'How did you find the argument?': Conflicting discourses in a master's dissertation tutorial

Hania Salter-Dvorak*
University of Exeter

This paper discusses feedback for developing L2 writing. It presents data from a serendipitous audio-recording of one L2 master's student's tutorial with her dissertation supervisor at a UK university, which is extracted from a 13-month linguistic ethnography. Following 'academic literacies' scholars, I view the tutorial as a 'literacy event' (Heath, 1982: 83), which, I argue, takes place in a 'backstage' (Goffman, 1959) social learning space where student–teacher power relations and identities may be asymmetrical, contested, and fluid. In line with the tenets of linguistic ethnography (Copland and Creese, 2015: 13), the discourse analysis of the tutorial considers how the interaction here is 'embedded in wider social contexts and structures'. I identify dominant institutional discourses and discuss how these create power relations that interact with language, identities, and agency in the student's experience. These data are triangulated with post-recall interviews with the two participants, the dissertation draft with the lecturer's written feedback, the summative feedback, and course documents. Findings demonstrate that, while the student was interested in developing argumentation, the supervisor focused on other aspects. I relate this to recent literature on knowledge transformation and argumentation in academic writing, and discuss its implications for L2 master's students by drawing on Bourdieu's notion of 'right to speak' (1991).

Keywords: L2 academic writing; tutor feedback; argumentation; language; institutional discourses

Introduction

The value of appropriate feedback for developing L2 writing has been widely discussed in the literature, both from the perspective of written teacher feedback and spoken dialogue in tutorials (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). The majority of studies on the latter either rely on self-report (for example, Krase, 2007), or focus on contexts outside the discipline, such as writing centres (Thonus, 2002). This paper, in contrast, presents data from the inside: a serendipitous audio-recording of one L2 master's student's tutorial with her dissertation supervisor at a UK university, which is extracted from a 13-month linguistic ethnography on the experience of 3 L2 master's students. In line with 'academic literacies' scholars, I view the tutorial as a 'literacy event', defined by Heath as 'any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions' (Heath, 1982: 83). Additionally, I suggest that this particular event takes place in a 'backstage' (Goffman, 1959) social learning space in which student–teacher power relations and identities may be asymmetrical, contested, and fluid. Following Lillis (2008) and Ivanič (1998), I am interested in how these phenomena are played out through 'actions around texts' (Ivanič, 1998: 62) in this context.

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* Email: H.M.Salter-Dvorak@exeter.ac.uk

Through discourse analysis of the tutorial transcript, I attempt to identify dominant institutional discourses (Blommaert and Jie, 2010: 72) relating to academic literacy, and discuss how these create power relations that interact with language, identities, and agency in the student's experience. To this end, following Copland (2015: 102), I look for face-threatening acts, by identifying points where 'negotiation or demonstration of power were particularly apparent' (Copland, 2015: 107). In line with the tenets of linguistic ethnography (Copland and Creese, 2015: 13), the analysis 'considers how these interactions are embedded in wider social contexts and structures'. The data are triangulated with post-recall interviews with the two participants, the dissertation draft with the lecturer's written feedback, the summative feedback, and course documents. Findings demonstrate that, while the student was interested in developing argumentation, the supervisor focused on other aspects. I relate this to recent literature on knowledge transformation and argumentation in academic writing, and discuss its implications for L2 master's students by drawing on Bourdieu's notion of 'right to speak' (1991).

Theoretical framework

The literature on L2 master's academic writers is consistent in acknowledging the considerable challenges such students face in their new learning contexts that may potentially disempower them. First, their socialization into the discourse community of their discipline in the English-medium university takes place through a second language that is still developing (Salter-Dvorak, 2014). Second, as many arrive in the host university immediately following their first degree, they are unfamiliar with the teaching styles that they will encounter there. Third, as their previous writing in English has typically been limited to the 250-word IELTS essay, the demands of producing much longer intertextual essays that are 'linguistically correct and culturally appropriate' (Salter-Dvorak, 2016b: 20) are numerous: lack of familiarity with conventions of academic referencing, for example, may result in unintentional plagiarism (Pecorari, 2006). Yet, in spite of the generally successful pass rates of L2 students, they continue to be framed as 'deficient' by dominant institutional discourses in HE (Spack, 1997b; Robinson-Pant, 2005). In order to investigate the impact of such discourses on the development of academic literacy of L2 master's students, situated studies are needed, as elaborated below.

