaborative workshops, leading to the overarching research question:

How does my pedagogical approach support entry to the academic community?

I explore this in relation to students' participation in academic literacy practices, their knowledge of those practices and their academic identity positions through three sub-questions:

1. How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate participation in academic practice?

My focus is on how the pedagogic approach in the module influences the ‘academic’ communities of practice that the students establish. I consider the practices which these student communities adopt, academic practices or otherwise, and the ways in which they overlap with each other and intersect with other student and non-student communities of practice, and the power relations which constrain or support participation. What students do interacts with what they know and understand about academic literacy practices, and how they interpret and articulate the academic literacies that they are required to practise as members of the academic community. I explore ‘knowing’ in my second research question:

2. How does a ‘pedagogy of academic practice’ facilitate knowledge of academic practice?

The relationship between implicit and explicit knowledge is examined and I use Wenger’s duality of meaning, reification and participation, to uncover how my pedagogical approach supports students in constructing meaning through the interplay between the articulated representation of practice and participation in that practice. As students participate in and construct knowledge about academic practice, their identities as ‘academic’ may be instigated, challenged or confirmed by the experience. Further, since the relationship is two-way, students’ identity positions will influence how they participate in academic practice. This element of student ‘being’ is the focus of my third research question:

3. How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate the development of an academic identity?

Collaborative activity provides a context in which students can 'perform' academic (and non-academic) identities, and also where they can claim identity positions in the way that they choose to portray the self through talk. I examine the influence of the particular academic context, which arises as a consequence of the pedagogical approach, on students' academic identity positions.

In Chapter 4 I outline my methodological approach. I justify my decision to undertake action research in order to investigate my intervention in the form of a redesigned module and explain my use of action research in the particular context of HE. I show how the first iteration of the action research cycle led to changes in the intervention and methodological approach and justify my decision to replace my original research questions. I discuss how, during the process of analysis, I found my approach becoming more ethnographic, resulting in what I call 'ethnographic action research'.

Chapter 4

Methodological Approach: The emergence of ethnographic action research

4.1 Introduction

The starting point for my research was a desire to improve student outcomes through the introduction of a module specifically designed to address concerns that my colleagues and I shared, that a significant number of students struggled to understand what was required in their assignments. Action research presented itself as the obvious methodological choice, since I was proposing an intervention which would be evaluated and subsequently redesigned in response to my findings. However, following the first research cycle, now cast as a pilot study (2008-9), I made major changes to the research methods and focus of the research for the second cycle, now the main study (2009-10). In the pilot study I used interviews, focus groups and written feedback to gather data, however in the main study my research instrument was audio recording of student participation in collaborative tasks, which shifted the focus from the evaluation of the intervention to the participation of the students, giving a much richer data set that provided a window into student experience and led the research to take on a more ethnographic dimension in the main study, leading to an action research-ethnography hybrid, which I have termed ethnographic action research.

In this chapter I first justify action research as an appropriate methodology, discussing what is meant by action research and what that might mean in the context in which I use it. In seeking to establish my own understanding of action research, and to develop action research in a useful direction for my own context, the themes which have commanded my attention have been the notion of ‘being critical’, the role of theory, and the knowledge created through the research process. These themes provide the structure for my discussion of educational action research within the context of HE. I briefly outline the pilot study and explain how reflection on the methodological approach led to my conceptualisation of ethnographic action research and new research questions. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the analytical process in the main study and how this resulted in the three foci of my empirical chapters.

4.2 What does it mean to do action research?

The origins of action research are generally traced back to Lewin (1946), working in social psychology in workplace settings in the US, who took a democratic approach to researching social issues and proposed action research as a way to involve people in the research process. He conceptualised action research as participatory and linked to social action, principles which are still evident in action research today (Cohen et al., 2007; Hammersley, 2004; McNiff, 2002; Somekh, 2006a; Walker, 2001). Much traditional educational research, which positioned teachers and schools as ‘subjects’, was seen to have little impact on what actually happened in schools; findings were not adopted by teachers or were

adapted to fit with existing classroom practices (Crawford, 1995; Elliott, 2005; Hammersley, 2004). British researchers, including Stenhouse, Elliott and Whitehead, worked with school teachers to promote action research as a methodology for educational research in the 1970s, in an attempt to make educational research more meaningful and valuable for practitioners. Furthermore, action research was seen as an alternative to the instrumentalism and objectivist rationality which was coming to dominate the school curriculum (Elliott, 2005). The principles underpinning educational action research demonstrate a desire to position teachers as legitimate researchers of their own practice, yet it is difficult to find an agreed definition of action research and in my discussion I explain how I conceptualise action research for my purposes within my own context.

4.2.1 Defining educational action research

Educational action research takes place in a particular context (that of the teacher-researcher) and can be viewed as a form of case study in that it seeks to present in-depth analysis of a particular case. However, it is distinguished from other case study methodologies since their intention is to describe, explore or illuminate a situation, whereas action research must involve the researcher in taking action, in the form an intervention designed to improve matters, which is the focus of the research (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007; Wellington, 2000). Although action research has been developed in different directions and with different emphases, Lewin's basic schema of a cyclical process in which the practitioner will 'plan, act, review, reflect' remains evident in more complex

models (McNiff, 2002). The process of action research is distinguished from teachers' everyday practices of seeking ongoing improvement since it is to be done 'more carefully, more systematically and more rigorously than one usually does' (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 10), and there is agreement that action research is concerned with improving one's own practice, rather than seeking to investigate from the outside (Cohen et al., 2007; Elliott, 1991, 2007; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; McNiff, 2002; Somekh, 2006a; Wellington, 2000). In action research, therefore, the 'case study' is carried out by an insider, or group of insiders, researching not only the existing situation, but also an intervention into that situation.

Action research has had a visible presence in schools in the UK since the 1980s, with many books published in order to support teacher- researchers (For example; Elliott, 1991; Johnson, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Koshy, 2005; McNiff, 2002; Stenhouse, 1975; Winter, 1989). However, because action research is concerned with change, it is 'always explicitly value laden' (Somekh, 2006a, p. 24); competing values will result in different foci for the action researcher, and these texts reflect different beliefs about the nature and purpose of action research. Titles reveal different foci: Action Research for *Improving Practice* (Koshy, 2005); *Professional Development* through Action Research in Educational Settings (O'Hanlon, 1996); Action Research for *Educational Change* (Elliott, 1991) (my emphases). Scholars use different terms to represent the different types of action research in which practitioners engage: Noffke and Somekh (2004) classify these as the professional, the personal and the political; Carr and Kemmis (1986) as the

technical, the practical and the emancipatory; Hammersley (2004) distinguishes action research for reasons of instrumentalism, professional development and social change. Although not entirely isomorphic with each other these different categorisations each include three distinct categories representing a similar range of purposes for action research, and which relate to the three benefits claimed for action research by Zuber-Skerritt (1992, p. 15); ‘the improvement of practice, the improvement of the understanding of practice by its practitioners [or] the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place’, as shown in Table 4.1.

Carr and Kemmis 1986	Category	Technical	Practical	Emancipatory
	Purpose	Functional	Professional development	Political: addressing how autonomy is constrained
Noffke and Somekh 2004	Category	Professional	Personal	Political
	Purpose	Improving the service one provides	Developing understanding of one’s own practice and self knowledge	Social action to combat oppression
Hammersley 2004	Category	Instrumental	Professional development	Social change
	Purpose	Finding practical solutions	Professional development	Social justice
Zuber-Skerritt 1992	Benefit	Improving practice	Improving understanding of practice	Improving situation in which the practice takes place

Table 4.1: Comparison of categorisations of types of action research

Thus there is broad agreement that action research can be undertaken for a range of purposes and that, while some action research scholars are keen to support teachers in personal and professional development, others focus on the need to address social injustice and ‘emancipate’ teachers through the research process. The different categories have been variously presented: as hierarchical, with emancipatory forms of action research seen as most valuable (Carr and Kemmis, 1986); as developmental, with teacher-researchers seen as progressing from a technical to emancipatory form of action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992); and as having equal status (Noffke & Somekh, 2004).

Advocates of each category of action research clearly believe in their preferred approach, and perhaps this has resulted in dividing lines being too firmly drawn, since one way to promote one’s own version of ‘truth’ is to deny the value of others’ versions, which entails focusing on otherness rather than what is shared. I suggest that the boundaries are not as clear cut as my table implies, and that in practice a teacher might set out with one purpose in mind and find another during the research. For example, McNiff (2002, p. 38) takes the view that action research is concerned with professional development and ‘must help teachers try to make sense of their normal, everyday practice’. But I would question whether professional development will necessarily be the only goal for teacher-researchers involved in such research, as is implied by distinct categories. A reflective and reflexive teacher-researcher, where reflexivity involves reflecting on the self and the presence of the self in the research, will develop new questions and pursue new lines of inquiry so that what begins as a practical undertaking may become

something quite different by the end. Equally, a teacher-researcher seeking to challenge the structures in school which constrain pupils' experiences might find that elements of their practice are reinforcing oppressive structures. Again, a reflective and reflexive teacher-researcher will develop new questions and pursue new lines of inquiry so that what begins as a political undertaking may also address a specific technical issue; certainly, there is no knowing at the outset what the research might uncover, and how different priorities might come to the fore at different times. This suggests more fuzzy boundaries than the categories suggest, and allows different purposes and approaches to be mixed within a single research project. As individuals undertake action research in their own context, for what begin as technical, practical and/or emancipatory reasons, they will develop their work in a particular direction and it is helpful to conceptualise action research as a cultural tool which will be appropriated and transformed as researchers seek to use action research in diverse contexts.

4.2.2 Action research- a cultural tool

Sociocultural approaches emphasise the importance of cultural tools which are culturally and historically shaped ways of organising and understanding, for example mathematical symbols, maps, computers and the most powerful cultural tool, language. Cultural tools mediate thinking; mathematics allows us to represent the world and our experience of it in symbolic and numeric form, to model and predict outcomes in a way that would not otherwise be possible. Cultural tools constantly change; world maps, initially produced by an empire which placed

Great Britain at the centre and which used a projection that grossly distorted the relative areas of countries near to and far from the equator have been joined by maps where the projection shows relative areas accurately, where Great Britain appears at the edge, and where the southern hemisphere is at the top. Cultural tools are both appropriated and transformed so that new ways of thinking are made possible (Bruner, 1996; Gee, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003; Wells, 1999; Wells & Claxton, 2002; Wertsch & Tulviste, 1996).

Conceptualising research methodologies as cultural tools allows us to recognise that the form of action research used makes particular ways of thinking about the research problem more or less likely, and also to recognise that since tools are transformed, new forms of action research will emerge. It is clear that notions of action research have been culturally and historically constructed over the past 60 years, and that as a social practice action research has been appropriated and transformed in a number of different ways. Indeed, Carr and Kemmis (2005, p. 349) acknowledge that this occurred in the way that their book *Being Critical* was used:

[I]n these increasingly postmodern times we now recognise that it was inevitable that, as [Being Critical] was being appropriated and applied in different cultural contexts, so it would be made relevant by readers in the light of intellectual perspectives and cultural conditions very different from those furnishing the background assumptions, beliefs and experiences against which it was originally written.

Their concern is that within the ever changing historical and cultural landscape its reinvention should maintain emancipatory goals.

It is hardly surprising that a methodology that is concerned with individuals researching their own situations is subject to wide variation, leading to debate about essential characteristics of action research. As noted earlier, the debates are primarily located within school settings, but the issues they raise need to be considered in relation to my own research, even if only to explain why I am rejecting or re-imagining certain aspects. It is to the key debates that I now turn, beginning with the dichotomy already introduced in this section between action research as critical and action research as practical. This is a central theme which continues to be explored in the literature, its importance demonstrated by a special feature on *Becoming Critical* (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) in the journal *Educational Action Research* in 2005. The debate focuses on competing interpretations of ‘critical’ and whether action research must be allied to critical theory²⁰, as Carr and Kemmis believe, or if a broader interpretation can be used.

4.2.3 Being critical in action research

Carr and Kemmis’ approach to action research is rooted in the tradition of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, especially Jurgen Habermas’ work. They argue against both positivist and interpretive paradigms of educational research, in

²⁰ In critical theory, the aim is the emancipation of individuals and groups; research that is underpinned by critical theory aims not simply to understand but to effect change through identifying and challenging the legitimacy of beliefs held by individuals and social groups that bestow power on some and deny it to others (Cohen et al., 2007).

favour of a critical paradigm that seeks to do more than provide the instrumental explanations of a positivist approach or the practical understanding of an interpretive approach. In arguing for action research that promotes social justice and emancipation they reject the possibility that action research might relate to technical solutions to improve a service or to practical and personal advances in the name of professional development, and instead propose a model in which action research is presented as ‘a deliberate process for emancipating practitioners from the often unseen constraints of assumptions, habit, precedent, coercion and ideology’ (Carr and Kemmis 2005, p. 192). It is evident that the emancipation must be on Carr and Kemmis’ terms, and be practiced within their preferred paradigm, yet they merely represent one model of action research, albeit a very influential one. Others take a different view; for example, Elliott locates action research within an interpretive paradigm.

In the interpretive paradigm, being critical comes from the teacher-researcher’s own reflections as part of the research process, and Elliott opposes Carr and Kemmis’ claim that teachers’ emancipation is dependent on ‘interaction with the critical theorems of the educational scientist’ (Elliott, 1991, p. 116). Elliott is not denying the importance of being critical, but claims that in suggesting that teacher-researchers cannot become critical through their own engagement:

The authors [Carr and Kemmis] neglect the ambiguities, conflicts and tensions contained within [practitioners’] self-understandings and therefore do not seriously entertain the possibility of a self-generating, reflexive and critical pedagogy emerging as a form of action research. (Elliott, 1991, p. 116)

Elliott concludes that the distinction between ‘practical’ and ‘emancipatory’ paradigms of action research is a false distinction, since ‘by engaging teachers in action research we believed that we were asking them to reflectively critique their taken-for-granted assumptions about good practice’ (Elliott, 2005, p. 366). It seems that the distinction is one of perspective rather than of substance; research that enables teachers to step outside their habitual ways of seeing and doing can be both critical and emancipatory, whether or not it is located within the critical paradigm.

My own action research is not inspired by critical theory, and I locate myself in an interpretive rather than a critical paradigm, but this does not dictate a specific purpose in my approach. I started from a position in which I sought to provide emancipatory possibilities for the students with whom I work, through a pedagogic approach informed by Academic Literacies research. However, my action necessarily also included an intention to improve practice and the understanding of that practice. My experience of action research is of different ways of responding at different times and fuzzy boundaries between the categories: my intervention was driven by a concern for social justice; my analysis of the pilot was largely focused on evaluating the intervention; and the main study sought to understand the student experience. In developing action research as a tool for my own purposes, within the context of HE, I have not been bound by convention, and it is to the debate surrounding the relationship between theory and practice in action research that I now turn in order to justify my position.

4.2.4 Using theory in action research

Action research is concerned with practice, and the plan, act, review, reflect cycles all begin with a practical issue that the practitioner wishes to address (Elliott, 1991; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Koshy, 2005; McNiff, 2002; Tormey & Henchy, 2008). It is notable that in these models, the planning phase involves collecting data in order to determine the course of action, but makes no reference to using theory to inform this stage, and this is not limited to school-based teacher-researchers. In one of the few books specifically concerned with action research in HE, Zuber-Skerrit (1992, p. 22) describes how, ‘Rather than starting from theories on student learning and then applying them to practice, this chapter aims to show how student learning can be improved through practical considerations and changes in the curriculum by teaching academics’. In these models, theory is constructed from practice (Elliott, 1991; Koshy, 2005; McNiff, 2002), yet little attention is paid to the role of theory in constructing practice and my use of Academic Literacies research to inform my intervention reveals an engagement with theory which some action researchers would reject.

Action researchers, seeking to distance themselves from a positivist paradigm in which theory is seen as providing knowledge which teachers are simply to implement effectively, might choose to marginalize the role of theory. Yet theory cannot be ignored. Educational practice is always informed by beliefs based on something, even if the practitioner cannot articulate those beliefs, what

Bruner (1996) calls ‘folk pedagogies’, and Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 113) explain as:

Since educational practitioners must already have some understanding of what they are doing and an elaborate, if not explicit, set of beliefs about why their practices make sense, they must already possess some ‘theory’ that serves to explain and direct their conduct.

Teachers’ existing practices are predicated on beliefs and values which have developed from previous experiences, and which will also have been influenced by ‘theory’ of some kind. Their decisions about what they wish to change and how to act to effect that change will similarly have some theoretical basis (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Somekh, 2003).

Hammersley (2004) highlights the tensions that exist between theory and practice. He argues that the theory-practice dualism can never be resolved, claiming that ‘*theoria* involves detachment from, and *praxis* immersion in, the flux of ephemeral events that makes up human social life’ (Hammersley, 2004, p. 167) and denying the possibility of unity since one will always be necessarily subordinate to the other. However, theory need not be set in opposition to practice; thought and action are dialectically related, each constituting the other (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Walker, 2001). In contrast to Hammersley’s characterization of praxis as immersed in ephemera which suggests that it is almost drowning in everyday concerns, Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 93) see praxis as ‘informed action’ arising from phronesis, practical reasoning and the disposition to act rightly. In this

model, practical deliberation results in the creation and adaptation of theory in tandem with practice:

The twin assumptions that all ‘theory’ is non-practical and all ‘practice’ is non-theoretical are, therefore, entirely misguided ... ‘Theories’ are not bodies of knowledge that can be generated out of a practical vacuum and teaching is not some kind of robot-like mechanical performance that is devoid of any theoretical reflection. Both are practical undertakings whose guiding theory consists of the reflective consciousness of their respective practitioners. (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 113)

Although theory is not always foregrounded in action research ‘how-to’ books, it does have a role to play a tool for individuals’ own theory-building:

Theories can be adapted, they can be used as the basis for new, and sometimes better, ideas, they can be linked with other ideas. The only methodological constraint within action research is that we need to know how we have used them and why, if not at the time then later in the course of reflection. (Somekh, 2006b, p. 101)

Somekh is writing, as I am, as an academic action researcher. This marks a divide with most authors who write as academics supporting school teachers in their research. School teachers may perceive theory as distant from their practice and even threatening, but academics are comfortable with theory and use theory as part of their everyday practice. It would seem perverse, therefore, not to use theory to inform their thinking about their action research. Others working in HE have also been clear about the importance of theory in informing their action research (Bowl et al., 2008; Postholm, 2008).

In my own research, Academic Literacies research has provided a framework for the intervention. To plan a major intervention without recourse to theoretical underpinning would, I believe, be unsupportable within HE, and I would have no wish to undertake any research without a theoretical framework in which to locate myself and the research, as I have done in Chapter 3. This is not to diminish that action research where no such theoretical basis is established at the outset, but to reiterate that in HE where theory is neither threatening nor alien it would seem perverse to ignore the contribution it can make to any research. Through interrogation of texts, the researcher can collaborate with the wider research community, including ways of constructing meaning within particular theoretical frameworks that enable existing ways of practising and thinking to be examined and evaluated:

Rather than being limited to our own time and our own circle of mentors, friends and colleagues, the knowledge written in books, expounded to us in lectures – or these days available on the Internet – gives us our rightful place in the accumulated experience of our culture. (Somekh, 2003, p. 260)

Theory can open up new possibilities, suggest ways forward and lead to new insights and the creation of new knowledge.

4.2.5 Creating knowledge from action research

Although much emphasis is placed on improving practice, less is written about the knowledge produced from action research. Elliott (1991, p. 49) states that, ‘the fundamental aim of action research is to improve practice rather than to

produce knowledge'. He does not deny that knowledge will be produced, but locates it as subordinate to the improvement of practice. The argument that is levelled at much ethnographic research, and case studies in particular, can also be levelled at action research; if it relates to a particular context, it cannot be generalisable and therefore has no external validity (Bryman, 2004; Wellington, 2000). Heikkinen et al. (2007, p. 12) argue that the action researcher should 'consider his/her research report a suggestive contribution, which provides material for discussion rather than proclaims an ultimate truth' and Winter (2002, p. 148) suggests that, 'the analysis is only a tentative structuring of divergent perspectives- one that can be justified not as 'accurate', but merely as 'trustworthy''. However, the action researcher's voice should be afforded greater authority than that of a 'suggestive contribution' or a 'tentative structuring' since it is not just one voice among many, it is one that has undertaken rigorous research and therefore it can claim greater validity and reliability than the casual observer.

Hammersley (1992, p. 69) suggests that, 'An account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise' and Cohen et al. (2007, p. 149), make a similar claim for reliability in qualitative research that it, 'can be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched'. But reality is always mediated; any attempt to represent accurately will be someone's report of the truth (Hammersley, 1992; Winter, 2002). Although it might therefore appear impossible to judge claims for truth or accuracy, it is possible to 'acknowledge the social construction of our reality ...

while at the same time seeking some level of correspondence to a reality that is separate from us' (Feldman, 2007, p. 29). Feldman claims that this is essential if we are to overcome extreme relativism and allow the action researcher to speak with some authority. It is helpful to distinguish between biased subjectivity, in which researchers are selective, only including data that support their conclusions, and perspectival subjectivity which occurs, 'when researchers who adopt different perspectives and pose different questions to the same text come up with different interpretations of the meaning' (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 213). Such subjectivity should be accepted and included as part of the research process. Being honest about one's position when reporting findings, 'rather than adopting the questionable conventional practices of so-called objectivity' (Clark & Ivanic, 1997, p. 169), acknowledges the researcher's presence and allows for 'a self-reflexive understanding of one's identity [which] is a necessary part of understanding the impact of one's presence and perspective on the research' (Marshall & Young, 2006, p. 72).

Whilst each action research project is within a particular context, provided it makes explicit the nature of that context, by revealing that which some might choose to gloss over, it gives a more honest picture of the research. My aim is to explore, through particular cohorts of students on a particular module, the effects of an intervention and to seek to draw theoretical insights from this that might be explored in other contexts. The nature of the knowledge created by action research is context specific, but there is value for a wider audience who can use it to reassess their own understandings of their own situations (Cotton & Griffiths,

2007; Stierer & Antoniou, 2004), although as Winter (2002, p. 144) suggests this will depend upon uncovering the underlying structure of a specific situation ‘to enable others to see potential similarities with other situations’. Only by implementing similar interventions in other contexts can my theoretical insights be tested. However, despite growing interest in HE pedagogical research, evidence of action research in the literature is limited. I briefly examine the current status of action research in HE before summarising my own position and introducing my research methods.

4.2.6 Action research in HE

There are still relatively few texts dealing with action research in HE (Somekh, 2006a; Walker, 2001; Zuber-Skerritt, 1987, 1992), and a lack of engagement in action research is further reflected in the scarcity of HE action research papers in academic journals. In a recent literature review of undergraduate student learning in the UK, of the 256 papers from 1992-2006, only 14 were classified as action research and the authors are critical that much of the research that calls itself action research is not actually action research. They explain that some research that had initially been classified as action research, on the basis of the authors’ claims for their work, had to be relocated to alternative positions of their analytical map (Ertl et al., 2008). Recent papers show the diversity that is found: Bowl et al (2008) claim they didn’t even call their research action research when they began, and Cotton and Griffiths (2007) accept that some

would not even call what they do action research, yet both were published in the journal *Educational Action Research*.

Of course, Ertl et al.'s definition of what constitutes action research is only one among many, but such a limited number of papers suggest that it is not a major research methodology in HE. A search of editions of *Educational Action Research* published since this review confirms their findings. Excluding editorials and book reviews, all articles from editions 15(1) to 18(4) were examined; of the 139 articles, only 17 described HE researchers' own action research projects. Reports were more likely to report on debates about action research, or on how action research had been introduced to student teachers or Masters students, but were not action research projects themselves. Of course, other journals may include papers detailing action research in HE, but it is reasonable to suppose that *Educational Action Research* is at least as likely to represent the general level of such research as any other journal.

Perhaps the theory-practice divide is evident in the limited adoption of, or claims to be undertaking, action research as a methodology in HE. Although I have argued that theory has a role in action research, 'action' clearly emphasises the role of practice, and the theory-practice divide mirrors the traditional teaching-research divide in HE. Historically, research has been seen as theoretical, and afforded higher status than teaching which has been seen as a practical undertaking (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992). However, as I have previously claimed, although action research addresses a practical concern, the theoretical can also be foregrounded,

with researchers each finding a way to use action research as a tool in their own context in way that can be justified. My own use is tailored to my research context: it is critical (but not within the critical theory paradigm); my research is informed by theory; and it is knowledge generating. Both research cycles included these characteristics, however other aspects were changed following the pilot study, and in the following section I explain why my methods and research questions were changed and how my action research developed into what I call ethnographic action research.

4.3 The pilot study: 2008-2009

As outlined in Chapter 3, the new module ES1A was planned to make aspects of academic practice visible, particularly writing practices, together with the opportunity to write collaboratively in small groups within the context of the Education Studies course. My initial research questions had been focused on evaluating the intervention:

1. To what extent does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate participation in academic practice?
2. To what extent does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate knowledge of academic practice?
3. To what extent does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate the development of an academic identity?

It quickly became clear that my research questions could not be answered by the data I had collected. My data was of student and tutor perceptions, so I could only

hope to attempt to answer ‘To what extent do tutors and students believe ...’, and I was not convinced that my data was sufficient even to allow me to do that. I began to question whether ‘to what extent’ could be adequately answered by any qualitative data, and sought to develop my research questions in a more useful direction.

4.3.1 Data collection: pilot

I used a range of methods to collect student and tutor perspectives of the module. From students: online questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and end of semester reviews (ESRs). From tutors: online questionnaires and focus groups. I also kept ongoing field notes. Both student and tutor questionnaires were designed to be completed online using the VLE²¹ after each session, and were short and simple to maximise returns (appendices 4.1 and 4.2). However, only seven students volunteered to complete the questionnaires, possibly because I had to recruit in their first week in HE and they were reluctant to volunteer for such a commitment, or because their responses could not be made anonymous on the VLE. Most respondents gave only brief answers, often a simple ‘yes’ with no expansion, and although feedback was positive, indicating that sessions were ‘good’, or ‘interesting’, and that they had learned more about whatever the intended objectives were, only two continued to make regular responses to the end of the module. This self-selection resulted in two highly motivated and committed students providing most of the feedback, and these were not the students that I was

²¹ Virtual learning environment: an online learning space including module documents, web links, discussion boards and forums.

concerned about when I planned my action research. Online questionnaires often have low response rates, and are also limited by the lack of opportunity to prompt or probe (Bryman, 2004). Further, the data is of limited value since it is likely that students in their first term in HE would have wanted to give the 'right' answers and say what they thought I, the module leader, wanted to hear.

The interviews and focus groups were designed to overcome some of these limitations and to elicit more in depth responses, at the start of the module and again after it was finished. Only two of the seven student volunteers elected to be interviewed (one of whom also gave extensive written feedback each week), and although I gained insight into the experiences of two students, the findings were again affected by the self selection process and the nature of the unequal relationship between us. I endeavoured to make the interviews friendly and non-threatening and to assure the interviewees that I was interested in how they had experienced the module, but there was an unavoidable imbalance in the power relation and the potential for interviewer effects on the students' responses (Bryman, 2004; Wellington, 2000). Both interviewees said only positive things about their experience of the module and if they had reservations they did not share them with me.

The anonymity of the ESRs (appendix 4.3) gave all students present at the final lecture of the module the opportunity to be less circumspect, and comprised two sections: the first asked students to rate on a 4 point scale how helpful for their understanding they had found various aspects of the module; the second asked

about their levels of participation in different aspects of the module, and asked them to explain ‘why’ for each response, so that whether they had participated or not, they were asked to give a justification for their actions. These were designed to provide both quantitative and qualitative data so that overall trends could easily be noted, and the free text responses could give some insight into the students’ reasoning. Almost all students gave reasons and even though these were brief they did offer insight into how they engaged with the module teaching as I discuss, together with other findings, in Chapter 5.

Tutor focus groups, one before the module began and one after the module had been completed, invited tutors to discuss their perceptions of student difficulties and their experiences of teaching on the module, and questionnaires asked about tutors’ perceptions of teaching the workshops each week. Power relations were not an issue for the tutor data. There was a good relationship between team members who, because of institutional procedures, often taught parallel sessions with seminar groups, working from the module leader’s planning. There was a collaborative ethos in the team who had worked together for several years and who, notwithstanding occasional grumbles, genuinely liked each other and got on well. However, I became increasingly dissatisfied with the data that I was collecting and decided to make a major change in the main study.

4.3.2 Changes in data collection methods arising from the pilot

Low participation rates, and an overwhelming tendency for students to say in interview and questionnaires only positive things, rendered much of the student data of limited value. My evidence provided student and tutor perceptions of the module, filtered through their understanding of the context of the interview, questionnaire and focus group, and I became convinced that to investigate the pedagogic approach I needed to look at participation, not perceptions of participation. Reported data, whether from focus groups, interviews or written feedback can only ever provide interpreted data about practice, and I was anxious to find out what students actually did rather than what they said they did. I decided to focus on investigating how the workshops were experienced by the students and what practising actually entailed for them. On reflection, it is surprising that, since my theoretical framework is provided by Academic Literacies and Communities of Practice, both of which seek to understand participation in practice, I did not adopt observational methods at the outset.

Although knowing that one is being observed may affect how one acts, observations capture more naturalistic data rather than ‘what [people] say in interviews about what they do in other settings’ (Hammersley, 1994, p. 5), and the limitations of using student accounts of their learning to draw any conclusions about what they actually do have been highlighted by other researchers into student learning (McMillan, 2010; Weller, 2010). Barnes and Todd (1995) gained considerable insight into school children’s collaborative learning through

analysing pupil talk and my desire to focus on practice rather than reports of practice, together with the problems of recruiting volunteers and the implications of power relations between tutor and students in interviews and questionnaires, led me to adopt similar research methods. My new approach was to make audio recordings of students' participation in workshop groups, a research approach which allowed me to take the research in a more productive direction. Rather than asking 'to what extent...', a question which I came to see as meaningless in the context, since it relies on numerical data to give a meaningful answer. My new approach would allow me to look at process and to seek to answer 'how', a more important question. As Gibbs (2003, p. 22) argues; 'we need better theories about what teachers and students actually do rather than only about what they perceive or understand'.

. The old and new research questions were closely aligned, but their emphasis was different, as shown in table 4.2.

Original research question	Final research question
To what extent does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate participation in academic practice?	How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate participation in academic practice?
To what extent does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate knowledge of academic practice?	How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate knowledge of academic practice?
To what extent does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate the development of an academic identity?	How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate the development of an academic identity?

Table 4.2: Comparison of original and final research questions

As I moved into the main study my action research had shifted from a focus on improving practice, although that was still implicit in all that I hoped to achieve, to a focus on understanding the process by which change occurs. As I sought to answer the new research questions, I realised that they were no longer the kinds of questions usually associated with action research. Rather, the new data collection methods and research questions resulted in an analytical approach that included aspects of ethnography, resulting in what I call ethnographic action research.

4.4 Adopting an ethnographic approach

Ethnography has roots in anthropology which involves immersion in a society, culture or institution in order to study it in depth. The researcher becomes a participant in the society that is being studied, although Wellington (2000) questions whether the researcher can truly become a participant in educational settings. As an action researcher, I was a participant in the workshops, however I was not a participant in the same way as the students. Our roles as tutor and students positioned us differently and in seeking to understand their experience I was more observer than participant. I therefore use Wellington's preferred terminology 'ethnographic approach' in preference to 'ethnography', and think of my research methodology as ethnographic action research, in that I am taking action with the intention to improve the situation, and in order to understand the situation from the perspective of the participants I am studying the real-life context of the participants as they participate in workshops that result from my action.

An ethnographic approach is not unusual in Academic Literacies research (Lea & Street, 1998; 2006; Lillis, 2008; Street, 1984), since ethnography studies how people experience, participate in and understand their social world, all of which are also concerns for the Academic Literacies researcher in relation to academic literacies and the social practices in which they are embedded. Different methodologies reflect particular conceptualisations of learning, and it is argued that ethnographic approaches to educational research often reflect the researcher's conception of learning as participatory, which in turn can limit the findings to within the broad framework that the researcher anticipated (Hodkinson & Macleod, 2010). Yet all methodologies reflect the researcher's beliefs and values, and all research presents a particular perspective; '[T]he validity of scientific claims is always relative to the paradigm within which they are judged; they are never simply a reflection of some independent domain of reality' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 12). It is possible that taking an ethnographic approach limited my findings to the kinds of things I was looking for but, on the contrary, I see the kinds of things I was looking for as leading the approach. After the pilot, I still thought of myself as an action researcher using alternative methods of data collection; it was not until I came to look at the data and had begun the analytical process in the main study that I realised my work was becoming ethnographic. In that sense, ethnographic action research emerged organically, rather than being chosen for a purpose.

However, my approach is not 'standard' ethnography. Ethnographies usually include multiple data sets, whereas my research uses only one, the

recordings of students participating in collaborative activity. Further, ethnographies usually study people in a setting that they understand that the researcher does not, whereas my research looks at people in a new setting. It is ‘theirs’ insofar as they are students in an academic setting, but like students all over the country meeting new people and trying to make sense of their new surroundings, the rules that operate in the context in which they find themselves still have to be established. Some rules will be incorporated from their previous experiences as they make sense of the social context of the workshop using their existing understandings of educational settings and what they think university is about. Others will be established from cues that the tutor and institution give, about what HE is about, and in this respect I, as the researcher, possess more knowledge of the type of setting than the students. Yet although the groups are within, and influenced by, a particular academic context, the routines, rules and expectation that each establish are specific to that group. Tutors may try to influence practices, but group members determine how a group works together, and the ways in which student groups operate when working independently is not usually shown to the tutor. My ethnographic study offers insight into emerging groups in formation.

Although Cousin appears to exclude the possibility of ethnographic research following an intervention in her claim that, in ethnographic research, ‘Wherever the research setting, it is never purposefully manipulated’ (Cousin, 2009, p. 110), Hammersley and Atkinson note that there has been a ‘growth of more interventionist conceptions of ethnography’ in researchers seeking social

justice (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 16). Within the action research model outlined earlier, I also hope to offer, in line with the definition of ethnography favoured by Cohen et al. (2007, p. 170), ‘a portrayal and explanation of social groups and situations in their real-life contexts’ and to attempt to ‘make sense of these events from the perspective of the participants’ (Lillis, 2008, p. 358). Audio recordings reveal what actually happened in workshops in the small group interactions: the negotiations that occurred, students’ engagement and their disengagement, students’ excited talk about their academic work and their excited talk about Christmas; students’ frustrations with their academic work and their frustrations with living in a hall of residence. I was privileged to glimpse the lived experiences of first year students and hope that in my thesis I have been able to achieve what Cohen et al. (2007, p. 169) would claim an ethnographic approach should achieve:

The task of ethnographers is to balance a commitment to catch the diversity, variability, creativity, individuality, uniqueness and spontaneity of social interactions ... with a commitment to the task of social science to seek regularities, order and patterns within such diversity.

In seeking to select from the array of data available, choices must be made about what questions need to be asked and what evidence is deemed relevant. Although all research includes elements of subjectivity, this is particularly apparent in ethnographic research since the researcher is not separate from the social world that is researched. Rather, the researcher as a participant in the research is seen as a research instrument and their role acknowledged

(Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Ethnographic research, in common with action research, recognises that the researcher approaches the study with existing knowledge and beliefs and accepts the subjectivity inherent in all research. As with action research, the trustworthiness of the research results from reflexivity, a self-awareness of the process of decision-making in all elements of the research process (Cousin, 2009). Recognising subjectivities allows the focus to be placed on understanding their effects rather than wasting time trying to eliminate them; 'As long as qualitative researchers are reflexive, making all their processes explicit, then issues of reliability and validity are served' (Delamont, 1992, p. 9).

Reflexivity also affected how I balanced the role of tutor and researcher in my interactions with the students. I was mindful of my dual role as tutor and researcher. As a tutor, I want to believe that what I do makes a difference, yet as a researcher I have been acutely conscious that my analysis must present a trustworthy story and that my desire for positive outcomes for my students must not lead me to interpret their words and actions in ways that they did not intend. Gans (1968) categorises the ethnographic researcher as moving between three roles; total participant, researcher participant and total researcher, rather than adopting a single role (Bryman, 2004). These roles are adopted at different times and for different purposes, and reflect the reality of being a participant whilst at the same time seeking to observe and analyse the situation. In workshops, as tutor I was a total participant, yet at the same time the researcher in me was alert to interactions or observations that might be relevant to the research. Later, listening to recordings, I was predominantly researcher, but hearing in a recording that a

particular student was struggling with something would also prompt the tutor in me to be aware and alert to potential problems in subsequent workshops. However, I never instigated talk about previous recordings in class time as I wanted to minimise any conflict between my role as tutor and as researcher. Previous recordings were only referred to if students asked me about the research (which they occasionally did). This was both a methodological and an ethical decision.

Methodologically, I acknowledge that talking about recordings could have provided additional data and given student perspectives on my interpretations, although it would be a mistake to believe that students would give a more valid interpretation than I since, ‘a qualitative researcher cannot assume that respondents have access to the truth ... Respondents’ knowledge is different from ethnographers’ knowledge, but not superior to it’ (Delamont, 1992, p. 159). My decision not to refer to previous recordings in class was intended to limit the extent to which the students’ participation in sessions was influenced by the research process. The observer’s paradox (Labov, 1970) is that the act of observation tends to alter the behaviour that is being observed (Swann, 1994; Wellington, 2000), and Delamont (1992) notes that the relationship between researcher and respondent, and in particular how the researcher is perceived, may interact with and influence the data being collected. I wanted to be perceived primarily as tutor, and asking students about what they had said in previous recordings would foreground the researcher. Of course, the students knew that their words would be heard since they controlled the recorders, but I was concerned that referring to the recordings would draw attention to that fact. Believing that they might have to account for

something they had said previously, or that I might reprimand them for going off task could have influenced what students felt able to say on the audio recordings, reducing their value as a research tool.

From many years' experience, I know that my presence when working with a small group affects what they say and do. As I approach a group it is apparent that some students become more careful about what they are saying or cease off-task talk. I anticipated that gathering data with audio-recorders might lead to the audio-recorders being seen as my proxy; I would be present even when not present. However, despite my initial concern that the audio-recorders might inhibit discussion, I was surprised at how quickly and easily students appeared to forget about them, recordings showing that they modified their tone or focus as I approached as students have always done. Also, individuals occasionally made direct reference to the recorders, with one student reminding another 'we're being recorded'. That they felt the need to remind each other indicates the ease with which they forgot, and this is supported by the regular occurrence of students suddenly realising that their off-task talk has been recorded, usually followed by embarrassed laughter. I believe this demonstrates that the audio recorders did not cause students to modify what they said to a significant degree, although there might have been individuals for whom it was inhibiting and who might have participated differently had the recorders not been present. Two students, Carl and Layla, appear rarely in the data, because they contributed rarely and appeared to be lacking in confidence. Group work may not be something that they readily involve themselves in, and this may be a consideration in relation to the pedagogical

approach, since some people are reluctant to work in collaborative settings, but I am not persuaded that their lack of contribution is a consequence of the research, an important consideration, since research must adhere to ethical standards and participants must not be disadvantaged.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations underpinned all decision making in both the pilot and the main study and possible effects of the research on participants were taken into account. Power relations between researcher and other participants must be recognised in any form of educational research, and where the researcher is also the tutor, invested with institutional power, those relationships must be managed with even greater care. My chief concern was that students should not be disadvantaged educationally by the research. I was primarily their tutor, concerned to support their learning, and that had to take precedence over the research. I built relationships with the students and was able to establish a high degree of trust in relation to my use of the data that was being collected. Although the students all knew that the recordings would be listened to later, the tutor-student relationship role could be foregrounded in the workshops rather than the researcher-participant relationship, ensuring that their education, rather than my research, were prioritised. Students' discussions when working in groups are usually only available to the tutor when the tutor is present with the group, and although these students generously allowed me to 'listen in' I did not feel that I had the right to talk to students about recorded conversations at which I had not been present.

Nevertheless, I did use knowledge gained from recordings to inform whole group discussion, for example, to revisit a topic that recordings had shown needed clarification. When groups did not record their participation in a session, they were not asked to account for this since the power relationship between us meant that such a question might be interpreted as a directive to record. My research followed guidance from BERA (2004) and was approved by the ethics committees of both Nottingham University and St. Hugh's.

4.6 The main study: 2009-2010

In the main study I decided, for several reasons, to restrict the research to my own workshop group rather than the whole year group. Firstly, I was taking a particular approach in the module, which matched my own epistemological position, and not all tutors were adopting the same approach, despite working from the same planning. Secondly, as I would be present in the workshops, understanding the context of the recordings would be easier and I would be able to bring 'insider' knowledge of the relationships between individual students. Furthermore, the amount of data generated from 6 groups, each with 6 smaller table groups recording their interactions over 6 weeks, each with 3 hours of workshop would be unmanageable, particularly since most would be students I did not know, rendering separating out voices and transcribing nearly impossible. The audio recordings of my group were supplemented with video recordings of the whole room in which I worked, using ceiling mounted cameras and audio recorders. The recordings from these devices are of poor quality and so were only

used to provide visual images to help interpret the audio recordings when it was not clear who was talking or what was happening.