Geertz, in his discussion of 'intellectual villages', proposes that the study of academe should include factors other than the intellectual, such as 'political, moral and broadly personal' (Geertz, 1973: 157), a focus grounded in cultural anthropology. In the UK, this focus has been deployed to examine social contexts of academic writing through the ethnographic work of 'academic literacies' scholars, such as Lea and Street (1998), Ivanič (1998), Lillis (2008), Street *et al.* (2001), Scott and Turner (2008), and Turner (2012). Spearheaded by Lea and Street (1998), academic literacies privileges the role of context; it views academic writing as the result of a socially constructed process mediated through sets of 'literacy practices' that emerge from 'a constellation of literacy events' in which people engage when preparing any academic text (Ivanič, 1998: 63). The aim, then, is to uncover how literacy practices and events are embedded in particular social and political contexts and linked to broader cultural institutions and practices. Street's pluralization of the word 'literacy' thus indicates rejection of the view of academic literacy as an autonomous ability to use written language that develops within a homogeneous view of academic culture. Lea and Street's research in universities, for example, found that successful academic writing reflects a particular way of 'constructing the world', rather than a set of 'generic writing skills' (Lea and Street, 2000: 40). Through a focus on staff feedback on student writing, they identified gaps between staff expectations and student interpretations. While lecturers typically referred to the importance of 'argument' or 'structure', these were neither easy to

explain, nor stable across disciplines. The instability of the university context also emerges from the work of Ivanič (1998), who reveals how some literacy practices in the academy are privileged over others, shaping identity construction of mature student writers; in so doing, she illuminates not just how people do academic writing, but what it feels like. More recently, academic literacies scholars have revealed the inconsistencies surrounding proofreading of student academic writing in universities (Scott and Turner, 2008; Turner, 2011). The contribution of academic literacies to academic writing research, then, is seminal; its post-structuralist view challenges unproblematized autonomous models of writing, as well as their contexts. However, as Street and Leung have argued, this research tradition has not sufficiently foregrounded issues of language; they suggest that incorporating the English as an additional language research tradition would enrich the academic literacies agenda (Street and Leung, 2010: 309).

In parallel with academic literacies, a growing body of participant ethnography has focused specifically on processes surrounding the academic writing of L2 university students (Casanave, 1995; Benesch, 1999; Belcher, 1994; Kiely, 2009; Krase, 2007; Spack, 1997a; Prior, 1998; Swales, 1990; Salter-Dvorak, 2014). Often carried out by English-language educators and academic writing teachers, this research examines how students negotiate texts and the role played by identities and relations with peers and faculty. Many studies present evidence of how lecturers both predict student performance and explain difficulties in retrospect through a deficiency discourse that employs ethnic stereotyping and imposed identities. For example, Prior (1998) relates how one professor stereotyped a Taiwanese student as someone who 'can't write' and who, 'like all South East Asians', has 'trouble with prepositions' (Prior, 1998: 68). Similarly, Krase's case study (2007) of a Taiwanese student identifies a clash of frames between supervisor and student conceptions of dissertation supervision: while the student wanted specific guidance, the supervisor subscribed to the 'independent learning' discourse prevalent in anglophone academia. As Prior argues, attitudes create social relationships that may deny affordances for learning; students' progress can thus be 'socially mediated or impeded' (Prior, 1998: 69).

It would be inaccurate, however, to present L2 students as passive victims of institutional discourses; findings also show how structures are resisted by individuals through their agency: Benesch (1999), for example, describes how her undergraduate English for academic purposes (EAP) students collaborated to create affordances for learning in an L2 in their psychology class. When the speed of delivery became overwhelming, they supported each other by asking questions and raising their hands in unison. Benesch argues that these students' use of agency enabled them to become 'potentially active participants rather than compliant subjects' (Benesch, 1999: 315).

As is clear from these findings, the processes by which those learning in an L2 negotiate their positions may be complex, unpredictable, and characterized by inequalities stemming from language. I suggest that, by virtue of their focus on language, many of the participant ethnographies above would fit under the umbrella of what Rampton (2007) termed 'linguistic ethnography', defined by Copland and Creese as 'an interpretive approach which studies the local and immediate actions of actors from their point of view and considers how these interactions are embedded in wider social contexts and structures' (Copland and Creese, 2015: 13). Through focus on the local and the immediate, the studies show how language is both instrumental and symbolic: it is not only a resource for communication, but also the medium through which power is wielded, identities generated, and agency enacted to create affordances for learning; this reflects Geertz's interest in the 'political, moral and broadly personal' in academia (Geertz, 1973: 157).

Further, I suggest that, in their analysis of literacy events, both the academic literacies and the linguistic ethnography traditions share a focus on what Goffman (1959) referred to as 'backstage'. Goffman's famous 'frontstage/backstage' metaphor models institutional life by analogy with the

spaces of a theatre: frontstage is the space where formal interactions between clients and staff take place, while backstage interactions are behind the scenes and generally hidden from public view. When adapted to the context of academic writing and literacy events, frontstage can be viewed as the classroom, where assignments are introduced and modelled and the criteria laid out, while backstage is the space outside the classroom (which may be virtual or physical) where participants prepare and negotiate their academic texts with lecturers and colleagues. A university tutorial could thus be seen either as a frontstage event (for example, a group of students with a lecturer) or a backstage event (for example, a meeting between an individual student and a lecturer to discuss aspects of the individual's assignment at any stage in the process). Frontstage, the focus would be on content for assignments and generalized ideas, while backstage would involve discussion of an individual's draft. In both the research traditions discussed above, data from the 'backstage' reveal the critical nature of the literacy events in this space (which are generally visible only to those involved) in shaping academic writing. Thus, as Belcher argues, students need to learn to establish 'constructive mentoring relationships with faculty' (Belcher, 1994: 33). It is such a mentoring relationship that this article examines by analysing an L2 master's student's individual backstage tutorial in the linguistic ethnography tradition. In the following section, I review the literature on the specific academic writing demands made on L2 master's students.