4.6.1 Data collection: main study

Rather than having to ask for volunteers from a large, fairly anonymous group during their first lecture, as I had done in the pilot, I introduced the research to my own workshop group more informally, during our first meeting at an ‘icebreaker’ session during induction week, outlining the nature and purpose of my research and how the audio recorders would be used. I explained that: there was no obligation to participate; they would control the audio recorders and could turn them off at any time they wished to without having to explain why; if they did not wish to be part of the research, I would simply ask that the non-participants all sat together at a table with no recorder, or that if they preferred to sit at a table with a recorder I would ignore their contributions when listening to the recordings; their contributions would at all times remain confidential and data would be stored securely. Cognisant of the power relationship, and the students’ vulnerability at the very start of term, but needing to start collecting data as soon as possible, students were given an information sheet (appendix 4.4) and a consent form (appendix 4.5) to take away. This was to allow them time to reflect before returning it the following week if they were willing to participate. The entire group agreed to participate, and although I cannot be sure that some did not feel an obligation, I am confident that I took every opportunity to reassure them that their participation was optional and emphasised that they would be treated no differently whether or not they participated in the research.

Students were free to select where they sat each week, and although there was some movement between groups, the groups were relatively stable from the second week of the module onwards. Table 4.3 shows the groups that they usually sat in. All students were white and Andrew was the only mature student. The length of recordings across the semester is also shown for each group. Additionally, 80 minutes 30 seconds were recorded on a day when they worked in three larger groups, making a total of 15 hours, 42 minutes and 40 seconds.

Group 1: 113 min 24	Group 2: 166 min 12	Group 3: 148 min 37
Nicola	Carl	Daisy
Rhiannon	Ellie	Ed
Sarah	Fran	Pippa
Xanthe	Iris	Querida
Zena	Teresa	Una
	Vicky	Wendy
Group 4: 268 min 37	Group 5: 118 min 02	Group 6: 47 min 18
Andrew	Bill	Bryony
Anne	Helen	Catherine
Dominic	Judith	Layla
Gary	Kim	Meg
Georgia		Olivia
Yvonne		

Table 4.3: Usual make- up of groups from 02.10.09

I usually reminded the students to switch on their recorders as they began group activities, but there is significantly less data for Group 6 who often forgot,

or chose not, to turn on the recorder, and who usually turned it off as soon as they felt they had completed the task, and significantly more for Group 4 who tended to leave the recorder running after tasks had been completed.

Whole group discussions have not contributed to the data, since the audio recorders were only used to capture small group interactions. In the pilot study I tried to write with the group as a whole, for example, mapping out a possible structure for a piece of writing and identifying what they would want to include where, but it was very difficult to manage and I felt that only the most engaged and well prepared students had gained much from these sessions. In the main study, although aspects of practice were introduced and discussed as a whole group, collaborative tasks were predominantly within the small groups. My presence in the recordings is therefore quite limited, only being seen when I am talking with a small group.

The presence of a tutor can alter the way a group interact. This can be positive, enabling the tutor to model and draw students into participation in academic practice, but if students revert to 'school' positionings when their tutor is present it can also construct student communities of practice less like those of the wider academic community. When present I was often positioned by the students as facilitator or expert, a positioning that was hard to displace. The liveliest discussions, the grappling with ideas and the sense of achievement were most prominent in student-student interactions when I was not working with the groups,

and these interactions provide the majority of my data. Although my presence is always in the background it is not foregrounded in my analysis which is focused on the students' collaborative participation in the workshops and which I explain in the following section.

4.7 Process of analysis: main study

Although I had research questions to answer, I did not interrogate the data with a clear focus on the research questions. This was to avoid the findings being overly determined by pre-conceptions of what sort of data would be relevant to each question. Rather I wanted to see what emerged from the data and to then compare these findings to the research questions. My approach does not fit neatly into any particular analytical box, however, it matches quite closely Silverman's summary of the three stages of grounded theory:

1. an initial attempt to develop categories which illuminate the data
2. an attempt to 'saturate' these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their relevance
3. developing these categories into more general analytic frameworks with relevance outside the setting.

(Silverman, 2000, p. 152)

However, I do not claim to have used grounded theory, partly because my research questions were always in the background, and although I sought to be reflexive, examining my own analysis for bias, this cannot be avoided entirely, and also because I am unconvinced that my coding arose solely from the data without

influence from the literature that I was immersed in throughout all stages of the data collection and analysis. Despite constant vigilance to avoid findings being determined by the theoretical framework, my attention will have been drawn to certain aspects more readily. Indeed, I share Charmaz's (2000) view that grounded theory aims to uncover an independent reality that emerges from the data, whereas reality is always constructed, and the categories and themes that emerge cannot but arise from the researcher's interaction with the data (Bryman, 2004). In all cases, the researcher influences what is found; there is no single 'truth' waiting to be uncovered. The research is judged by asking not, 'is it true?' but, 'is this faithful enough to some human construction that we feel safe in acting upon it?' (Marshall & Young, 2006, p. 72).

However, my reluctance to claim objectivity is, I believe, no more than any reflexive researcher should acknowledge. My more significant split from grounded theory is in stage 3 of my analytical approach in which, in order to answer my research questions, I deliberately brought my analytical framework to bear on the categories that I had identified as significant in order to develop analytical themes, and in the subsequent analysis which drew on Communities of Practice as an analytical tool. Rather than ally myself with any particular analytical approach, Wellington's (2000) broad outline of qualitative analysis as involving immersion in the data, reflection, taking apart/ analysing data and recombining/ synthesising data describes, in a rather more ordered way than is experienced in reality, the stages of my analytical process.

4.7.1 Stage 1: Familiarisation with data

Stage 1 included repeated listening to recordings and making ‘rough notes’ while listening (as opposed to full transcription) to construct an overall ‘feel’ for the whole group and for the different table groups, initial hunches about emerging themes, similarities and differences in group talk, behaviour and approaches to activities. Reflection on these resulted in a number of broad topics for exploration arising from the data:

1. Group approach to activities: process and product orientations

How did groups negotiate their approach to collaborative activities; was it actively negotiated or did it just ‘happen’? Could my initial sense that, whilst some groups sought to understand and engage with the subject, others simply sought to complete the activity be justified? Was this an active choice, or the only way of working that they knew?

2. Independent study: student talk about it and their engagement with it

Was there evidence that students completed the independent tasks that had been set between sessions, and how did they talk about their engagement with these tasks?

3. Use of academic discourse in workshops

Did the academic quality of student talk change over the semester?

4. Students' attitudes to academia and their own academicity

How did students respond to their own and others' participation in academic practice and how did they refer to themselves and others in relation to their participation in academic practices?

5. Off-task activity

What off task activity occurred? When did it occur, and what led to groups returning to on-task talk?

It was apparent that the workshops provided a context for talk of various kinds and that these revealed different aspects of the students' experiences of the workshops. With a broad orientation that sought to capture both what students talked about and how they talked about it, I began the transcription process.

4.7.2 Stage 2: Transcribing and identifying 'categories of significance'

Transcribing can be undertaken in different ways depending on the purpose of the investigation, and any written representation of spoken language will always fall short of conveying what the spoken work conveyed (Swann, 1994). However, reliability of transcripts rests on whether they convey the meaning that was intended by the speaker and their validity lies in whether they allow the analysis that was intended (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). My aim was not to undertake detailed discourse analysis, but to present the students' discussions as readable accounts of the meanings that they brought to the group and constructed together. Initially, transcripts were unpunctuated, showing all hesitations, repetitions and

simultaneous speech. However, I have subsequently punctuated them, separated simultaneous speech and omitted some hesitations and repetitions so that although the transcripts are not always verbatim reproductions, they are faithful to the speakers' meanings which can be communicated more effectively.

Through the transcribing of the recordings and reading and re-reading of transcripts, and in the light of the topics that had emerged in stage 1, I coded the data using NVivo into categories that represented the different purposes of talk in the students' discussions. I focused on what talk was being used for in relation to each of the broad categories identified in the first stage, and as new categories emerged I revisited previously coded transcripts to identify any instances of the newly emerging categories that had not been noticed in the initial coding. I called these categories 'categories of significance' since they represented the categories that were significant to my understanding of the student experience.

I undertook coding without direct reference to Academic Literacies since, although I had used it as a framework to inform my intervention, I wanted to avoid interpreting data in a narrow way, over-determined by any theoretical framework. Similarly, I intended to use Communities of Practice as an analytical framework in the later stages of analysis, but at this stage I sought explicitly to code the data without undue influence. An element of perspectival subjectivity is inevitable, nevertheless, I endeavoured to be led by the data as the categories of significance emerged.

It became apparent that the data emerging in relation to each broad topic could be read in two distinct ways: as practice (what students do); and as talking about practice (what students say about what they do). Talking about practice can of course be seen as a practice in itself, and it later emerged in my analysis that this was a particularly significant practice, but for the purposes of initial organisation of the categories of significance I treated it separately. The categories of significance within each broad topic were coded on Nvivo and organised into three tree nodes:

1. Practising
2. Talking about practising
3. Influence of the research process

The categories of significance are shown in table 4.4 in relation to the broad topics from which they emerged and as practice or talk about practice. The influence of the research process on the data, demonstrated by groups choosing to comment on the presence of the recorder and to turn recorders off at various times, represents three additional categories of significance not included in table 4.4: awareness of recorder, turn off and on, and unease with recorder. Influence of the research process, does not contribute to the data used for analysis but provides confirmation that the data was not substantially affected by the method of data collection. I am confident that the recordings provide data that tells a valuable story of how participation in academic practice supports students' entry to the academic community of practice.

Broad topic	Categories of significance	
	Practising	Talking about practising
1. Group approach to activities- process and product orientations.	Encouraging Hedging Involving Peacemaking Responsibility Seeking agreement Tension Humour	Talk about... Organising to complete a task
2. Independent study; student talk about this and engagement with it.	Making links to reading Making links to placement Requesting others' information	Talk about... Academic practices Assessment processes
3. Use of academic discourse and practice in the workshops.	Challenging Example Explanation Extending Justification Making links: to module ES1B to experiences to reading to school placement Referencing Thinking aloud Asking 'understanding' questions Asking factual questions Constructing sentence together Making a statement	
4. Students' attitudes to academia and their own academicity.		Talk about... Academicity Academic practices
5. Off-task activity.	Moving between on-task and off-task talk	Talk about... Accommodation Education studies course Family and home Friends Institution Subjects Socialising

Table 4.4: Categories of significance arising from each of the broad topics

4.7.3 Stage 3: Identifying analytical themes.

Having identified the categories of significance, and distinguished between practising and talk about practising, I re-visited the data in order to ‘compare and relate what happens at different places and times in order to identify stable features’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 211). As students participated in aspects of practice, and talked about practice, they did so in relation to others and in relation to study, and I re-organised categories of significance in both practice and talk about practice in relation to: non-students; other students (those present and the wider student body); and study. This provided six possible groupings of the categories of significance, although only 5 had data included (table 4.5).

At this stage I returned to the three domains that each represented one of my research questions - doing, knowing and being - and mapped these onto the five groupings to help shape the themes that were emerging: Participating in practice (both academic and non-academic); Knowing about academic practice (demonstrated by student talk about practising); and Being a student (demonstrated by how students talked about the self in relation to students, non-students and study). All categories of significance are included in table 4.5 and some appear in more than one ‘theme’, unsurprisingly since the themes themselves are closely related and impact upon each other. I have tried to keep this duplication to a minimum for ease of analysis, but in the recognition that in reality the themes will need to be read both separately and together if reliable meanings are to be interpreted from the data.

Practising			Talking about practising	
In relation to non-students				
Category	Theme		Category	Theme
(field empty)			Family and home Friends	<i>Being a student</i>
In relation to other students (in the group and more widely)				
Category	Theme		Category	Theme
Encouraging Hedging Involving Peacemaking Responsibility Seeking agreement Tension Humour Moving between on-task and off-task talk	<i>Participating in practice</i>		Academicity Academic practices Accommodation Socialising Family and home Education studies course Institution Subjects	<i>Being a student</i>
In relation to study				
Category	Theme		Category	Theme
Requesting others' information Challenging Offering example Explanation Extending Justification Making links to ES1B to experiences to reading to school placement Referencing Thinking aloud Asking 'understanding' questions Constructing sentence together Asking factual questions Making a statement Moving between on-task and off-task talk	<i>Participating in practice</i>		Organising to complete a task Academic practices Assessment process	<i>Knowing about academic practice and Being a Student</i>

Table 4.5: Mapping the categories of significance onto emerging themes

I considered the possibility of interviewing some of the students to give additional insight to my interpretations of the data, but decided not to do so for three reasons: firstly, the pilot study had persuaded me that the relationship between student and tutor is too embedded within power relations for the data to be trustworthy; secondly, the transcription was not complete until the following summer meaning that students could not be interviewed until the following academic year, by which time their memories of the workshops would be limited; thirdly, I had become convinced at the end of the pilot study that, if participation in practice was the focus of my research, I should gather data that showed what people do, not what they say they do. I was not convinced that interviews, a year after the data had been collected, would yield any useful data, and interviews seemed incompatible with my desire to capture lived experience rather than reported experience. Although my findings are influenced by where I looked, I do not believe that is a limitation of the methodology. Rather, it throws light on to particular aspects of participation in practice which often remain hidden.

4.8 Conclusion

What began as an action research project, focused on evaluation of an intervention, became ethnographic action research focused on understanding the lived experience of those participating in the intervention. Dissatisfaction with my data-collection methods led to a new research approach; in hindsight it seems obvious that participation in practice can best be understood by looking directly at that practice, rather than relying on mediated reports of practice, but this only

became apparent following the pilot study. In the same way, after wrestling with data, codings and categories, the final three themes that emerged seemed obvious, and I questioned why it had taken me several months to arrive at them. However, the process was rigorous and carried out with integrity, and gives me confidence that, unlike the data from the pilot, the data from the main study is capable of offering answers to the research questions that were identified following the pilot study. However, although the pilot study does not make a major contribution to the findings, valuable insights emerged which influenced the pedagogical approach of the main study and these are outlined in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

The metamorphosis of the module, ES1A

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the module that is the focus of the study. I begin by outlining how the module developed from the first validation of Education Studies at St. Hugh's in 2002 to the revalidation in 2008, and explain the rationale for decisions made, together with the structure of the module and the pedagogical approach. I then describe the findings from the pilot study and how these influenced changes for the main study.

As outlined in chapter 4, methodological decisions arising from the pilot study led to a new method of data collection for the main study and the adoption of new research questions consistent with the new approach. The findings from the pilot study, although not able to answer the original research questions, provided other useful insights: they showed that both students and tutors perceived the intervention as largely positive; and they revealed levels of student participation, and reasons for participation or non-participation in aspects of the module, enabling me to identify adjustments that needed to be made to the pedagogic approach. I draw on Bernsteinian concepts to analyse the data and to explain my decisions to expand my pedagogic focus from academic writing to encompass a broader conceptualisation of academic practices, to highlight the importance of academic reading practices which, in the pilot study, were somewhat overlooked,

and to show the importance of positioning students as peripheral members of the academic community. The findings from the pilot do not contribute directly to the central argument in the thesis, rather they explain why adjustments were made to the module in the main study, and so although I give enough detail to justify my decisions there are few quotes from participants or details of the analytical process.

5.2 Module development

At the first validation of Education Studies in 2002 the new programme followed the structure of the previous QTS programme quite closely. I was not involved in writing the programme but inherited responsibility for a 20 credit module (ED1 *The Developing Child*) which had grown out of a 'Child Study' in the 4-year QTS course. The module took a traditional approach to the study of Child Development, looking at Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Social development and I felt that it tried to cover too much so that we could achieve no more than a superficial skim over the surface of a wide range of topics.

Over the following years I expanded certain aspects of the module and contracted others, and following re-validation in 2005 the focus of the module became 'learning'. Behaviourist, constructivist and social constructivist theory were included in the module and students were invited to look critically both at their own experiences of learning and at the experiences of pupils and teachers in schools during school placement, which was retained as part of the module.

Placement was viewed by Education Studies tutors at St. Hugh's as an essential element of several modules, contextualising the taught course and giving students the opportunity to make links between theory and practice. The overall message of the module was that teaching is influenced by beliefs about learning and that different perspectives on learning are associated with different pedagogical approaches. I aimed to encourage students to identify and question their own beliefs about learning and to use their time in school to explore how different theoretical perspectives might influence teachers' practice. This ensured that although ED1 might be seen as psychology-based, its educational focus was constantly reiterated. There was no attempt to introduce the module as 'psychology', rather to enable students to recognise that what teachers do is informed by research and theory of various kinds. Students who had studied Psychology at A-level often commented that they had studied Piaget before, but 'not like this'. Rather than the memorisation and evaluation of psychological studies that students described from their in A-level Psychology courses, ED1 focused on how theory might be helpful in the classroom for understanding what children and teachers do.

Revalidation in 2008 provided me with the opportunity to undertake an action research project that began with the planning and implementation of a new module, ES1A, a compulsory 20 credit module, taken by all 150 first year Education Studies student. The existing module, ED1, was well received by students and judged to be a successful introduction to learning and development and so the subject content remained largely unchanged in the new module.

However, in line with the pedagogy of academic practice outlined in chapter 3, I also sought to introduce students to academic practice within the context of the module through: making practice visible; supporting students as they ‘negotiated the gaps’; and positioning students as participants in practice. Teaching on ES1A was a combination of interactive lectures with all students, which were largely content focused, and workshops which were based around small group collaborative activities with groups of 25. The teaching took place on alternate Fridays, with another compulsory 20 credit module in Education Studies (ES1B) being taught on alternate weeks, and each Monday was spent in a primary school where students could carry out observations and tasks related to both ES1A and ES1B. The timetable for ES1A each week included a one hour workshop followed by a one hour lecture, then lunch and another one hour lecture followed by a one hour workshop (see appendix 5.1 for module learning outcomes, syllabus and session overview). The structure provided equal time in workshop groups and lectures, and gave students the opportunity to work together in two different ways. Afternoon workshops allowed students to respond immediately to theoretical material introduced in the lectures by beginning to think about their responses to them, to question and to share understandings. Morning workshops relied on independent study carried out since the previous workshop and allowed for a more informed and rigorous response, drawing on additional reading and school observations. For example, the workshop following a lecture on Piaget was called ‘Making sense of Piaget’, and enabled students to revisit lecture content and explore its meaning, the morning workshop two weeks later was called ‘Making use of Piaget’ and explored the relevance of Piaget’s work for educators through

the collaborative construction of a plan for a piece of writing, drawing on reading and observations carried out in the intervening period. Set reading and directed school based tasks were detailed in the module booklet each week, for completion before the following workshop, as shown in table 5.1.

Independent Study and preparation for 17.10.08

1. Read Smidt (2006) Chapter 2. Take a deep approach; what does it mean for you? Can you relate the ideas to your own experience or to other reading? How do the ideas in the chapter relate to each other? Focus on understanding. Bring notes to the workshops on 17.10.08
2. Read Davis (1993) pp18-20 (provided). Annotate as you read and remember to interact with the text, as outlined in 1 (above). Bring your annotated pages to the workshops on 17.10.08
3. Find and read another text to research Piaget's stages. Familiarise yourself with the characteristics of the stage relevant to the class you are working with in school. Bring notes and full references to the workshop on 17.10.08 a.m.

Preparation for Portfolio task 1

Observe the children in school. In what ways do they exemplify aspects of Piaget's theory? How does an understanding of Piaget's work help you as an adult to understand the needs of the children and to work with them? Bring your notes to the workshop on 17.10.08 a.m.

Table 5.1: Example of independent study tasks (ES1A module booklet 2008-2009)

In workshops, within the context of subject content, whole group explication and discussion of aspects of academic practice, was combined with the opportunity to engage collaboratively in that practice within the smaller 'table-groups' in which students were seated. My initial focus was on collaborative writing, since perceived difficulties with academic writing provided the impetus for my research. For example, a session addressing 'what counts as argument' asked students to discuss in their small group what they thought academic argument entailed, a subsequent whole group discussion led by the tutor provided

the opportunity for students and tutor to unpick the meaning of the term ‘argument’ together, to explore how everyday understandings of ‘argument’ might be different from ‘academic argument’, and for students to then participate collaboratively in their small groups to begin to develop an argument within the context of the module content so that content and academic practice would be learned together. Table 5.2 shows the overview of the workshop and outcomes as listed in the module booklet, together with a summary of the activities.

Portfolio task 2.	Learning objectives	Activities
Writing an argument		
This workshop is designed to help you think about how you might use the evidence you have to support your views about Piaget in order to construct an argument.	<p>To know what constitutes an argument in higher education</p> <p>To know what evidence supports your view of the usefulness of Piaget’s theory</p> <p>Begin to use evidence to develop an argument</p> <p>To consider alternative perspectives</p>	<p>Small group discussion, <i>what is argument?</i> Try to write a definition.</p> <p>Whole group discussion and tutor input on academic argument.</p> <p>Small group discussion about the usefulness of Piaget’s theory for teaching.</p> <p>Organising evidence from reading and observation to show different sides of an argument.</p>

Table 5.2: Example of an ES1A afternoon workshop (17.10.08)

The planning of the module was located within the national, local and disciplinary context. It was a response to institutional concerns that students were struggling to understand what they needed to do differently to experience

academic success and national concerns that many students were unprepared for study at HE. As a relatively new and poorly defined subject, Education Studies needed to be clearly positioned as the study of, rather than the study for, education. However, I was not attempting to 'induct' students into a specifically 'Education Studies' ways of thinking and practising, since Education Studies is practiced in different ways in different contexts and for different purposes. Rather, I aimed to help students to recognise that study at HE would be different from what they had done before, and to help them to understand what that might look like within the context of the specific module that was the focus for the research. Although the session plans outline specific learning objectives, I viewed the pedagogic approach as encompassing all teaching and learning interactions. Aspects that had been visited previously were referred to in later sessions, and not only in ES1A. I was also a group tutor for ES1B, and although the planning, which another tutor provided, did not embed academic practice within the module content, I was working with the same students and sought where possible to make academic practice visible within the context of ES1B and to position students as peripheral participants in the academic community. In the first lecture I asked students to reflect on what it might mean to 'be a student' and in the final lecture this was reviewed, so that students might actively consider the sort of student they wanted to be.

5.3 Findings from the pilot study

As outlined in chapter 4, a range of data collection methods were used: interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and end of semester reviews (ESRs). All forms of data indicated that the workshops were perceived as valuable for a range of purposes. As noted previously, both interviewees were eager to be helpful, and gave only positive feedback about the module, claiming that the collaborative group work had been valuable both for their understanding of the module content and their academic writing. Although my interview technique was perhaps insufficiently probing, asking face-to-face about their experience of the module that I co-ordinated was unlikely to generate negative comment. However, most students also agreed in the ESR that the workshops had been valuable, as shown in table 5.3.

The workshops helped me understand the following better:	Not at all	A bit	Quite a lot	Very much
Different theories about learning and development	1 (1%)	7 (6%)	71 (65%)	29 (27%)
How to take a deep approach to my studies	2 (2%)	38 (35%)	51 (47%)	17 (16%)
How to write academically	5 (5%)	45 (41%)	46 (42%)	12 (11%)
How to include references in my writing	1 (1%)	18 (17%)	40 (37%)	49 (45%)
How to structure my writing	4 (4%)	53 (49%)	37 (34%)	13 (12%)
How to develop argument	3 (3%)	46 (42%)	46 (42%)	13 (12%)
How to become more analytical	2 (2%)	40 (37%)	47 (43%)	19 (17%)

Table 5.3: Student responses to the ESR part 1, *Your Learning*

Two unsurprising findings emerge: positive responses to the first question, about subject content, are considerably higher than the other categories, perhaps

since it refers to the content of the whole module rather than to specific aspects of practice; and students also report that they have learnt most about those aspects of practice that are more easily defined such as how to include referencing and take a deep approach, rather than those that cannot be reduced to a list of rules or descriptors such as structuring writing. Tutors also believed that the workshops had been worthwhile. Judith's statement summarises the views presented:

I agree, I think the critical thinking and the analytical writing sessions have simply raised the skills of the most able students in particular, and I think that's reflected in the kind of marks that they achieved by the end of the semester. I think the middle ones seemed to me to have a bit of a better grasp but couldn't necessarily do it, and the weaker students (laughs), for me, I felt, you know, it completely probably went over their head, but I'm not sure what we could possibly have done to have, you know, made it more accessible for the weaker students. The important thing is that we exposed in a very structured way the key and core skills and that must go some way to enhancing student performance.

(Judith: Focus group 2, March 2009)

Of course, it was with those that she calls 'the weaker students' in mind that I had planned the intervention, but from Judith's perspective, it seemed to be broadening the gap between those who were well prepared for university level study and those who were not, rather than supporting those who struggled most to understand academic practice. Different students were experiencing the module differently, and the second section of the ESR helps cast light on why this might be.

Student and tutor questionnaires and student interviews highlight that a significant minority of students attended workshops, but did not prepare for them, and the ESR allows for the comparison of levels of participation in different aspects of the module and students' reasons for levels of participation, since each question about their level of participation in an aspect of the module was followed by the supplementary question 'why?'. Table 5.4 shows that attendance was a priority since all respondents claim to attend 'always' or 'usually'; attendance is a stated expectation, with registers taken at workshop sessions. Furthermore, most respondents claim to be active contributors to workshops, 92% claiming to contribute usually or always in small group discussions (involving 5-6 students). However, although attendance and contribution are recognised as essential elements of the course, independent study is not seen in the same way by approximately one third of the cohort. Despite preparation also being a stated expectation, fewer respondents report engagement in independent academic practices. 72% claim to bring resources and notes from placement to workshops and 64% claim to complete set reading 'usually' or 'always'.

	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Always
In workshops I contributed to whole group discussions/activities	8 (7%)	55 (50%)	33 (30%)	13 (12%)
In workshops I contributed to small group discussions/activities (One non response)	0 (0%)	7 (6%)	48 (44%)	52 (48%)
I did the set reading	3 (3%)	37 (34%)	51 (47%)	18 (17%)
I brought books and notes from school placement to the workshops when we were asked to	8 (7%)	23 (21%)	42 (39%)	36 (33%)
I used the module booklet to help me know what I needed to do	0 (0%)	15 (14%)	33 (30%)	61 (56%)
I attended workshops	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	23 (21%)	85 (78%)

Table 5.4: Student responses to the ESR part 2, *Your Participation*

Brief responses to the question ‘why?’ cannot give extensive insight into the students’ beliefs about their ongoing negotiation of academic practices, nevertheless, the reasons they give for not carrying out independent study show how they justify their levels of participation and what they perceive to be valid reasons for non-participation. A few students claim to take a strategic approach, deliberately reading only what they believe to be essential, but most non-participants claim that they do not have enough time to read, or that they simply forget, or are confused about what they need to do. Many students have wide ranging demands on their time: family commitments; jobs; long journeys to and from St. Hugh’s; and library books in high demand. However, time must be managed, texts must be accessed, and reading must be done. The ‘bread and butter’ practices of getting a book from the library or structuring the week to ensure that things are not forgotten or completed in a rush are essential for success. A student who fails to recognise that independent study is essential and that subsequent participation in group tasks is limited by non-preparation, and who believes that attending and contributing is enough, may never seek to do things differently. Students’ opportunity to participate in and begin to understand aspects of academic practice, such as the construction of an argument, is seriously limited if they do not have knowledge of the module content and understanding of the central themes. Academic practice is always within a subject context, and without subject knowledge one cannot argue or evaluate. Whilst sympathising with many students’ needs to juggle jobs and other responsibilities with study, as students they must recognise that independent study is part of being a student and must find ways to read and prepare or their success will be limited.

5.3.1 The discourse of powerlessness

My concern is not primarily with the levels of participation reported by students, since adapting to university life is not straightforward; many students initially find it hard to manage time (van der Meer et al., 2010; Winn, 2002) or negotiate institutional systems for reserving books or accessing reference copies in the library (Lumsden et al., 2010), and reluctance to read around a subject is a common characteristic of first year students (Yorke & Longden, 2008). However, students present different levels of perceived ‘control’ in relation to completion of set tasks and some present the self as accepting of their non-participation, echoing Winn’s (2002) finding that students with apparently similar circumstances experience their situations in very different ways. Whilst some are able to manage the competing demands of the course and other aspects of their lives, or express an intention to get better at doing so, others appear to accept limited participation in independent study. An apparent acceptance of non-participation suggests that the specific social conditions in which these practices are embedded are not supporting students in recognising the importance of independent study, or helping them to find ways to overcome the difficulties they encounter, and the tutor data casts some light on the institutional context.

The workshops were planned to support collaborative participation in academic literacy practices that might otherwise exclude, and I viewed the module as potentially empowering. However, the tutor weekly feedback alerted me to tutor anxieties, and misunderstandings about the purpose of the sessions. Collaborative

writing relies on the tutor having confidence to respond to whatever the group offers, and cannot be prepared for in the way that a more content based session might be, and I was asking tutors to cede some of their control in the approach that I was asking them to take in the workshops. Transfer of control was particularly difficult for two tutors who lacked confidence working in the way that I was asking them; for example, in one workshop, the aim was for the tutor to take ideas from the whole group and work with them to create a possible structure for a piece of writing, but one tutor produced a powerpoint presentation of a structure that he presented to his group as a model, eliminating any discussion of how it had been constructed, and my field notes show early concern that the rationale for the intervention was not affecting tutors' ways of working. I was, however, able to make ongoing adjustments to the module to try to support colleagues who felt threatened by the perceived lack of control when engaged in an unpredictable collaborative activity, creating McNiff's 'spiral of spirals' (2002, p. 45) in which a small 'plan, act, review, reflect' cycle is enacted within the ongoing cycle. I made whole group activities more structured with additional slides to guide tutors through sessions, and included more activities that took the focus away from the tutor in collaboration with the students and more on collaboration between students in small groups, with tutor support, adjustments that continued in the main study.

Tutors were also reluctant to cede control in response to students' lack of preparation. Some colleagues provided photocopies of set texts on which the workshop relied so that students could refer to them in the workshop, even if they

had not read them in advance. There is a dilemma for tutors; to provide texts which will enable students to participate in workshops at some level, despite not having prepared, or to do nothing and effectively exclude students from the activity. In the second focus group, my colleagues gave strong heartfelt justifications for their actions, but it was my belief that last-minute provision of texts can send misleading messages about the importance of preparation and, with the best of intentions, position students as dependent. In seeking to overcome alienation and make non-traditional students feel comfortable in the institution, workshops were supportive and welcoming, in line with suggestions made by Mann (2001) of ways that tutors might work with students to limit the alienation they might experience, including: Solidarity (empathise with the students); Hospitality (Be welcoming); and Safety (Provide safe spaces where emerging ideas can be tried out). However, facilitating the participation of those who have not prepared by providing texts that they can skim read in order to participate in a collaborative activity might explain why some students claim that they always participate but never do the preparatory reading; it is not necessary if the tutor appears to anticipate and compensate for your lack of preparation.

Mann (2005) explores how ‘failure of communication’ can be seen to result in misunderstandings between tutor and students, where each experiences and understands the same context differently, but does not recognise that mismatch. Tutors need to make expectations clear, and failure to do so can be seen as weak framing (Bernstein, 2000), and as Crozier and Reay (2011, pp. 153-154) found:

Weak framing may also imply (albeit unintentionally) that not very much work is required ... loose framing intended as a supportive approach, has been seen to compound students' lack of cultural capital and confusion.

Students who participate in workshops, despite having done no preparation for the sessions, may believe that they are participating in 'academic practice', but without preparation their participation can only be superficial.

I conceptualise students as members of the academic community, and it is only when students are positioned as legitimate peripheral participants of the academic community of practice, and are allowed responsibility for aspects of tasks that have been delegated to them, such as preparing for sessions, that they can embark on a trajectory toward fuller membership of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Taking responsibility can be seen as a desirable step toward becoming a professional and being denied responsibility can lead to students feeling disempowered (Clouder, 2009). Membership of a community rests on participation in practice, with the newcomer gradually taking on more responsibility for aspects of tasks which grow in complexity. In Bernstein's terms, if newcomers do not recognise and realise that responsibility, they cannot participate in community practices and are consigned to the periphery of the community.

The recognition and realisation rules in relation to attendance and contributing appeared to be clear to most students; the boundaries were drawn

between what was deemed acceptable and what was not, and students were able to realise the expectations that we had of them. The recognition rules in relation to independent study were less clear; some did not appear to recognise that independent study was an expectation, with boundaries being blurred and inconsistent through the weak classification created by tutors who appeared not only to accept but to anticipate and prepare for non-completion. Furthermore, even amongst those students who did recognise that completing independent study tasks was necessary, in common with Crozier and Reay's findings (2011) many appeared unable to realise them, accepting non-completion as unavoidable.

Ecclestone and Hayes (2009, p. 87) argue that pedagogies purporting to be empowering can actually be disempowering, since they position students as vulnerable and fragile such that 'students are infantilised by a discourse of vulnerability'. Tutors informed by this discourse of vulnerability can undermine students' acquisition of recognition and realisation rules. Giddens (1991, p. 6) suggests that:

[C]lass divisions and other fundamental lines of inequality ... can be partly defined in terms of differential access to forms of self actualisation and empowerment ... Holding out the possibility of emancipation, modern institutions at the same time create mechanisms of suppression, rather than actualisation, of self.

Rather than compensating for student non-participation, planning for the module in the following year needed to expect, and demonstrate the expectation that students would complete reading and other independent study. However,

although making expectations clear might help students to recognise what they needed to do, stronger framing was necessary if students were to realise those expectations; in my focus on academic writing in the pilot study I had marginalised academic reading and overlooked the ‘bread and butter’ practices that are also essential for academic success. Both needed to be addressed in the main study.

5.4 Changes arising from the pilot study

Although there was broad agreement that the intervention did support students in recognising and realising aspects of academic literacy practice, it was not effective for all students and other aspects of practice, which had an impact on literacy practices, had been overlooked. On reflection, I had asked too much of tutors in the pilot study, some of whom preferred to lead workshops with clear content-based outcomes and were not confident with the less structured practice-based approach. There appeared to be a mismatch between my own epistemological position and approach to the module, and that of some other tutors. Gibbs (2003) notes that research into student learning is often inconclusive and interventions which are almost identical can have conflicting findings, the key difference being the way the individual tutor implemented them. The changes to the module ES1A had certainly been done in different ways, and sometimes in ways that did not reflect the rationale underpinning the module. As Ertl and Wright (2008, p. 206) note, ‘both tutors and students need guidance and support in introducing pedagogical innovations that might differ from their previous experience and challenge expectations’. Supporting tutors more, by making whole

group activities more structured, and including more small-group activities, enabled me to reduce tutors' anxieties and perceived need to supplement my guidance with additional content. I discussed again with colleagues the rationale for the module and the ways of working, and to ensure that all students could access the reading and tutors would not feel obliged to compensate for perceived shortcomings of the library provision, I made all set reading available on the VLE. The necessity of completing preparation for workshop activities was made more explicit, for example, specifically stating in workshop guidance 'you need your notes from ... to complete this task' to address the failure of some students to see the relevance of independent tasks to the activities in the workshops.

My focus in the pilot on collaborative writing had been too narrow. Writing was where student difficulties were most clearly made manifest, and still needed to be a major element of the approach, but students also had problems with reading; reading practices needed to be made more visible and students needed to be supported in their participation in academic reading. Reading would be acknowledged as problematic, and students would be encouraged to identify in the set reading each week, sections that they had found difficult or had not understood. Workshops would then provide a context for talking about reading; students would be positioned as a community of learners, sharing both their approaches to texts and their understanding of content.

Wider practices also needed to be addressed since student participation in literacy practices appeared to be limited by their limited participation in the 'bread

and butter' practices underpinning academic engagement such as managing time, remembering what needs to be done and using the library. Rather than compensate for non-preparation, my pedagogical approach needed to be extended to provide situated opportunities for students to read academic texts, discuss how long it takes to read different kinds of text, search the library catalogue to find a relevant text and discuss how they managed time or organised their study schedules as part of collaborative workshops. To support time-management, independent set tasks would include a guide as to how long students should expect to spend on the task. Such an approach was intended to provide stronger framing for those academic practices overlooked in the pilot study. I also decided to make the workshops longer so that the 4 hours contact time became 3 hours workshops and 1 hour lecture, to give more time for students to work together. This meant that there was less time for teaching module content, which had been mainly included in lectures, but that which was included could be explored more fully in the workshop sessions. (The full list of workshop titles, overviews, objectives and summary descriptions of activities from the main study (2009-10) are in appendix 5.2).

5.5 Conclusion

My journey through the first action research cycle took me from an initial concern with students who struggled with writing for assignments, to a fuller recognition that writing was providing the window through which problems with wider academic practices were made visible. Although practices such as being analytical, constructing argument and providing evidence were problematic, as I

had anticipated, so too were reading and broader academic practices. Furthermore, tutors seeking to be supportive sometimes undermined students' sense of responsibility and the mis-communication of expectations consigned some students to the periphery of the academic community. In the main study, I adopted the same pedagogy of academic practice, but sought to extend its scope, and my research explored how students experienced the workshops and their changing participation in, knowledge of and identification with academic practice.

In Chapter 6 I explore 'Participation in Practice'. My analysis explores what the students do as they work together in their small groups, how they establish ways of working together and the practices in which they participate. In particular, the emergence of talk about practice as a significant practice of the community is discussed. In Chapter 7 I examine students' articulated knowledge of academic practice as demonstrated by the way that they talk about the practices in which they are engaged and the practices that they engage in independently and I explore the relationship between that knowledge of practice as represented by their talk and their enacted knowledge, as demonstrated by their participation in practice. In Chapter 8 I discuss students' academic identities. Through analysis of students' talk about academic practice in relation to others, students and non-students, I show how participation in shared academic practice provides a space for them to construct narratives with which to tell the self as academic.

Chapter 6

Participating in practice

6.1 Introduction: Making academic practice accessible

Academic practice, and in particular academic literacy practice, is often seen as alienating, acting as ‘gatekeeper’ for an academy that excludes those that are not familiar with and able to use those practices (Burn & Finnigan, 2003; Ivanic, 1998; Lea 2004; Lea 1998; Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Lillis, 2001; Satterthwaite, 2003). I have argued that the privilege and power inherent in these practices should be challenged, not by rejecting the practices but by adopting pedagogical approaches that make academic practices accessible, so that those practices might be a potential agent of empowerment and inclusion rather than an agent of alienation and exclusion. In this chapter I address my first research question; how does a pedagogy of academic practice facilitate participation in academic practice?

I first explain how I am conceptualising students as members of the academic community, and then use Communities of Practice as a framework for analysis. I examine how students working in small groups establish their own communities of practice within the wider academic and non-academic context: the ways they find to work together; how they negotiate their approach; and the practices which they adopt. Through analysis of participation in practice I identify

talk about practice as central to the project of becoming a member of the academic student community of practice.

6.2 Academic communities of practice

As outlined in Chapter 3, I am conceptualising undergraduates as legitimate peripheral participants in academic communities of practice. The notion of ‘academic community of practice’ is problematic and I use the term, not to suggest homogeneity but to indicate that there are shared practices across the academy whilst acknowledging that these practices will look different in different disciplines, and even within a discipline. Different disciplinary communities will participate in academic practices from different epistemological positions, raising doubts about any attempt to talk about a singular ‘academic community’, and even within a discipline there will be smaller communities of practice reflecting particular epistemological or methodological positions. Disciplinary communities of practice can be seen as ‘complex, shifting, with often ill defined boundaries, and possibly with a number of competing or contradictory communities’ (Jones, 2009, p. 94). This is further complicated in Education Studies which is not so much a discipline as a field, with contributory disciplines, as discussed in Chapter 2. Education Studies departments show diversity in their allegiance to the contributory disciplines and are in constant flux as new practices become adopted and old ones rejected or modified. Local Education Studies communities of practice reflect different ways of practising and overlap to a greater or lesser extent with each other, together contributing to the ongoing construction of the broad

Education Studies community of practice. The broad Education Studies community of practice in turn overlaps with other disciplinary communities of practice, together contributing to the ongoing construction of the ‘academic community’.

Within the broad ‘academic community’, it is possible to identify shared characteristics of academic practice, even if they look different in different contexts; for example, that which counts as evidence will vary between communities, but the requirement for evidence of some kind in the construction of argument is shared. In this broad sense, the notion of an ‘academic community’ makes sense, and can be understood as comprising disciplinary, institutional and departmental communities of practice overlapping with other disciplinary, institutional and departmental communities of practice to a greater or lesser extent depending on the extent to which specific ways of thinking and practising are shared.

Students experience the academic community through their participation in localised institutional and departmental communities of practice, and student communities of practice are constructed in relation to these. Figure 6.1 represents how Education Studies communities of practice which provide the context for my research might be positioned in relation to one another. The Education Studies community of practice at St. Hugh’s will share many practices with the wider Education Studies community, but will also have localised practices that have grown up as a consequence of the people that comprise the community and in

response to institutional imperatives and constraints. The small grouped circles represent the academic student communities of practice created on each table in the workshop group, showing that they will share some practices with other Education Studies communities of practice but also might evolve practices unique to the group.

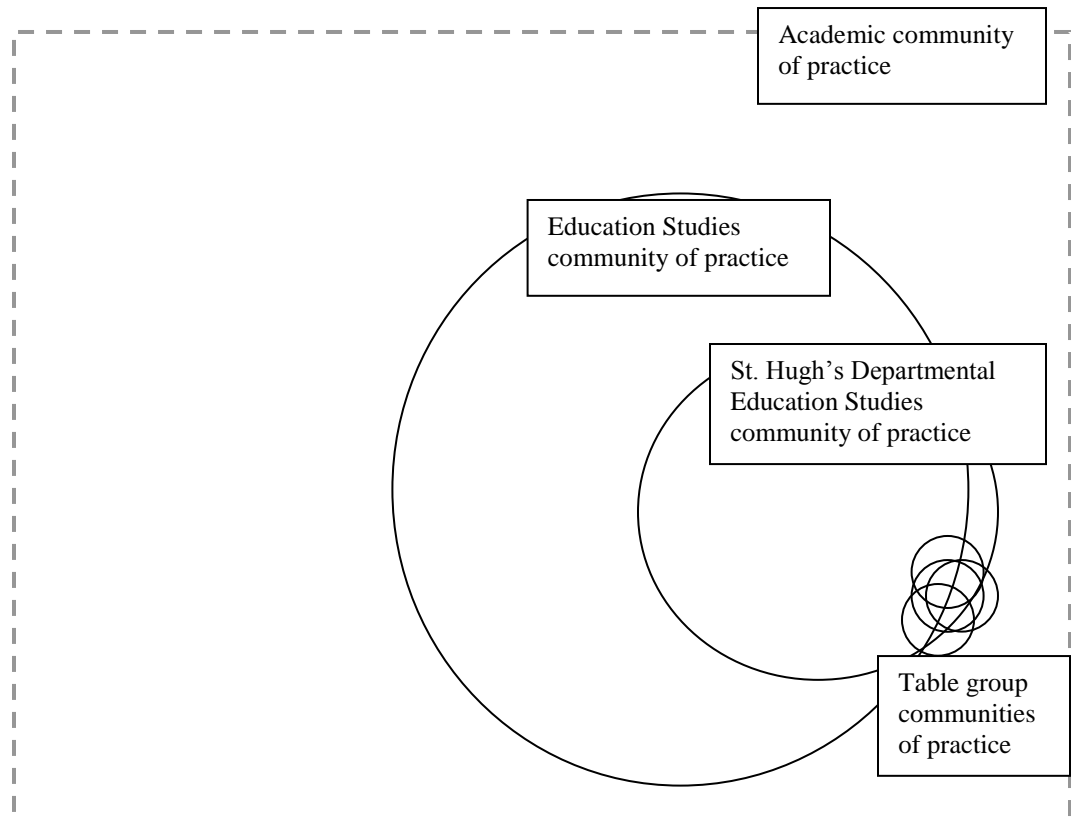


Figure 6.1: Education Studies communities of practice in relation to each other and to the wider academic community

Other institutional Education Studies communities would be represented by similar circles, overlapping in some areas, and not in others, and together would comprise the large Education Studies circle, but are omitted for clarity. The dotted line represents the plane of the ‘academic community’ comprised of other subject

and disciplinary communities of practice which overlap with each other to varying degrees and which are also omitted for clarity.

Within this model, the students in each small ‘table’ group, as they work together, can be conceptualised as actively constructing their own academic student communities of practice. Although these are constructed within the context of the wider Education Studies community, and specifically within the departmental Education Studies community as enacted in the curriculum and pedagogy, they are not determined by it. The membership of academic student communities within the context of the wider academic community can be seen as analogous to Paechter’s (2007, p. 24) characterization of gender communities of practice where:

The multiple nature of participation in communities of practice also means that we can see children as moving between successive age-related communities of masculinity and femininity practice, while gradually becoming less peripheral members of wider, adult-centred gender communities.

Similarly, undergraduates can be seen as participating in undergraduate communities of academic practice while at the same time becoming members of wider academic communities within the department, the institution and beyond. Despite being within the context of the departmental academic community of practice, where tutors will provide a model of practice and can endeavour to support students’ trajectories from peripheral to fuller participation, within the student academic community of practice there are no ‘old-timers’ since they are all

new. No-one is quite sure what they should do, or if they are doing it right. Tutors show that they recognise legitimacy through feedback of various kinds, both formal and informal, but other students also respond in ways that show that they recognise aspects of participation as being legitimate or not, and through such interactions successful performance can be judged. The extent to which academic student communities of practice resemble wider academic communities of practice depends on the extent to which students appropriate or reject practices of the wider academic community. If power resides in practice, as I have previously suggested, and existing members of the community judge whether or not peripheral members practice in acceptable ways, students' academic success rests on their ability to demonstrate those practices deemed appropriate by existing members, and in particular to demonstrate those practices in assessed work. The degree of similarity between their academic student community of practice and the departmental academic community of practice therefore contributes to their academic success.

Although my chief interest is in the students' positions as members of student and departmental academic communities of practice, individuals are members of many other communities of practice: sports, social, family, political, religious and other. Of particular relevance, students are members of other student communities of practice (for example, the football club, the dance society or a particular hall of residence) which, as non-academic communities, would be represented on different planes intersecting and overlapping in complex ways with each other and with the academic plane represented in Figure 6.1. Furthermore, all the students in this study are studying another subject alongside Education and so

they are also members of their subject community of practice. Students' memberships of other communities of practice affect their academic practice, as I discuss in this chapter, and their positioning at the nexus of intersecting and overlapping student and non-student communities of practice also has implications for identity work as I discuss in Chapter 8.

6.3 Student participation in academic practice

To examine the nature of participation in academic practice in the workshops I draw on Wenger's (1998) dimensions of practice - *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise* and *shared repertoire* - as an analytical framework. Each of these dimensions provides a different focus for analysis, foregrounding different aspects of the community of practice. First, I examine the nature of the relationships that students establish within their groups so that they can work together in particular ways (mutual engagement) and examine elements of this process including community maintenance and the mediating role of talk about practice.

Secondly, I discuss how students negotiate their approach to the demands of the workshop, in order to achieve their goals (joint enterprise). As students they have, to some extent, shared goals, and these generally include to get a degree, to learn and, for most of the students on this module, ultimately to become teachers. But they also share more immediate goals: to get through the day, to maintain relationships, to complete workshop tasks. As groups negotiate ways to 'get things

done', it becomes clear that the nature of the joint enterprise is different for different groups, with evidence of a more or less 'academic' enterprise depending on the group. I focus on a critical incident in which one group, recognising limitations in their original approach, set about negotiating an alternative way to approach their task which enables them to redefine their joint enterprise as more 'academic', and I highlight the central role of talk about practice in the process.

Thirdly, I identify practices that become part of the groups' ways of working, and discuss how for most groups there is evidence of a qualitative change in the nature of their participation (shared repertoire). Although this change is quite limited, for most groups the academic student community of practice begins to include aspects of academic practice; for example, there are fewer unexplained statements, less willingness to accept all contributions without question, and a greater readiness to present and consider alternatives, justify, extend, explain and 'think aloud'. Crucially, recordings show that students do not only participate in practice; they talk about it, so that talk about practice itself becomes a practice of the community.

Finally, I draw on the previous three sections to discuss the central role of talk about practice in the students' ways of practising. My pedagogic approach fulfilled my intentions to make practice visible and to give students the opportunity to experience in context what it was that they were trying to achieve, and I argue that the most significant element of the pedagogic approach was talk about practice, which itself became a practice of the community.

6.4 Mutual engagement: Finding ways of working together

Wenger (1998) notes that mutual engagement in the practices of the community is what defines the community: the way that the members do things, the relationships that are entailed, and community maintenance. ‘Relationship’ and ‘community’, should not be taken to imply agreement and homogeneity, rather, they are concerned with how disparate members of a group find ways of working together, despite disagreement and difference. Students from varied backgrounds with different experiences and expectations might or might not agree, might or might not like each other, and might or might not have much in common, but within this module, with a pedagogical approach that includes collaborative group work, they must find ways to work together. Each individual therefore has a vested interest in contributing to the construction and maintenance of a group to which they can feel they belong.

6.4.1 Finding a group to belong to

The students in this study were allocated at random to one of six workshop groups. At the start of the module most were essentially strangers, although some had already met through their accommodation, the subject that they studied alongside education or social events, and the first meeting of the workshop group included ice breaking games to try to begin to establish relationships. Before attending the first session of ES1A they had attended the ice breaking session, and one seminar session (taught in the same group) for the other core Education Studies module studied in semester 1 (ES1B).

In the workshop group, students sat around tables which could accommodate up to six and these smaller working groups were self-selected. Most students had already settled into a particular group by the second week of the module, and by the third week (when the students had already worked together on 5 occasions, twice for ES1A and three times for ED1B) group membership was static, with only one student, Ed, failing to select a single group to work with, and moving instead between two groups throughout the semester. Everyone else sat at the same table each week, except when specific factors (such as the absence of a usual working partner or the nature of the activity) prompted a move to another group.

The decision to allow students to self-select their groups was taken deliberately. Allowing student to choose where to sit gives those who want the security of familiar faces the support they desire, but also permits those who would prefer to move the opportunity to do so. Directing students to different groups each week does have advantages associated with working with a range of different people, encountering different perspectives, and perhaps feeling more obliged to contribute, since relative strangers might be less forgiving than friends. It can also influence the tone of the whole group who come to know each other, rather than just the people with whom they usually work. On the only week when the nature of the activity meant that students were obliged to work in different groups there was no evidence that individuals' contributions were affected either negatively or positively. However, I have found that previous attempts to direct students to particular groups have met with resistance, and, since establishing friendships

appears to aid retention (Harvey et al., 2006; Wilcox et al., 2005; Yorke & Longden, 2008), I believe that in the first semester in particular, as students try to establish relationships, allowing them to work in self-selected friendship groups can contribute to a sense of ‘belonging’ and the creation of communities of practice, the early stages of which I now discuss.

6.4.2 Getting started: finding a voice

In the first week of the module (25.09.09) students were asked to write individually a brief response to the question ‘What is learning?’, and then to share their thoughts with the others on their table. They were asked to discuss their different responses and to write together a paragraph that captured their discussion and their range of views. Everyone made a contribution, and all groups endeavoured to give everyone a chance to contribute and to receive all ideas positively. Nevertheless, many students engaged in ‘hedging’ whereby they were critical of their own contributions and appeared to demonstrate a reluctance to appear to be claiming expertise. Hedging diminished as the semester progressed, surfacing rarely in the second half of the module, but was found frequently in the first session. In these examples Kim presents her ideas as ‘rambling’ and Helen takes a similar attitude, dismissing the second part of her answer as not making sense:

Kim: I just started rambling towards the end of the sentence.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 4

Helen: I just put 'fully understanding the topic', 'cos when you've learnt something you know it don't you? ... And that bit doesn't even make sense very well anyway.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 1

Helen's use of the modifying statement 'I just put' is found in all groups during that first session and is indicative of a tendency to downplay one's contributions, which is, perhaps not surprisingly, common in the first weeks; sharing work with others whom one hardly knows is difficult, there can be no confidence that they will receive your ideas positively, and there is risk involved in opening oneself to the judgment of others. However, any such worries were unfounded, all groups in the first week appear to be keen to demonstrate acceptance; they receive contributions positively, and 'yeah' and 'mm' punctuate their talk as they seek to show agreement. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Group 6 they rarely discuss ideas, rather they make contributions without comment one after the other:

Bryony : I've just put, um, 'it's the opportunity to broaden your knowledge and open your mind and gain new skills in various subjects which may help you though life'.

Meg: I just put 'gaining knowledge of something that may or may not be familiar'. Same sort of thing.

Layla: I've just put 'to learn something means you've had a good understanding of it and you can discuss it or (unclear)'.

Olivia: Um, I've put 'the understanding and remembering of knowledge and skills'.

Catherine: I've put, um, 'acquiring knowledge and understanding, something which enables you to apply it either to an exam or other situation'.

Bryony: They're all pretty similar then aren't they?

Several: Yeah.

Bryony: We can just use any of them.

Olivia: It's all pretty much just about knowledge isn't it?

Bryony: Yeah.

(inaudible muttering with gaps)

(laughter)

Olivia: Right, so what are we going to write down then?

25.09.09 a.m. Group 6

Groups had been explicitly asked to note and discuss where their ideas were different, but they appear to be either unable or unwilling to recognise differences. In receiving others' contributions positively there is no threat, but there is also no room for challenge, and no room even for clarification; what does Bryony mean by 'open the mind'? Does she have ideas about the transformative powers of learning? We cannot know, because no-one asks her. There is a wealth of ideas in their responses to the question, but no attempt is made to explore them any further. Their different views are all accepted and the initial identification of gaining knowledge and skills is gradually extended to include understanding, remembering and applying. Their ideas are not contradictory, yet there are

differences that go unrecognised in Bryony's summary that they are 'all pretty similar' and they can 'just use any of them'. Their response may reflect existing understandings of the nature of group tasks learned from school which, Cameron (2000, p. 179) suggests, requires acceptance rather than questioning so that students learn to be 'co-operative and non-judgmental' rather than to 'argue, challenge or persuade'.

Such co-operative and non-judgmental talk results in a complete lack of discussion, and all other groups follow a similar pattern of stating a range of views, agreeing that they all said the same and then putting them together into a short paragraph. Rather than explore different conceptualisations of 'learning' they move swiftly to produce an outcome in a product-focused response to Olivia's question 'Right, so what are we going to write down then?' Group 6 produce a statement that is a composite of all of their separate sentences, with care taken to include everyone's suggestions in the final paragraph, and individuals deliberately drawing in others by inviting them to restate their sentences:

Olivia: What's yours again?

Meg: 'Gaining knowledge of something you may or may not be familiar with', and then I've put 'something that may, may confuse you will be more clear after you have learnt it'. (laughs)

Layla: So should we put 'gaining knowledge'?

Olivia: Gaining knowledge and understanding?

Meg: Yeah that's good.

- Olivia: 'Cos that seems like a good theme.
- Meg: Applying it to exams.
- Catherine: Yeah and tasks.
- Olivia: Yeah I mean gaining knowledge and understanding and being able to apply it.
- Catherine: Yeah.
- Bryony: It's the, like (unclear) it's the opportunity to do that. Have you learnt it?
- Catherine: That's quite a good way to start it.
- Olivia: Yeah.
- Bryony: Yeah. We could start it like this and then add on the, um, what, what was yours again? Like new skills acquired to...
- Meg: That was the one applying it to, um.
- Catherine: Oh 'applying to an exam or other situations'.
- Bryony: Yeah you said something as well didn't you, what was it?
- Catherine: Yeah, yours was something about familiar, 'it might be familiar'.
- Meg: Oh um 'something that you may or may not be familiar with'.
- Bryony: Yeah we can add that on as well.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 6

Although they do not discuss or challenge others' ideas, individuals want to ensure that their ideas are included. As they begin to write, Layla's suggestion that they put 'gaining knowledge' is extended by Olivia to include 'understanding' and Meg's suggestion that this knowledge and understanding could be applied in

exams is extended by Catherine to include ‘tasks’, points they had each made in their initial written statements. Students are deploying sophisticated interpersonal skills as they negotiate a position for themselves within the group. This includes encouraging and involving others whilst not appearing to be too confident yourself, yet ensuring that your own ideas are not ignored. It is, perhaps, not surprising that there is little space for discussion of the topic.

Although students did begin to argue, challenge and persuade as the semester progressed, their initial readiness to co-operate, and to encourage and facilitate contributions from others continued. They made attempts to involve people and encourage them when they faltered and little overt conflict was apparent in their relationships. Of course this does not mean that there was very little conflict, only that the students did not see it as acceptable to articulate or enact conflict in the workshop groups, or at least that they ensured that it was not recorded. The categories arising from the data that were coded in relation to the ways that relationships within groups were established were predominantly concerned with building positive relationships (hedging, encouraging, humour, involving, seeking agreement) with only tension, peacemaking (as a response to tension) and responsibility (to the group) revealing breakdowns in relationships.

The three categories indicating disharmony (tension, peacemaking and responsibility), were the three with the fewest references in the data. However, the two extracts that follow show that when tensions and frustrations arise in relation to academic practice, and are vocalised through talk about what participation in

practice includes, the resultant negotiation can contribute toward establishing the group as ‘academic’. The focus in my analysis of these extracts is on how the relationships that are created and sustained, and which make mutual engagement possible, mediate and are mediated by talk about practice.

6.4.3 Articulating expectations for practice: Tension and Peacemaking

In this extract from week 4, the students are discussing Vygotsky’s work (the topic of a lecture earlier that day). They have been asked to select two aspects that they believe it would be valuable for teachers to know and understand, and to justify their choices, recording their choice and a short explanation of why they have chosen it on a post-it note. Iris has just begun to record their selection:

- Carl: What we doing? ‘More Knowledgeable Other’ or not?
- Iris: Yeah is that alright?
- Carl: Yeah.
- Vicky: Are we? Oh.
- Iris: (unclear)
- Vicky: Well it’s not just me is it? We do have to actually discuss it.
- Iris: I thought we’d agreed. You all said it so I was writing it.
- Ellie: Do you want to say anything Teresa?
- Teresa: I just thought we...
- Iris: Fine! (with irritation)

6.11.09 p.m. Group 2

Group 2 have been talking for over 17 minutes and Iris has begun to record before the group has made a firm decision. The disagreement is about how the task is being approached, and despite Ellie's attempt to involve Teresa, perhaps as a neutral third party to broker the peace, Iris appears to feel marginalised, her vehement 'Fine!' indicating that she is anything but fine. After withdrawing from the discussion for a short time, a few minutes later she is involved again:

Iris: The thing is, I think that if we have [scaffolding] we're going to have a lot of the same reasons as [More Knowledgeable Other] because the More Knowledgeable Other is the same, it will bring the same outcome, so...

Vicky: Yeah but does it matter? Because if ...

Iris: Yeah because it's variety.

Vicky: Yeah but at the end of the day...

Iris: And I like variety it's nice.

Vicky: Actually we should be choosing the aspects that we think it's important for teachers to understand.

Ellie: OK, yeah, no.

Vicky: The most important, [even] if they're similar.

Iris: I'm just going to stop talking if you're just going to disagree with everything I'm saying.

Ellie: Whoa, stop. Chill. Right.

(They switch off)

Iris and Vicky disagree over the nature of their participation. For Vicky, discussion is an important practice: 'We do have to actually discuss it'. She is determined to follow the brief and to try and identify reasons to justify their choice rather than to allow Iris to make decisions based on giving the task 'variety'. Vicky's defence of her position leads to a temporary breakdown in the good relationships established in the group and as they talk about what their collaborative practice should include, agreement and acceptance, key characteristics of all group relationships as established in the early days, become less tenable. Talk about practice forces them to confront their different perspectives, not in relation to the module content, but in relation to ways of practising, and to review the nature of their mutual engagement.

Turning off the recorder prevents us from knowing how they resolve the issue, but reveals something of their perceptions of conflict. Ellie's interventions, when she tries to involve Teresa as a neutral third party and later when she halts the disagreement with 'Whoa, stop', show her desire to avoid conflict and it is significant that although this group often leave the recorder running when they go off-task and talk about their social lives, they choose to switch off the recorder on this occasion. The argument is not something that they feel has a place as part of the research data, suggesting that they perceive conflict as an unacceptable practice, something that they had also articulated earlier in week 2 when I (Jane) approached them part way through a task which included the following guidance:

You may not agree in your group, but that is OK - these are things to debate! Try to convince each other - what evidence can you provide to try and persuade the others? (ES1A Workshop handout 2.10.09)

- Fran: We are arguing a lot on this table to be fair.
- Vicky: Yeah, we're arguing a lot.
- Jane: You are arguing a lot?
- Fran: A lot.
- Teresa: But we aren't arguing with each other we're just arguing with each other's points.
- Jane: That's fine, that's good.
- Iris: No we're not arguing with each other.

2.10.09 p.m. Group 2

Explicitly stating the distinction between academic argument 'with each other's points' and arguing 'with each other' (a distinction which had been discussed in the workshop session that morning when 'academic debate' had been introduced as looking at different ideas and viewpoints and testing them out against each other) allows Group 2 to accept disagreement about module content as an academic practice, without feeling that it has an impact on their relationships. Their explicit statement enables them to articulate knowledge of academic practice and ensure that their interpretations of academic practice as involving argument are similar, permitting them to adopt 'arguing' roles in their

discussion of module content. In contrast, in the disagreement between Vicky and Iris, different interpretations of academic practice are the root problem, and this affects how they can work together. But different beliefs and expectations about the nature of academic practice can only be addressed if they are vocalised in this way, and so such disagreements are helpful in establishing the mutual engagement of the group. Disagreement is not comfortable for Vicky and Iris, nevertheless it provides an opportunity to make visible the academic relationship, where academic practice is foregrounded and actions need to be justified. A similar incident, when expectations about practice are articulated, is demonstrated by members of Group 4 in relation to independent study practices and others' lack of preparation for workshops.

6.4.4 Articulating expectations for practice: Responsibility to the group

Failure to prepare for sessions might be expected to cause the rest of the group some justifiable irritation, however individuals were almost always accepting of others' excuses. Perhaps this is because they hoped for similar indulgence when they failed to prepare, and lack of preparation was not uncommon. Only in Group 4 was there regular comment on the fact that others (only ever Gary or Dominic) had failed to prepare for the session. In this extract from week 3, the group leave the recorder running after completing a task, and Georgia takes the opportunity to show her disapproval of Gary's actions:

- Dominic: Were you out yesterday Gary?
- Gary: No I didn't go out.
- Dominic: No?
- Gary: No, I went I went to my mate's house, like, got a pizza and things, but I didn't go out.
- Georgia: So what's your excuse for not doing that work then?
- Gary: Er.
- Georgia: I saw you highlighting it this morning.
- Gary: Still doing it. (laughs)
- Andrew: Actually that's the first thing I did, before I did the [essay about] rote learning. I did that first.
- Yvonne: I didn't even know we had to do this till like yesterday. (laughs)

16.10.09 a.m. Group 4

Although Gary laughs off Georgia's direct challenge, this is not the only expression of disapproval from the group. Andrew, although less confrontational than Georgia, talks about his own practice, contrasting his own time management with Gary's, and Yvonne's comment that she had only realised the previous day that it needed to be done, with the unspoken adjunct 'yet I managed to complete it', can also be interpreted as criticism, particularly when coupled with another example at the end of term, this time directed at Dominic:

- Dominic: So technically, when you said [that] I haven't done the reading, I wasn't here when the reading was set.

Yvonne: Neither was I though and I did it.

11.12.09 a.m. Group 4

Others may irritate, let you down or fail to make any useful contribution, however direct challenge of their behaviour is extremely rare and the obliqueness of these challenges demonstrates the work involved in establishing and maintaining good relationships despite others' non-preparation. The relationships that the students work to maintain exclude any overt criticism of others, and it is only in Group 4 that any challenges are made. Such talk emphasises to Gary and Dominic that others are preparing, and managing their time differently, subtly revealing a power struggle as the others seek to establish themselves as an 'academic' group. Talk about independent study practices provides Georgia, Andrew and Yvonne with a way to challenge Gary and Dominic, to emphasise group responsibility and to construct academic relationships that are situated within academic practice.

All groups talked about their ongoing academic practice in order to complete tasks, negotiating the minute by minute decisions that had to be made. In this way relationships were established within an academic context, but the expectations and responsibilities that arise from mutual engagement in academic practice were not articulated without the prompting of some kind of conflict that gave rise to challenge of another's practice. The students' co-operative and non-confrontational relationships also contributed to the ways that they negotiated their approach to workshop tasks as they sought to 'get things done'. It is this negotiation of 'joint enterprise' to which I now turn.

6.5 Joint Enterprise: Finding ways to ‘get things done’

Individual students arrive at university with different experiences of learning and different expectations of what study at university will entail, but as members of small groups undertaking collaborative tasks they must negotiate their approach to tasks and what they judge to be an acceptable outcome of that task.

The joint enterprise of a group of participants is ‘a negotiated response to their situation’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). For people to be mutually engaged in joint enterprise they must negotiate ways to work together, despite differences that may exist in their contributions, aspirations and understandings of the enterprise (Wenger, 1998). This aspect of practice has already been discussed in relation to disharmony, although the focus in my analysis of those extracts was on how academic relationships mediated and were mediated by talk about practice. Also central to the process of defining the joint enterprise is the mutual accountability that is revealed as students seek to ‘get the job done’. Negotiation of what they are trying to achieve and what they see as the purpose of the task is essential if any kind of ‘joint’ enterprise is to be achieved.

Two key elements of the process of negotiation of joint enterprise emerge from the data: movement between on-task and off-task talk, which reveals the tensions between overlapping communities of practice; and understanding the purpose of activities, which reveals the tensions between participation in practice and the product which represents that practice. I examine each of these separately.

6.5.1 Moving between on-task and off-task talk; overlapping communities of practice

Although my focus is on the students in this study as members of the academic student community of practice, this community intersects and overlaps with other student and non-student communities of practice of which students are also members. In particular, other student communities of practice overlap with the academic student community of practice. The students in the study were all engaged in the joint enterprise of getting a degree, but other joint enterprises existed and these ‘spilled over’ into the academic student community of practice; Saturday’s match, a dance rehearsal, problems with fire alarms in hall or a Drama assessment all jostled for space alongside the Education Studies curriculum when students were in their small groups. Individuals did not cease to be a member of the football, or drama student communities of practice, just because they were in the Education Studies workshop, so that any ‘negotiated response to their situation’ was not limited to their physical presence in the classroom.

On any given day, joint enterprise in workshops could be more or less ‘academic’. It is clear from the data that several groups spent a considerable amount of time off task, and for some of the groups on some weeks this exceeded the time spent on task. On these occasions alternate student communities of practice took precedence, for example, on 11.12.09 the main concern for Group 1 was with renting a house for the following year. Their joint enterprise on that particular day was less about the topic of the workshop and more about arranging a

house viewing, and the majority of the recording for one particular task was spent identifying a time when they would all be free.

Group 5 had members who would spontaneously take conversation off-task at any time, simply introducing a new topic such as where they had been the previous night, their latest ailment or their plans for the weekend, and who rarely made any attempt to bring the talk back on track. Kim and Judith were core members of Group 5, with Helen and Bill joining them from the third week, and Ed sometimes sitting with them. Others who worked with Kim and Judith earlier in the semester moved to different groups. That others chose to sit elsewhere is further evidence that there was no appetite for conflict within groups and rather than try to establish alternate practices within Group 5 they simply sat with others where the joint enterprise was more academically focused, since Group 5 was not representative of the workshop group as a whole. Whilst Group 5's experience might be seen as a reason for intervening in the group membership, moving students each week so that such non-participatory practices are not adopted, I believe that the advantages for others in having a stable group, where mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire can be established over consecutive weeks, outweigh the possible advantages for members of Group 5 that might accrue from working with different people each week.

All groups went off-task at times, usually through a gradual drift as talk about the topic led into associated topics and eventually into something unrelated. For example, in a discussion about learning in context (6.11.09), Wendy was

trying to provide an example of how she had only realised the relevance of trigonometry through a real life experience, and this diverted into talk about how different group members had learned to memorise ‘soh-cah-toa’, the rule for the relationships between sides and angles of a triangle, and how their teachers at school had introduced it. Similarly, when Georgia talked about the importance of educational visits, her group spent some time sharing examples of places they had been on school trips. Discussions easily slid into reminiscences of students’ own experiences without any direct relevance to the discussion, but groups employed mechanisms for bringing themselves back on task. In the examples above, Wendy and Andrew brought their groups back from the diversion, Wendy by simply carrying on as if the off-task talk had not happened and Andrew by re-orienting the group by re-stating the task, a common strategy used widely by different groups. Another common strategy was for someone, on realizing that they had strayed off topic, to signal a return by saying ‘Anyway’ emphatically.

All the groups moved between on-task and off-task talk throughout the recordings, allowing others to take the talk off topic and, equally, allowing others to return talk to the intended focus. The value given to maintaining non-confrontational relationships meant that when someone took the discussion in a new direction, either off-task or back on-task, others generally followed. The essential factor for the groups was having someone who would signal that the group needed to return to the task, and this was not always the same person. Different people would re-orient the group, but if this did not happen on a particular occasion, the practices of the group were less like those of an academic

community and instead resembled more closely the practices of other student communities of practice to which they also belonged.

For most groups the overlapping student communities co-existed with the academic student community, and they moved between them with ease. However, Group 5 did not establish any re-orienting practices in the way that other groups did, and it was often left to me to engage with them to bring them back on-task. This does not mean that Group 5 did not complete tasks, rather that they completed them with minimal discussion. Their mutual engagement was in a joint enterprise to complete tasks and to spend the rest of the time available on alternate practices that would not have been out of place in the bar or common room, and these practices from the overlapping student communities to which they belonged marginalized the practices of the academic student community.

Power relations operate within specific communities of practice so that, for example, when the group operate as a community of friends, intent on sharing a house, what can be spoken of, and how it can be spoken of, is different from when the group are operating as an academic community. For most groups, power was located in the workshop academic context, in the knowledge that they needed to complete tasks and that I might ask them to share outcomes of their work, leading them to return to the 'academic' when they realised that they had drifted off-task. Having a specific task to complete gave groups a joint enterprise in any particular workshop, and this was integral to keeping the groups on-task, or returning them to on-task activity through re-statement of the task. However, if the outcome of the

task is seen as being an end in itself then, as with Group 5, the task can actually limit engagement since, once it is complete the group members feel free to pursue other concerns. I now discuss how students' perceptions of the purpose of activities affected their approach to practice.

6.5.2 Perceptions of the purpose of activities

For workshops to be successful, the joint enterprise to 'get the job done' needs to include more than the production of an outcome, and the first step to achieving this is for the students themselves to recognise that the physical product is not the sole purpose of the activity. It was clear in the first week that simply completing the task was the main focus, and any learning was secondary, but a critical incident for Group 4, in week 2 (2.10.09), illustrates how perceptions of purpose affected their approach to practice.

Following a lecture on constructivism, groups were given nine cards containing statements paraphrasing aspects of Piaget's theory and were asked to discuss the importance of these for teachers, ranking the statements in diamond formation (one most important card at the top, then two, then three, then two and one least important at the bottom). Group 4 began by randomly setting the cards out in diamond formation, at Andrew's suggestion, and then re-ordering. Statements were made such as 'Well I definitely don't think that one should be at the top' and 'I quite like this one' to accompany the re-ordering, but there was no explanation of why, and after just two minutes they were nearing completion of

the task. As in previous examples, the overarching tendency to look for agreement was evident:

Yvonne: (swaps the positions of two cards)

Georgia: Yeah I was just thinking that.

Andrew: I was just gonna do that.

Georgia: Yeah I was as well.

Andrew: Now we're done! (laughs)

Georgia: Yeah (unclear).

Dominic: It's easier once you've already set it out into a diamond then sort of move them about and there's no arguing.

Andrew: Yeah.

(gap 8 seconds)

Georgia: Does everyone agree with that?

Yvonne: Yeah.

Georgia: Anne?

Anne: Yeah.

2.10.09 p.m. Group 4

Despite the introduction of 'academic debate' in the workshop that morning, Group 4 complete the task and agree that it is finished after just 2 minutes 17 seconds. Dominic's comment that their approach had meant there was 'no arguing' demonstrates an apparent belief that agreement was an aspiration and that task completion was his main purpose for the activity. In line with Cameron's

(2000, p. 147) claim that what students have learned in school as being appropriate ways to talk ‘could not be more different from ... formal debate’, Dominic does not seem to have considered the possibility that ‘arguing’ might help them to explore the meanings and implications of the statements. However, the collaborative task provides opportunity for Georgia to re-orient the group and their initial focus on task completion gives way to recognition that perhaps the purpose of the task might be about more than just getting an answer:

Georgia: We haven’t really discussed them have we? (laughs) (gap 7 seconds) Shall we ask each other why we think that?

Andrew: That one (pointing to one that had been positioned low in the hierarchy) might be, might be quite an important one. I don’t know.

Georgia: I know.

Andrew: Maybe we need to move that one onto the next line up and then move one down, but it’s just an idea.

2.10.09 p.m. Group 4

Again, there is no discussion of why ‘that one’ might be important, and the ensuing recording is difficult to follow, with suggestions about ‘moving this up’ or ‘moving that down’ but no justification offered or requested as to why any of the statements might need to be placed higher or lower. Members of Group 4 simply permit each other to make moves and signal agreement with ‘yeah’ or ‘mm’. After another 2 minutes 30 seconds the group again agree that they have finished followed by the realisation that other groups are still working, which leads them to

talk about their own approach to the task:

Andrew: We didn't need to rush did we?

Gary: Eh?

Andrew: We didn't need to rush.

Dominic : Yeah. (laughs)

Georgia: Shall we ask each other why we think that?

2.10.09 p.m. Group 4

Their first encounter with Piaget's work is an opportunity to try and make sense of the new material through discussion with others. It also enables them to begin to work differently as a group, to recognise that the task is not only about the outcome but is also a stimulus for discussion. Georgia's persistence, perhaps in response to the morning workshop that had talked about academic debate and evaluating different views, eventually results in discussion in which the group question, challenge, justify and offer examples:

Georgia: So how useful is Piaget's work? That's what we need to ask ourselves now.

Andrew: Go on then.

Georgia: I think it's useful. I do agree with quite a lot of the things he says, except that one. I can't get my head around that one

Andrew: (reads) 'It can be harmful to try to teach children... [things they aren't ready to understand]'.

Georgia: You obviously, you obviously, you wouldn't, because I think sometimes they do need a push to learn something else.

Anne: If you, if you push a child that's got disability.

Georgia: Oh no, yeah I know. Then it's like that but, um, otherwise it'll start to get a bit complacent and not do anything.

[...]

Anne: It's not the people that are lazy. It's nothing to do with that it's actually being ready to learn.

Gary: So it's that some learn quicker or slower than others?

Anne: Yeah so, it's not really that stupid, it's not really that much of a stupid statement. If you're not ready to learn something, you can't learn it.

Georgia: Oh yeah I understand that.

Anne: If you put me into a Masters Maths lesson.

[...]

Yvonne: Harmful is a strong word. I think it's this word that we have a problem with.

Georgia: Yeah the 'harmful'.

Yvonne: Yeah.

Anne: Overload of information.

Georgia: But it's not harmful.

[...]

Anne: We don't know if it's harmful but [it] obviously might put them off learning, if it's too hard for them they are not going to do it.

- Yvonne: If they do that then they are a bit lazy and narrow minded.
- Anne: Not necessarily! You only know what you're taught.
- Yvonne: I still don't like that one.
- Anne: If you're proper rubbish at everything, you can't succeed at anything, you're not going to think, oh yeah I'm going to do this.
- Yvonne: Try and prove people wrong.
- Anne: What, do children think like that?
- Yvonne: I don't know. It depends on the individual.

2.10.09 p.m. Group 4

Despite eventually exploring the meaning of the statements and offering reasons for their positions, seeing the purpose of the activity as finding 'the answer' is still prominent in some of their thoughts:

- Andrew: It'll be interesting to see what the answer was.
- Dominic: Yeah. I bet we're close. (laughs) If there is one.
- Georgia: (unclear)
- Yvonne: Yeah but it's ...
- Georgia: Sort of like your own personal thing
- [...]
- Yvonne: I want to write them down. But if we change it again ... (laughs)
- Andrew: You want to write them down, but what?
- Yvonne: If we change them again it'll be wrong in my book.

2.10.09 p.m. Group 4

Andrew's assumption that there is 'an answer' and Yvonne's desire to record their ranking only once it is a 'final' version for fear that it will be 'wrong in my book' suggest that both are focusing on the product they have created as knowledge to be owned, in contrast to my own perception of the task as a vehicle to promote understanding of Piaget's theory and a consideration of the implications for educators, together with the opportunity to begin to participate in academic debate. However, the context of the workshop provides an opportunity for the students in Group 4 to begin to see the activity as more than the production of an answer.

The balance between outcome and participation is evident; Group 4's first attempt at participation is affected by their concern to complete the task and produce an outcome, and their concern to 'do the right thing' when they see other groups still engaged causes them to return to the activity, and to try to participate in a different way. This is articulated by them at various times as 'We haven't really discussed them', 'Shall we ask each other why we think that?', 'We didn't need to rush'. Their joint enterprise becomes more than simply getting an answer, it also becomes about their ways of participation in practice.

Their participation provides a context in which it is necessary to talk about their practice in order to try and work out what they might do differently. Their consequent talk about practice enables them to begin to negotiate a new aspect of their joint enterprise, that of finding more academic ways to practise, even if, at this stage, they are unsure about what academic practice might look like. Aspects

of academic practice that had already been introduced in workshops are alluded to including the need to question, readiness to consider alternative perspectives and debate. Even if they are not yet in a position to do these things with any confidence or skill, their participation in the workshop task provides a context where they can talk about these aspects of practice in order to negotiate their joint enterprise. Talk about practice can contribute to the formation of academic relationships and the negotiation of a more academic joint enterprise, but Lave & Wenger (1991) are clear that talk about practice cannot replace participation in practice, and in the next section I consider the nature of that participation.

6.6 Shared Repertoire: The nature of academic practice and participation in practice

‘Shared repertoire’ refers to those ways of practising in which members of the community participate, and previous sections have already noted aspects of the shared repertoire including inviting and encouraging others’ contributions, responding positively, maintaining cordial relationships that allow others to take talk off-task and also signalling and acquiescing to signals that it is time to move back on-task. These are all elements of the shared repertoires of the groups, practices that help to define the groups, however in my discussion so far of how the groups establish and maintain relationships and how they establish joint enterprise, the distinctively ‘academic’ repertoire has been less visible.

‘Critical thinking’ is often seen as a defining characteristic of academic

practice, and might be expected in an academic repertoire. However, new undergraduates, as peripheral members of the academic community, cannot be expected to demonstrate critical thinking (Moon, 2005). Moon draws on Baxter Magolda's (1992) stages of thinking to link students' capacities for critical thinking with their epistemological beliefs, and suggests that most students will not reach the most advanced stage of 'contextual knowing' until the end of their degree, if at all. Baxter Magolda (*ibid.*) suggests that for most first-year students, the first steps toward critical thinking will involve a movement from the stage of 'absolute knowing' whereby knowledge is conceptualized as the reproduction of facts to the 'transitional stage', which includes recognising that knowledge is uncertain and judgments must be made about the status of knowledge claims (Moon, 2005). The trajectory toward fuller membership of the academic community would, therefore, be demonstrated by participation in practices indicative of the transitional stage such as seeking to understand rather than focusing on 'getting it right', coping with uncertainty, asking questions and evaluating.

In this section, I examine the nature of change in the repertoire of academic practices during the semester. The maintenance of harmonious relationships, which continued throughout the semester, limited students' readiness to challenge others and restricted opportunity for debate. However, the safety that such lack of challenge provided also had positive effects; the hedging, ubiquitous in the first week, vanished as students felt able to share their thoughts, not only to 'get the job done' but to extend their understanding. Students asked each other to explain

aspects of the content that they found difficult, they requested clarification of others' ideas, provided examples, explanations and justifications, built on others' contributions rather than simply making independent contributions, referred to reading and engaged in 'thinking aloud' whereby they tried out ideas which were not yet fully formed. 'Thinking aloud' is what Barnes and Todd (1995), in their work with school children, call 'exploratory talk' and they describe it as including 'hesitations and changes of direction; tentativeness; assertions and questions in a hypothetical modality that invites modification and surmise; self-monitoring and reflexivity' (p. 9), and they note that unlike larger groups, 'members of a small group can risk hesitation and confusion, changes of direction, and rejection of their ideas by the others' (p. 15). Of course, participation in more 'academic' talk was not found consistently, and by the end of the module there were still unexplained claims, statements with no attempt to provide or request justification, and unsupported opinion in students' talk. This is not surprising: the module lasted only one semester, and appropriation of new ways of practising takes time, with no simple linear progression, rather a more haphazard process distributed over time, activity and domain (Moon, 2005; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007). In accord with my experience, Hammer & Green (2011), writing about an intervention to develop critical thinking in a first-year module, question what a single unit can achieve. However, for the workshop group as a whole, there was a shift towards those practices which can be seen as representing the transitional stage.

In the first weeks the need to find the answer and produce a 'product' precluded any consideration of alternative interpretations, but as the semester

progressed and students were repeatedly asked to look for alternative perspectives, this became part of their repertoire, and, in particular, ‘thinking aloud’ became an element of their practice. ‘Thinking aloud’ is illustrated in the following extract from Week 4; Vicky is expressing uncertainty, trying to understand how scaffolding might be a useful concept for teachers to know and understand:

Vicky: With the whole idea of the child’s actual development and the potential, with the support of the teacher, I thought was quite good. But then that could not really, be not helpful for teachers at all, because ...

Iris: Why?

Vicky: Because of all the different, well every child’s gonna have a different actual development ...

Iris: Yeah but ...

Vicky: And a different potential development so ...

Iris: But it’s like they have ...

Vicky: The teacher’s going to have to be with every student.

Iris: No it’s like they were saying with um, numeracy or literacy, you don’t have to have the teacher there [...] you give them blocks to count with and that’s their scaffolding for numeracy. It doesn’t necessarily mean that there’s got to be a teacher there scaffolding. Scaffolding is anything that will help the children to learn.

6.11.09 p.m. Group 2

Vicky’s willingness to share her own uncertainty and her difficulty managing two

conflicting perspectives demonstrate that she sees knowledge not as absolute, but as a choice between alternatives. Iris' question 'why?' gives Vicky the opportunity to try to clarify her thinking and prompts the long counter argument from Iris.

Other academic practices which became part of groups' shared repertoires were constructing meaning together by finishing off one another's sentences, asking factual questions, asking questions about meaning, challenging, justifying and explaining. In the same session discussing Vygotsky's work even Group 5, who often failed to engage fully, participated in seeking to understand, asking questions and constructing meaning together through constructing shared sentences:

Judith: So we think it is important that teachers should know how to scaffold ...

Kim: And then the zone of proximal development.

Helen: What?

Kim: The proximal, the zone of proximal development²².

Helen: What that, um, what they are right now and what they can achieve?

Kim: What they can achieve with support, 'cos if [teachers] know that, then they can develop strategies for certain children.

[...]

²² The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a concept created by Vygotsky to represent the difference between the child's actual developmental level and their potential developmental level, sometimes described as the difference between what the child can achieve alone and what they can achieve with support.

- Helen: You've to put a reason on it too. Why is it important for teachers to know and understand scaffolding?
- Kim: You see, I'd say I can, I can give you one for zone of proximal development.
- Judith: Right, what is it then?
- Kim: I think it's then they can understand the level that a child's at and then they can develop strategies to help that child which ...
- Helen: Would support them.
- Kim: Would support ...
- Helen: They do it on their own and then with support they can raise it.
- Judith: When they find the level the child is at.
- Kim: And what the [child's] potential is with support, and that's where the scaffolding then comes in to it, 'cos that's a form of support.

6.11.09 p.m. Group 5

Helen is still unclear about the zone of proximal development, but the shared repertoire includes requesting clarification from others which she does by offering her tentative explanation 'what they are right now and what they can achieve?' so that Kim can offer her explanation, and they then all contribute to wording the final justification. Asking others to explain was part of the shared repertoire of all the groups, and demonstrated a willingness to admit to uncertainty and on some occasions students also acknowledged that knowledge itself might be uncertain, as demonstrated in the recognition that different interpretations or perspectives are possible. In the following extract at the end of term, the

recognition that it is possible to disagree with what has been read is evident:

Georgia: Well one of the main things from reading [pages] 9-13 was that, um, talking is an essential tool of teaching and it is actually as important as writing. Because writing is seen as like the only real learning in the classroom, writing things down, but actually [Alexander] is saying that discussion and classroom talk is just as valid as writing. Do you agree with that?

Andrew: Yeah.

Yvonne: But people don't take exams in talking do they?

Bryony: They get to see other people's points of view.

11.12.09 a.m. Group 4

Georgia's question 'Do you agree with that?' shows an acceptance that it is possible to question literature, and allows Yvonne to articulate a different view. Furthermore, Bryony explicitly states that exposing learners to different views is a positive approach to learning, in a coming together of the module content and the students' experiences of academic practice.

Although the students were still very much on the periphery of the Educational Studies academic community of practice, the shared repertoires of their academic student communities of practice became more 'academic' as the term progressed. There was variation; some students were closer to the periphery and might be seen as having made less progress on an inward trajectory into the

academic community. Variability can be seen in the following extract from Group 3 at the end of the semester as the group start a writing task. Catherine (who usually sat with Group 6 had relocated to Group 3 for this session as several people were absent) and Una had read the text but Querida and Pippa did not appear to have done so.

Una: We need to talk about discussion and dialogue.

Catherine: We need to put why it's important and we can draw on Alexander for that, back it up with Vygotsky.

Querida: OK, so are we, (takes a pen and positions the paper ready to write) right ...

Catherine: This is just an outline.

Querida: Yeah, no that's cool, um, um. What, what shall we put down? Shall I put down this first?

Una: Well, hang on. If we're doing a presentation on dialogic approaches to teaching and learning...

Querida: We'll put 'focus'.

Una: But hey, think for a moment (unclear). Because [Alexander] says [dialogue and discussion] are necessary but [teachers] never do it.

Catherine: So you could just say that (unclear).

Querida: If I was doing a presentation though, I would, like, start with the really good points and then say this, say 'we've highlighted this' and then overall bring it together and say 'this has worked well'.

Catherine: Because you don't really want to put in any limitations of, of

talking in the classroom do you?

Querida: No, you don't want to highlight that so ...

Catherine: You could, you could say how these [rote, recitation and exposition] are bad to back up that point.

Querida: Yeah.

Una: Well, they are not bad, they are just not good.

11.12.09 a.m. Group 3

Whilst both Una and Catherine are able to identify what they see as key issues and comment on how they would relate their argument to theory, Querida's contributions are limited to how they should approach the task, and she immediately focuses on starting to write something. It is notable that Una stops her twice, saying 'well, hang on' and 'think for a moment' to prevent her from writing before they have had an opportunity to discuss. In this academic context, the power appears to rest with those who are performing 'academic' most successfully, and Querida allows Una and Catherine to take the task in the direction they choose. The shared repertoire in this group usually relied on Wendy and Daisy (who were both ill on this day) and Una to have done the preparation. Querida, who struggled to read academic texts, would use the discussion as a way of understanding the topic, whether or not she had prepared. The collaborative activity exposes Querida to others talking about and engaging in academic practice and forces her to pause before writing, to consider the issues and to begin to construct an understanding of the teacher's role in supporting dialogue in the classroom. In writing together, the group must talk about academic writing

practice. The writing process, which remains hidden if students are expected to 'practice' only as part of independent study is made visible as others model practice and the group negotiate how to proceed.

Despite not having prepared for the workshop, later in the discussion whilst writing some notes, Querida is able to pick up on an earlier comment made by Catherine about the teacher guiding discussion and this enables her to ask questions and begin to unpick the meaning behind what others are talking about:

Querida: Shall we mention the, how the teacher, is structuring, structuring their discussion to make them form their own questions?

Pippa: Yeah I like that.

Querida: Is that right?

Una: It's not, it's not the teachers that are really having a ...

Querida: This major role.

Una: No. To me, it's just like (unclear) and she's looking around to see how to contribute, [teachers] are not really having a full input in what [the pupils] are doing.

Querida: That's what, that's how I see, like, structuring though, like she puts that out there and then letting them...

Una: (unclear)

Querida: Yeah like, that's how I see it.

11.12.09 a.m. Group 3

Changes in practice were not dramatic over the term, there is, however a

clear qualitative change linked to a growing understanding that the purpose of the tasks is not simply get ‘the right answer’. As their shared repertoire evolves, Una’s use of ‘To me it’s just like ...’ shows her recognition that alternative ways of seeing and knowing might exist and that the workshop is a forum where these could and should be shared, and this is echoed by Querida when she claims ‘that’s how I see it’. Even though Querida’s view might not be clearly thought through or articulated, the group’s shared repertoire includes an acceptance that individuals might have different interpretations which they will share with each other. This aspect of practice is indicative of a move towards Baxter-Magolda’s (2003) transitional stage and is in accord with her findings that constructing knowledge together reduces assumptions about passive acquisition of knowledge and helps students to see knowledge as uncertain rather than as absolute.

Epistemologically, the capacity to see knowledge as provisional is a major shift for many students, and collaborative writing helped students not only to begin to view knowledge differently and to practise in new ways, but also to talk about practice in new ways. Collaborative writing ensured that their shared repertoire included talk about academic practice; they were not just participating in academic practice, they were talking about ways of practising. When they wrote they did not just write, they needed to talk about how they would do it: ‘We need to talk about discussion and dialogue’; ‘We need to put why it’s important and we can draw on Alexander for that, back it up with Vygotsky’; ‘Shall we mention the, how the teacher, is structuring, structuring their discussion?’

For all groups, shared repertoire became more ‘academic’ over the course of the semester. This change is most apparent in Groups 2, 3 and 4, as Groups 1 and 6 sometimes forgot (or chose not) to turn on their recorders, so the data is more limited, and Group 5’s participation was often limited by their lack of engagement. Changes were often small, yet there was a clear increase in the recognition of alternative perspectives, and attempts to develop understanding rather than simply complete tasks, to engage with different ideas, to construct meaning together, to support claims with evidence, to relate discussion to theory and to reference accurately. Crucially, talk about practice became part of the shared repertoire of the groups.

Talk about academic practice was built into the module teaching from the first week when students were asked to discuss how they thought study at university level would be different from study they had done previously. This was to make visible and begin to explore together some of the different practices involved in HE (lectures, independence, using the library, managing time, academic reading and writing). In subsequent weeks activities included talking about how a particular reading task had been approached, justifying claims with evidence, how literature might be used in writing, and the difference between descriptive and analytical writing. These activities were planned to make aspects of academic practice visible and to enable to students to construct meaning together through talk about practice, usually in conjunction with a collaborative activity involving participation in that practice. However, as noted previously, talk about practice did not only occur as a result of tasks where talk about practice was

the stated focus of the activity. Collaborative tasks rely upon group members agreeing how to proceed and coordinating their actions, and talk about practice was essential to the groups' negotiation of all three dimensions of practice (mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire).

The pedagogy of academic practice that I adopted helped to establish that academic practice, as well as module content, was an appropriate topic for discussion. Significantly, students appropriated 'talk about practice' as a practice of their academic student communities and talked about aspects of practice not only when tasks required them to do so but spontaneously at other times. As a result of the pedagogic action, talk about practice became part of 'what we do'.

6.7 Spontaneous talk about practice

Spontaneous talk about practice was not necessary to complete the task, but arose from the task in much the same way that talk drifted into off-task talk when something caused an individual to think of something related but not directly relevant to the task in hand. The tasks provided a context which enabled students to articulate uncertainty about what they would need to do in their independent study and provided a forum for them to 'rehearse' what they needed to do and to ask questions of each other.

In the following example from Week 3 (16.10.09), the students had been asked to share with others on their table their summaries of a section of text that

they had been set to read and summarise independently, and to compare what they had each taken from the text. Through their group discussion, aspects of uncertainty about the module content and recognition of the necessity to read beyond the essential texts becomes apparent, leading to a growing awareness of the need to take some responsibility for further reading:

Daisy: I suppose you have to research [Piaget's] theory though, to see how he backs that up.

Wendy: Yeah we're gonna have to research his theory a little bit.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 3

The necessity for independent study and research had been explained in introductory lectures, but it was only through their participation that Daisy identifies gaps in understanding and is prompted to suggest implications for their own practice. Her use of 'I suppose you have to research' indicates not that this is something that she expected, despite being told in a lecture. Rather, it is something she is discovering for herself. Participation in workshop tasks allows students to identify and articulate such aspects of practice, a process that appears regularly in workshops and allows students to 'rehearse' practice.

The 'rehearsal' of what needed to be done for assignments was common. Even Judith who, as a member of Group 5 had little opportunity to participate in academic practices within the workshops, and Dominic, whose commitment to Group 4 was fluctuating, spontaneously articulate plans for time management:

Judith: I'm going to start this essay tomorrow then while it's in my head.

Wendy: Yeah, I'm going get a lot done over the weekend I think.

27.11.09 a.m. Group C

Dominic: I'm gonna have to get in early for like, er, some of these books for this essay, 'cos I go to the library and like all of them have been wiped out.

6.11.09 p.m. Group 4

Talking through their plans seems to be a step toward action, part of their planning for the organisation and management of the writing process, but spontaneous talk also provides an exchange of information:

Dominic: See, if we went now to use this, say, in an essay, would you, how, how would you reference it?

6.11.09 p.m. Group 4

Nicola: In Sport we were told, weren't we, to get a dictionary.

Sarah: Yeah.

Nicola: And anything we don't know, look it up in the dictionary.

Zena: That's a good idea actually.

Nicola: And then go back to it and make sense of it.

2.10.09 a.m. Group 1

Students not only ask questions, as Dominic does, they want to share their knowledge and offer information unbidden. If talking about practice is ‘what we do’ as part of the shared repertoire, then spontaneous sharing of knowledge about practice will occur, as Nicola does in the above example. And the value of such sharing is clearly demonstrated by Zena’s comment ‘That’s a good idea actually’ which implies that looking up unknown words in a dictionary has not previously occurred to her.

Participation in workshop activities prompted talk about academic practice, including academic writing practices, but also wider aspects such as time management, accessing texts and referencing accurately. The informality of the small groups and the high degree of tolerance students extended to each other meant that they could, and did, easily slide off-task. However the latitude permitted meant that students also had freedom to slide into conversations about practice, and what they might need to do as part of their independent study practices or specifically in their assignments, and helped to establish talk about practice as a practice of the community.

6.8 Discussion

My findings show that students’ participation in academic practice was facilitated by talk about practice within the context of participation in practice. Talk about practice helped to establish academic relationships of *mutual engagement*. In the first workshop, as groups sought to ensure harmony in their

relationships, agreement about how to proceed with tasks was threaded through their talk. These relationships might be seen, within the broader context, to be lacking robust debate, but they provided a safe space in which to begin to explore ideas. Later in the semester when tensions arose in some groups in relation to participation in practice in the workshops and independent study practices, talk about practice was again central to the project of establishing expectations about the nature of participation and responsibility. *Joint enterprise* was also determined through talk about practice as group members negotiated what it was that they were trying to do, and how to manage their practice. The critical incident when Group 4 realised that there might be an alternative way to proceed, and then revisited the task three times, was only possible because they talked about practice and how they might practice differently. In order to develop a *shared repertoire*, talk about what that repertoire included was evident, and subsequently talk about practice became more than something students did just to complete the workshop tasks. Talk about practice became part of the shared repertoire, arising spontaneously when a particular task prompted students to ask a question about practice, or even just to share some thoughts about practice. Talk about practice itself became a practice of the academic student communities of practice.

I have shown talk about academic practice, within the context of participation in practice, to be integral to the mutual engagement of participants and the establishment of joint enterprise and shared repertoire for the workshop groups. That is to say, talk about academic practice is central to the construction of the academic community of practice. Yet, in their conceptualisation of learning as

changing participation in practice, Lave & Wenger (1991) and later Wenger (1998) pay little attention to the process by which individuals move from legitimate peripheral participation to fuller participation, in particular the role of talk is insufficiently theorised. Lave & Wenger (1991) make passing references to ‘the circulation of information among peers’ (p93), and ‘information flows and conversations’ (p102), yet they place little value on talk about practice in their subsequent discussion in which they make a distinction between ‘talking within’ and ‘talking about’ practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 109). They associate ‘talking about’ with learning from transmission, and although they acknowledge that ‘talking within’ will itself include both ‘talking within’ and ‘talking about’ practice, the role of ‘talking about’ practice is not explored in any detail. They conclude that ‘For newcomers then the purpose is not to learn *from* talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn *to* talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 109). Whilst accepting their main point, that ‘talk about’ cannot be a substitute for participation, it seems that there is a tendency for Lave & Wenger to marginalise talk in their concern for practice. In Wenger’s later work (Wenger, 1998), learning is seen as occurring through negotiation of meaning arising from participation in practice, but again he fails to explore the process by which this happens, and in particular does not consider the role of talk (Creese, 2005; Tusting, 2005). In Chapter 7 I seek to theorise the role of talk about academic practice more fully in the relationship between students’ knowledge of and participation in academic practices.

Chapter 7

Knowing about academic practice

7.1 Introduction: the relationship between knowing and doing

Academic Literacies research shows that academic literacy practices are often tacit, embedded within specific sociocultural contexts and reflecting expectations, values and beliefs to which students are not always given access, in what Lillis (2001, p. 58) calls ‘the institutional practice of mystery’. My pedagogical approach sought to make practice visible, and in this chapter I explore how students make sense of the explicit ‘knowledge’ that is provided as I address my second research question; how does a pedagogy of academic practice facilitate knowledge of academic practice? I use ‘knowledge’ to refer to articulated, explicit knowledge; tacit knowledge cannot, by definition, be articulated. Consequently, students’ tacit knowledge is hidden from the researcher and, although it might be demonstrated through participation, my intention is not to speculate on its nature. Using ‘knowledge’ to refer specifically to articulated knowledge allows it to be viewed separately from enacted knowledge, in the form of participation in practice, so that the relationship between the two can be explored.

Drawing on Wenger’s conceptualisation of reification and participation as constituents of meaning I conceptualise articulated knowledge of practice as reification of practice. I discuss how knowledge of aspects of academic practice that were explicitly introduced to students affected their practice, and how their

participation in practice led to the construction of new knowledge. I position talk as a mediator between what is known and what is done; talk about practice played a critical role in the way that knowledge of and participation in practice each constructed and was constructed by the other. I seek to theorise the role of talk about academic practice in the relationship between students' knowledge of, and participation in academic practice and conclude that there is a significant difference between talk about practice within the context of participation in that practice and talk about practice that is separate from participation in that practice.

7.2 Reification

Wenger uses the concept of reification 'very generally to refer to the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into "thingness"' (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). The objects produced are also called 'reifications', the word referring to both the product and the act of production. Although the object might be an image, tool, story or other object, it is often a spoken word or text. As Barton and Tusting (2005, p. 14) observe, although reifications can be of many kinds, Wenger's examples are often 'more abstract forms of semiotic representation, including many that involve literacy', and my use of the term is quite narrowly focused on the documents, definitions and statements that are used to represent academic practice and that students can 'know'.

From Wenger's perspective, all text is reification, someone's attempt to put down on paper their experience of making meaning. In the context of HE, where literacy practices are central to teaching, learning and researching, written reifications of practice are ubiquitous, and are often provided for students. For example, the experience of a whole module is reified into a module handbook and the experience of writing an assignment is reified into an assignment brief, documents which are presented to students at the beginning of a semester as a tangible representation of their forthcoming studies. Furthermore, terminology is used to reify aspects of study (for example, 'problem-based learning', 'independent learning') and academic practice (for example, 'analysis', 'argument'), so that few words come to represent complex practices. Students have to produce essays which are also reifications, their understanding of the module content, and their thoughts about the ideas to which they have been introduced, 'congealed into thingness'.

7.2.1 The reification of academic practice

The students in this study were presented with many different documents in their first days at St. Hugh's. Academic documentation included: the Programme Specification; *Guidance for written coursework*; module booklets for ES1A, ES1B (the other Education module studied in semester 1) and another non-Education module; library guidance; student support leaflet; and school placement booklet. Some information, for example the Programme Specification, was distributed with no accompanying explanation, other than that it contained

information that they might wish to refer to later, but that they should not worry about reading it now. Often the distribution of paperwork was accompanied by some kind of lecture: the library handout was given at a dedicated session led by library staff; the document *Guidance for written coursework* was distributed in a lecture by the university Quality Assurance officer who explained the dire consequences of plagiarism. These sessions were organised institutionally rather than departmentally and were included in Freshers' Week²³. Module booklets for Education Studies were distributed in an introductory session in Freshers' Week in workshop groups, with tutors offering a quick 'signposting' of key sections and setting students the task to read through both Education Studies module booklets before the first taught sessions. Assignment briefs were included in module booklets, including full details of the assignments and a marking grid for each assignment (appendices 7.1 and 7.2). These were explained in a lecture in the first week of the module. All of these documents and the distribution timetable were managed at an institutional level. Module booklets were produced to a fixed template, and it was an institutional directive that assignments be 'set' in the first week of the module so that students would 'know' what was expected of them.

Students were therefore provided with paperwork containing a large amount of reified information during their first days at St. Hugh's, and although the institution had an approach that also sought to explain these documents, additional verbal reifications do not necessarily make documents clearer. The

²³ A week before the formal start of study to welcome, induct and orient new students, often associated in UK universities with socialising and drinking alcohol.

potential for information overload and difficulty understanding uncontextualised information is significant, and is surely compounded by being provided in Freshers' Week when, for many students, late nights and alcohol do little to aid understanding. However, reification of practice is necessary.

Students' opportunities to appropriate academic practices rely on having some knowledge of what those practices are. Wenger (1998, p. 64) claims that 'reification is essential to repair the potential misalignments inherent in participation'. As previously discussed, students newly arrived from school may assume that study in HE will be like their previous experiences of education since they will be drawing on 'what they have implicitly learned through the way learning is organised and managed in schools' (Mann, 2008, p. 96) and, unless someone makes visible the nature of academic practice and helps them to understand 'the rules of the game', their forms of participation might not be successful in HE (Crozier et al. 2008; Foster et al. 2011; Scott, 2000).

Reification of practice can help students to realise that academic practices in HE will be different, and can provide an enduring, if imperfect, representation of practice. As Barton and Hamilton (2005, p. 32) point out, 'reifications are crucial for interactions across time and space'. But it is a mistake to assume that a raft of documents and accompanying verbal explanations will be understood and implemented. Drawing on Bernstein's (2000) distinction between visible and invisible pedagogies, reifications which draw clear boundaries between what is, and is not, deemed appropriate in a given context can be seen as providing strong

classification, creating recognition rules whereby individual students know what is seen as legitimate action. However, although such visibility is necessary, it is not sufficient. In the construction of meaning, reification is always inadequate.

7.2.2 Reification and participation; the duality of meaning

The reified product reflects the practices of the community, but as an abstraction it can never fully represent the experience to which it refers. This is central to Wenger's (1998, p. 62) argument that 'reification as a constituent of meaning is always incomplete, ongoing, potentially enriching, and potentially misleading'. It is potentially enriching because it can draw attention to salient aspects of practice; assignment briefs, however imperfect, do at least give students some idea of the sort of thing their tutors are looking for, a far cry from my own undergraduate experience when we were given a title and nothing more. But the potential to mislead is ever present. For example, we can seek to capture the essence of 'analysis' in a sentence, but definitions fall far short of the lived experience of trying to do analysis, and say nothing about what might need to be done in the context of a specific piece of written work. I have spoken to 3rd year undergraduates who say; 'My feedback always tells me to be more analytical but I don't even know what that means'. They 'know' the definition, but it has no meaning for them. Analysis can be reified in alternative ways, which might help students come closer to an understanding, but no reification can be a perfect representation, for any attempt to capture in words the complexity of the experience of analysis will inevitably be incomplete.

Wenger's caution that reification is always incomplete and potentially misleading leads him to argue that 'Participation is essential to repairing the potential misalignments inherent in reification' (1998, p. 64), mirroring his claim about the need for reification to compensate for the inadequacies of participation. He concludes that reification and participation must always be seen as a duality. The reification represents the student's knowledge of practice, and their participation demonstrates their attempt to act in accordance with that knowledge. Students in possession of assignment briefs may 'know' what they have to do, students in tutorials discussing feedback on assignments may 'know' what they need to improve, but such knowledge is useless if they do not know how act upon it. Wenger's duality of meaning, the interplay between reification and participation, provides an analytical tool for examining the relationship between tacit and explicit knowledge of academic practice. As discussed in chapter 3, academic writing relies upon tacit knowledge which cannot be codified and shared with students (Bloxham & West, 2007; Elton, 2010; Mitchell, 2010; O'Donovan et al., 2004). Tacit knowledge resides in the experience of practising and, although it can never be made fully explicit, it 'provides the backdrop against which explicit knowledge can be interpreted and understood' (O'Donovan et al., 2004, p. 333).

Using Wenger's participation-reification duality of the construction of meaning, an individual student's attempts to implement the guidance that has been given is represented in Figure 7.1, in which block arrows represent influence of one element of meaning on another. I acknowledge that the social nature of the enterprise is not represented, and participation in practice is inherently social since

the meaning of action is always within a social context, even when practiced alone, nevertheless it is helpful initially to consider the model in relation to individuals. Any community of practice is made up of individuals and by focusing on the individual student, I am deliberately seeking to capture the experience of a student where collaborative learning is not included in the pedagogic approach, and participation in academic reading and writing practice largely take place alone.

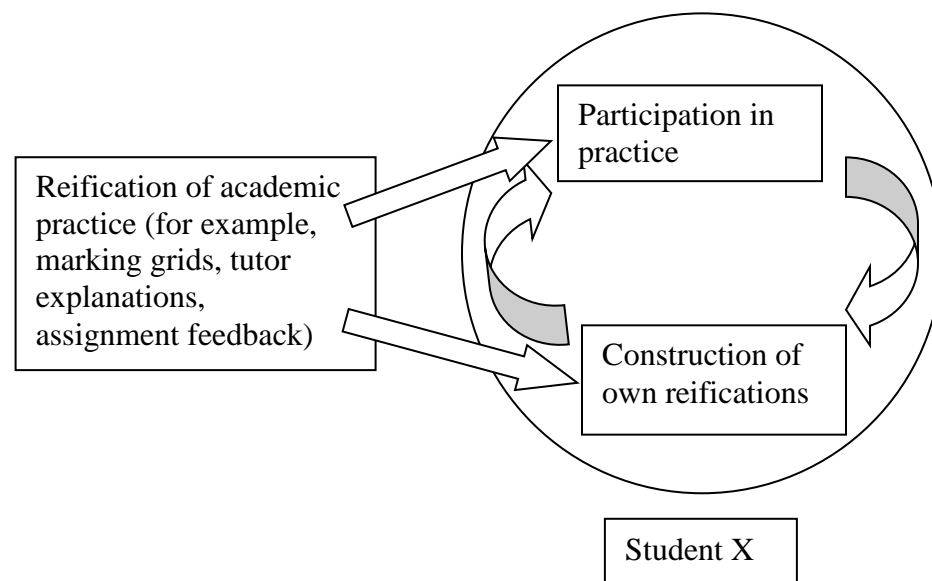


Figure 7.1: Construction of meaning about academic practice in the individual sphere.

Guidance and definitions that students are given are reifications of practice that influence students as they endeavour to participate in practice and as they construct their own meanings and explanations that they use to guide their practice. In an iterative process, through attempts at participation, as they try to do what they think they are required to do, they refine their own reifications, and these reifications inform their subsequent practice. Additional reification of

academic practice in assignment feedback or tutorials, which reinforce or challenge the student's existing ways of practising and existing reifications, provide new influences on participation and reification. An individual's reification of practice and participation in practice are always in dynamic relationship, each constructing and being constructed by the other, and by external reifications.

In an ideal world, over time, the student's own reifications of what academic practice entails, and their participation in academic practice, would gradually become more like that of the established academic, what Lea (2004, p. 193) calls, 'the benign view of the novice student gradually moving towards full participation in a community of practice and engaging in written practices similar to those of the established academic members of that community'. However, students do not all live in the 'ideal world'. If students' own reifications, constructed from their existing practice in the light of the new reifications they encounter in HE, move further away from those of the academic community, their attempts to participate in academic practice on the basis of these reification will consign them to the periphery of the academic community. Burn and Finnigan describe one such mature student in her final year of part-time study. After several years of participation in HE, attempting to practise as she thought the academy required, and constructing her own reifications of the tacit 'rules' of academic writing, she concluded that 'to write academically you needed to 'add some snob words'... rather than developing her thesis' (Burn & Finnigan, 2003, p. 125).

I now use Wenger's duality of meaning to discuss the experiences of the students in my study. I initially focus on students' knowledge and understanding of 'independent study', a reification which appears in many documents and which is seen as a defining feature of HE, before examining academic writing and reading practices.

7.3 Knowing what to do in 'independent study'

'Independent study' is a much used term that appears in Programme Specifications and module booklets, and as with all reifications, what it stands for is not always clear. Depending on the particular context it might mean studying out-of-class work that has been set by a tutor, whereby independent simply means 'not with the tutor present'; or it might mean self-directed study, undertaken with no support, where topic, resources and direction are self-generated; or something in between.

The expectation that the students in this study would work independently was explained when module booklets were distributed and timetables were discussed. For ES1A, essential independent study tasks were described week-by-week in the module booklet and on the VLE, along with additional optional tasks. These often involved some kind of reading. Optional tasks were designated as 'for extra support' (usually simpler texts or you-tube videos) or 'to extend your understanding' (usually more complex texts), and there was an indication of how long tasks should take. In the other core Education module, ES1B, the tutor

designated tasks as ‘must’, ‘should’ or ‘could’ to distinguish between essential, recommended and optional tasks, with no distinction between those intended for extra support or extension.

In the first week of ES1A (25.9.09), students (all of whom had already attended a session for ES1B) were asked to talk about how they thought study at university level would be different from what they had done previously, as a way of helping them to construct meaning from their experiences so far, and from the information they had encountered in their induction and in the documentation. It is clear from their talk that ‘independent study’ was already an expectation, and all groups demonstrate knowledge that university-level study would require greater independence of them than school had done. However, like students in other studies (Foster et al., 2011; Haggis & Pouget, 2002), they show little understanding of what this would mean in practice. Ellie suggests that they will not be ‘force fed information’:

Ellie: I think that we’re going to be having to use our brains a bit more.
Not in like the most obvious way, what I mean is we’re not gonna
be force fed information.

25.9.09 a.m. Group 2

Ellie’s use of the negative expression ‘force fed’ indicates that she is embracing the opportunity to ‘use her brain a bit more’, however she is the only person to speak about the nature of independent study in relation to independent

thinking. The other discussions all focus on organisational aspects. ‘Must, should and could’ (used to differentiate tasks in ES1B) have already been appropriated as a way to talk about the different importance attached to different texts, providing, as Wenger (1998, p. 58) suggests reifications will, a ‘point of focus around which negotiation of meaning becomes organized’.

Teresa: It’s just really the whole independence, go off and you should do this and you could do this. It sort of makes you need the motivation to be able to go away and say, ‘right I am going to do it’. It’s, it’s not like school where you have to do everything.

25.9.09 a.m. Group 5

Judith: But normally you just get given them and told ‘you have to read this’, it’s not like ‘you could read this’. At school it was just like, ‘do this’.

Andrew: How much do I actually read, woo!

Judith: Yeah.

Andrew: I’ve got to go and get all these books out now, you know, and then...

Dominic: Suggested reading and then it’s up to you whether you do it or not.

25.9.09 a.m. Group 4

The reification of practice in module booklets and introductory session has drawn attention to the element of responsibility inherent in the discourse of

independence promoted across the institution, and students know that study at university will be different from school, where, they imply, they could rely on their teachers to tell them exactly what they needed to know and do. They know that they will have to be self-organized and self-motivated yet there is no consideration of what they will need to do when they participate in ‘independent study’ until they are specifically asked to talk about their expectations and concerns related to academic reading and writing.

My analysis explores students’ knowledge of the literacy practices that constitute much of their independent study, their participation in those practices and the relationship between knowledge and participation. I consider reading and writing separately since, although they are clearly connected and students’ writing is, to some extent, dependent on their reading, I want to ensure that academic reading practices are not hidden or seen only in relation to writing. I had overlooked academic reading in the pilot study, and my findings indicated that it was an element of academic practice with which a significant minority of students did not fully engage. The relative invisibility of reading is embedded in HE pedagogic research; although there are many texts dealing with academic writing, some of which also discuss student reading in relation to writing, relatively few are primarily focused on academic reading. Furthermore, in a major report for the QAA in Scotland on introducing scholarship skills, Alston et al. (2008, p. 2) explain that, ‘This report uses the term ‘writing’ to refer to both the act of writing and the range of practices that surround it, such as information selection, reading and note-taking’, and in their main report there are only seven references to

reading (and four of those are in the phrase ‘reading and writing’). The authors’ decision to subsume reading within writing hides reading as a separate practice, and detracts from a conceptualisation of reading as a meaning-making endeavour in its own right, separate from any writing that might result from the reading.

Scholars who do examine student engagement in academic reading conclude that students’ situated understanding of academic reading arises from their experiences in previous learning contexts and that students tend to see reading as gathering information for reproduction rather than as to extend their understanding (Mann, 2000, 2008; Mateos et al., 2007; Saltmarsh & Saltmarsh, 2008; Scott, 2000; Weller, 2010). Mann (2008, p. 24) summarises the problem; ‘normally we read with expectation of communication- finding out what the author wants us to know - but we learn through study (and schooling) to read academic texts for reproduction’. Reading is, of course, undertaken as part of the writing process, however, I see it as essential to separate my discussion of academic writing and reading, so that neither is concealed by being seen solely in relation to the other.

7.4 Academic Writing: a major student concern

On the first day of the module ES1A, after talking about how study at university might be different from what they had done before, I asked the students to discuss any concerns they had about academic reading and writing as a way of making academic literacy practices visible and positioning them as topics for

discussion. Students' talk showed that they anticipated far more problems with academic writing than academic reading. Drawing on previous experiences of writing for academic purposes, they identified issues such as adhering to word limits, addressing the question and interpreting the mark scheme; aspects of writing that many already knew they struggled with from their experiences of writing for A-levels and other qualifications. Additionally, many were aware that academic writing at university level would be different in some way, and expressed concern that they would 'do it wrong' because of uncertainty about the exact nature of the difference and the greater independence expected of them. Writing therefore presented two sources of anxiety: aspects of writing which they had found difficult before would continue to be troublesome; and there would be new, as yet unknown, challenges. Students in all groups drew on the discourse of independence in their discussion of writing, although they were not sure what this would entail in practice:

Zena: Also with writing, um, there may be less advice or bullet points on what to write about.

Zena: Less guidance I think.

Sarah: Yeah.

Anne: And you have to do your own, like, research.

Zena: Yeah.

Anne: Like finding books and stuff, they're not just gonna give it you.

Zena: Yeah.

Helen: A lot less guidance.

Zena: Yeah.

(gap 11 seconds)

Georgia: Also you've got to find the resources yourself.

Zena: Yeah.

Georgia: So it's extra time isn't it?

Sarah: Time consuming.

(gap 17 seconds)

Zena: 'Cos I didn't really worry about reading as such.

Anne: No I didn't.

Zena: No, just about writing and making sure you're understanding the question.

Anne: Yeah.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 1

The students' knowledge that greater independence will be expected of them is articulated in relation to writing as including interpreting essay titles, knowing what to write about and finding resources. Anne positions researching and finding books as part of the writing process rather than the reading process, so that even though they are presented as concerns, she agrees with Zena that she doesn't worry about reading. Reading remains hidden in Group 1's talk, only being presented as part of writing. Anxiety about writing is understandable; writing is the vehicle for much assessed work, it is the product that tutors will evaluate and grade. In contrast, reading is indirectly assessed, usually through the medium of writing, so it is perhaps not surprising that, since reading practices are

‘hidden’ in the assessment process, they are also to some extent ‘hidden’ in the students’ talk.

The dominance of writing and the concern for assessment is also shown in students’ concerns that they might misinterpret what they have to do. Although talking about reading and note-making in the following extract, Vicky is talking about them in relation to writing, and her anxiety about reading is predominantly insofar as it might affect her writing:

Vicky: I mean that's the other, that's my only worry, going and reading about someone, coming back with all my notes and realise that you've missed the whole point of the thing and I'm like, 'Oh great'. And I think that's what makes university slightly different.

Nicola: Yeah.

Vicky: Instead of schools and things because in all, like, our kind of assignments when you read it, it's, like, there is no right or wrong answer.

Nicola: Yeah.

Vicky: They are basically just looking for your points and your opinions.

Nicola: Yeah.

Vicky: Which I don't mind because I'm quite opinionated so, as long as I don't get told off for it, I don't mind. (laughs)

25.9.09 a.m. Group 5

When the assignment for ES1A was set in a lecture, students had been told that there was no ‘right’ answer, and that they needed to ‘recognise different viewpoints in the construction of an argument’ (a module learning outcome). This ‘reification’ of practice has been interpreted by Vicky as meaning that when she writes, she should present her opinions, and there is no indication at this early stage of the course that she recognises the need to support her opinions with evidence. Providing students with written guidance and talking them through it can lead to students who, endeavouring to practise in the light of their ‘knowledge’, misinterpret what is required. Group 3, exploring the same issue, contrast opinion with facts:

Pippa: I had a piece for Social Care, work that I had, it was one section of, it was like a thousand words and that was all fact like, the sort of, look on the internet and books, do that, it was like ...

Wendy: No my, my Art was completely, you could say ‘he was born here’ and ‘this is his piece of work’ but that was it, and then it was all completely opinion. ‘What do you think that painting would then mean?’ You had to get a paragraph out of that and it’s like ...

Pippa: I can do facts, right, I can write facts fine.

Daisy: It’s thoughts and opinions and whether you’re right or wrong and whether that really makes sense. Just because I’ve made that link doesn’t actually mean the rest of the world would as well.

25.9.09 a.m. Group 3

These discussions in the first week of the module demonstrate a good deal of knowledge that the academic writing that they would be required to complete for assessed work would be different from what they had done before. At the same time, independence opens up possibilities for error and there is concern that working independently, and being required to do more than simply report facts, might cause them to accidentally do things incorrectly. Both Vicky and Daisy clearly position themselves in powerless positions, in contrast to the institutional power invested in the tutors; Vicky anxious that making a mistake could lead her to get ‘into trouble’ and Daisy doubting the worth of her own interpretation against ‘the rest of the world’.

Anxiety about accidentally doing wrong, despite your best effort to do what you think your tutors want, was also apparent in relation to plagiarism. Students had been introduced to the issue of plagiarism in a centrally delivered session during which they had been introduced to and given a written document, *Guidance for written coursework*. This had been a stern session where penalties for plagiarism (zero mark and possible disciplinary proceedings) were explained by a member of the Quality Assurance office.

Ellie raises an important question about what counts as plagiarism, and in a module where collaborative learning is a pedagogical approach it is even more pertinent. Who ‘owns’ the knowledge that the group constructs together? The discussion allows this group to unpick some quite complex ideas about what does and what does not constitute plagiarism:

Ellie: I mean, when we get to writing our actual assessment, I'm going to have to go through that whole learning advice thing and like, make sure about it. My only issue is the plagiarism bit, and I'm not saying I'm going to be ...

Several: Oh yeah.

Ellie: I'm not a bit plagiariser person.

?: No.

Ellie: But I have issues right, this is my issue, right. (laughs) When I go through everyday life, or as we're sitting in lectures or things, I take on other people's ideas, and if I perhaps write something I will think they're my own.

Rhiannon: Yeah, yeah.

[Ellie describes an example from school when, for an assignment, she had proposed what she believed to be an original idea for an Art project to her teacher, who reminded her that he had shown the class the same idea several weeks previously]

Fran: I've done that before.

Rhiannon: You have to write absolutely everything down, don't you, like all your sources? I've never done that before, like we didn't do it for A-level.

[...]

Ellie: 'Cos is it plagiarism if, like, we've been chatting at the table?

Fran: Yeah.

- Ellie: About a little assessment and then kind of, not thought about what we were chatting about, and then got back home and thought ‘oh yeah, that was brilliant’, it could have been your idea, like, that’s what bothers me.
- Rhiannon: I think as long as you don’t, um, take something off somebody that’s like ...
- Fran: Yeah, like the internet, like Wikipedia or something.
- Rhiannon: As long as it, like, say you’re doing Art. If a famous artist’s done something then you go and do it, it’s obvious.
- Ellie: (laughs) A little bit. Although Banksy did do that, um, Monet, water lilies one, with the trolley in it. Have you seen it?
- Rhiannon: Yeah, yeah I’ve seen that.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 2

The opportunity to discuss academic practice may not always provide clear answers, but the students in Group 2 are able to articulate aspects of the reifications they had been given, in order to try to understand what they mean as they seek to explore meaning in different contexts. They do not reach a conclusion, but are pushing at the boundaries of their knowledge.

Subsequent workshop sessions reified aspects of academic writing practice so that students’ knowledge about writing in the first week, including their belief that essays required them to present opinion, could be challenged and re-constructed in new ways. These sessions, which covered academic debate, using

literature in writing, structuring an essay, academic argument, being analytical and being critical, included tutor input and both whole group and small group discussion. But explicit reification is only one part of the making of meaning and the workshops also included collaborative participation in academic practice in small groups. The relationship between participation in writing practices and reification of those practices can be seen in the way that students try to make meaning and I examine the two aspects of this iterative process separately, firstly in the way that participation informs reification, and secondly in the way that reification informs participation.

7.4.1 Participation informing reification: writing

Collaborative participation provides a space where students talk about their practice and in doing so reify, or ‘congeal into “thingness”’, their experience as they articulate representations of academic practice. In the second week of the module (2.10.09), having independently read some set texts about rote learning, the students were discussing the question ‘Is there a place for rote learning in schools today? Should there be?’ This was also the title of their first piece of assessed writing (700 words), a title chosen to ensure that, from the start of the module, writing would be presented to students as being about argument rather than reproduction of content (See appendix 7.1 for assignment briefs). In the workshop they were asked to consider collaboratively how they might want to conclude their piece as a first step to thinking about how they would construct an argument, and what evidence they would want to include in support of that

conclusion. The need for literary and observational evidence was reified in the assignment brief and verbally as part of the whole group introduction to the activity.

In their first few weeks in HE, students' knowledge of the purpose and nature of academic writing was limited, with little recognition of the need to engage critically with ideas rather than simply to provide 'the right' answer. Group 4 demonstrate this lacuna clearly, having decided that there was a place for rote learning in school, but being unsure of how to find 700 words that would lead to their conclusion:

Georgia: Yes, so yes it is, yes it's useful as long as you've got ... [but] it's insufficient. For full knowledge you do need to expand on it. It's a good foundation, start.

Andrew: Mm.

Georgia: Given there's a limit to how many times you can say that, isn't there, for seven hundred words.

[...]

Dominic: But that's the, that's the problem with the essay, like, how is that ...

Georgia: You'd have to use examples from your placement.

Andrew: Yeah.

Dominic: Yes, but what about if you don't get examples, do we make 'em up?
(laughs)

Gary: I suppose you could really.

- Andrew: Yeah make some up.
- Georgia: Yesterday I was in a Year 3 class and they were doing times tables.
- Andrew: Little Johnny said this ...
- Dominic: Oh yeah. (laughs)

2.10.09 a.m. Group 4

As they talk, knowledge of aspects of academic writing are articulated. The reification of the necessity for evidence, including examples from their placement is reiterated, and their subsequent talk leads to a subversion of the task, the group's suggestion that they could simply make up observations. As their tutor, this is not a practice I would endorse, but as researcher it is interesting to note how their discussion of the writing process, as they collaborate to complete the task, results in the creation of their own reification of writing practice: that lack of evidence can be overcome by making it up. Later it appears that this was not just joking. After handing in their 700 words on rote learning, Dominic explains he has not referred to school observations:

- Dominic: I didn't mention my placement, I realised, but ...
- Georgia: Did you not?
- Dominic: It was like, there wasn't, there wasn't really, yeah. I was, like, trying to make up a scenario in my head but then I was like ...
- Yvonne: I made one up.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 4

Reifications constructed together can result in a student community where the practices are not those of the mainstream academic community, however, Group 4's discussion does also identify aspects of acceptable academic practice: literature that might be relevant (which, thankfully, they do not suggest 'making up'); how many texts they will need; the need to 'make notes':

Dominic: Yeah I reckon we have to make the, um, [use the] suggested reading to get, like, a more, more places to reference 'cos ...

Georgia: Yeah.

Dominic: We're, [going to need] references, like from three things you're not going to get enough for this, enough words are you?

Georgia: Yeah.

Andrew: So you've got to make a lot of notes.

2.10.09 a.m. Group 4

Their talk gives the sense of 'rehearsal' noted in Chapter 6, identifying what they will need to do in their independent study, and, although their talk is still at a very general level, later in the discussion, as they try to commit their ideas to paper, Dominic is able to make specific reference to a text and to rehearse the academic voice he believes to be appropriate for academic argument, despite Georgia and Andrew still placing primary importance on the answer rather than the argument:

Georgia: So is there a place for rote learning in schools today? Yes.

Andrew: Is there? Yes.

?: (laughs)

Georgia: Right, just write that 700 times.

Andrew: Discuss.

(gap 5 secs)

Dominic: You, you could, I would definitely quote Mayer and I reckon you could quote, like, Tapscott somewhere in there.

Georgia: Yeah saying that he doesn't think ...

Dominic: Yeah that 'There are some, however' ...

2.10.09 a.m. Group 4

Participation in practice leads to the reification of practice and by the final week of the module (11.12.09), students knew that the writing they were required to do involved argument. Their task involved using different voices to present different sides of an argument about dialogic teaching:

You are the staff in a school. The Head Teacher has asked for your ideas to include in a presentation that she is giving to the next Governors' meeting, explaining the new school policy to take a more dialogic approach to teaching and learning. List the main points you think she should include then organise them into a structure that the Head will be able to use as a basis for the presentation. (ES1A Workshop handout 11.12.09)

Participation provides a space for the students to talk about the nature of the kind of text they have to produce as they write in voices

other than their own, and to recognise that different types of writing will require different things:

Sarah: What you said about, um, children are just ...

Rhiannon: Saying what you think the teacher wants to hear.

Sarah: So ...

Rhiannon: Are we supposed to be doing negatives though, or are we supposed to be saying how good it is?

Xanthe: Um, as it's for the Governors it's meant to be like biased isn't it?

Zena: Yeah, I don't think ...

Xanthe: It's not meant to be balanced, but it...

Sarah: Convincing to other people.

And then later in role as the Governing Body they have to adopt a different role:

Sarah: (reads another group's notes aloud)

Rhiannon: Very good.

Zena: Right we've got to be critical now haven't we? 'Cos we're, like, the Governors.

Nicola: Yeah.

Xanthe: So, we'll say 'Well, we don't agree with that!'

(laughter)

Xanthe: It's quite difficult when you do agree with it though, isn't it?

As the students participate in the activity, the need to write in different voices provides the opportunity for them to reify aspects of academic practice: the nature of persuasive writing, as distinct from biased or neutral writing; and the recognition that it is necessary to present alternative views in the discussion of a topic and to give them consideration, whatever your own beliefs. The laughter following Xanthe's statement 'We don't agree with that!' shows that they know argument requires more than a statement of disagreement, but they still do not demonstrate recognition that this is not simply about their own opinion but rather about considering alternative perspectives. Participation provides a context in which the students produce and refine reifications of practice in their articulation of knowledge of academic practice. However, collaborative work does not just provide a context where participation can inform reification. Reification also informs participation.

7.4.2 Reification informing participation: writing

I suggested in Chapter 6 that when practice is made visible in workshops it informs participation, as exemplified by Group 2 who contrasted 'arguing with each other' with 'arguing with each other's points' and Group 4 who identified the need to 'ask each other why we think that', following a workshop about academic debate. Students not only share their knowledge verbally, and identify what it means for their practice, but are also able to demonstrate through shared practice how they act on that knowledge.

The duality of reification and participation sheds light on the process by which this knowledge informs their practice. As described in Chapter 6 (pp. 195-201), the reification of ‘debate’ and their explicit knowledge of it did not initially affect Group 4’s practice, and had they been working alone in their rooms the reification presented in the morning workshop might have had no influence, but the classroom setting demonstrated to them that other groups were still engaged in discussion whilst they had ground to a halt. Articulation of their interpretation of the reification enabled Group 4 to identify what they ought to do, even if they were not sure how to do it, and it was this talk about practice that prompted them to participate in a different way. Although they were still unsure how to practise differently, Group 4 did go on to re-start the activity, and despite several false starts, they eventually managed to discuss what the statements meant and their importance for teachers, offering examples from their experiences in school to justify their positions.

Participating in a collaborative activity provides opportunity for knowledge of practice that has been previously introduced to be articulated and to inform ways of practising. In the following example in the final week of the module, in the same dialogic teaching task as above, following a discussion about dialogic teaching, during which the group had made rough notes, Group 2 are writing a document to give to the ‘head teacher’:

Ellie: Well I’ve got the basics of whatever we’ve come up with, [we’ll] just write it up neatly.

[...]

Ellie: Yeah. Put the title 'towards dialogic teaching'. First point ...

Fran: As a bullet point?

Ellie: Yeah, so like, 'aims' or something. Seems like aims to me.

Fran: Yeah.

Ellie: To encourage talk in the classroom to, to extend their thinking ...

Vicky: Is it to extend the child's thinking?

Ellie: Yeah, [put] 'the child's thinking'.

Ellie's assumption that the ideas arising from their discussion just need to be written up neatly initially goes unchallenged and Fran simply writes what Ellie reads from their notes although Vicky, recognising the need for precision in a written document, emphasises that it is 'the child's' thinking. But as they continue with the task the lack of structure is questioned:

Ellie: Emphasis on discussion and dialogue, so next bullet point. Emphasise discussion and dialogue ...

Fran: Yes, but it is an aim or what is it?

Ellie: It's ... Make them all aims, like aims for how they should be.

Fran: So what is it?

Ellie: Emphasise discussion and dialogue, [as] opposed to recitation, instruction and rote.

Fran: (writing) 'Emphasise discussion and dialogue ... as opposed to' ...

Teresa: Why are they aims?

Ellie: 'Cos they're like aims of dialogic teaching, teaching in a way that Alexander wants us to.

[...]

Ellie: Um, next one ... more conversations initiated, should be initiated by children.

Vicky: Should we not put them in some kind of order first?

Fran: We're not what?

Vicky: Put the points in some kind of order.

Ellie: It's just points that we've come out with.

Vicky: What I'm saying is there needs to be more structure in there for the points for the head teacher to include in her piece ...

Ellie: Well, we're writing aims of dialogic teaching and then we can just whack out Alexander's thing on the end ...

Vicky: It was only an idea ...

Jane: (passing by, checking that all groups are on task) Are you OK here?

Fran, as scribe for the group, is first to recognise the need to organise the points and asks if it is an aim (the subtitle Ellie had previously suggested), and although Teresa questions Ellie's assertion that the characteristics she is describing are aims, she accepts Ellie's response without further question. Both Fran and Teresa present a sense of disquiet, that the structure Ellie is claiming is unjustified, but they appear to lack the confidence in their own interpretation to challenge her. As the task becomes little more than Ellie reading out the points they had previously discussed, Vicky appeals to the need for structure, but she too appears

to capitulate ‘it was only an idea’, and my comment, made as I passed by, perhaps diverts attention from Vicky’s disquiet. However, although Ellie continues to dominate the activity, she eventually acknowledges the others’ concerns and explicitly refers to creating a structure twice later in the task:

Ellie: Yeah. And then if you want to do it in, like, a structured way, you could do, you’ve done the aims, and it would be like, um, how dialogic teaching could be used and be like ... um, not to discriminate um, precision in vocabulary, or something.

Fran: How ...

Ellie: I don’t know, I don’t know how to phrase it. I need ideas from other people here.

Fran: Well what are you trying to do? I don’t understand.

Ellie: Right, I’ve just come on to like another section, kind of about, like, how this bit here is, like, kind of, how it could be used, and this is, like, the different types of dialogic teaching, so they are your three sections, if you want to do it structured.

Iris : So what’s our first one?

Fran: How should dialogic teaching be used?

Vicky: Well surely that’s the aims.

Ellie: Don’t matter does it? It’s not fucking assessed.

Iris: Yeah this isn’t assessed, she’s [Jane’s] not gonna care that much.

Ellie: But not to, not to, OK wait a minute, it's basically, not pick on people's vocabulary and like how they phrase their words and things, it's actually to bring their ideas out, do you know what I mean?

The task is making considerable demands on the group. Ellie is struggling to articulate an important point about valuing attempts to construct meaning over the way that things are said, and at the same time she has to negotiate a structure and approach to writing. Of course, this is the same process that is undertaken when completing an essay, but one is not constantly challenged when writing an essay. Swearing is very rare in the recordings, so Ellie's use of 'fucking' suggests a growing frustration, and irritation with Vicky who continues to question the structure of their work. The social context here is one in which Ellie and Iris present writing completed in class as less important than writing carried out for an assessment. Although this group readily engage with tasks, the importance of writing in a particular way is downplayed, and Iris' comment that I, the tutor, am 'not gonna care that much' suggest that she sees the content as being more important than the way that it is written. Nevertheless, Vicky returns to structure in the final extract, organising the points into a more coherent order, and Fran, who has been busy scribing for the group, is finally able to articulate how the points can be organised into definitions and reasons:

Vicky: So we've got two forms haven't you? Because we said about the discussion and dialogue, so then that [prioritising sharing ideas over vocabulary and

phrasing] just leads on from that [emphasis on discussion and dialogue]
 doesn't it? Because that's dialogic ...

Ellie: Yeah.

Vicky: In that's kind of the way to teach.

Fran: Yeah.

Vicky: And I just thought the dialogic teaching just came ...

Fran: I think that's just a statement of what, of what he, um, [it's] the definition,
 not, not the reason behind it, just the ...

Ellie: Yeah, I like it.

Vicky: That was what I thought. I just thought that would go on from that ...

Ellie: The next one under there?

11.12.09 a.m. Group 2

Writing collaboratively is not easy: the process requires explanation and justification of decisions and Ellie is obliged to address others' concerns. The reification of the need for structure in writing leads to talk about practice that influences the way the group completes the task. Together they move from listing points randomly to categorising the types of points that they are making and finally begin to organise them differently, the writing task obliging them to construct meaning in terms of definitions, aims and reasons. In this way, the practice of collaborative writing is also supporting higher level engagement with the content of the module.

The model of the reification-participation duality in Figure 7.1 (p. 227) can be applied to the group context of collaborative activity (Figure 7.2). Block arrows again represent influence of one element of meaning on another.

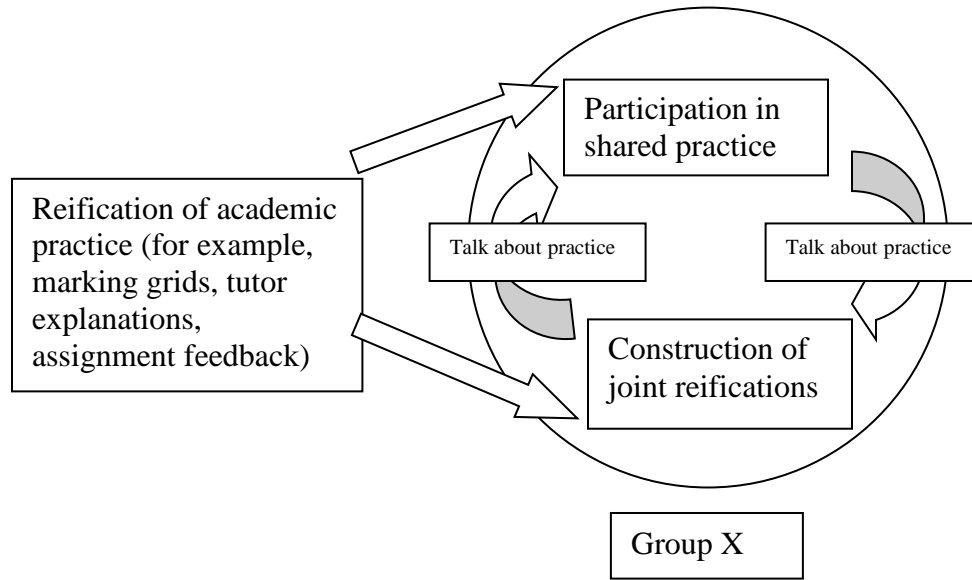


Figure 7.2: Construction of meaning about academic practice in the collaborative sphere

In the group setting, the iterative process in which reification and participation each construct and are constructed by the other in a dynamic relationship is mediated by talk about practice.

In their first few weeks in HE, in accord with the findings of Haggis (2006, p. 528) the students were unaware that learning in the humanities was ‘about questioning and creating knowledge ... as well as being about exploring what is already known’. However, by the end of the semester they not only knew about

characteristics of academic writing such as the need for justification and evidence, but were also beginning to understand their purpose.

7.4.3 Reified knowledge about academic writing- seeing the purpose

Collaborative writing necessitates talk about practice that not only draws on reifications that have been introduced, but also requires them to be restated and refined as mutual engagement and joint enterprise are negotiated, and as those reifications become instrumental in moulding participation their purpose can be more clearly seen and articulated.

Group 4's original purpose when discussing rote learning had been to complete the task. In contrast, by the end of term they understood the purpose of academic writing differently. Whilst engaged in a collaborative writing task which constituted making an argument in favour of a dialogic approach to teaching, it was clear that Georgia and Andrew took a completely different approach than they did in the early weeks of the module. They demonstrated knowledge of, and participated in, academic writing practices including the construction of argument and the need for supporting evidence:

Andrew: So I guess we've got to say, we've got to bring those [theoretical perspectives introduced previously] into that, sort of thing, haven't we? So you're talking about, um, something that links with

Vygotsky, and scaffolding, and that sort of thing. Do we need to go back to that theory?

Georgia: Yeah, references. So we've got theory basing this, we're not just saying this we've got theory to back it up.

Andrew: Yeah, (reads) 'As Bruner said, 'children must think for themselves in order to know and understand''.

Georgia: Yeah, and in order to do this they need to discuss with others to get others' perspectives.

11.12.09 a.m. Group 4

In the same session, talk about practice in the workshops gave members of Group 2, who had been concerned about plagiarism in the first week, the opportunity to refine their knowledge. Talk about referencing took place as part of the collaborative writing task they were engaged in, providing an opportunity for existing knowledge to be shared and to inform practice. In this extract Ellie is scribing for the group as they make an argument in favour of a dialogic approach to teaching:

Ellie: Um hang on, running out of room. Children what? (reads what she has just written) 'Children are given time', is this, like, a direct quote?

Iris: Well yeah, I'm reading that from the book, (reads) 'Children are given time to think things out and ... indeed think aloud'.

Vicky: I don't know whether these are quotes from the book in here [lecture handout] but they're quite good. (reads) 'Children need to talk and experience a rich diet of spoken language to think and to learn. Children must think for themselves before they truly know and understand and teaching must provide them with linguistic opportunities to do so'.

Ellie: I doubt it's a direct quote, I doubt it's a direct quote, but I ... it doesn't mean that you can't use it in your essay but you can just put it in because you can be like 'Alexander 2008 spoke about blah blah blah blah' and rewrite it.

11.12.09 a.m. Group 2

Ellie asking 'is this a direct quote?' and Vicky's comment that she doesn't know whether or not the points she was reading from a lecture handout were direct quotes demonstrate that the knowledge that referencing must be accurate has been appropriated into their ongoing practice. The opportunity to talk about and clarify aspects of practice is taken up by Ellie who demonstrates how she could use the source in her work, reifying the practice of paraphrasing. As her tutor, I would prefer that she go to the original source, but as researcher I can focus on the relationship between participation and reification: participation in collaborative practice necessitates talk about referencing that reifies aspects of the practice of referencing; creation of joint reifications can inform subsequent practice. Reifications about plagiarism make sense to Group 2 because they have a purpose. Not only does Ellie know about the practice of paraphrasing, she has a purpose for

knowing, because it allows her to use a lecture hand-out and bypass the need to read the original. Making meaning is a constant process such that reifications and practice are always in flux, with the potential for each to affect the other, both for the individual and for the group. Reifications influence writing practices and, in turn, the practice of writing influences the production of new reifications which place the student on a trajectory toward fuller participation in practice. The ‘negotiation of gaps’, which English conceptualises as the relationship between what can be known and what remains implicit, takes place through the act of participation:

In the end, students cannot know ‘what we want’ until they write ...
 However, it is actually somewhere in the gap between the lecturer's design and the student's interpretation that learning takes place ...
 it is the space where they can (or must) try to make sense of the material. (English, 2011, p. 58)

And the space to which English refers can be a communal space, where the participation is collaborative, and sense is made through shared endeavour. Individual students bring their existing reifications of academic writing practices to the workshops which contribute to the joint reifications that are constructed. As they ‘rehearse’ together what they need to do in their essays the potential for joint reifications to influence students’ own reifications is apparent. Similarly, students bring their own writing practices to the group which can influence and be influenced by joint participation in practice. The ongoing individual and group constructions of meaning take place in tandem, and the relationship between them

is represented in Figure 7.3 the block arrows again representing influence of one element of meaning on another.

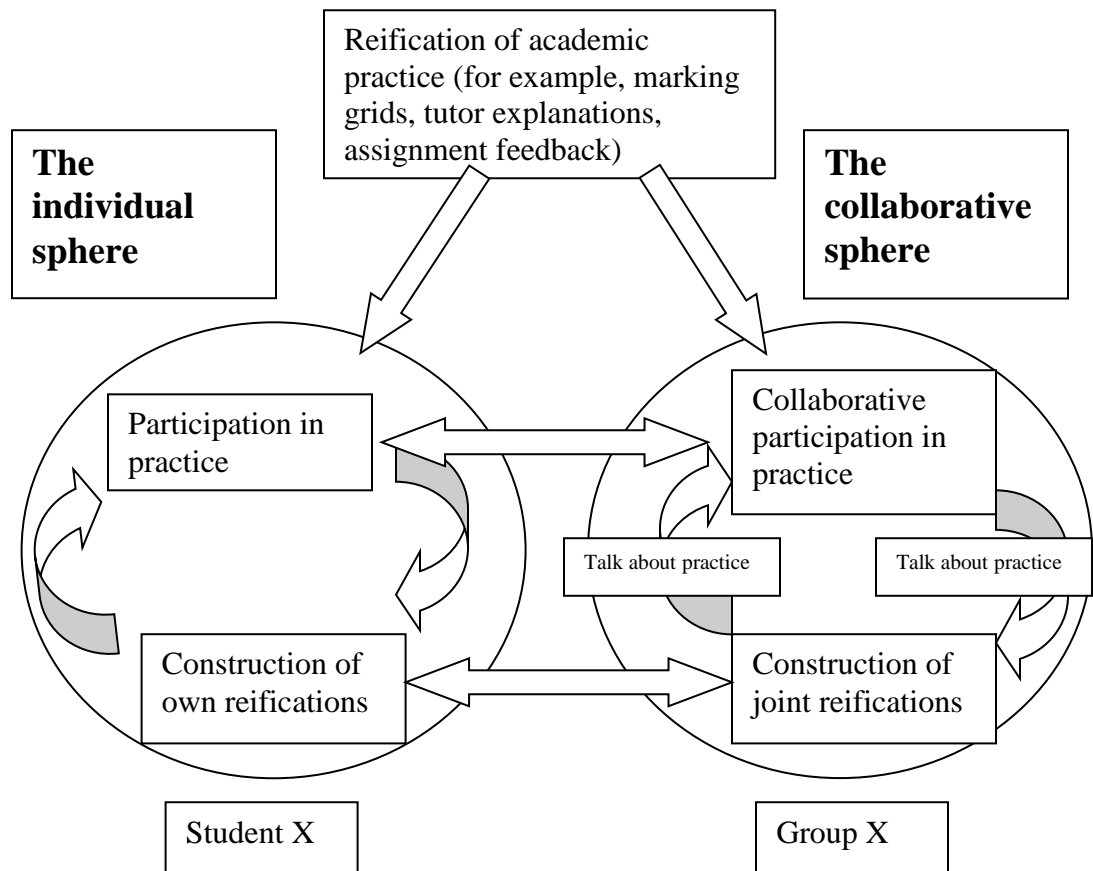


Figure 7.3: The relationship between individual and collaborative construction of meaning in relation to academic writing

Figure 7.3 represents how for the students in the study, participating in collaborative writing, the dynamic relationship between reification and participation is enacted in two spheres simultaneously, the individual and the collaborative, and these two spheres are also in a dynamic relationship where each shapes and is shaped by the other. However, although this relationship could be seen in relation to academic writing, there is little evidence that the workshops influenced students' reading practices in the same way.

7.5 Academic Reading: a hidden problem

As previously noted, on the first day of the module, when students were asked to discuss concerns about academic reading and writing, few identified concerns with reading, except those who knew that they had a specific problem, such as dyslexia. On the whole, students' perceptions of academic reading were quite different from their perceptions of academic writing. Many already knew that they had problems with writing, and additionally they expected that writing at university would be in some way different, and more demanding. Reading, in contrast, was not presented as an existing problem and there was no awareness that reading at university would require anything more from them:

Anne: What about reading?

Zena : How do you feel about the reading that you will need to do?

Anne: I'm not really that worried about it.

Zena : The writing I think [is the problem]. Getting to the, what the question's asking you and understanding the question.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 1

Group 1 then talked for several minutes about concerns with writing, but did not return to the topic of reading. The students' dismissal of reading as a cause for concern does not demonstrate that these students were all adept at academic reading, but rather that their knowledge of what it would entail was limited.

- Xanthe: How do you feel about the reading we need to do?
- Rhiannon: Oh I read it, but it doesn't go in I don't think.
- Fran: I love reading.
- Rhiannon: Do you?
- Ellie: Reading I can cope with, as long as I'm reading something and then making notes. Or I highlight it and then go back and make notes 'cos otherwise I can read something and then, like, think 'what's for tea?'

25.09.09 a.m. Group 2

- Judith: How do you feel about the reading that you will have to do?
- Andrew: Reading, I don't have a problem with reading.
- Judith: Nor do I.
- Andrew: It's, it's taking it in and understanding it isn't it?

25.09.09 a.m. Group 4

Only Ellie indicates that there might be different ways to approach academic reading that would help her to engage and make sense of the text. The other students position 'reading' as something distinct from 'taking it in' and 'understanding', suggesting that for some students reading is perceived as decoding the print on the page. If reading is understood as decoding print, which they know they can do, then it is not surprising that students initially have little concern about reading. Some have not considered the possibility that academic reading might entail something different from reading for pleasure, and Kim's

portrayal of herself as an avid reader indicates that she does not distinguish between different sorts of reading:

Kim: See I've gone through three books since I've got here, just reading for pleasure, so I've been here a week and I've got through three.

Andrew: Yeah.

Kim: So basically I've run out of books so I went down [to town] to borrow my friend's book. Um, she's at Manor Towers [student residence].

Judith: I normally read but I haven't read while I've been here I've been too busy.

Kim: You see I always seem to read, like a couple of chapters before I go to sleep no matter what time it is. Just one of those things.

Judith: If I've been drinking, I can't see the words.

Andrew: If you're actually reading, er, something that you've got to learn, it's slightly different isn't it?

Kim: Yeah you're just sort of, like, 'oh, this is dragging'.

Judith: You can't really get into a education book can you?

Kim: Not really, you get to the first page and it's ...

Andrew: 'Well that's really interesting'! (ironically)

25.09.09 a.m. Group 4

Although Andrew tries to instigate discussion of how academic texts might need to be read differently, Kim and Judith simply position academic books as

boring, a perception with which Andrew agrees (at this point they have only read one text, for ES1B, so are basing their judgements on little evidence), but he persists in his attempt to focus the discussion, introducing the problem of unfamiliar vocabulary:

Andrew: They use a lot of words, like, and sentences with lots of long words in and you're, like, 'and that means, er'?

Dominic: (laughs)

Judith: I've been having to use Google while I've been reading this [text for ES1B that she had brought with her].

Kim: Yeah, I use that quite a bit as well. Google, define, and then it comes up with all definitions.

Andrew: Long words that you don't know.

[...]

Judith: I think the higher you get in education the smaller the writing gets.

Dominic: More formal as well.

Judith: Yeah.

Dominic: We were introduced to journals yesterday [in Sport].

Judith: Mm.

Dominic: And they are written, you know like, they are publishing results and stuff rather than ... This is like a book that explains it to you. [A journal] is giving you information which you have to infer yourself.

Talk about reading is predominantly concerned with identifying characteristics of academic texts, including that they are boring, with unfamiliar vocabulary and formal structures, rather than with the practice of reading. There is, as Weller (2010) notes, a perception of text as object, rather than as relational and dialogic. Furthermore, whereas students' talk about writing is littered with phrases such as 'I'm really worried about ...' they do not express explicit concern about reading; reading is something that they know they can do and academic reading is essentially the same, although texts will be 'harder' and boring and therefore might require extra effort, a will to concentrate and a dictionary. Few students indicate any awareness that academic reading practices might be different from the practices involved in reading for pleasure and in their first week, most students did not position reading as problematic in the way that they positioned writing. However, the set reading presented a challenge to their assumptions, their participation in academic reading leading them to talk about reading differently in the subsequent workshop.

7.5.1 Participation informing reification: reading

Although they had not initially anticipated difficulties with reading, in the second week (2.10.09 a.m.) students were asked to discuss some reading that had been set as preparation, and the experience of completing some reading had revealed a number of problems. The texts had included the first two pages of an online academic paper (which stood alone as a critique of rote learning) and the students were asked to identify any parts of the text they had found difficult so that

they could try to construct meaning together, and discuss what they did when reading was difficult. Talk initially focuses on the nature of the text as boring and hard to read, and the perception of academic texts as using difficult vocabulary and being difficult to understand is shared by many:

Sarah: It gets a bit confusing when they, because when you're reading something like this it gets a bit boring, so then you kind of switch off, then you don't get ...

Nicola: Yeah.

Sarah: You don't get (unclear).

Zena: Yeah if at first, like, some of the names that you don't understand.

Sarah: And then I have to read and then be, like, 'oh', and then I just give up.

Zena: Yeah.

Sarah: But then you don't really get the grasp of it 'cos then you don't understand, but it's hard to sit and read, like, especially when the names are a bit confusing.

2.10.09 a.m. Group 1

In particular, the structure of the text has not been understood. The purpose of the first paragraph, which acted as an abstract, outlining the argument and presenting key ideas, is not recognised as such by most of the students, who simply see it as confusing and unnecessarily complex, given that the subsequent

paragraphs included a simple introduction to the topic and straightforward examples to illustrate the first point of the argument:

Bryony: Yeah the vocabulary I thought was quite different to what we're used to.

Layla: I couldn't really understand [the author] as well.

[...]

Meg: I couldn't read any of this [first paragraph]. I just read this bit [the rest of the text]. It made more sense to me.

2.10.09 a.m. Group 6

Meg has adopted a strategy of reading-on in the text to try and get to the meaning of the paper. The same strategy is articulated by Fran in the next extract:

Iris: I got really annoyed with [the author] actually.

Vicky: I got annoyed with [the author] because the whole load of ...

Iris: The thing is though, is they kind of went really hard, like not hard to understand but they kind of talked, like, in a academic kind of way here [in the first paragraph, which served as an abstract].

Vicky: Yeah.

Iris: And then as soon as I went to here [the next section] he spoke like an idiot, because it was just so easy to understand.

Vicky: Yeah.

Iris: It was just like, well ...

- Vicky: It was such a change of ...
- Ellie: I get what he's trying to do, he's trying to set out an example without actually being able to speak, it's quite hard.
- Fran: Yeah it's funny because when you look at the first, like the first three, like there's the two big paragraphs and that small paragraph yeah? If you look at [the first paragraph], when I read it it's just like 'blah, blah, blah, blah', but then when I got on to those [the second and third paragraph] it's like, 'oh I know what this [first paragraph] means', do you know what I mean? It's really helped me.

2.10.09 a.m. Group 2

As a consequence of their participation in independent reading the students have refined their reifications of academic reading and through their talk about practice they share these with others. Vicky and Iris have simply been irritated by the structure of the text, and the abstract nature of the first paragraph which acted as an abstract for the article. They portray their experience of academic reading as 'annoying', implying that the author has been deliberately obscure, moving between abstract ideas and straightforward examples without reason. In contrast, Ellie and Fran have understood that the author was trying to get across his main argument without giving specific detail, and as Ellie tries to articulate this, 'I get what he's trying to do, he's trying to set out an example without actually being able to speak', she is reifying the nature of the abstract as the author's attempt to set out the argument without recourse to full explanation. Ellie is the only person to try to reify the text in this way and for most groups the discussion reveals

frustration and irritation with the structure of the text and unnecessary use of 'difficult words'. Students' talk about academic text results in joint reifications which reinforce individual reifications of academic texts, rather than offering alternative perspectives.

Yet difficult texts need not be impenetrable. Fran's participation in reading has enabled her to see that, although the abstract was difficult on first reading, when she read the next paragraphs she could understand the argument more clearly, an experience that she tries to capture in words as a reification that reading may be non-linear, and reading on in a text can make it possible to understand what had previously made no sense. In both the small groups and in the larger workshop group students willingly share strategies for approaching difficult texts:

Zena: So how do we, like, go about ...

Sarah: When it gets tricky? Is it like re-read it?

Zena: I just read it over and over again.

Helen: Highlight words you don't understand and that, (unclear) words, yeah.

[...]

Sarah: I think that's really it. Or you can maybe like talk to it, about, like with your friends or whatever.

Zena: Yeah ask friends and discuss.

Nicola: Yeah.

Despite experiencing the text as difficult and boring, Group 1 are able to share some reading practices including re-reading, highlighting text and talking with a friend. Common strategies amongst all groups were: re-reading the text; putting it down and doing something else for a while; talking it over with a friend; turning off music (or alternatively turning it on); making notes; highlighting difficult words; and using a dictionary to find meanings. In this way participation in academic reading was reified, and other workshops introduced additional reifications of academic reading practices including: finding, evaluating and selecting web based sources; ways to approach difficult texts; the need for re-reading; making time to read academic texts; surface/deep approaches to reading; reading actively; and reading critically. These aspects of academic reading practices were explained in workshops, discussed in the whole group or in small groups, and referred to in independent study tasks to encourage students to incorporate them into their independent reading practices. For example:

Remember to focus on making meaning and understanding what you read. Discussing reading with a friend can be very useful (ES1A module booklet 2009-2010).

Yet, despite my pedagogy of academic practice that sought to make visible aspects of reading practice that often remain invisible, by the end of the module it became clear that the reifications I introduced did not appear to have influenced participation.

7.5.2 Reification not informing participation: reading

Students' appropriation of academic reading practices may have been affected by their initial perceptions of academic reading as unproblematic and their subsequent perceptions of academic texts as impenetrable and deliberately obtuse which group reifications did little to challenge. However, the pedagogical approach, which was different from the approach to writing, was also a contributory factor.

Collaborative activity was a pedagogical approach in the module, however, whereas the workshops provided opportunities for students to write together, reading could be undertaken rarely in the workshops. This decision was dictated by a programme-level directive that students should not be asked to read in sessions, rather reading should always be given to students in advance so that those with additional needs, particularly dyslexic students, would not be disadvantaged. On one occasion I contravened the directive and asked students to read in the workshop so that they could experience attempting to read a particular text and then employ the strategy of reading the first sentence of each paragraph as a way into the text, followed by a whole group discussion²⁴. Colleagues working on the module accepted this as a 'one-off' but were mainly supportive of the directive and were also reluctant to spend time reading in workshops. I was unconvinced that I could make a strong enough argument to justify more in-class reading without specific evidence of its benefit. Instead, my response to the pilot

²⁴ As only small group discussions were recorded there is unfortunately no data available for this activity.

study, which highlighted the need to address academic reading, was to introduce and discuss reading practices in workshops. However, the discussion was almost always separate from the practice of reading, relating instead to reading that had already been, or was about to be, undertaken as independent study.

Focused teaching sessions, even within the module context and with opportunity to talk about academic reading practices, were not sufficient to persuade most students to incorporate alternate (academic) reading practices into their own practice. This was starkly demonstrated in a session near the end of the semester. Following a lecture on sociocultural theory, students discussed as a whole group what aspects they had found difficult to understand, and as a group identified three questions that they had about the topic. As part of their independent study they were each to choose one of these questions, carry out independent research to try and answer the question, and come to the next session with their responses. This was planned to make explicit that not understanding everything in a lecture is normal, and that a helpful response is to try and identify aspects you have not understood and to read around the topic to try and gain understanding. In retrospect this task was perhaps too difficult, both in terms of their understanding of the subject matter (which meant that the questions they set as a group were not fully understood by them all) and in terms of their understanding of what research entailed. The task was outlined as:

Read Wood (1998) pp 97-102 (Available on Blackboard²⁵). Make notes on any parts you don't understand and any parts where it

²⁵ Blackboard is the VLE at St. Hugh's

helps to answer the questions your group asked in the workshop on 6/11/09. Bring your notes to the workshop on 27/11/09 a.m. (Allow 2 hours)

Find additional texts to answer the questions your group asked in the workshop on 6/11/09 p.m. Suggested texts are:

- Smidt (2006) Chapter 3 (available as an e-book)
- Keenan (2009) Chapter 7 pp171-178 (available on Blackboard)
- You can also find many texts in the library.

Bring the answers and the texts (or references for them) to the workshop on 27/11/09 a.m. Ensure that you have an answer to at least one of the questions. (Allow 4 hours). (ES1A module booklet 2009-2010)

However, few students consulted the recommended books, preferring to use internet search engines or to rely on their lecture notes, or even their own existing thoughts on the questions that had been set the previous week, which were on semiotic tools, the cultural context and legitimate peripheral participation. In the first workshop (25.9.09), ‘good practice’ when searching the web had been reified through the provision of a checklist of things to consider when deciding whether or not a website was trustworthy and appropriate for HE study and, following an independent study task involving evaluating websites, the reification had been re-iterated (2.10.09). In these sessions it was acknowledged that Wikipedia can be a useful ‘way in’ to a topic but that it is unreliable and not deemed ‘academic’. Nevertheless, many of those who used the internet for this task used Wikipedia or other sites with dubious credentials. Rather than

identifying specific websites, students talk of ‘Google’ as the source, as shown by the following extract in response to the question about semiotic tools:

Ellie: Anyway, what did you guys get? After chatting to you [Vicky] last night, I looked at Google, as you do, and I found it was some kind of, like ... I think it’s tools used in, like, a linguistic way.

[...]

Vicky: Yeah, because this is what I got really confused about. Because I thought it was like an actual physical thing that you could use and then when I looked at it on Google it was like linguistics.

27.11.08 a.m. Group A

Using an internet search engine is, of course, far more accessible than a book. However, the students’ preference for websites over academic texts led them to ‘semiotics’, which was not relevant to the module, rather than to an understanding of cultural tools for making meaning, and they were, understandably, unable to see the relevance of what they had read. However, their uncertainty had not led them to search for other sources, or use the recommended texts; they had simply been content to bring the answer they had found, even if its relevance was not clear. Others had not done any research, but had sought to answer the question using their ‘initiative’. This extract is from the group looking at ‘cultural context’:

Zena: I put things like language, 'cos I didn't actually read it. I just used my initiative.

[...]

Querida: No I thought that, I didn't really, er, read anything. I just used my initiative.

27.11.08 a.m. Group B

For a significant number of students, their knowledge that reading should be an integral part of their studies contributing to their construction of meaning does not appear to influence their practice, even towards the end of the semester. I was keen to promote the small groups, and the workshop group as a whole, as learning communities, and the guidance had specifically specified that they should make a full record of all sources so that they could share them with others, a practice I am seeking to encourage in the following extract:

Jane: Where did you look?

Judith: I used Google.

Jane: Oh right, and what did you find then?

Judith: Um, I just looked at different websites and sort of tried to summarise it.

Jane: What sort of websites did you find?

Judith: There was a random article on Wikipedia, I sort of ...

Jane: Wikipedia!

- Judith: I looked at the references and they were like actual books, not just random rubbish.
- Nicola: (laughs)
- Jane: OK. (realising that Judith has not recorded any sources) [Georgia] What did you use?
- Georgia: I used, um, Wells and Claxton, it's, like, only a tiny little bit but I thought like it was ...
- Jane: Yeah?
- Georgia: I thought I'd rather look at a book than just Google, so that's what I did.

27.11.08 a.m. Group C

Knowledge that, in academia, sources are hierarchical is apparent in Georgia's explanation of why she chose to use a recommended book, but this knowledge did not influence the others' participation in researching the question and Judith seeks to justify her use of Wikipedia in response to my exasperated 'Wikipedia!', even though she knows that it is not an acceptable academic source. Others in this group also ignored the recommended texts:

- Wendy: I used lecture notes mainly.
- Nicola: Yeah.
- Wendy: And then went through Google to see if I had, like, if I'd in my head got ...

Nicola: I did it the other way round, I did Google and then looked back at lecture notes to check that it was, what I was reading was right.
(laughs)

Jane: To see if you had understood what you'd read, in relation to the lecture?

Nicola: Yeah, yeah.

Jane: So, did you find any particular sites or did you end up on Wikipedia too?

Nicola: Um, yeah, I think I ended up on Wikipedia at one point, just to start with, I can't remember what the other site was.

Judith: I sort of got my idea from there and then checked.

27.11.08 a.m. Group C

They are clearly embarrassed by my questions, since they know that they are not putting into practice things that we had previously talked about. They seek to justify their practice by claiming to have only used Wikipedia at the start and to have subsequently 'checked' what it said, a practice that had been discussed in previous sessions, however they cannot say what other sites they then used and have not adopted the practice of recording sources. Furthermore, as with Ellie who did her research 'after talking to you last night', this group are clear that preparation was not done far in advance:

Judith: I always do mine the night before. I, like, do mine the night before 'cos then it gets it in your head.

Georgia: I know. I do mine the night before as well.

Judith: If I did it like 3 weeks ago I wouldn't have a clue now.

Nicola: Yeah.

Judith: I'd just be like, 'yeah, sorry guys'.

27.11.08 a.m. Group C

Despite a pedagogic approach which sought to reify aspects of academic reading practice through direct teaching and group discussion, most students did not participate in such practices during independent study. Their individual reifications of reading as something to be done so that they are ready for the workshop, rather than to extend understanding, undermines academic practices and encourages alternate practices. The module booklet had indicated that they should spend 6 hours on this task, and the importance of managing time and ways to manage time had been introduced and discussed in the first week (25.09.09), and revisited in subsequent workshops. Preparing the night before offers little time to access books, to reflect, or to find alternative sources if the first source you find is confusing. The internet is relied upon, and Wikipedia provides a shortcut, even though students know it is not considered academic. Yet reading the night before is a strategic move to avoid forgetting the facts. This is understandable, but that their reading the night before is their first encounter with the text, rather than a reminder of reading previously undertaken, suggests that students view texts as repositories of information to be accessed and subsequently reproduced the following day, rather than as contributing to their own construction of meaning over time. Having something to bring is the aim, even if it is not understood, or is

from Wikipedia, or from your own ‘initiative’. As I was not present for this part of their discussion, knowledge of the ‘last-minute’ nature of their independent study was not available to me at the time, yet even if I had been able to identify and discuss this with the students, I am convinced that they will only change their practice if they believe the alternative to be worthwhile, if they can see a purpose.

7.5.3 Reified knowledge about academic reading – not seeing the purpose

Reifications of aspects of academic reading that were presented as part of the module were concerned with interacting with text to construct meaning. For example; ‘finding ways into difficult texts’ enables the reader to make sense rather than simply lifting quotes that may not be understood; ‘finding and selecting sources’ enables the reader to choose texts that are relevant and will enhance understanding; and ‘leaving enough time to read’ gives the reader time to figure out what the writer was trying to communicate. Yet in contrast to writing, for which students could largely see the purpose for the practices that were reified, this did not happen in relation to reading practices, despite purposes being explained.

‘Approaches to study’ was reified in a workshop in week 3, using the deep/surface model (Marton & Säljö, 2005; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Ramsden, 2003) and was presented to students in the context of academic reading, making explicit the knowledge that there are different ways to approach reading, and that different approaches relate to different purposes for reading. Students had

previously been asked to read a section from a paper that had been provided as a photocopy, and to:

Annotate as you read. Write a 2-3 sentence summary of the main argument. Bring your annotated pages and summary to the workshop on 16.10.09 a.m. (ES1A module booklet 2009-2010)

In the workshop, after deep and surface approaches had been presented and explained, students were asked to look at prepared copies of the text that had been annotated in two different ways, one to exemplify a surface approach and the other to exemplify a deep approach to reading. They were then asked to decide which was which and to analyse the two copies to identify what the different aspects of each approach looked like in practice, and then to look at their own annotations and decide which approach they thought they themselves had taken with the set reading.

Students readily acquired knowledge of the different approaches: the definitions of surface and deep approaches provide an opportunity to talk about practice and enable students to relate the reification of surface/deep approaches directly to their own participation in practice. They are able to begin to articulate awareness of possible ways to interact with texts, and to identify the different approaches, what each might look like, and pick out relevant examples of what the reader has done:

- Zena: [The reader has] asked more questions about what [the author] said, like 'what if the child is never ready?' Sort of questions like that that. They've pushed themselves.
- Nicola: Yeah because they can come back to it.
- Zena: Yeah.
- Nicola: And look at it with the tutor or themselves.
- Zena: Yeah they've questioned themselves.
- Nicola: And then at the bottom they've put 'what does that mean?', like ...
- Zena: Yeah.
- Nicola: So they're not just reading it they actually want to understand it.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 1

Zena positions the reader as having ownership of the reading process in that the reader has 'pushed themselves' and 'questioned themselves'. The reading process has not been the passive collection of information, rather the reflective engagement of a self-directed individual. Nicola articulates this as 'they actually want to understand it', however, for most students, despite their knowledge about approaches to reading, the purpose of reading is limited and in particular the purpose of taking a deep approach when reading is unclear and Group 3's discussion is more representative of the students as a whole:

- Una: I suppose if you're highlighting the important bit, it's all important.
- Querida: Yeah.

Wendy: I'm like that, 'oh yeah that's a good line'. I'll look back and I'll be like ...

Ed: The thing is, I don't get the point though. Because I still read the whole thing, I don't just read lines.

Wendy: You see, I don't. Now I've highlighted I can go back and read it, the highlighted sentence.

Querida: I do, like, but then I still, I'm, like, actually I do need to read this whole paragraph again.

Ed: Yeah, and at the time I understand it, and then I'll come back to it and I'm like, 'I'll read the whole thing anyway'.

Querida: Yeah.

Ed: Just so I can see why it was important.

Querida: It's a line.

Ed: Yes.

[...]

Querida: Is that a technique though, highlighting and stuff, a technique is it to make it, is it meant to make it quicker?

Ed: I think it's ...

Wendy: I don't know, but I highlight all the time.

Una: I highlight the important bits and then when you're looking through it and you're doing an essay you're just like 'oh yeah I remember that bit'.

Wendy: Even my own notes I highlight.

Una: 'Oh yeah I remember that bit', whereas now you just look at it and say 'yeah'. That's what I do.

Querida: No, yeah, I understand.

Wendy: If I haven't highlighted I look at the whole thing going 'oh what the hell?' but if I highlight it I like read a couple of sentences like the sentences I've highlighted and go 'oh yeah, yeah I've got it, yeah'.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 3

As Group 3 discuss the purpose of annotating and highlighting text, it is clear that they see highlighting as a way to identify the 'important' bits. Highlighting and note making are not discussed as dialogue with the text, leading to greater understanding of issues, but simply as a preparation for returning to the text when they write their essay, as if the highlighting and the annotations constitute a store of knowledge to be reassembled for assessment. The reification of approaches to learning which was presented to the students was intended to help them consider how they engaged with reading and whether they looked for meaning and sought to make connections. However, in their talk about practice, the specific examples of interaction with text characteristic of a deep approach are reified by the students as information-gathering practices, and as Marton and Säljö (2005) found, students see strategies designed to encourage a deep approach as an end in themselves rather than as valuable for enhancing understanding and constructing meaning.

Knowledge about ways to approach reading did not affect students' perceptions of engagement with text since their underlying purpose for reading, to gather information for an essay, was not challenged. A little later in the discussion Querida suggests that she sees as unnecessary the process of engaging with text to produce the annotation:

Querida: In the library ones though, if you write it in pencil, don't do it too hard then it's fine, and then make sure you rub it out. But when, I love it when you get a book and it's all annotated for you (laughs), just like, 'you've just made my life easier'!

16.10.09 a.m. Group 3

The active engagement in the process of annotation/ note making as being integral to constructing meaning for oneself is clearly not recognised in the assumption that others' annotations might simply be adopted, a perspective which is still evident in Querida's comments in the final week of the module, when the same group of students are engaged on a collaborative task writing task, drawing on reading set as independent study. Querida has not completed the set reading and proposes a way to bypass the need to read, ignoring the limited understanding that might result from such a strategy:

Querida: Are these your written notes, do you write these up?

Una: Yeah.

Querida: That's pretty cool.

- Catherine: I do that too.
- Querida: All these notes and stuff.
- [...]
- Catherine: How cool are these [Una's notes]?
- Querida: Una, at some point can I steal your notes?
- Una: No.
- Querida: Can I come in your room and steal your notes?
- Una: No.
- Querida: Why?
- Una: You've got, you should have them written down.
- Querida: Mm.
- Catherine: It looks really cool.
- Querida: It looks really cool, well done.

11.12.09 a.m. Group 3

Student talk suggests that individuals' independent reading practices were not influenced by making visible, exemplifying and providing opportunity for students to talk about and relate deep/surface approaches to reading to their own practice. Una continued to annotate, highlight and make notes, and Querida did not. Querida still perceived reading and note taking as being to acquire information which could later be used in an assignment, rather than recognising reading as an essential process for understanding the module content, such that the reading itself could be rendered unnecessary if an annotated library book or someone else's notes could be acquired.

The tutor has a role here in seeking to modify unhelpful reifications which small-group work might reinforce, but the tutor cannot know what their students talk about when they are not present; I was often not aware of issues until I had found time to listen to the recordings, and tutors do not usually have the luxury of recordings. Misconceptions or unhelpful reifications arising in small-group talk are not necessarily addressed unless the tutor is present or they are covered in whole group discussion. My normal practice was to engage fairly briefly with groups and to try to pick up issues with the whole group after they had completed small group tasks. Following this task, as part of the planned session, the purpose of taking a deep approach was re-visited in a whole-group discussion following the small-group work, and following the ‘Wikipedia’ discussion with group C I was able to review with the whole group the importance of recording details of sources and selecting appropriately academic sources. I related the inability of most of the group to share their sources, because of poor recording of where they had found their information, to the need to develop good habits in order to reference accurately in essays, and this might have had some impact on subsequent behaviour. However the whole group discussion demonstrated that students already ‘knew’ that it was important to use appropriate academic sources and to record their sources, they simply failed to act on that knowledge, and I am not convinced that revisiting in this way made any subsequent difference to their practice.

Students participated willingly in workshop activities that required them to talk about their reading practices, but this was almost always limited to talk about

practice separate from participation in that practice, and did not appear to have an impact on their reading practices; it was an academic exercise that students engaged with, but without participation in practice, where reifications could be used and refined, the purpose of those reifications remained hidden. The purpose of academic writing practices that had been reified, such as debate, evidence and accurate referencing, became apparent through talk about practice as the students participated in that practice, but, on the whole, the students continued to see the purpose of reading as being the acquisition of information, and their existing reifications were not significantly revised in the light of new reifications presented in workshops. Talk about academic reading practice could not connect reification of practice and participation in practice, as it could do for writing. It appears that reification without the opportunity for participation has limited influence on students' practice.

Collaborative writing and the associated talk led to joint construction of meaning, and joint reifications and participation that could inform and be informed by students' individual reifications and participation (as represented in Figure 7.3 p. 259). In contrast, without collaborative participation in academic reading, talk about reading was solely within the bounds of reification. If students constructed unhelpful joint reifications there was no participation to repair the 'potential misalignments inherent in reification' (Wenger, 1998, p. 64). The absence of collaborative reading practices is shown in Figure 7.4.

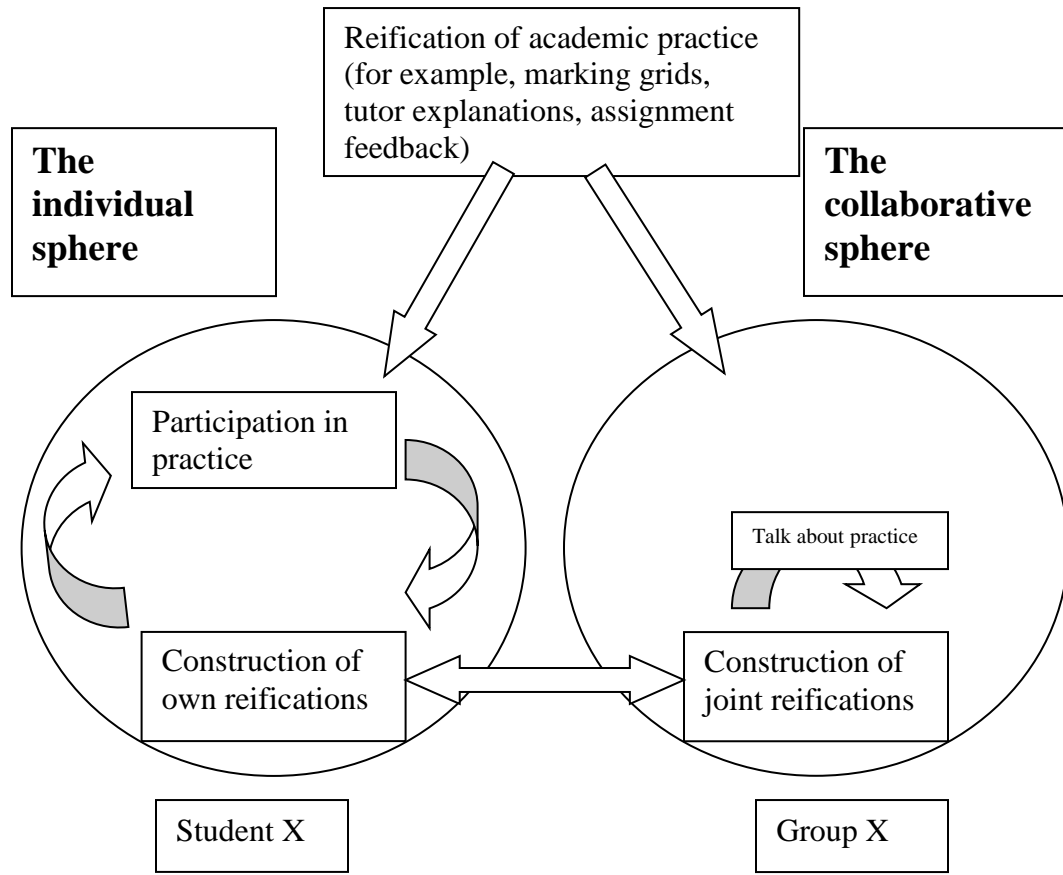


Figure 7.4: The relationship between individual and collaborative construction of meaning in relation to academic reading

Two differences from the diagrammatic representation of writing are apparent. Firstly, all talk about practice in the collaborative sphere is solely in relation to reification. The iterative process whereby participation in practice influences reification and reification influences participation cannot occur where there is no participation. It can only occur in the individual sphere. Secondly, the absence of collaborative participation gives no opportunity for participation in practice in the individual and collaborative spheres each to influence the other directly, although joint reifications and individual reifications can still each influence the other.

Participation in academic reading practices almost always took place alone, in contexts where students could not discuss the reifications that they had encountered in workshops, could not collaborate on making meaning and could not seek to reify together aspects of their experience. Reification of academic reading practice led to students who ‘knew’ but for the majority this knowledge did not impact on practice.

7.6 Discussion

My findings show that students’ knowledge of academic practice was supported by a pedagogy of academic practice; the talk about practice which such an approach entails creates a context in which knowledge of practice can inform participation and participation can lead to construction of knowledge. However, students’ different appropriation of academic writing and reading practices suggests that the context of the talk is significant, although other factors such as existing expectations may also be relevant.

Academic reading and writing are social practices, which are given meaning by students in different ways, meanings that are shaped by previous experiences of academic reading and writing and by the students’ understandings of the context in which they are studying. For the majority of the cohort in this study, expectations about reading and writing were quite different. Problems were anticipated with writing; many students had already experienced difficulties with writing for their previous studies, and they also knew that the writing that would

be expected of them in HE would be different in some way. Problems were not anticipated with reading; the practice of reading was understood as a generic practice and, although the texts would be in some way ‘harder’ reading was seen as something that they knew they could do. Furthermore, any potential problems with reading were recast in student talk as problems with writing. Academic reading is central to academic writing, and students regularly drew on their reading when they participated in collaborative writing tasks. However, reading is also a practice in its own right, central to the process of making meaning, yet students positioned it almost exclusively as being to provide information for essays. As the semester progressed, students’ knowledge of aspects of academic writing practice and their appropriation of these practices was apparent, together with a growing sense of the purpose of the practices. However there was no evidence that they recognised or adopted alternate reading practices that had been reified, or that they recognised their purpose.

Talk about practice is always reification, a representation of the practice to which it refers. When talk about practice is within the context of participation in the practice to which it refers, the talk connects the reification of practice with participation in that practice. The possibility exists for both reification and participation to influence the other, each compensating for the limitations of the other. I call this ‘talk about practice within the context of participation’, or ‘talk within participation’. This is the type of talk about practice that occurred when students were involved in collaborative writing activities, and which allowed them to see the purpose of the practices that had been reified. Talk about practice

separate from participation, as was most of the talk about reading, led to the construction of reifications that were divorced from participation. I call this ‘talk about practice within the context of reification’, or ‘talk within reification’. Such talk is more likely to result in unhelpful knowledge, since it is not modified by participation in the practice to which it refers, and without participation its purpose may not be recognised. Lave & Wenger’s (1991) discussion of Yucatec midwives who learnt to talk in biomedical terms in contexts where such talk was required, but did not adjust their practice in line with their talk about practice, is an example of talk about practice in the context of reification, and is in accord with my findings that talk within reification is of limited value. Although it can help to make elements of practice more visible, it is separate from the social practice to which it refers and does not necessarily influence practice. However, Lave & Wenger’s lack of interest in ‘talking about’ practice fails to recognise the importance of talking about practice within the context of participation.

Talk about practice within participation supports joint construction of meaning. Students not only know what academic practice entails, in terms of the reifications they have been given, but they come to understand its purpose through participation in practice and the ongoing mutually constituting relationship between reified knowledge and participation in practice that is enabled by talk about practice within the context of participation in practice. Talk about practice within participation is also a key element of the final aspect of ‘becoming a student’ that I explore: the emergent academic identity.

Chapter 8

Being a Student

8.1 Introduction: 'Telling the self' as academic

Pedagogical approaches that enable students to construct the self as 'academic' can contribute to a sense of belonging and engagement (Hughes, 2010; Reay et al., 2010) and in this chapter I address my third research question; how does a pedagogy of academic practice facilitate the development of an academic identity? My interest is in how a pedagogy of academic practice enables students to position themselves as 'academic' and to claim a place in academic student communities of practice, and I refer to students' 'academic' identities.

In the same way that gendered identities are complex, with different masculinities or femininities coming to the fore at different times and in different contexts, I see academic student identities as complex, reflecting different elements of the academic self at different times. There is the sense of being 'student', someone who has passed the necessary exams to achieve a place at university, but also the sense of being at a particular institution or part of particular programme, subject or discipline or, within my study, of a particular workshop group.

Much identity theory is concerned with performance, particularly in gender studies where scholars draw on Judith Butler's (1990) notion of performativity

(For example, Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Hughes, 2010; Paechter, 2007), and this is a useful way to proceed within a Communities of Practice framework, concerned as it is with practice and how individuals participate in that practice. Attempts to ‘perform’ academic student were evident, although not discussed in relation to identity, in Chapters 6 and 7 where I focused on what students did in workshops, and how what they did related to what they knew about academic practice. However, in this chapter I do not analyse identity through performance in general. Collecting data through audio recordings casts the focus onto what students say, and in particular throws into sharp relief a particular aspect of the performance of student that I call ‘telling the self’ which involves stating claims about ‘the kind of person I am’. Hall (1996, p. 4) suggests, identities arise from ‘the narrativisation of the self’, and the workshop setting provides a context for the construction and sharing of such narratives.

In contrast to research that has found resistance to academic identities, particularly amongst working-class students (Archer, 2003; Archer & Leathwood 2003; Burke, 2005; Burn & Finnigan, 2003; Christie, 2009; Ivanic, 1998; Preece, 2006; Read et al., 2003) and also in the wider student population (Benwell & Stokoe, 2002), I show that students in this study were keen to ‘tell themselves’ as academic in relation to others, in relation to academic practice, and, in one particular case, in relation to how they believed others positioned them. ‘Telling’ these relationships is a first step toward claiming membership of the academic community. A pedagogy of academic practice requires students to think of themselves as participants in practice so that they are encouraged to position

themselves in relation to ‘academic’ as well as the many other student identity positions available to them, and I conclude that talk about practice that emerges from a participatory pedagogy enables students to construct and tell the self as academic.

8.2 Dimensions of student identity: illuminating the ‘academic’

Many competing discourses of ‘student’ are available to new undergraduates from their previous experiences of interacting with family and friends who are students, from media representations, and from their own engagement with the process of attaining a university place. They will have written a personal statement for the UCAS form, read prospectuses, attended open days and interviews, applied for funding and organised accommodation, quite apart from gaining the necessary qualifications, and they have been allowed into the ‘club’. Social networking sites now enable students to make contact with those with whom they will be studying and living even before term has started, with students in this cohort posting on Facebook²⁶ to find others on their course or in their hall of residence during the summer before they started at St. Hugh’s. HEIs and Student Unions are proactive in contacting new undergraduates and provide copious amounts of information about the student community of which they will be a part.

²⁶ A social networking website.

For the new student, meeting new people with different life experiences and different views, it soon becomes apparent that ‘student’ can encompass a range of ways of being and doing, and recent research demonstrates the importance of ‘fitting in’ and feeling a sense of belonging for successful transition into HE (Case, 2008; Gourlay, 2009; Harvey et al., 2006; Mann, 2008; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007; Palmer et al. 2009; Reay et al. 2010). The literature often focuses on students’ classed, raced and gendered identity positions, with the choices about institutions made by non-traditional students from widening participation backgrounds being mediated by a desire to attend an institution where they will find ‘people like me’ (Archer and Leathwood, 2003; Reay et al. 2010; Reay et al. 2001; Voigt, 2007).

The discussion about belonging and student identity often becomes enmeshed with classed identity. Research demonstrates that non-traditional students often lack the sense of entitlement to HE that many middle-class students enjoy and there is a significant body of literature exploring the tension and conflict between students’ working-class identities and the middle class discourse of HE (Archer, 2007; Archer and Hutchings 2000; Archer and Leathwood 2003; Burke, 2005; Burn & Finnigan, 2003; Christie, 2009; Christie et al. 2008; Crozier et al. 2008; Hughes, 2010; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007; Reay et al. 2010). It is claimed that the language of the academy is white, middle class, able-bodied and male, positioning working-class students as ‘other’ (Burn & Finnigan, 2003; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Read et al. 2003), and Bowl (2001, p. 158) asks if non-

traditional students in HE, ‘merely adopt coping strategies which involve denying or submerging their ‘real life’ identities as black, working-class, mature?’.

Working-class students are thus presented as having either to reject their working-class identity in order to belong, or resist the ‘enforced, and middle class narrative’ of HE (Christie, 2009, p. 127) and remain an outsider. Lehmann (2009, p. 147) describes this as:

[T]he betrayal that is often a part of social mobility. Parents wish for nothing more than their children to move beyond their station in life; but this means that the most successful children in this respect will have to turn their back on their parents and their lifestyle. Those who are not successful and remain in the working-class squander the initial investment and betray the sacrifice their parents made.

As discussed in Chapter 6, students are members of multiple communities of practice which intersect and overlap. Each student occupies a unique position at the nexus of different student and non-student communities of practice; for example living in a particular hall of residence, a member of the netball club who likes to go out drinking and who studies Sport alongside Education. Where there is overlap, the practices of different communities may be similar, for example the netball community of practice and Sport students’ community of practice may have shared practices, however where there is an intersection practices might be difficult to reconcile. A student I worked with some years ago was a member of a strict Christian community and found it hard to reconcile practices of

unquestioning obedience and prioritising time for family and church with the academic community's valorisation of analysis and criticism, and expectations to prioritise time for study. The real tensions inherent in the membership of different communities of practice must not be underestimated. Students need to reconcile the different expectations of their membership of different communities of practice and all students may experience some degree of 'otherness' as they 'interact over time with these constantly enacted [social and academic] practices' (Mann, 2008, p. 81). Yet, although all students may find their identities are challenged by their education, it is non-traditional students about whom most has been written and, it is argued, their position at the intersection of working-class and academic communities of practice is a source of a sense of dislocation. Furthermore, there is an implication in the literature that this is necessarily so. However, students may be more adept at managing different aspects of identity than some research suggests.

Different aspects of identity are not necessarily directly related in predictable ways; working-class students can create hybrid identities, in which working-class and academic identities co-exist, and a changing learner identity need not imply a changing class identity (Brine & Waller, 2004; Crozier & Reay, 2008). Two recent papers demonstrate that 'fitting in' need not be related to students' classed, raced or gendered identities; it can be established through academic identity positions that match those of their peers. Reay et al. (2010, p. 119) draw on the notion of learner identity which they define as 'what [students] want out of their learning and how they want to get it'; and Hughes (2010, p. 48)

explores ‘knowledge-related identity’, defined as ‘how learners ... identify with knowledge in the teaching and learning environments they encounter’. Both claim the academic dimension of identity to be the crucial element in students’ sense of belonging and engagement.

The justifiable concern shown in literature to understand student identities as classed, raced and gendered often leads to the ‘academic student’ being seen through a classed, raced or gendered lens. I am seeking to put the academic student into the spotlight, providing a perspective that does not discount classed, raced or gendered identities, rather that seeks to look through an ‘academic’ lens. The focus is on the student as learner, knower and participant and in my exploration of students’ identities I use the academic lens to foreground the academic aspect of identity as revealed by the students’ talk about academic practice.

It is acceptance on to a degree course that gives an individual the right to be called ‘student’, placing the way that individuals position the self in relation to their studies at the centre of any attempt to understand student identity: how they establish that they ‘belong’; that they have a right to be called ‘student’; and, that they are legitimate members of the academic community of practice. Naming oneself as a member of a community indicates an intention to signal belonging (Paechter, 2007) and, although Christie (2009) notes that there are emotional risks for non-traditional students in naming oneself as student, telling the self as ‘academic student’ within workshops was one way that individuals in this study

asserted their right to be a member of the academic student community of practice as they sought to construct the self in the midst of change.

Postmodern identity theorists conceptualise identity as incorporating many possible identities, as fractured, constantly in flux and constantly being constructed. Individuals in a new setting, such as new undergraduates, may find a high level of uncertainty about the self difficult to manage, and may seek reassurance that they are who they think they are:

On the one hand, theorists of modern identity emphasise concepts such as 'fluidity', 'migration', 'diaspora', 'crossing' and 'decentring'. On the other hand, much attention is paid to individuals' strategies for shoring up an authentic sense of self in an uncertain world. (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, pp. 21-22)

And the world of academia is an uncertain world, particularly for first year students, many of whom have little understanding of academic practices (Byrne & Flood, 2005; Christie, 2009; Christie et al., 2008; Crozier et al., 2008; Haggis, 2006; Haggis & Pouget, 2002; Lillis 2001; Lillis and Turner 2001; Mann, 2008; McAlpine, 2004). In the uncertain world of the HEI, students can seek to shore up the 'authentic sense of self' through their tellings of the self, so that their right to be called 'student' is established and their academic identity claimed. Through these tellings individuals can adopt or resist competing discourses of student and can construct coherent identities through the telling of, 'edited' descriptions and evaluations of themselves and others' (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 42) to tell the self in a particular way.

8.3 Claiming a place in the academic community of practice: Telling the self as 'other' to non-students

Identities are always constructed in relation to the 'other':

Identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected. (Hall, 1996, p. 5)

Such identity work is widely recognised in gender studies, where as individuals construct gender identities they demonstrate their masculinities or femininities in relation to what they are not, since gender identities are not only relational but often oppositional. Individuals perform male (or female) partly by rejecting behaviours associated with the other (For example, Connolly, 2003; Reay 2001). Furthermore, the other is often denigrated, using dominant discourses to present one's own gender as preferable in a process of 'othering' (Paechter, 1998).

Students seeking to establish an academic student identity engage in similar practices. Comparison to non-students identifies difference between the practices of students and of non-students and demonstrates that one is a *bona fide* student. I now examine how the students in this study construct their academic identities in relation to the 'other'; to family and peers who have not gone to university, and also to the pre-university self.

8.3.1 Telling the self as different from the pre-university self

Beginning a degree course is a significant marker of change, and the sense of having moved on was articulated by students in the first workshop of the module (25.09.09). They had been asked to discuss how they expected university-level study to be different from study they had done before (in order to begin to explore with them the nature of academic practice). However the students did not talk just about 'study', they used the activity also to talk about themselves. The context provided an opportunity for telling the self which revealed a sense of expectation that things would be different, because their study now was the result of choices they had made: choices to continue to study, and about what to study. All students in the workshops were taking Education Studies together with another subject and almost all were intending to become teachers. They therefore had a subject identity, but also a vocational identity as aspiring teachers. Several examples show the prevalence of the discourse of choice, which positions them as willing students, who are expecting to be more engaged, in contrast to the (largely) disinterested students they had previously been:

Ed: Even though at A-levels we still did subjects which we were kind of interested in, but this is like the ultimate subject that we are interested in. So I think it is gonna be more, I'm going to enjoy it a lot more.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 3

Vicky: And, sort of, start thinking for myself and start taking responsibility and say 'right to get my degree I need to do this', [and] sit down and do it.

Nicola: And I think if there's something that you're passionate about and you really want ...

Vicky: Yeah.

Nicola: I think you can motivate yourself, but if you're not really ... Like with school as well, you have to do certain subjects, whereas here I've chosen to do this course and it's something that I really want to do, so I find it easier to motivate myself because I've chosen it and I want it. Whereas at school when you're forced to do like Maths or that and you don't really want to, then it's difficult to motivate yourself to do it.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 5

Bryony: I think it would be because, um, I think you're more willing to learn things and ...

?: Yeah, it's a choice to be here isn't it?

Bryony: Yeah it's a choice.

Olivia: You don't actually have to be here.

[...]

Meg: Like now I want to learn it.

Bryony: Mmm, you know it's going to be helpful in the future as well.

Olivia: Yeah I think when, when you get to HE you've gone through all the processes of like picking your university and that sorting through loads of shit, oh sorry, rubbish and um, (laughs) um, getting student finance sorted out you're more, well, you wanna learn more.

Meg: Yes, you've gone through all the hassle to get here you might as well.

Olivia: Pretty much. (laughs)

25.09.09 a.m. Group 6

Although Ed refers to the 'ultimate subject', which is probably the subject being taken alongside Education Studies, other students are less clear that they are identifying with a subject, referring to 'getting a degree', 'this course' and generally wanting to learn. I address disciplinary/subject identities later in this chapter, however my purpose here is to focus on the students' sense of being different from before, now that they are 'students'.

Not only do these students expect to find it easier to motivate themselves than previously, but there is also a sense that they see having made the choice to study as demonstrating a degree of personal investment in their education that is connected to an academic identity not necessarily present in their previous educational experiences. Nicola makes a particularly strong distinction between being 'passionate' about her new course and being 'forced' to study certain subjects at school. The good intentions and high expectations as they begin their first term are almost palpable in their talk, and it is clear that these students feel

that they are embarking on something worthwhile and valuable. Many scholars have discussed problems associated with transition to HE (Bowl, 2001; Byrne & Flood, 2005; Christie et al., 2008; Gourlay, 2009) and the sense of dislocation and uncertainty that students experience. Anxiety and discomfort are an integral part of the struggle to know (Barnett, 1997; 2000; 2007; Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009) and some students will need additional support to cope with this, but the justified concern of scholars to uncover and understand what students find difficult in the transition process has obscured in the literature the excitement, the positive attitudes and the embracing of the 'new' identity that these students display at the very beginning of their course.

Through their talk about academic practice, and how they expect it to be different, students present a self that can be distinguished from the pre-university self. Despite apparently having found it hard to sustain interest and motivation in the past, these students voice a hope that things will be better and an intention to engage with new opportunities for study. By investing in the discourse of 'choice' of university and of a field of study, the academic self that they tell is more interested and motivated than the school-student of the past, and this is not only in relation to their previous selves, but also in relation to non-student groups: their peers who had not made that choice to go to university and their parents. There was limited talk about non-students, but that which did occur was used to tell non-students as 'other' to the academic identity that they were claiming for the self, and also to acknowledge the importance of those non-academic relationships with

friends and family. There is no sense of dislocation or rejection resulting from their choice to undertake university-level study.

8.3.2 Telling the self as different from peers

The dominance of the discourse of choice suggests that, although many students just ‘drift’ into HE (Mann, 2001), for many in this cohort a positive choice has been made, and for some the choice marks them out from the majority of their peers, as demonstrated by Catherine whose school provided an incentive to continue into HE:

Catherine: And in, like, my year at school, if they’ve gone to uni they’ve got £200. They’ve got a £200 cheque.

11.12.09 a.m. Group 3

Of the workshop group, 25% are from low participation neighbourhoods in comparison to 10.3% of students in the UK as a whole total (HESA, 2011), and some appear to have low opinions of those with whom they had attended school/college:

Wendy: I hated my [college] class ‘cos it was all boys who didn’t care, they was only there for the 30 quid a week so ... here everyone’s here because they want to qualify, like. I think that’s slightly weaned out the people who don’t want to be there at college, 6th form. But you

think of the people who were there because it's something to do, yeah?

Pippa: My friend's like that, she's gone back to third year because she has no idea what she wants to do. She'd rather sit and get 30 quid a week from EMA²⁷ than go out and get a job.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 3

As noted previously there is a concern for the working-class student for whom 'working-class' identity and 'student' identity are seen as incompatible. However, for the student who has always wanted to be 'academic', yet has been in contexts where performance of academic was marginalised, the possibility for the construction of the self as academic is welcome. Different identities can co-exist and Wendy, who is anxious to claim an academic identity by distancing herself from her uninterested peers at 6th form college, is still 'one of the lads' when she goes home:

Wendy: I was gonna say, the lads I hang around with, I've got the highest GCSEs but they're so much quicker than me playing darts, anything, they can do all the counting down [for scoring] and it's so weird that I'm like ...

Jane: It shows you the importance of context because if you gave them those calculations as a written sum you'd probably do it faster.

²⁷ Educational Maintenance Allowance: a means tested benefit (maximum £30 per week) payable to students aged 16-19 in non-compulsory post-16 education. Discontinued in 2011.

- Wendy: Yeah.
- Jane: You should try.
- Wendy: I'm like 'lads, sit down'. (laughs)
- Daisy: Pub quiz.
- Wendy: They'd tell me where to go, I'm telling you. (laughs)

6.11.09 p.m. Group 3

As she talks about academic practice, Wendy tells herself in contrast to her friends whom she presents as 'other' to her academic self in her assertion that, if she were to try to involve them in written calculations 'they'd tell me where to go'. However, she maintains her identity as part of their social grouping. Membership of the academic community of practice does not conflict with Wendy's membership of other communities of practice but, although they co-exist, there is a recognition that 'the lads' would not welcome academic behaviour in the context of playing darts in the pub, and equally, the language and behaviour that are acceptable in the pub are probably not appropriate for the university classroom. The hybrid identities which students construct need not be sites of conflict, Wendy simultaneously manages the two. Her emerging academic identity and her pub-going, dart-playing identity do not exclude each other, and in their intersection Wendy can find a space to be a member of both the academic student community and a particular non-academic social community. Other students too comment on the importance of their friends who have not gone to university:

Ed: I've still got 4 friends who work full time and they're all apprentices. Like, I couldn't be too far away from them, like, being 3 or 4 hours, like. I was going to go to ... Newcastle was my first choice originally, but then it was just too far.

27.11.09 a.m. Group A

In common with the students in Reay et al.'s (2010) study, these students successfully maintain relationships with old friends whilst pursuing academic goals. If they are experiencing conflict in this juggling of identity positions, they do not share this with the group. Perhaps their choice of institution mitigates any sense of dislocation, since many of the students in the cohort are from non-traditional backgrounds so that individuals are able to establish that they are in the company of 'people like me' (Archer and Leathwood, 2003, p. 176); the academic student community of practice which they are joining is clearly not synonymous with 'middle class' and so presents no overt conflict with other class-based communities of practice, including families. The students' narratives about their non-academic parents (siblings are rarely mentioned) are similar to those they tell about their friends. They tell their parents as 'other', but without any indication of conflict. Quite the reverse: their parents are supportive, but uncertain of how to help.

8.3.3 *Telling the self as different from parents*

In this extract from the second week of the module (2.10.09), the students are discussing, as part of a session on academic reading, what strategies they use when they find academic reading difficult. Talk about academic practice provides a context where the students in Group 3 can once again contrast their own participation in practice with that of non-students:

Wendy: You see my parents now, I'm at the point I've had more education than either of them.

Daisy: I have.

Pippa: Yeah I have as well.

Wendy: So it's like, they can't help me.

Daisy: Yeah, I've had more education than my mum, but my mum will do anything for me in that sense. If she thinks she can help she will try, even if she doesn't understand herself, because like two heads are better than one, isn't it, in that sense? And if not, we ring up Dad. My dad just sort of gets a little bit impatient with me if I'm not picking it up enough, you know, sometimes you just miss don't you? You just don't pick it up.

Querida: Yeah.

Daisy: And he will get impatient as to why, if he can understand it why can't I?

Querida: Yeah.

- Daisy: So it's a bit...
- Pippa: I'm always like, 'Mum I can't do it', she's like, 'Neither can I, I can't do any of it'.
- Wendy: Yeah my parents are like, they're smart but they just never had the opportunities so it's like ...
- Pippa: My mum will read it and she'll try and help.
- Wendy: Yeah, same.
- Pippa: But it's, sometimes she doesn't understand what it's about and it's like, 'No I don't either'.
- Wendy: Yeah.

2.10.09 a.m. Group 3

Again, there is a sense of telling the self as somehow having moved on, this time not away from the previous self but from the limitations of parents' educational achievements. Despite their lack of HE, parents try to help, so that, although the students are taking their places in the new academic student community of practice, parents are fulfilling a supportive and nurturing role in the family community of practice. Telling the self as different from parents underlines these students' sense of finding a new place for themselves, yet in no way suggests conflict between students' family identity positions and their academic identities. The two co-exist in the intersection of different communities of practice. This is the same pattern that emerged in relation to friends; membership of the academic community of practice means that they are members of something that their parents are not, but it does not negate their legitimate membership of the family

community of practice which, at least in these early stages of their study, continues in the same way as before. However, identity positions are not only claimed through telling the self as 'different'. Telling the self also allows the group to establish 'sameness' through identifying with each other. Hall (1996, p. 2) suggests that:

[I]dentification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation.

When Wendy notes that her level of education has already exceeded that of her parents, Daisy and Pippa readily claim sameness and this continues throughout the extract where they interweave the telling of similar stories of parents who are willing but not always able to help. Establishing 'sameness' occurs frequently in the students' stories, and is part of the ongoing project to find a place for the self within the academic student community of practice. Although communities of practice are defined by their practices, those practices do not exist in isolation but as part of systems of relations that 'arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53).

Membership of the academic student community rests in part on constructing appropriate relationships with other members of the community, who accept your performance of student, and establishing sameness is a way of

recognising commonality and confirming one's right to belong. Indeed, Lave & Wenger (1991, p. 115) claim that the development of identity is 'central to the careers of newcomers in communities of practice ... learning and a sense of identity are inseparable: They are aspects of the same phenomenon'. However, although the students seek to establish sameness through their contrast with non-students and their shared participation in Education Studies, there are also distinctions between them in the subjects that they are studying alongside Education, and their subjects also contribute to their academic identities.

8.4 Finding a space in the intersection of different communities of practice:

Telling the self in relation to other students

Students on the Education and Subject Studies degree programme were positioned in relation to other programmes within the institution, and also in relation to the different subjects within the programme. Multiple opportunities for 'belonging' were apparent, even within the limited scope of subjects studied alongside Education. Students were not just claiming to be 'student' they were telling the self as a student at a particular institution and of a particular course, and within that as a 'Geography student' or a 'Drama student', or as an aspiring teacher. They had little understanding of Education Studies as a subject in its own right, other than as the component of the course that would be preparing them for their future career, nevertheless an identity as Education and Subject student could be established by telling the self as distinct from the other main undergraduate programme at the institution, a 3-year Primary Education course.

8.4.1 Telling the self as 'Education and Subject' Student

As part of a discussion about how they thought study in HE would be different from that undertaken previously, Group 6 compare the requirements of their course with the Primary Education course. They tell themselves as Education and Subject student through claiming 'otherness' and 'sameness' in the same way that students had done to tell the selves as 'student' in contrast to non-student:

Olivia: We're quite lucky I think, 'cos the Primary Eds²⁸ have just been dropped in at the deep end, like literally, so much stuff to do.

Catherine: I was going to do that course. I'm glad I didn't.

Meg: Mm.

Olivia: No, they've got so much to do now they're all swamped already. They've already been given like 9 or 10 essays.

Bryony: Really?

Olivia: Like for the rest of the term. Mental.

Meg: The thing is, we're going to get to the same place that they are with more options and more time.

Catherine: And if you decide you don't want to be a Primary school teacher at the end you've got a degree.

Meg: Yes, because their degree isn't actually a degree, it's just Primary Ed²⁹ so (unclear).

Catherine: So if they hate teaching they've got nothing to fall back on.

²⁸ Students on the Primary Education programme

²⁹ Meg has misunderstood the nature of the professional qualification attached to the Primary Education course which is a degree (BA with QTS).

- Meg: They've wasted three years.
- Catherine: Whereas we're all gonna have, like, a degree.
- Meg: Not that it's a bad course, it's a good course. You have to know you want to do it [become a teacher].
- Catherine: Yeah.
- Olivia: I'm not sure yet, I don't know what I want.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 6

When Olivia introduces the Primary Education course as overly demanding, she appears to be adopting a non-academic identity, and implies that the Education Studies course is preferable because it will make fewer demands on her. However, the others manage to 'other' the Primary Education course without adopting her non-academic stance, allowing sameness to be established in their preference for the course they are on, whilst justifying their preference with reference to the discourse of 'keeping options open' portrayed in Education Studies promotional material. Meg and Catherine present having time to make informed decisions about future careers, and the greater flexibility of the (non-professional) Education and Subject Studies course as preferable to the Primary Education course which leads to a professional qualification and consequently fewer exit routes.

The story these students tell is a shared story which they have all heard in talks at open days, at interview, in departmental promotional material, and during their induction. However, in taking on the telling of it themselves, it is no longer

just a story about a university programme, it is about themselves and the place that they inhabit as members of the course. Although Meg feels obliged to point out that the other course is ‘a good course’ they agree that it is not the course they want to be on. Such othering allows a broad sameness to be established with others in the group; we are all ‘not that’, and criticism of the other course serves to confirm the rightness of their choice and to reassure that the space they are finding for the self is a space that others want to inhabit too, even if for Olivia the main reason for distancing herself from the other course is the workload, portraying a distinctly non-academic identity.

8.4.2 Telling the self as Subject Student

As individuals sought to find a space for the self in the overlap and intersection of different communities of practice, the subjects took on an importance in their telling of the self. Students frequently referred to their other subjects of study, to say they enjoyed them, to complain about an aspect of the subject to a sympathetic audience, to compare expectations, contact time and assessment requirements or to use as examples when discussing Education topics (since their familiarity with a particular subject enabled them to find relevant examples). However, although such oblique reference to the subjects allowed individuals to identify the self as a student of a particular subject, in the telling of the self in relation to that subject, students claimed to be a particular kind of student, as distinct from other Education students, because of the nature of the subject. In Group 5, the discussion of how study would be different did not lead to

telling the self in contrast to students on another programme, as it had for Group 6, but to telling the self as a particular subject student. In this extract Vicky, a Maths student, tells herself as having a ‘mathematical and scientific’ mind, in contrast to an English student:

- Vicky: You see I’ve, I’ve got a more ... mathematical and scientific mind, so I think that is why I prefer things to be laid out.
- Nicola: Yeah.
- Vicky: And said ‘right, this is what you need [to do]’.
- Nicola: Yeah.
- Vicky: ‘This is how you do it’, kind of thing, whereas I think some people, such as yourself, might have a more artistic English-based mind.
- Nicola: Yeah.
- Vicky: So you can go away and read a book and ...
- Nicola: Mm ... Yeah.
- Vicky: Sort of find things out for yourself ...

25.09.09 a.m. Group 5

In contrasting her own mind with Nicola’s ‘artistic, English-based mind’, Vicky draws on a perception of Mathematics as a subject based on logic and correct answers, where success accrues from following rules: ‘right, this is what you need’, and she presents English as more open to individual interpretation and accessing meaning through reading. In this way, Vicky positions herself as less well prepared for the literacy practices that would be part of the Education Studies

course than an English student, a concern shared by others in Group 4 during the same discussion. Judith (Maths) and Dominic (Sport) share their perceived shortcomings as writers, while Kim uses her status as an English student to claim expertise and to share her strategies for writing, allowing her to mark out a more central place for herself within the academic student community of practice:

Judith: I am a bit worried about the essays because I'm not very good English ... That's why I didn't choose English.

Kim: I'm doing English.

Judith: Are you?

Kim: Yeah.

Dominic: I think I've got alright, like, essay technique, my hand-writing is awful, and my spelling is awful, and my punctuation is bad, but ...

Judith: Yeah I'm not, I just can't write essays. I can't get it out, what I'm trying to say in the right amount of words.

Kim: You see that's what I, I used to have that issue, so I basically put everything down on paper and then basically, I then go back to it and go, no, no ...

Dominic: (laughs)

Kim: And then I'd come out with a paragraph maybe from like half a page instead, sort of a decent sized paragraph, and that is how I just ended up sort of going through it myself, because I just learnt from doing GCSE and then doing A-level that it was the essays.

25.09.09 a.m. Group 4

Kim identifies as an English student again two weeks later when discussing academic reading:

Judith: I don't really know how to annotate, like how to write.

Kim: You see I've been doing my English, my English teacher said never read a text that you're having to look at without a pen in your hand, so I've just got into that habit of instantly, pen in hand, something important, write it.

[...]

Kim: It makes me glad I brought my dictionary with me anyway.

Helen: I use my Theosaurus (sic.).

Judith: Google it, (laughs) I always Google it.

Kim: Yeah if I'm feeling lazy and I can't be bothered to actually move over to the shelf I could always Google.

Judith: I didn't bring a dictionary. I just thought Google would do.

Helen: Yeah.

Kim: [I'm an] English student.

Judith: Yeah.

Kim: I'm slightly better off, I think.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 5

In these discussions about academic reading and writing, Kim, as English student, tells herself as more of an expert than the others in the context of reading and writing for Education studies, and twice uses 'You see ...' to mark a point

where she shares her expertise with the others. Others appear to accept her authority as she explains in some detail, with no interruptions from others, how she completes written work or reading. In the second exchange Kim 'others' Judith by referring to her use of Google as a 'lazy' strategy, reinforcing her own superior position. Judith, in contrast, is clearly expressing a sense of uncertainty; she is 'not very good at English', she doesn't know 'how to annotate', and has not brought a dictionary to university. Judith's dejected explanation that 'I just thought Google would do' suggests that she recognises that she is being criticised by Kim, however this is re-constructed by Kim not as a personal criticism rather as a consequence of their subject identities as she reminds the others that as an English student she is 'slightly better off'.

The telling of the self in relation to subjects reveals not only how students seek to find a space for the self within the intersection of Education and Subject academic student communities of practice, but also how they see that intersection. Kim claims a more central place for herself in the Education Studies student community, on the strength of her competence in English, a position which Vicky also affords to Nicola in their discussion. However, the position claimed within the academic community was not always in relation to others or subjects studied. Students also told the self in direct relation to their participation in academic practice, within the context of Education Studies. As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, Judith was not alone in her uncertainty about how to participate in academic practices, and I explore now how participation became another aspect of the narrative which students used to tell themselves as academic.

8.5 Telling the self in relation to participation in academic practice

Large lectures, relative anonymity compared to previous learning experiences, the expectation of independent study and academic reading and writing all make demands on the new student; yet talking about these practices provided students with a context in which to tell the self as academic in relation to their participation in lectures, independent study and assessments.

8.5.1 *Telling the self in relation to lectures*

My pedagogical approach prioritised collaborative learning in workshops, but there were also lectures of about 150 students. Although as interactive as possible, these were necessarily more transmissive. The limitations of lectures as a teaching approach and the difficulties which students face in maintaining focus have long been recognised (Bligh, 1972; Laurillard, 1993; Tormey & Henchy, 2008). Nevertheless, the sometimes difficult experiences of learning from lectures can be used to tell the self as academic:

Olivia: I actually listened.

Meg: What?

Olivia: I said I actually listened, I'm proud of myself.

Meg: I love it, you know when you, bits make sense, like 'oh, I know this'!

Olivia: Yeah. (laughs)

Meg: I actually know something.

Olivia: Yeah. (laughs)

2.10.09 p.m. Group 6

‘I actually listened, I’m proud of myself’ implies that Olivia is not someone who always listens, or who finds it easy to sustain concentration in a lecture, but that her developing ability to ‘perform’ academic successfully by listening in a lecture is a source of satisfaction. The confirmation of ‘sameness’ as Meg takes up the narrative, clearly demonstrates her pleasure in being able to make sense of what she has heard and her validation as a knower. That the ability to ‘make sense’ is worthy of comment suggests that this is not a ‘given’, indeed there is evident pleasure for both Meg and Olivia as they realise that they are capable of being ‘academic’. And as they tell themselves as emerging academic, even in the face of their own, and possibly others’ doubts, each confirms the legitimacy of the other as a peripheral participant in the academic community of practice.

However, not all students listen in lectures and in the following extract Ellie uses the ‘othering’ of a student from another workshop group to tell herself as academic. In the same way that Wendy ‘othered’ students in 6th form colleges in order to tell herself as academic, Ellie contrasts her own behaviour in lectures and her intention to listen with the low level disruption of another:

Ellie: Okay, can we not sit next to Derek please for the lecture?

Carl: (laughs)

- Ellie: I mean I'm being totally serious. I'm more than happy to sit on my own in this lecture because, or you actually the way you're going this morning [not focusing].
- Vicky: (Laughs)
- Ellie: Because you make me laugh and I feel really rude ... No it is bad but, like, I actually can't control my laughter, I have no control, but especially if I know I really shouldn't laugh.
- Vicky: Yes.
- Ellie: And I absolutely start laughing and it's just really inconsiderate.
- Vicky: Derek goes bright red.
- Ellie: Derek makes me laugh so much, hilarious.
- Vicky: We'll take Derek off your hands. He'll most probably fall asleep in the lecture anyway.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 2

Clearly not all students will be attentive and engaged at all times, and Derek is constructed here by both Ellie and Vicky as regularly disengaged and disruptive. Different student communities are apparent in this talk; although Ellie constructs herself in contrast to Derek's behaviour in lectures, she still claims to find him 'hilarious' and Vicky's offer to 'take Derek off your hands' indicates that he is not completely rejected. Derek might be sidelined in the lecture, but would still remain a friend within the wider student community of practice. Like Wendy, whose membership of a social non-academic pub and darts community co-exists with her membership of an academic student community, Ellie is simultaneously a

member of both social and academic student communities, and she is finding that she needs to establish boundaries between the two. For Wendy this is less of a problem, since the two communities intersect rather than overlap: the lads in the pub are completely separate from St. Hugh's and so the boundaries are clear. The overlap of student communities of practice, however, creates difficulties, and where practices from one student community (having a laugh) conflict with practices of another (listening in a lecture) significant identity work needs to take place as Ellie seeks to manage the different aspects of being student.

Anything that challenges the academic identity can present a threat to the self as academic, and so when Ellie finds herself performing as non-academic through laughing in lectures, she is obliged to find a way to tell herself as academic, whilst remaining part of the social group of which she is a also member. Derek is not rejected; his practices would be acceptable, even welcome, in another context, rather Derek's practices in the lecture are rejected. As Ellie positions herself in relation to acceptable and unacceptable behaviour she is finding a space to be a member of both the academic student community and a particular social student community. Where practices of the social student community of practice spill over into the academic, she tells a version of herself that rejects inappropriate behaviour in lectures, the self that reinforces her academic identity. This tendency to shore up the academic identity is also evident in students' telling of the self in relation to their independent study.

8.5.2 *Telling the self in relation to independent study (reading, writing, preparation)*

In the same way that Olivia expresses pride in her concentration and success in performing academic within the context of the lecture, Anne spontaneously shares an experience with her group during off-task talk about getting to lectures in the morning:

Gary: I got up at 20 past 9.

Dominic: I get up at 8.

Anne: I was in the library at that time (laughs). It's the first time in my life I've felt like an intellectual, all the intellectuals are in the library at that time.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 4

Anne is certainly not claiming to be an 'intellectual', her comment about 'all the intellectuals' positions them as other than herself. However, she seems quite at ease with feeling like an intellectual, through her participation in what she perceives as intellectual activity. But not all students are in the library early, if at all, and it is clear that students' engagement with independent study is variable. The recordings demonstrate that a significant minority fail, at least on some occasions, to complete set reading and other tasks they have been asked to prepare, which could be interpreted as rejection of academicity. However, although their

‘performance’ of academic may suggest this, their claims for the self continue to tell the self as academic.

For example, having failed to prepare for a session, Dominic spends some time establishing when the reading was set and then identifies that he had been absent. The fact that all set reading was also specified in the module booklet and on the VLE is ignored as he tries to suggest that it was not his fault and to uphold his ‘academic’ credentials:

Dominic: So technically when you said [that] I haven’t done the reading, I wasn’t here when the reading was set.

Yvonne: Neither was I though, and I did it.

Dominic: Still ordered Alexander [a set text] though.

11.12.09 a.m. Group 4

Yvonne takes the opportunity, not only to ‘other’ Dominic, but to tell herself as academic in relation to both Dominic and the task, but Dominic is not to be defeated and defends himself by claiming that at least he has now ordered the book (which they had been advised to buy six weeks earlier!). It is interesting to note Dominic’s resistance to Yvonne’s positioning of him, despite having failed to buy the book, check what he needed to read in the module booklet or on the VLE, ask a friend what he had missed and complete the set reading. Such effort to present as academic, despite evidence to the contrary was particularly apparent in week 3. Students had been given the following task to complete independently:

Read Davis (1993) pp18-20 (provided). Annotate as you read. Write a 2-3 sentence summary of the main argument. Bring your annotated pages and summary to the workshop on 16.10.09 a.m. (Allow 2 hours). (ES1A module booklet 2009-2010)

In the workshop that followed, students were introduced to the concept of surface and deep approaches to study (Marton & Säljö, 2005; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Ramsden, 2003). They were then asked to look back at the reading they had prepared for the session, to look at their annotations, and to identify which approach they thought they had taken as they undertook the task. They were also told of research showing that deep approaches are more likely to promote the kind of thinking that will lead to success in HE. Taking a deep approach was therefore presented as a more ‘academic’ approach which students could choose to adopt in their ongoing studies.

Most had taken a surface approach to the reading, and some found that this challenged their academic identity and so sought to tell the self in contrast to their performance:

Fran: If we had like two hours.

Vicky: (reads) ‘[Surface is] intention to complete and [deep is] intention to understand’ so ...

Ellie: Because it was just, was it because, was it you thought it was just an article, we were just going to read it?

Fran: Just an article yeah, but if I'd um spent longer on it ... 'cos I didn't spend that long on it, um, I would have attempted to understand and I would have really tried to focus on the meaning of the article.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 2

The module booklet had specified that they should allow two hours for the task, but Fran clearly has not. She implies that if she had spent longer on the task she would have approached it differently, but does not give any reason why she did not do so. However, she seeks to position herself as 'academic' by claiming that she 'would have' tried to understand and focus on the meaning, presenting this occasion as an aberration. Daisy makes a similar claim:

Daisy: When we did, you know that first lot we did when we all took a chapter [section] each.

?: Yeah.

Daisy: I'd say that was deep for me, because I've not done this one properly.

Pippa: I remember that.

Daisy: I remember that and I made links to it and I understood and I put examples to it. I've not read [this] yet so I can't really tell you.

Querida: No.

Daisy: I'm only being honest. I've not read it yet.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 3

Despite not having read the text at all, Daisy claims an ‘academic’ identity by referring back to another reading that they had prepared for ES1B. Whereas Fran’s argument is, ‘I would if I had time’, Daisy’s argument is, ‘I did before’, and Kim uses the argument ‘I do usually’:

Kim: Mine was surface. I know full well it was because I didn't do my usual of actually doing those three things [intending to understand, relating ideas to existing knowledge and focusing on the meaning]. I just went through and highlighted.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 5

Fran, Daisy and Kim all find a way to tell the self in contrast to their performance. None has taken a deep approach, but all want to claim this as a characteristic of the self they portray. The academic selves that they seek to tell sit uneasily with their performance and so they are willing to admit to poor time management or laziness in order to defend their academic identity. Judith and Bill, part of Kim’s group, make no attempt to tell themselves in contrast to their performance, but nevertheless seek to establish a place for themselves within the academic community of practice by telling themselves as being on a trajectory leading toward academicity at some unspecified time in the future:

Helen: If I had time I would do it more.

Judith: Yeah.

- Bill: No even if I had loads of time, I'd just highlight the sheet of paper. I'd never, I'd never really think of any anything else because I've highlighted ...
- Helen: It depends what mood you're in.
- Judith: I think it was too hard for me. When I get, later on like, like during the year.
- Bill: Yeah, well that's the same here as well, once you get into it.
- Judith: Yeah once I get used to the language and that, it's just so different from what I used to read at A-level.
- Bill: Yeah.
- Helen: But eugh, it doesn't make sense, half of it.

16.10.09 a.m. Group 5

Although Judith initially agrees with Helen's assertion that lack of time was the problem, Bill's statement that he does not think he would ever take a deep approach, 'I'd never really think of any anything else', seems to allow Judith to explain that it was 'too hard', and they agree by the end that the problem was that the text was difficult to understand. Bill's use of 'same here' again shows the prevalence of identifying 'sameness' with others when seeking to claim membership of the academic student community of practice. Judith and Bill indicate that they currently have no expectation of reading for meaning and understanding, it is just a case of getting through. However, like Fran, Daisy and Kim, their current performance of student is not one that they wish to be defined by. Despite having found the reading difficult, Bill and Judith demonstrate a desire

to tell themselves as academic at some time in the future. When they have more experience of reading academic texts, they suggest, they will be able to approach them differently, and perform 'academic' student more successfully. In presenting this sense of the future self they present a hope of becoming academic rather than a sense of alienation.

How Helen wants to tell herself is less clear, and perhaps there is some sense of alienation for her. Like Fran, she initially suggests that it was lack of time that had prevented her from taking a deep approach, 'If I had time I would do it more', then claims 'It depends what mood you're in' and finally, after Judith and Bill discuss difficulties with academic reading she agrees that 'it doesn't make sense, half of it'. Whereas the others in Group 5 use this task to tell themselves, she makes the task less personal with each of her three statements. Although the first is about herself, the second is about a generic 'you' and the final statement is about the text. Whereas Judith chooses to relate the discussion about the difficulty of the text to herself: 'I think it was too hard for me' and 'it's just so different from what I used to read at A level', Helen positions the text as inadequate 'it doesn't make sense', and she does not participate in Bill's and Judith's telling of themselves as being on a trajectory toward fuller participation in the academic student community of practice.

Talk about academic practice gives students the opportunity to talk about themselves in relation to that practice. This does not always happen; it is possible to talk about practice without talking about one's own experience of that practice

or one's relationship to it, as shown in Helen's response, but many students do use talk about practice to tell themselves as 'academic', even in contradiction of the evidence provided by their performance. However, assessed work is an arena where performance really does matter. One cannot simply tell oneself as academic since one's work will be judged by others who will evaluate its academicity. Nevertheless, talk about assessed work also provides opportunity for students to tell themselves as academic.

8.5.3 Telling the self in relation to assessed work

During a workshop in week 2, Group 6 had gone off- task and were trying to work out what assessments would be expected of them in the first semester. Module booklets contained assignment briefs giving full details of each piece of assessed work and weekly set tasks, but integrating the demands of three modules meant that the students had not yet established any clarity about what was being asked of them. They had already been asked to write 500 words (non-assessed) for ES1B to be brought to a seminar the week after this conversation, and 700 words (assessed) for ES1A (This was the first of four pieces that contributed to an assessed portfolio, and which had to be handed in two weeks after this conversation so that feedback could be provided before they handed in the other three pieces):

Meg: But we assume we'll be getting an essay a week.

Catherine: And 700 words isn't much.

- Olivia: An essay a week?
- Meg: 700 word portfolio, we've got 500 next week [for ES1B], 700 the week after [to hand in for ES1A], another 700 and then another 700 [other portfolio tasks]
- Olivia: An essay a week?
- Catherine: 700 words isn't much.
- Bryony: And then our drama work as well.
- ?: (unclear)
- Olivia: Oh fuck a duck. I didn't sign up for this.
- Meg: The only work we do in drama is studio practice.
- Olivia: Is it still on, shit, sorry.
- (laughter)

02.10.09 a.m. Group 6

Olivia's objection to what she sees as an unreasonable amount of work suggests that her expectation of what being a student entails does not include having to complete regular written work, a position she had taken the previous week when she had expressed horror at the amount of work expected of students on the Primary Education course. Although the others seek to present the expectations as achievable '700 words isn't much' and 'the only work we do in drama is studio practice', Olivia's reiteration of 'an essay a week?' almost seems to be a dramatic device to emphasise her shock and she emphasises her rejection of the 'academic' with 'Oh fuck a duck. I didn't sign up for this'. I have mentioned previously that within the academic context of the workshops, swearing is

extremely rare; Olivia's use of 'fuck', and in the next line 'shit', underline her rejection of the academic as she draws on the discourse practices of alternative communities.

In telling the self in this way, Olivia is in direct contrast to other members of her group, and indeed to most of the cohort who choose to present the self as aspiring to be academically successful and with the intention to work hard. The students are acutely aware that it will be through academic performance, including assessed work, that their claims of academicity will be validated or denied. For Zena it appears that failing an assignment would challenge her identity as a student so strongly that she would feel unable to try to continue to construct an academic identity, and Rhiannon claims 'sameness' through agreement with Zena:

Zena: I know I'd hate to fail.

?: Yeah.

Zena: I think I'd just give up uni if I failed.

Rhiannon: I know ... I don't think I'd be able to do it.

06.11.09 a.m. Group 1

For Georgia, the threat to her academicity is not in failing but in not excelling. She tells herself in contrast to the assertion that a pass mark is sufficient, rejecting a discourse of 'good enough' to position herself as academic:

Dominic: As long as you passed though.

Andrew: You don't, you only need 40% to pass though don't you?

Georgia: Yeah, but I don't want to just pass.

06.11.09 p.m. Group 4

Each of these students seeks to find a place for the self in the academic community: Meg and Catherine who accept regular engagement with written tasks as an aspect of the academic life; Zena and Rhiannon who see failing an assignment as the end of their academic careers; and Georgia who wants to have her academic identity reinforced by good grades. Although peripheral membership of the academic community of practice might be conferred when one is awarded a university place, fuller membership depends on successful performance including, and most importantly, completion of assessments. Assessment justifies one's place in the community, so that, despite all the claims that one can make for the self, others in positions of power ultimately confer the right to belong (or not) through their judgement of your performance. One's status as a member of the academic community is always open to challenge, so opportunities to claim membership and tell the self as academic may be particularly valuable for students who are not confident of their position. The regular use of 'yeah' and claiming sameness with others in the group demonstrates the prevalence of agreement as a practice of the communities of practice that the students establish, as noted in Chapter 6. Finding agreement and sameness reassures the individual that they belong: finding 'people like me' is important not only in relation to ethnicity or class, but also in relation to the academic identity position that one inhabits. Challenge to one's position as academic can come from many directions and my final section explores the

reaction of one student who vehemently resisted what she interpreted as her Geography tutor positioning her as ‘non-academic’.

8.6 Telling the academic self in relation to the positioning given by others

For Wendy, the student who played darts with ‘the lads’ in the pub and who had parents who tried to help but whose own academic levels she had already overtaken, attending university bestowed on her membership of an academic community of practice in contrast to her parents and friends, and she was keen to tell herself as academic in relation to these others. Wendy and Daisy were studying Geography alongside Education and the first semester Geography module (GE1A) included the study of UK settlements. As part of the study of urban populations, the tutor for GE1A, Eric, had spoken about Wendy’s home town in a way that she felt challenged her right to an academic identity:

Wendy: And he just thinks I’m some silly northerner from the most economic deprived ...

Daisy: He is so biased.

Wendy: Isn’t he? ... From the most economically deprived area...

Daisy: Now to begin with it was sort of amusing, not in a nasty way but just the fact that he had his opinion, but now it’s just really like (unclear).

- Wendy: He's already said that, um, there's a reason, basically there's a reason the likes of the towns of Oldtown and Midtown are still northern.
- Querida: If he says it again just be like, 'well I'm offended by that'.
- Wendy: Then yesterday apparently he said that [the region where I live] is the most economically deprived area in England. It's, it's alright saying that but when you've got four or five people in the class from that area you really should watch what you're saying.
- Querida: Mm.
- Wendy: Because if it's that economically deprived why is there like 5 percent of the class [from there] ...?
- Pippa: Why are there so many here?
- Wendy: Yeah.

06.11.09 p.m. Group 3

Eric's use of Wendy's home-town, an urban centre within the local region, as a case study for an area of deprivation is interpreted by Wendy as implying that she was not 'university' material, since she asks 'Because if it's that economically deprived why is there like 5 percent of the class [from there]?' Eric's intention cannot have been to suggest that students from Oldtown ought not to be in HE, however he appears to have failed to explain himself clearly and to recognise that first-year students may not readily distinguish between social data and opinion. He also appears to have failed to take account of the affective domain of learning and how students' identities are implicated in the learning process. It is hard to hear an

objective argument when one's home town is cast in a negative light. Discussion of areas of deprivation is not an academic exercise for residents of those areas, it is part of their lived experience; they are members of the communities that are being talked about, and these communities intersect with the academic community through students such as Wendy, with Wendy being positioned at the intersection. It is striking how the other group members seek to support Wendy and reinforce her right to be at university by dismissing analysis of regional data as Eric's 'opinion' and 'offensive', and re-iterating her question 'Yeah, why are there so many here?'

Clearly, although I stated my intention to use a different lens to examine student identity from classed, raced or gendered lenses, these aspects of identity will always be present for students, and it is right to acknowledge as much. Nevertheless, by foregrounding the students' academic identities I believe that I have been able to paint a more hopeful picture than is often the case. The reason so many students from Wendy's home town are at St. Hugh's is precisely because it has low entry requirements and takes many local students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds. Yet in contrast to Archer's (2003) findings, Wendy does not appear to be aware of any hierarchy of institutions. In fact, on the contrary, she had claimed previously: 'we are one, we are at, like, one of the best places aren't we ... for teaching, there's nowhere like it' (16.10.09 a.m.), and the group's indignant response to Eric's analysis of deprivation shows that these students want very much to claim the right to be student and to have their academic identities validated. To be from a non-traditional background does not mean that one must

choose between one's existing identity and a new 'academic' identity. These students show that different identities can co-exist and that even if others seem to be suggesting that they are incompatible (as Wendy believed Eric was implying) they will resist such a claim.

8.7 Discussion

In this chapter I have shown how students used talk about academic practice in workshops to tell themselves as academic. Of course we do not have a full picture of how this group of students tell themselves as academic (or not). As noted in Chapter 4, whilst some groups left the recorder running at all times, others were quick to turn it off if they went off task or immediately they judged themselves to have completed a task, meaning that narratives about the self have been, to some extent, censored by some groups. Also it is possible that, knowing that I would listen to the recordings, individuals sought to present themselves as 'academic'. However, also noted in Chapter 4 was the ease with which the 'public' nature of their talk appeared to be forgotten. The consistency of the desire of most of the group to claim 'academic' suggests that an academic identity is, for these students, an aspiration. However, I do not believe that the pedagogical approach merely offers a context in which to display emerging academic identities; I believe it also gives students the space to construct academic identities through their talk about academic practice.

A pedagogy of academic practice positions students as peripheral participants in the academic community. Through their participation in, and discussion of, academic practice, students are not only able to understand academic practice differently, they are also obliged to think about the self as a participant in that practice. And because the participation is collaborative, individuals are not endeavouring to be a participant in isolation; ‘people like me’ are also seen to be participating in practice and claiming an academic identity. As new undergraduates seek to find a ‘space’ for the self within the intersecting and overlapping student communities of practice and the other communities of practice to which they belong (including classed, gendered and ethnic communities), presenting the self as a particular kind of person, is a way of creating a sense of continuity and coherence amidst the social and cultural changes they are experiencing (Giddens, 1991; Gulbrandsen, 2003). Talking about academic practice provides a context in which students can begin to articulate their relationship to those practices and to establish that they belong in the academic community of practice, as demonstrated through: telling the self as other to non-students; finding sameness with other students; and finding a particular space for the self in the intersection of the different communities of practice to which each individual belongs. In this way, the narratives employed enable students to engage in identity work such that a coherent identity can be told and an academic identity claimed.

Although my interest in ‘Being and Becoming’ a student was initially concerned with enabling students to be more successful academically, my interest

extended to encompass a concern that they might also become people who saw themselves as having a stake in the academy; who felt that, in some way, they belonged to it, and it belonged to them; who would appropriate academic practices rather than being ‘colonised’ by them (Ivanic, 1998, p. 73). The difference between colonisation and appropriation is fundamental; it is the difference between jumping through hoops and experiencing the emancipation that enables one to see and think differently, what Crozier et al. (2008, p. 171) refer to as the difference between relating to university as ‘being on ‘a treadmill’ or as a more holistically fulfilling experience’. Without an identity that includes ‘academic’, participation in academic practice will always feel alien: like an atheist at a church service, or a drinking alcoholic at an AA meeting. It is possible to ‘go through the motions’, and even to look like a Christian, or a recovering alcoholic, but such jumping through hoops is oppressive rather than emancipatory. As Barnett (2007, p. 38) argues:

Being has to be claimed as a key concept in any serious reflection on higher education, especially any thinking concerned with students and their experience. It is through her being that the student comes into a relationship or, rather, a set of relationships with all that she encounters. It is through her being that the student makes or declines to make her own interventions into those experiences, and so make those experiences partly her own.

If student identity influences students’ responses to their courses, then it needs to be a priority for HE at all levels. Others have shown that success in writing (Gourlay, 2009) and participation in practice (O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007)

can help students to begin to construct the self as academic, and I have added to our understanding of students' emerging academic identities by highlighting the enabling role that can be played by talk about practice within the context of practice. In Chapter 9 I briefly comment on the effect of my research on the local context in which it was conducted before drawing together the findings from my three empirical chapters and making pedagogical recommendations.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

Action research begins with an intention to improve the existing situation, and the desire to make improvements continues after the study has been written up. Revalidation in 2011 resulted in ES1A being replaced with a new 30 credit module (EX130) and I was able to use the findings from the main study to build in more time for reading together in class, talking about different types of text, different purposes for reading and different approaches to reading for the 2011-12 cohort. The ‘plan, act, review, reflect’ cycle continues in the context of the module, and has also influenced the teaching and learning at St. Hugh’s. After describing the local impact of the research I briefly revisit the definition of a pedagogy of academic practice and my research questions and outline the importance of talk about practice, within the context of participation in practice, for each of the three domains: doing, knowing and being. I summarise the methodological and pedagogical insights arising from the research and conclude with pedagogical implications. I argue that HE curricula need to make room for participatory pedagogies that provide opportunities to talk about practice as well as about subject content, and that as successive governments position HE as a business transaction, and students as consumers, talk about practice might become even more necessary if we are to continue to seek to make HE transformational.

9.2 The impact of the research at St. Hugh's

This thesis began with the concern that many students on the Education Studies programme at St. Hugh's did not 'get it', a problem which I framed in terms of their not recognising what was included in 'being and becoming' a successful student. There are many different aspects of the student experience and many ways to be 'student', however, in relation to the academic experience, some ways are more successful than others. My aim was to enable students to access those ways that would enable them to achieve academic success. Academic practice is often seen as excluding, perpetuating the power relations that operate within the academy, and my pedagogical approach was driven by a desire to give access to the academy and associated powerful ways of knowing, doing, and being; HE should be transformatory, offering new possibilities for action in the world. I have previously noted that a single module is limited in what it can achieve, however, other Education Studies tutors and the learning support team have seen gains for students in the approach and my action research has reached beyond the module that was the focus of the research.

The learning support team at St. Hugh's began to explore Academic Literacies shortly after I began my pilot study and have since produced resources, some based on my sessions, to support and encourage tutors across the institution to embed academic practice within their teaching. Together we gave a presentation to colleagues at an in-house learning and teaching conference in April 2011 to promote an Academic Literacies approach across the institution. Additionally, as

part of a small project within the institution I worked with other module leaders in Education Studies to try to ensure that the embedding of practice within module content is not limited to the first semester of the first year, but is included throughout all modules, responding to the different contexts, including disciplinary emphases and epistemological positions, of the different modules. Although they still use the discourse of ‘study skills’ to talk about students’ academic reading and writing, Education Studies tutors, many of whom have been involved in teaching ES1A, have been broadly supportive of the initiative. Nevertheless, some are anxious about the prospect of trying to integrate academic practice into their own modules. Discussion of different academic literacies in different contexts allows tutors to discuss the contested nature of academic literacies, and to help students to recognise that there is a reason why different kinds of writing are more or less appropriate for different departments or in different modules. However, achieving such an approach across an institution is not easy.

Embedding innovations in institutional practices is difficult. Even when tutors are sympathetic to the innovation, changing modules takes time and effort that not all tutors have, or are willing to invest. The limited impact of educational research on school teachers’ practices was noted in chapter 3, and there is no reason to suspect that the situation is any different for university teachers. Further, whilst I am enthusiastic about the potential of a pedagogy of academic practice, some departments reject any responsibility for students’ academic literacy practices, and still need to be convinced of the value of the approach. Indeed, they are not convinced that there are different ways to write, and see their own

disciplinary literacy as the ‘Gold Standard’ of which other departments are falling short. As Trowler and Cooper (2002) suggest, tutors’ implicit theories of teaching and learning will influence their willingness to accept innovations, and where there is a mismatch between their own beliefs and the theoretical framework informing the innovation, antagonism or anxiety can result.

A pedagogy of academic practice will only be successful where tutors share the beliefs and values on which the approach is based. For example, in the pilot study, when tutors felt unable to relinquish responsibility to students, and students were positioned as dependent, the approach was not successful in enabling students to access recognition rules in relation to independent study. Similarly, when tutors are unwilling to accept any responsibility for supporting students’ academic literacy practices, students will struggle to access the realisation rules in relation to academic reading and writing. Yet I believe that there is evidence to convince others of the worth of the approach, and in the rest of this chapter I move from the particular to the general as I discuss the pedagogical implications arising from my study.

9.3 Supporting the process of ‘being and becoming’ student

Research into academic literacies informed my pedagogical approach which included two key elements in the pilot study. Firstly, literacy practices that are often implicit needed to be made visible and accessible; the articulation of practice gives students some idea of what is entailed, but descriptions and

explanations always fall short so students also need to be supported in participating in practice. Secondly, student participation in academic practices needs to be within the academic context in which those practices are embedded; subject matter and participation in academic practice need to be learned together in order to encompass the beliefs and values, including epistemologies and conventions, represented by particular ways of practising. Academic Literacies also draws attention to the importance of ‘being’ in relation to literacy practices. The student is not merely a knower and a do-er, the student has an identity as knower and do-er which might or might not encourage their participation in academic practice. I therefore sought to enable students to appropriate academic identities. Examination of student engagement with academic content has been necessarily marginalised in my discussion by the focus on academic practice. However, content is always a contextualising factor; participation in and knowledge of practice, and identity positions made available to participants are always in relation to particular bodies of content, and associated epistemologies. My lack of attention to content is not to imply that it is unimportant, but out of necessity so that the focus can lie elsewhere, however, I suggested in chapter 7 that the pedagogical approach supports higher level engagement with content and as such is beneficial in relation to content as well as in relation to practice.

My pedagogy of academic practice can be summarised as a three part approach: make practice visible; support participation in practice; position students as ‘academic’. Although I was initially concerned with academic literacy practices, and particularly writing practices, following the pilot study this interest broadened

to include a wider range of academic practices. My research questions also changed focus, from outcome to process, and in the main study I sought to investigate:

How does my pedagogical approach support entry to the academic community?

I explored this through three associated sub-questions:

1. How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate participation in academic practice?
2. How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate knowledge of academic practice?
3. How does a 'pedagogy of academic practice' facilitate the development of an academic identity?

These questions focus on the process by which students working collaboratively in small groups can become peripheral participants in the academic community and in so doing respond to Gibbs' (2003, p. 22) plea that:

We need theories about how teaching and learning methods actually work ... Too many papers describe only the surface features of an intervention with little awareness of what is actually going on that might improve student learning.

Although this is only a small scale study, comprising 32 students in one first year, first semester module, it offers insight into how a pedagogy of academic

practice can support students in their first term in HE, in their academic participation, knowledge and identity positions and I briefly summarise findings in relation to each.

9.3.1 Academic participation

Students working in groups will establish ways of practising that are more or less recognisable as ‘academic’, and which will be more or less helpful to them in ‘being and becoming’ successful students. Conceptualising the small groups in which students worked as communities of practice, and drawing on Wenger’s dimensions of practice (Wenger, 1998) I examined how, within the context of the small groups in which they worked, students established relationships (mutual engagement), negotiated ways of working together to achieve shared goals (joint enterprise), and established ways of practising (shared repertoire). Talk about practice was an element of various group tasks, but more than that, it was also the process by which groups negotiated their mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. Talk about academic practice itself became part of the shared repertoire and students also began to talk about aspects of academic practice spontaneously at other times. Talk about practice emerged as a practice in its own right, influencing not only participation in practice but also knowledge of academic practice and the construction of academic identities.

9.3.2 Academic knowledge

It is necessary to make academic practice visible, and description, explanation and explication can all provide students with reified ‘knowledge’ of academic practice. Wenger’s (1998) model of participation and reification as a duality of meaning provided a lens to examine the relationship between reified knowledge of practice and participation in practice. A shift in aspects of students’ participation in practice, including attempts to develop understanding rather than simply complete tasks, to engage with different ideas, to construct meaning together, to support claims with evidence, to relate discussion to theory and to reference accurately, could be seen to be a result of the dynamic relationship between reification and participation where each had the potential to influence and be influenced by the other. Talk about practice was shown to be the enabling factor in this dynamic relationship. When students talked about practice within the context of participation in practice they were able to use their reified knowledge to inform participation, and to use their experience of participation to construct new knowledge.

Literacy practices, and the wider academic practices of which they are a part, reflect beliefs and values, and it was clear that beliefs about the purpose and value of reading and writing influenced participation. Whereas students could begin to recognise and appreciate the purpose and value of academic writing practices through collaborative participation, this was not the case for reading practices. In relation to reading, students were introduced to new knowledge with

limited opportunity for collaborative participation, and their talk was about what they had done previously or might do at some time in the future. Such talk was located within the context of reification of practice rather than within the context of participation in practice. On these occasions students had difficulty understanding the purpose of practices that had been reified and there was no evidence that they appropriated them. Without participation, talk about academic practice appeared to be of limited value, and on some occasions reinforced unhelpful reifications.

9.3.3 Academic identity

Identities are constructed partly in response to how one is positioned by others and the identity positions that are made available. The pedagogic approach, deliberately sought to make an ‘academic’ identity available by positioning students as participants in academic practice. Through their participation in practice and consequent talk about practice, students were obliged to think of the self as a participant in that practice, a context which led them to explore their identity positions in relation to practice and in which most sought to construct narratives that told the self as academic. In contrast to much research that indicates rejection of an academic identity, students in this study sought to tell themselves as academic even when their ‘performance’ of academic was in question. Listening to students in an academic context reveals the academic student in a way that might not be revealed by other research.

Despite research proposing the embedding of teaching and learning about academic practice in subject teaching, there is little published research exploring the consequences of doing so (exceptions are Wingate et al., 2011 and Mitchell and Evison, 2006) and none which listens to what students actually say to each other when they are working collaboratively in order to examine the nature of student participation and the processes through which participation changes. This is where my original contributions lie: in the insight into students' participation afforded by my methodological approach; and in the finding that talk about practice that is situated within collaborative participation in practice is instrumental in supporting students' entry to the academic community through their changing participation in academic practice, knowledge of academic practice, and construction of the self as academic.

9.4 Methodological insights

In seeking to explore how a pedagogy of academic practice can support students in the transition into HE, I have looked not at what students say about their experience, or at their written work, but at their collaborative participation in practice. I therefore offer, as far as I know, a unique insight into the lived experience of a group of students in one module in the first term of their first year and show how they find ways to participate in academic practice, to make sense of the knowledge they are given about academic practice, and to construct the self as academic. My finding that students were keen to claim an identity that included 'academic' is in contrast to much of the literature which identifies academic

practice as alienating and focuses on rejection of academic identity. However, ‘what we know about student learning depends on where we look, and is always a reflection of specific purposes and interests’ (Haggis, 2009, p. 388), and my findings in Chapters 6 and 7 can help to illuminate why I have found something different.

Much research uses interview or focus group data and so reflects how the student understands that context. Drawing on the conceptualization of overlapping and intersecting communities of practice that informed my discussion in Chapter 6, when in an interview or focus group, the student, who is positioned at the intersection of several communities of practice, may respond primarily as a member of an alternate, non-academic, community. They may bring other aspects of the self to the fore, such as the working-class student self or the alienated student self which leave the academic student self hidden. I do not deny the very real resistance and alienation that students can experience; these responses are of course valid, and reveal a particular dimension of how students experience their university courses, but they may conceal other possible ways of relating to academic practice at other times and in other contexts.

In the academic context of the workshops, students are positioned as ‘academic’ and participate in academic practice, so the academic student self is foregrounded. If we are to find the ‘academic’ dimensions of student identity anywhere it is likely to be here. Additionally, the type of talk is different in the two contexts. In Chapter 7 I drew a distinction between talk about practice within participation and talk about practice within reification. Talk in an interview or

focus group is necessarily within the context of reification rather than participation and may or may not reflect how students talk within participation. My research has shown that when the data are recordings of what students actually say and do when participating in academic practice, almost all were keen to claim a place in the academic community, and talk about practice within the context of participation in practice is what enabled students to find ways to participate in academic practice, to make sense of the knowledge they were given about academic practice, and to construct the self as academic.

9.5 Talk about practice within participation in practice

My finding that talk about practice is central to students' construction of meaning about practice is, perhaps, not surprising. Sociocultural theorists have demonstrated the significance of dialogic interaction, both with each other and with adults, for children's learning (For example, Alexander, 2008; Barnes, 2008; Barnes & Todd, 1995; Bruner, 1996; Mercer & Hodgkinson 2008; Mercer & Littleton 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1999) and the importance of talk for the construction of meaning is widely accepted. The role of talk is less prominent in research into undergraduate learning, although there is increasing interest in pedagogical approaches involving collaborative learning, including problem-based or inquiry-based learning (Ertl & Wright, 2008; Gibbs, 2010). Clearly talk is implicated in collaborative practice; 'dialogic learning ... is seen by many as vital to the problem-based approach' (Savin-Baden, 2003, p. 91), and Mann (2008) advocates an approach in HE where 'Dialogue and discussion become central to

seeking and clarifying understanding' (p. 137), however she notes that 'One aspect of the world that is not often opened up to dialogue in higher education is the world of academic practice itself' (p. 143). Some scholars advocate talking with HE students about academic practice as part of the pedagogical approach (Elton, 2010; Haggis, 2006; Jones, 2009; Northedge, 2002), but they do not draw the distinction as I have done between talk within participation and talk within reification.

My research shows the importance of talk about practice in contexts where students are positioned as participants in that practice. Hanks, in the foreword to Lave & Wenger (1991, p. 22) states, 'Quite simply, if learning is about increased access to performance, then the way to maximize learning is to perform, not to talk about it', yet when one looks, as I have done, at the talk about practice that takes place within the context of participation in practice, it is apparent that it is through such talk that students make sense of academic practice and position themselves in relation to that practice.

9.6 Pedagogical implications

Pedagogical implications arising from my study can be summarised as:

- i) Position students as novice 'academics'. This is the first step to students seeing themselves as academic since tutors are the ones whose judgement they trust.

- ii) Make practice explicit so that students have some sense of what it is they are trying to do.
- iii) Provide opportunities for exploring what that explicit knowledge means in the context in which it is practiced.
- iv) Create a culture where talk about practice becomes a practice of the community, since through that talk that students establish:
 - a. what they are trying to do
 - b. how to do it
 - c. their position in the community

The first three do not, perhaps, offer much that is new, although my work has provided additional evidence that these things are important. It is the final implication that arises from the main study that provides insight into how the other three make a difference to the student experience, and it is this that I consider first.

9.6.1 Building a community that talks about practice

Student groups working collaboratively will establish practices that guide how they interact with each other, the tutor and the tasks that they are given. If these practices are to support entry to the academic community, it is essential that they are distinctly academic, that they are in some way different from the practices in the bar or on the football field. Subject tutors need to accept that appropriating academic practice is problematic and that it falls within their remit to support students in the process, in all modules at all stages of the programme. Modules

need to be planned not only in relation to subject content but also in relation to specific aspects of academic practice that will be made visible and practiced in the context of the module content. Talking about academic practice needs to be seen as legitimate as talking about subject content, and this can be achieved through planning both activities that direct students to talk about practice and activities where talk about practice is necessary to complete the activity.

Talk about practice can occur both as part of the whole group and within smaller groups, each offering different benefits. In the whole group, common misconceptions can be addressed, and academic practice can be modelled most easily, but the talk can actively involve only a minority of the students. In small groups there is a greater requirement for all to contribute and the possibility for contributing in a more tentative way than in the full glare of the whole group, but greater possibility for low level, unhelpful and off-task talk. When students work in small groups the tutor is not necessarily aware of unhelpful practices, or unhelpful talk about practice, which can go unchallenged.

In seeking to give students as much opportunity as possible to work collaboratively with each other, I limited the time spent on whole group talk, and consequently restricted my own participation in collaborative construction of meaning and did not always have the opportunity to address misconceptions or model academic practice. However, I do not believe that working as a whole group more often is the answer; misconceptions are also not addressed when students remain silent in whole group discussion, and modelling is only valuable insofar as

it influences practice. Where whole group work predominates, students may learn to be silent in their first year, a passive way of ‘being’, and if they learn not to see themselves as participants in academic practice that might be even more limiting. In order to successfully forge communities of practice, students need to spend time working together so that they can establish mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. It is helpful to examine the pedagogic approach using Bernstein’s conceptualisation of ‘framing’: the way that what is to be learned is selected, ordered and transmitted (Bernstein, 2000). Where framing is strong, as it can be in whole group activity, the resultant visible pedagogic practice makes expectations explicit, but leaves little room for the exploration and interpretation made possible by the weaker framing of small group work. A balance must be struck between whole group work where tutors can model and make visible the ‘legitimate text’ (ibid., p 17) and small group work where students can collaboratively begin to produce the legitimate text.

Small group work involves a necessary transfer of power, from the tutor to the students. In the ways that students manage their groups, and the negotiations that ensue, students are positioned as responsible for making decisions about how they practise, and the practices that become part of their shared repertoire. There was more off-task talk in my recordings than I would have liked, yet if talk about academic practice is as important as I suggest, tutors must sometimes accept talk from other communities of practice in order for students to establish ways to re-orient the group to academic talk, as most did in my study. Trusting students to manage their own groups in this way requires tutors to ‘let go’ and to expect

students to take control rather than to be controlled. Where responsibility is ceded to students they see that tutors are not positioning them as dependent but as emerging members of the academic community. For some tutors and students this transfer of responsibility is difficult but it is, perhaps, the most important aspect of the pedagogical approach.

9.6.2 Positioning students as ‘academic’

Students need to be positioned by their tutors as ‘academic’ through a pedagogic approach that includes participation in practice and talk about practice, so that they can position themselves in relation to practice. If students are positioned as peripheral participants in academic practice, they have a responsibility to behave as participants, to complete reading and other preparation, and to make contributions. My pilot study showed that such an approach requires a ‘letting go’ of control that some tutors found difficult, yet tutors can limit students’ participation in the academic community if they position the students as dependent and, in effect, support the construction of student communities where the practices are more like school and students rely on their tutors to provide for them. This is particularly undermining if aspects of academic practice, such as preparing for sessions and bringing reading, have been reified only to have tutors anticipate and adapt to non-participation.

Tutors need to be aware of how their actions position students and, if necessary, find alternate ways of ‘being tutor’ that do not deny the students’ positioning as legitimate peripheral participants. Reifications of academic

practices such as arriving on time, prepared to contribute, in possession of the necessary preparation can be explored together at the outset of the module, and then revisited within the context of participation in those practices during the module. However, if such reifications provided by the tutor do not match their practices, the message is: ‘This is what academic students do, but I do not see you as academic’, and the potential for the students’ identities as ‘academic’ and their sense of academic practice being ‘what I do’ is diminished. Tutors need to consistently position students as novice academics, who participate in academic practice, from the outset of their course.

9.6.3 Talk to connect knowing and doing

Pedagogical arrangements need to be made that bring together knowledge of academic practice and participation in academic practice. A pedagogy of academic practice supported students’ construction of knowledge about practice as they made the transition into HE, and talk about practice was instrumental in providing that support. However, I distinguish between talk about practice within the context of participation in practice and that which is separate from participation. Making academic practice visible is partly achieved through reification of practice, explicitly telling students about aspects of practice, defining and exemplifying those things which often remain hidden, and providing opportunity for discussion. Such talk about practice might help to clarify, yet it is insufficient without participation in practice, through which the meanings of the reifications can begin to be explored within the context in which they are used.

When this participation is collaborative, talk about practice within the context of participation in that practice, allows meaning to be constructed.

In their initial conceptualisation of communities of practice, Lave & Wenger (1991) place importance on learning to talk as a legitimate peripheral participant in the community of practice, using the discourse practices of the community, however they do not deal with the role such talk plays in the individual's trajectory to fuller membership and talk 'about' practice is marginalised, without consideration of the role it might also play. Yet talk is what brings reification and participation together. Whereas Lave & Wenger, and later Wenger, are dismissive of the value of talk, and leave a mystery hanging over how the legitimate peripheral participant becomes a fuller participant, I have demonstrated the role of talk about practice within the context of practice in this process.

The necessity for reification of knowledge about practice, participation in that practice, and talk about practice as part of participation has implications for the planning of all modules, not just a single first year, first semester module. I have noted that, although a pedagogy of academic practice did support students' entry to the academic community, they were still very much on the periphery. To sustain an inward trajectory, the pedagogical approach needs to be sustained across modules and across all levels of study so that talk about academic practice is always within the context in which it is practiced. I take both a macro view, in which 'academic practice' in its broad sense can be understood as having shared

characteristics across the academy, and a micro view in which it is recognised that these characteristics will look different in different modules and assignments, so they need to be re-examined with students in each module. Students need to be constantly positioned as participants, who not only practice but also talk about practice: practices will be understood differently in new contexts; constructions of meanings will become more complex; practices will be understood as contested; students may even begin to see themselves as not only having the power to participate in practice but also to challenge practice. This is the key to continuing to understand practice more fully, to constructing meaning about what it means to practise academically and to constructing the self as academic - as a participant and one who talks about practice. Although I use academic practice broadly, to refer to literacy practices and the 'bread and butter' practices of academic life, I am aware that both in my own work and across the academy, more attention needs to be given in curriculum planning to academic reading practices.

9.6.4 Addressing the invisibility of reading

Academic reading is marginalised in the literature and in students' perceptions. It needs to be foregrounded as a practice in its own right, as part of the meaning-making process, not only as information gathering for written work. Seeing reading as accumulation, as many students do, makes assumptions about the truth of texts, leading to one-directional engagement (from the text to the student) rather than a dialogue. Engaging students in academic reading was the least successful aspect of the intervention. Despite adapting the pedagogical approach to make reading practices visible, participation in academic reading in

workshops was limited. This was in contrast to regular opportunities to participate collaboratively in writing practices within workshops, and may have contributed to students' continued positioning of academic reading as less important than academic writing, since the pedagogic approach appeared to do so. Collaborative writing which used reading that had been carried out as preparation, but in which reading itself was not the main focus, reinforced the view of reading as being in the service of writing and implied that writing practices needed to be addressed in a way that reading practices did not. But the problem lies not only in the way that the pedagogic arrangements led reading to be positioned.

Whilst the absence of participation in reading practices in the course design was a pedagogical omission, it was not simply the absence of participation, but the absence of the kind of talk that participation affords that limited students' construction of meaning in relation to academic reading practices. Talk about academic writing within the context of collaborative writing allowed students' individual reifications and ways of participating to inform and be informed by shared group reifications and ways of participating. Talk about academic reading was not in the context of collaborative reading, but in the context of reifications of reading; reification and participation were separate and so students' reifications were not modified by participation, and on some occasions, unhelpful reifications were reinforced.

Ways must be found to incorporate academic reading into collaborative participation so that the reifications of academic reading practices can be

connected meaningfully to participation in those practices through talk within the context of participation in practice. This is perhaps the greatest challenge since reading is not usually a collaborative task. People read at different speeds and my experience is that some students find having to read in class quite stressful, sometimes so much so that they are unable to take any meaning from the text, reading and re-reading words without understanding. Rather than admit defeat in relation to collaborative reading I see future research opportunities. Very short texts or sections of text might be read together and used by groups for a range of purposes to establish reading as making meaning rather than accumulating information, and to establish collaborative reading as non-threatening and part of ‘what we do’. I would also like to explore how anxiety might be reduced by giving reading in advance and then reading it again in the workshop for different purposes. This would allow students to participate in and talk about different ways of reading a text, different ways of engaging with the content and different ways of recording and using text within the context of participation in reading.

9.7 Final remarks

My study sheds light on how students work together in small groups, and how a pedagogy of academic practice can support entry to the academic community. O’Donovan et al. (2008) question whether or not communities of practice can be cultivated in HE and if any benefit would derive from doing so, but I see their first question as misconstrued; people working together in groups will, in any case, create their own communities of practice. Students working in small

groups will find ways to work together, and the practices in which they participate will resemble academic practices to a greater or lesser extent. The question is whether or not tutors can influence the practices in which students participate and the nature of their mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire so that they support student success. Practice defines the community, and from this perspective, a pedagogical approach centred on participation in academic practice, and in which talk about practice is promoted, is one way that the communities that students construct can be cultivated as 'academic'. The benefits lie in students' participation in and knowledge of academic practice and a context in which to construct an academic identity.

The pedagogy of academic practice relied on collaborative participation, but others have sought to support student engagement in academic practice in different ways. Cant & Watts (2007) describe an intervention to enable ways of thinking and practising as sociologists, specifically the 'sociological imagination' (Mills, 1959). They provided access to the field of sociology through making academic practice visible and supporting participation in sociological practice within the context of tiered learning tasks set on a VLE. Their approach was successful in increasing pass rates and student satisfaction, and although the intervention was online, seminars shared features of the workshops in my module, including:

[C]ollaborative discussion of the tiered learning exercises, encouraging peer support and engendering the ability to articulate and manipulate their newly acquired knowledge base ...

opportunity to make explicit some of the tacit features of learning within a community- the rules of academic communication and debate; the expectations of participation; and the sharing of expertise. (Cant & Watts, 2007, p. 13)

In another recent study, Wass et al. (2011) examined students' critical thinking in a zoology degree and concluded that the provision by tutors of all materials and a focus on the mastery of factual information in the first year limited critical thinking, which did not emerge until the second year when learning through research became the major pedagogical approach. Students in the second year began to see the purpose of critical thinking, and talk within the context of participation provided a context for epistemological shift:

[F]ormal and informal conversations helped students towards what one described as 'thinking like a researcher'. Curriculum components that provided conversational space ... supported changing dispositions as students matured and formed new attitudes to their own learning and that of their peer group. (Wass et al., 2011, p. 326)

Similar outcomes can be achieved in different ways, but making practice explicit and providing opportunity to participate in practice and to talk about practice appear to be common elements. In my own research, and that of Cant & Watts, the transition to HE is presented as embarking on something new, whereas in Wass et al. (2011) the students reported that although they had expected university to be different, their first year resembled the learning they had done in school, mostly memorising information to pass exams. As Reay et al. (2010) have

indicated, there may be a sense of security for students when the HEI provides continuity for the student rather than change, but there are costs in the more limited potential for accessing academic practice and acquiring academic identities. Students expect HE to make new demands; institutions should not seek continuity but rather should expect that students will engage with academic practice if it is made visible to them and they are supported in participation.

In contrast to the research that shows students rejecting academic identities, most of the students in this study did want to be academic, they did want to succeed and they did try to do what they thought they needed to do. However, the future is uncertain. The main reason given by successive cohorts of students for applying for the course is as a route to a better paid job; intellectual growth and personal fulfilment were both cited less frequently, and we can speculate that this will become even more marked in future. HE is currently not within the government portfolio of the Department for Education, but in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills where the discourse of the marketplace prevails. Molesworth et al. (2009) argue that a market-led university sector is incompatible with a transformational one and that tutors need to resist pressure from managers and students that would subsume HE into the discourse of the market where students are positioned as consumers, learning is seen as a commodity, and degrees are judged by their exchange value, rather than learning being valued for its inherent usefulness (Ainley, 2008; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Mann, 2008). An incident some years ago that contributed to my growing realisation that academic practice needed to be explored with students was when a student, eager to do well,

said ‘Just tell me what I need to write and I’ll write it’. If the consumer is always right, pressure to ‘just tell them what to write’ might increase, particularly when students are paying up to £9000 a year for their tuition, over one third of the median gross annual earnings in 2011 (*Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings* 2011).

There is evidence that students from institutions across the sector do still value disciplinary knowledge and the possibility for transformation. Ashwin et al. (2011) found that what the Social Science students in their study valued most was the breadth of thinking about the world, and the potential to contribute to society in new ways that their degrees made possible, rather than the financial return they might one day provide. Nevertheless, we may be entering an age when students, as consumers paying significantly increased fees, will demand less ‘academic practice’ and more factual content to be retained and regurgitated. The challenge may become to persuade students that academic practice is important; that their degree should involve critique of beliefs and principles in order to be the study ‘of’ as well as study ‘for’ (Barnett, 1997; Molesworth et al., 2009). Another area for research presents itself. Talk about practice would seem to be an obvious tool for exploring with students the value of academic ways of thinking and practising, and their transformatory potential for their lives beyond the university. Can talk about practice help convince students that academic practice is worthwhile? That being academic is worthwhile? Because convince them we must, otherwise we will be reduced to what I see as an unethical business model that takes their (borrowed) money and gives them something they have been told is valuable but which does

little to help them see beyond their immediate circumstance to other, as yet unimagined, ways of knowing, doing and being.

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Appendix 2.1

Questionnaire for first years in first week³⁰

Education and Subject Studies Questionnaire for First Year Students

Please complete this questionnaire carefully. Your responses will help us with our research into the expectations students have of the course, reasons for choosing to join the Education and Subject Studies (ESS) course at St. Hugh's University College and how best to induct students into the course.

Please complete it on your own to ensure that you are not influenced by others; remember it is your answers we are interested in. If you wish your responses to be anonymous, please leave your name blank. If you are willing to participate in follow up interviews later in the year, to develop the research further, please include your name.

It is important that you use the 'other' option if it is appropriate as this gives a more accurate result than trying to fit your response to one of the specified options.

Name (Optional)

Gender M / F

Age (Please tick)

18- 22	23- 30	31- 40	41- 50	51+

What subject are you studying alongside Education Studies?

Were you accepted through Clearing?

yes / no

³⁰ Free text responses had larger spaces in the original document.

Are you the first person from your family (parents, brothers, sisters) to attend university? yes/ no

What qualifications do you have? (Please give type of qualification and grade e.g. A levels, grades CCE)

Why did you decide to study for a degree? (Give up to three reasons)

Why did you apply to St. Hugh's University College? (Give all relevant reasons)

How would you categorise your answers to the previous question? (Please tick all that apply)

Location	
Course	
Reputation	
Recommendation	
Small college	
Other (Please specify)	

Did you apply for any other courses here?

No other courses	
ESS with a different subject	
3 Year Primary Education with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)	
Heritage Studies	
English Literature	
Drama in the Community	
Foundation Degree	

What attracted you to the ESS course? (Please tick all that apply)

Opportunity to continue studying my specialist subject	
Opportunity to study education as a distinct academic subject	
Preparation for a PGCE course	
Opportunity to study education without having to follow QTS requirements	
Course suggested as an alternative to my original	

choice (Please specify original choice)	
Unsure of my intended career and this gives more options than a QTS course	
Other (Please specify)	

What is your intended career? (Please tick all that apply)

Primary Teacher	
Secondary Teacher	
Other Educational (Please specify)	
Other Non- Educational (Please specify)	
Undecided (Please specify any ideas you are considering)	

What do you expect the Education modules to cover in your first year?
(We know you won't be sure about this, but we would like to know what your expectations are)

What is your knowledge of the course based on, and how useful did you find the information? (Rate usefulness 0-5, with 5 being very useful and 0 being useless)

	Tick if used	Usefulness
Prospectus		
Website		
Open Day		
Talking to current students		
Talking to past students		
Programme Handbook		
Other (Please specify)		

How do you think studying here will be different from studying at 6th form/ college?

If you feel that any of your answers require explanation or if there is anything you wish to add, please use the space below.

Appendix 4.1

Student weekly feedback (online questions)

This document fulfils two purposes; it is for you, to help you to reflect on your participation and learning in the workshops, but it is also intended to help us to research the module. Please answer in your own words and for your own situation; it is each individual's experience that makes up the picture of the whole group, so anything you think is important to you should be included.

- 1) Did you feel able to participate in today's workshops? Was there anything that particularly helped you to participate or held you back?
- 2) Do you feel that you achieved the intended learning outcomes for today's workshops? (Please explain your answer if you wish)
- 3) What are the most important, useful or interesting things you have learnt in the workshops today? (These may or may not relate to the intended learning outcomes). You can include as many things as you think are relevant.
- 4) Why are those things important, useful or interesting to you?
- 5) Is there anything else you would like to add to help us understand your experience of today's workshops?

Appendix 4.2

Tutor weekly feedback (online questions)

Date:

How well did students participate in today's workshops?

Do you feel that the workshops enabled students to achieve the intended learning outcomes?

Were there any aspects of the workshops that were particularly successful?

Are there any particular problems or issues that we need to address?

Appendix 4.3

End of semester review³¹

Your learning

The workshops helped me understand the following better:

	Not at all	A bit	Quite a lot	Very much
Different theories about learning and development				
How to take a deep approach to my studies				
How to write academically				
How to include references in my writing				
How to structure my writing				
How to develop argument				
How to become more analytical				

Your participation

	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Always
In workshops I contributed to whole group discussions/activities				
Why?				
In workshops I contributed to small group discussions/activities				
Why?				
I did the set reading				
Why?				
I brought books and notes from school placement to the workshops when we were asked to				
Why?				
I used the module booklet to help me know what I needed to do				
Why?				
I attended workshops				
Why?				

³¹ Free text responses had larger spaces in the original document.

Appendix 4.4

Information Sheet for prospective participants

I am undertaking research as part of my Ph.D. on the module ES1A and would like all of you to be involved in this process, since you are the people who are most affected by it, and who can help us to make it even better. This module is designed not just to teach you about theories about children's learning- it is designed to help you understand about learning at university and becoming successful students.

The main way I will be researching this year is by recording the workshop sessions. No-one will see the recordings except me, and possibly my supervisor at Nottingham University. I want to see how you respond to the things we do, how helpful they are for your learning and ultimately how the module can be further developed next year. I will also make audio recordings of some of your discussions when you are working in small groups. This will be completely voluntary. You do not have to be involved in the research, but it will be more valuable if we have a wide range of students represented.

If you don't want to be part of this, I will simply ignore anything you say or do when I look at or listen to the recordings. Choosing not to participate will not reflect badly on you or affect anything else, and even if you say at the start that that you are willing to participate, you can change your mind at any time.

Ethical concerns are of course a priority; the study has been approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Nottingham, School of Education. Throughout the study your personal details will be treated as strictly confidential. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage and request that any data about you is deleted. This data will only be available to me and my supervisor and will not be passed on to any third parties. Throughout the study, the Data Protection Act will be followed.

After the study has been completed my findings will be published in my Ph.D. thesis at the University of Nottingham. There is also the possibility that papers arising from the study may be published in Academic Journals. Participants will remain anonymous with pseudonyms being used instead of names.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me, (email address included).

If you have any concerns about the ethical standards please contact the Research Ethics Coordinator at the University of Nottingham, (email address included).

Appendix 4.5

Consent Form for prospective participants

Project title Practice Based Pedagogy: Knowing, Acting and Becoming a Student

Researcher's name Jane Tapp

Supervisor's name Monica McLean

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped / videotaped during the workshops.
- I understand that data will be stored electronically in a secure database that requires a password, and paper copies of transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Only Jane Tapp (researcher) and Monica McLean (supervisor) will have access to the data.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact Dr. Alison Kington, (email address included) the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Participant.....
Date.....

Researcher.....
Date.....

Appendix 5.1

Learning outcomes, syllabus and session overview for ES1A

following 2008 re-validation

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this module, students will be expected to:

- organise and demonstrate a factual knowledge and conceptual understanding of the principles and theories associated with child development and learning;
- begin to use and apply theoretical perspectives of development and learning in order to describe, analyse and interpret findings;
- develop critical thinking through discussion of ideas and issues and begin to recognise the complexity of different viewpoints in the construction of an argument;
- communicate findings in a clear, concise and effective manner.

SYLLABUS

The syllabus will include a study of the individual from birth to adulthood. Students will be introduced to a range of major educational theorists and philosophers concerned with child development and learning, including Skinner, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Alexander and Rogoff, and the significant contributions of each. Students will reflect on their own approaches to learning and begin to explore critical thinking. The strengths, limitations and general applicability of theory will be considered carefully in the light of evidence presented and this will be related to work on placement. Students will be guided towards and supported in carrying out classroom-based observations and other tasks. They will discuss and reflect upon their growing awareness of the developing child within the educational system and wider society, and of their own learning. This module takes a sociocultural approach in that student learning is conceptualised as a process of changing participation in the activities of school and the university college.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Date	Session
19.09 Friday	Lecture: An overview of the course, the modules studied and the assessment pattern.
	Seminar: Getting to know you
26.09 Friday	Workshop: What is learning?
	Lecture: Living and Learning
	Lecture: Theoretical approaches
	Lecture/ Directed task School placement: organisation, structure and requirements.
03.10 Friday.	Workshop: Approaches to learning
	Lecture: Learners of all ages
	Lecture: Piaget 1
	Workshop: Making sense of Piaget
06.10 Monday	School Placement
13.10 Monday	School Placement
17.10 Friday.	Workshop: Making use of Piaget
	Lecture: Piaget 2
	Lecture: Vygotsky
	Workshop: Building an argument
20.10 Monday	School Placement
w/c 27.10	Reading Week
03.11 Monday	School Placement
07.11 Fri.	Workshop: Analytical writing
	Lecture: Bruner

	Lecture: The Sociocultural context for learning
	Workshop: Making sense of Vygotsky and Bruner
10.11 Monday	School Placement
w/c 17.11 Monday-Friday	Block Placement
24.11 Monday	School Placement
28.11 Fri	Workshop: Making use of Vygotsky and Bruner
	Lecture: Language
	Lecture: Dialogic Teaching 1
	Workshop: Language as a tool for Learning
01.12 Monday	School Placement
08.12 Monday	School Placement
12.12 Fri	Workshop: Why take a dialogic approach?
	Lecture: Dialogic Teaching 2
	Lecture: Becoming a student
	Workshop: What is learning?
15.12 Monday	School Placement
w/c 15.12	Individual Tutorials

Appendix 5.2

Full list of workshop titles, overviews, objectives and summary descriptions of activities from 2009-10

Overview in module Booklet	Learning Outcomes and Key Objectives for this session ³²	Summary of activity
Friday 25.09.09		
10 – 12 What is learning? This workshop is to help you to think about learning. What does it mean to you? It will also introduce you to one way of categorising different views of learning.	1 To know that there are different ways to define learning. To know and use one way of categorising different views about learning. 2 To organise and categorise according to given criteria. 3 To question assumptions. To work collaboratively.	Individual and group writing ‘What is learning?’ Introduction to Saljo’s categories and comparison with own thoughts. Small group discussion about expectations followed by whole group plenary.
2-3 Rote Learning This workshop uses the topic of rote learning to explore the benefits and pitfalls of internet searching, and how to approach websites critically.	1 To know that there is a range of views about rote learning. 3 To approach websites critically. To begin to engage in academic debate, testing ideas out against each other. To recognise your role as a member of the learning community and the importance of your contribution to group tasks.	Small group discussion about the place of rote learning; what do you think, what other views might you encounter in the wider population? Whole group plenary. Whole group search ‘rote learning’ using Google. Tutor led discussion on how to find out who wrote what you are reading and who to evaluate websites. Whole group discussion: managing time.

³² The session objectives are all linked to module objectives. The numbers identify the module objectives to which they relate:

1. organise and demonstrate a factual knowledge and conceptual understanding of the principles and theories associated with child development and learning;
2. begin to use and apply theoretical perspectives of development and learning in order to describe, analyse and interpret findings;
3. develop critical thinking through discussion of ideas and issues and begin to recognise the complexity of different viewpoints in the construction of an argument;
4. communicate findings in a clear, concise and effective manner.

Friday 02.10.09		
10 – 12 Portfolio task 1. Rote Learning In this workshop you will share your findings about the websites from last week and begin to think about how you might use internet sources in your written work. We will discuss ways to help you approach academic reading and writing.	3 To know some ways to evaluate websites To know the importance of reading for meaning To enter into debate To use reading to inform debate 4 To know the importance of referencing and how to reference websites To share findings and ideas	Students present findings on websites found last week on Google. Which would be suitable for use in an essay? Why? In small groups, use the handbook for written coursework to see if you can work out how to reference the suitable websites. Small group discussion about one of the readings and any parts you found difficult; what do you do when you get stuck? Tutor led discussion about strategies for reading. Small group task; is rote learning valuable? What would you conclude and why? How could you use these websites to present different perspectives? Write an outline plan together.
2 – 3 Making sense of Piaget In this workshop you will get the chance to clarify your understanding of Piaget's major ideas and to begin to consider different opinions. We will also continue to explore strategies to use when faced with a difficult text, and look at one way to 'get into' academic reading.	1 To know key themes in Piaget's theory of cognitive development. 3 To know one way to approach difficult texts. To take and defend a point of view. To recognise the value of different opinions, including your own	Whole group task: recalling key themes about Piaget's work from the lecture. Small group task debating the relative importance for teachers of different aspects of Piaget's theory. Individually reading a short text about Piaget. Tutor led discussion about ways to approach a difficult text.

Friday 16.10.09		
10 – 12 Portfolio task 2. Making use of Piaget This workshop focuses on the evidence you will use in Portfolio task 2 when you write about Piaget's theory, including reading and	1 To know that surface/deep is one way to categorise approaches to learning. To know what characterises each of these approaches. 2	In small group, comparing summaries written of set reading as preparation. Tutor introduction to deep/surface approaches to learning. Small group analysis of annotated texts

<p>school observations. We will also look at how you can approach study to get the most from it.</p>	<p>To analyse and reflect on your approach to reading. To relate aspects of Piaget's theory to observations.</p>	<p>to identify the different approaches taken by the readers and by the self in relation to the set text. Video, relating Piaget's theory to observations of teaching and learning in school context. Small group discussions comparing what they had taken from the video and whole group plenary. Whole group discussion about finding relevant texts in the library. Using the library catalogue together.</p>
<p>2 – 3 Portfolio task 2. Writing an argument This workshop is designed to help you think about how you might use the evidence you have to support your views about Piaget in order to construct an argument.</p>	<p>1 To consolidate knowledge and understanding of Piaget's work. 3 To know what constitutes an argument in higher education. To use evidence to support your view of the value of Piaget's theory. To consider alternative perspectives and recognise the validity of different opinions, including your own.</p>	<p>Small group discussion, what is argument. Tutor input on academic argument. Small group discussion about how Piaget's theory can inform teaching. Organising evidence from reading and observation to show different sides of an argument.</p>

w/c 26.10.09 Intra-Semester break (Reading Week)

Friday 06.11.09

<p>10 – 12 Portfolio task 2. Analytical Writing This workshop focuses on analytical writing, what it is, and how you can begin to make your writing more analytical.</p>	<p>1 To further consolidate understanding of Piaget's work. 3 To know what is meant by 'analysis'. To contrast descriptive and analytical writing. To identify where work is overly descriptive and ask analytical questions. 4 To write clearly, with</p>	<p>Small group discussion, what is analysis? Tutor input contrasting analytical and descriptive writing. Small group analysis of a piece of writing to say where it is analytical and where it is descriptive. Analysing partner's draft (completed as preparation) to find places where it needs to be more analytical. Working on the draft using partner's comments.</p>
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	accurate referencing.	
2 – 3 Making sense of socio-cultural approaches In this workshop you will get the chance to clarify your understanding of major ideas in socio-cultural theory and begin to consider how you respond to lectures to get the most from them.	1 To know key themes in socio-cultural perspectives of learning. 3 To take and defend a point of view. To recognise that being unsure, or confused, is normal!	Whole group task: recalling key themes about sociocultural theory from the lecture. Small group discussion to then select two aspects of sociocultural theory that they think are important for teachers to know and understand. What are the reasons for this choice? Writing choices together with a justification to contribute to whole group mapping of ideas. Whole group task: identification of aspects of the lecture that had been hard to understand. Jointly posing three questions that the group thinks need to be answered, and which will be researched for the next workshop.

w/c 16.11.09 Block Week School Placement

Friday 27.11.09		
10 – 12 Portfolio Task 3: Making use of Socio-cultural approaches In this workshop you will use your reading and school observations to work collaboratively to try out ideas and develop your understanding of Socio-cultural theory.	1 To know that there are different opinions about the value of socio-cultural theory. To know what evidence supports your view of the usefulness of socio-cultural theory. 2 To use evidence from school and reading to critically evaluate socio-cultural theory. 3 To integrate evidence in the development of an argument. To recognise your role in contributing to the joint construction of knowledge.	In three groups: sharing answers to the one of the questions posed in the previous workshop. Write an explanation to be shared with the other groups. Tutor introduction to ‘critical thinking’ and discussion about what this means for academic writing. Whole group construction of a structure for a piece of writing. What might you want to conclude? What evidence do you have?

<p>2 – 3 Language as a Tool for Learning In this workshop you will get the opportunity to see different types of teacher talk and to begin to reflect on their place in the classroom.</p>	<p>1 To know the different types of teacher talk identified by Robin Alexander 2 To identify ways in which talk is used in the classroom and how this might promote learning</p>	<p>Whole group watching dvd of different uses of talk for learning Whole group discussion about types of talk seen on school placement</p>
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Friday 11.12.09		
<p>10 – 12 The value of talk in the classroom; Working together on Assessment Component 2 This workshop will help you identify arguments both in favour and against taking a dialogic approach.</p>	<p>1 To know arguments in favour of taking a dialogic approach. 2 To use evidence (reading and observation) to discuss talk in the classroom. 3 To consider counter arguments and how they might be addressed. 4 To articulate your argument in a real-life context.</p>	<p>In small groups: writing notes and then a briefing sheet on the value of dialogic teaching. In small groups: reading others' briefing sheets and taking a critical stance. Making arguments and counter arguments.</p>
<p>2 – 3 Assessment Component 2 This workshop will review the work you have done this semester on debate, referencing, argument, structure, analysis and being critical, within the context of Assessment Component 2. There will be time to ask questions so that you are clear about what you need to do for this assignment.</p>	<p>1 To know key themes in Dialogic Teaching and the theoretical basis for these 4 To be familiar with and able to use a range of 'academic literacy' tools</p>	<p>Tutor led discussion reviewing: debate; referencing; argument; structure; analysis; being critical.</p>

Appendix 7.1

Assignment Brief: Assessment component 1

PROGRAMME	SUBJECT
BA/BSc Specialist Subject and Education Studies	Education Studies

LEVEL	MODULE CODE	TITLE OF ASSIGNMENT	WEIGHTING
4	ES1A	Portfolio	50%

DATE DISCUSSED	<p>This assessment will be 'set' in the lecture 'Introduction to the Module' on 25/9/09</p> <p>It will also be discussed and worked on in workshops, as outlined in the module booklet.</p> <p>THIS ASSESSMENT IS NOT ANONYMOUSLY MARKED.</p>
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DESCRIPTION OF TASK

This assignment portfolio comprises 3 separate 700 word pieces of work which are written throughout the semester. Workshops will help you to begin and develop your ideas but you will also need to read, reflect and make observations in school, following the school based tasks.

Task 1 Is there a place for rote learning in schools today? Should there be?

Task 2 How can knowledge and understanding of Piaget's theory help teachers and others working with children to do so more effectively? Explain your reasons with evidence from school and reading.

Task 3 How can knowledge and understanding of socio-cultural theory help teachers and others working with children to do so more effectively? Explain your reasons with evidence from school and reading.

What we are looking for

- Evidence that you have understood the value and limitations of different theoretical perspectives.
- The ability to use observational and literary evidence to support your argument
- A critical approach which evaluates evidence and considers alternatives
- The ability to be selective. These are short pieces of writing, you cannot include everything. You can more easily achieve high marks if you choose a clear focus rather than skimming over the surface of a lot of different areas

Task 1 MUST be handed in on 15/10/09. You will receive written feedback on this to help you to understand better what we are looking for. You will also be given an indication of the grade but NOT a numerical mark even though Task 1 WILL contribute to your overall mark for this assessment. This is because we grade the 3 pieces as a whole when they are handed in on 18/12/09.

Please note that any unauthorised absence whilst on placement is likely to significantly affect your ability to complete this portfolio and thus is likely to result in module failure.

MODULE OUTCOMES TO BE TESTED

- organise and demonstrate a factual knowledge and conceptual understanding of the principles and theories associated with child development and learning;
- begin to use and apply theoretical perspectives of development and learning in order to describe, analyse and interpret findings;
- develop critical thinking through discussion of ideas and issues and begin to recognise the complexity of different viewpoints in the construction of an argument;
- communicate findings in a clear, concise and effective manner.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Knowledge and Understanding

- Knowledge of major theoretical perspectives of child development and learning
- Understanding of how these theories can be used to interpret and analyse children's actions

Collection and Selection of Evidence

- To select appropriate literary sources
- To gather appropriate data whilst working as a participant observer in school
- To ensure anonymity of all individuals and institutions

Discussion and Argument

- To organise evidence in coherent structure
- To present different perspectives within the argument
- To justify assertions

Quality of Communication

- To communicate concisely in written form
- To reference all sources in line with guidance and to organise reference list correctly.

DATE AND TIME OF SUBMISSION

Hand in Task 1 15/10/09 08.30- 16.00

All Tasks 18/12/09 08.30- 16.00

Note to students: Any work submitted after these dates will receive a mark of zero. All requests for extensions must be submitted to the Programme Leader for approval before the date stated. Such claims must be on the standard pro forma and must be accompanied by corroborating evidence. Following the date of submission requests may be made for the Board of Examiners to take extenuating circumstances for non-submission into account. All such requests must be made on the standard pro forma and must be accompanied by corroborating evidence.

As this work is not anonymously marked, please use your name on the hand-in sheet.

DATE ON WHICH MARKED WORK WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR COLLECTION

Feedback on Task 1 will be available on	06/11/09
All Tasks	05/02/10

Inaccuracies in presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar will be commented upon in tutor feedback sheets in order that appropriate study skills support may be sought. We may refer you to Student Support if we identify that this would be of benefit to you and your work.

Where a student submits an assignment which exceeds the prescribed word limit, marking will cease at the point at which the word limit has been exceeded by a margin of 10% and the mark will be awarded on the basis of the extent to which the criteria for assessment have been met up to that point.

PLAGIARISM

Note to students: Your attention is drawn to the College's Code of Practice covering plagiarism. Penalties for work found to be plagiarised are severe and can include the withdrawal of the right to resubmit work and termination of studies. On the submission of the assignment you will be required to sign a declaration that the work is your own and that all sources have been properly acknowledged.

MARK SCHEME

Equal weighting will be given to each category

Mark	Knowledge and Understanding	Collection and Selection of Evidence	Discussion and Argument	Quality of Communication and Presentation
70-100	In depth knowledge and understanding of theory and perceptive application to observations	Critical judgement in selection of literary and observational evidence in the development of your argument. Wide reading evident, including set texts.	Independent thinking in a coherent, well-formulated, logical structure, which draws key strands together to reach conclusions.	Communication of high quality showing awareness of audience, precision of phrasing. Referencing of a very high standard.
60-69	Confident knowledge of theory and clear understanding of how it relates to observations. No misconceptions evident.	Pertinent selection of literary and observational evidence which is effectively linked to your arguments. Set texts are used appropriately but reading goes beyond set texts.	Clear evidence of sustained thinking in the construction of an argument. Ideas are discussed in relation to each other and points made lead logically to the conclusion.	A written style which contributes to the clear and fluent communication of meaning. Generally appropriate for the audience. Accurate referencing
50-59	Sound knowledge of theory and sound understanding of how it relates to observations. A few minor misconceptions may be evident.	Sound selection of literary and observational evidence which is clearly linked to the arguments being made. Set texts are used appropriately.	An essay which is sound and coherent in the discussion of different perspectives. Structure may not lead logically from point to point or lead to the conclusion.	Few inconsistencies in written style. Possibly a few difficulties with register. A few inaccuracies in phrasing and referencing
40-49	Basic knowledge of theory and able to relate to relevant observations. Some misconceptions may be evident.	Largely relevant literary and observational evidence. It is usually clear how your arguments link to your evidence. Set texts are included.	A mainly coherently structured discussion showing awareness of different perspectives. Some inclusion of opinion rather than evidence based claims.	Some inconsistency in written style which impairs communication. Some difficulty with register. A number of inaccuracies in phrasing and referencing
35-39	Limited knowledge of theory and limited ability to relate to relevant observations. Several misconceptions evident.	Literary and observational evidence not always relevant, Heavy reliance on a limited range of sources.	Limited awareness of different perspectives and limited evidence of the ability to provide a coherent structure for discussion. Some inclusion of opinion rather than evidence based claims.	Many inconsistencies and inaccuracies which impair communication; inappropriate for audience. Many errors in referencing.
30-34	Limited knowledge of theory and limited ability to relate to relevant observations. Several misconceptions evident.	Literary and observational evidence not always relevant, Heavy reliance on a limited range of insufficiently academic sources.	Limited awareness of different perspectives and limited evidence of the ability to provide a coherent structure for discussion. Frequent inclusion of opinion rather than evidence based claims.	Many inconsistencies and inaccuracies which impair communication; inappropriate for audience. Many errors in referencing.
0-29	Little or no knowledge of theory or relevant issues	Literary and observational evidence not relevant. No reference to reading.	Little or no attempt to develop a structure or discussion. An account that is purely descriptive.	Many inconsistencies and inaccuracies which impair communication; inappropriate for the audience. Little or no attempt to reference accurately

Appendix 7.2

Assignment Brief: Assessment component 2

PROGRAMME	SUBJECT
BA/BSc Specialist Subject and Education Studies	Education Studies

LEVEL	MODULE CODE	TITLE OF ASSIGNMENT	WEIGHTING
4	ES1A	Talk in the Classroom (2000 words)	50%

DATE DISCUSSED	This assessment will be 'set' in the lecture 'Language and Learning' on 27/11/09 It will also be discussed and worked on in workshops on 11/12/09 THIS ASSESSMENT IS ANONYMOUSLY MARKED.
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DESCRIPTION OF TASK

Alexander (2006;14) is concerned for '...the relative scarcity of talk which really challenges children to think for themselves, and especially the low level of cognitive demand in many questions' and Mercer (2007;3) notes that '...there is not enough emphasis in educational policy and practice on the value of teaching children how to use language for learning'.

Imagine that you work in a school keen to take a more dialogic approach to teaching and learning, and you need to explain to the governors why you are doing so. Many governors are unaware of the potential for using dialogue more widely in the classroom to extend children's thinking and they may not have time to read lengthy documents.

Create a resource for governors to explain the value of talk in the classroom. It should explain the theoretical basis and give clear explanations of the key issues. You should present your work in such a way as to appeal to the target audience, for example as a leaflet, a booklet, or a cd-rom. You can include pictures if you wish, to make it user friendly. However, you should use a formal academic tone; governors would want to know that this is research based and not just the latest fad, so you must also include academic references. Whatever format you choose, work must be word processed and include a bibliography. Aim for the highest standards of presentation however your work is presented.

No extra marks will be given for different presentation formats; we are simply giving you the opportunity to work in a way that you prefer.

If you are not sure if your choice of format is acceptable, please check with the

module leader.

What we are looking for

- A clear explanation of the theoretical basis for valuing talk in the classroom
- Identification and explanation of the key issues
- Justification for such an approach in the classroom, with a recognition of alternative views
- High quality presentation that would appeals to the target audience (governors).

MODULE OUTCOMES TO BE TESTED

- organise and demonstrate a factual knowledge and conceptual understanding of the principles and theories associated with child development and learning;
- develop critical thinking through discussion of ideas and issues and begin to recognise the complexity of different viewpoints in the construction of an argument;
- communicate findings in a clear, concise and effective manner.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Knowledge and Understanding

- Knowledge and understanding of the theoretical perspectives underpinning approaches to teaching which value talk

Collection and Selection of Evidence

- To select appropriate information from texts

Discussion and Argument

- Organize information to create a persuasive argument

Quality of Communication and Presentation

- To communicate concisely in written form
- To present in a high quality format, appealing to busy teachers
- The use of correct referencing and bibliography formats

DATE AND TIME OF SUBMISSION

22/01/10 08.30- 16.00

Note to students: Any work submitted after this date will receive a mark of zero. All requests for extensions must be submitted to the Programme Leader for approval before the date stated. Such claims must be on the standard pro forma and must be accompanied by corroborating evidence. Following the date of submission requests may be made for the Board of Examiners to take extenuating circumstances for non-submission into account. All such requests must be made on the standard pro forma and must be accompanied by corroborating evidence.

As this work is anonymously marked, please use your student number on the hand- in sheet.

DATE ON WHICH MARKED WORK WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR COLLECTION

19/02/10

Inaccuracies in presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar will be commented upon in tutor feedback sheets in order that appropriate study skills support may be sought. We may refer you to Student Support if we identify that this would be of benefit to you and your work.

Where a student submits an assignment which exceeds the prescribed word limit, marking will cease at the point at which the word limit has been exceeded by a margin of 10% and the mark will be awarded on the basis of the extent to which the criteria for assessment have been met up to that point.

PLAGIARISM

Note to students: Your attention is drawn to the College's Code of Practice covering plagiarism. Penalties for work found to be plagiarised are severe and can include the withdrawal of the right to resubmit work and termination of studies. On the submission of the assignment you will be required to sign a declaration that the work is your own and that all sources have been properly acknowledged.

MARK SCHEME

Equal weighting will be given to each category

Mark	Knowledge and Understanding	Collection and Selection of Evidence	Discussion and Argument	Quality of Communication and Presentation
70-100	In depth knowledge of theory and perceptive understanding of relevant issues. No misconceptions evident.	Critical judgement in selection of literary evidence. Wide reading evident.	Independent thinking in a coherent, well-formulated structure, which convinces the reader.	Communication of high quality showing awareness of audience and precision of phrasing. Presentation and referencing of a very high standard.
60-69	Confident knowledge of theory and clear understanding of relevant issues No misconceptions evident.	Pertinent selection of literary evidence. Relevant reading beyond that given as set reading is included.	Clear evidence of sustained thinking in the construction of a persuasive resource which convinces the reader.	A written style which communicates meaning clearly and fluently. Generally appropriate for the audience. Accurate referencing and high quality presentation.
50-59	Sound knowledge of theory and sound understanding of relevant issues A few minor misconceptions may be evident.	Sound selection of literary evidence. Relevant reading is included.	A resource which is sound and coherent but not entirely convincing.	Few inconsistencies in written style. Possibly a few difficulties with register or phrasing. A few inconsistencies in referencing and presentation.
40-49	Basic knowledge of theory and able to identify relevant issues Some misconceptions may be evident.	Largely relevant literary evidence is included.	A mainly coherent resource but not entirely convincing.	Some inconsistency in written style which impairs communication. Some difficulty with register or phrasing. A number of inconsistencies in referencing and presentation.
35-39	Limited knowledge of theory and limited ability to identify relevant issues Several misconceptions evident.	Literary evidence not always relevant. Heavy reliance on a limited range of sources.	Limited evidence of the ability to provide a coherent structure. Not convincing.	Many inconsistencies and inaccuracies which impair communication; inappropriate for audience. Many errors in referencing. Poorly presented.
30-34	Limited knowledge of theory and limited ability to identify relevant issues Several misconceptions evident.	Literary evidence not always relevant. Heavy reliance on a limited range of sources.	Limited evidence of the ability to provide a coherent structure. Not convincing.	Many inconsistencies and inaccuracies which impair communication; inappropriate for audience. Many errors in referencing. Poorly presented.
0-29	In depth knowledge of theory and perceptive understanding of relevant issues.	Literary evidence not relevant. No reference to reading.	Little or no attempt to develop a structure. Not convincing.	Many inconsistencies and inaccuracies which impair communication; inappropriate for the audience. Little or no attempt to reference accurately. Poorly presented.