L2 master's students and academic writing

Much of the literature on academic writing of master's students highlights the transition from 'knowledge telling' to 'knowledge transformation', as first identified by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987). Tardy (2005) sees this as the key characteristic of the 'advanced academic literacy' required at master's level, while Attola and Attola (quoted by Ylijoki, 2001: 21) argue that students at this stage are expected to be 'producers rather than consumers of knowledge'. In order to display this ability through their academic writing, students need: (1) to identify and draw on relevant sources; and (2) to provide a line of argument by citing and referring to the sources. Producing intertextual writing, however, involves mastery of a number of complex literacy practices that are linguistically demanding, as demonstrated by a growing number of studies (Howard, 1995; Pecorari, 2003; Pecorari, 2006; Shi, 2008; Shi, 2012; Li and Casanave, 2012; Hirvela and Du, 2013). Howard (1995), for example, argues that 'patchwriting', that is, relying very heavily on the original text by copying verbatim and then substituting individual words, is a necessary stage in developing academic writing. There is also appropriacy to consider; Shi's (2012) study of paraphrasing, summarizing, and translating in postgraduate writing demonstrates that these 'depend on one's knowledge of the disciplinary context, the nature of citation practices and rhetorical purposes of using citations in a specific context of disciplinary writing' (Shi, 2012: 145). Such fine-grained textual analysis data cast a new light on the thorny issue of plagiarism, which remains contested and unresolved in the literature (Howard, 1995; Pennycook, 1996; Sutherland Smith, 2005).

For L2 students, who are still developing their academic writing, the expectations posed by the above can be overwhelming. As Kiely argues, such students face 'substantial challenges in extending syntax and lexis skills at the sentence level' (Kiely, 2009: 331). I suggest that, after the start of their master's programme, there is less time to address these linguistic challenges, as the expectation of knowledge transformation results in an inevitable shift of focus from language to content. Indeed, recent findings on both undergraduates and master's students show that, once immersed in their programme of study, linguistic progress in academic writing is minimal, as measured by IELTS writing scores after one and a half years (O'Loughlin and Arkoudis, 2009), accuracy in writing over three years (Knoch *et al.*, 2015), and mastery of lexical phrases over a

year (Li and Schmitt, 2009). From my observation of my own master's students, their spoken and written fluency develops considerably, but their writing improves minimally in terms of accuracy over the year.

In line with an increasing social constructivist perspective on writing, for a number of decades researchers have attempted to make visible the processes that provide scaffolding for L2 student writers from various perspectives. First, there is a substantial literature on efficacy of written teacher feedback, mainly for developing language (Radecki and Swales, 1998; Chandler, 2003; Hyland and Hyland, 2006), demonstrating how academic writing is critically dependent on appropriate teacher formative feedback. Second, there are robust findings on the role of revision in academic writing, which show that students need to address content in revisions, thereby focusing on meaning rather than language or style; as Sommers argued, skilled writers redraft to discover meaning by seeking a 'design' for the argument, while their unskilled peers assume that the 'meaning is already there' (Sommers, 1980: 382). Third, there are findings that report on classroom pedagogies aimed specifically at sensitizing students to the role of argumentation in their writing (Mitchell and Riddle, 2000; Bacha, 2010; Davies, 2008; Wingate, 2012; Salter-Dvorak, 2016b). Fourth, studies have investigated the efficacy of individual tutorials (Thonus, 2002; Krase, 2007).

For L2 master's students, the requirements of knowledge transformation are particularly salient when it comes to the dissertation. Here, students are assigned a supervisor, who generally provides feedback on written drafts as well as a number of face-to-face meetings. While there exists a body of research on doctoral supervision in anglophone academia, master's-level supervision has only recently received attention (Anderson *et al.*, 2006; Fujioka, 2014; Harwood and Petrić, 2017). The current study contributes to this research. What I am interested in is how institutional discourses are reflected in the 'backstage' social learning space of the individual tutorial, and to what extent the interaction scaffolds the student's socialization into the advanced academic literacy required at this level.

The study

The data reported here pertain to the dissertation tutorial of Shahrzad, a master's student in English literature, and Angela, her supervisor. These data are derived from a larger linguistic ethnography that tracked 3 master's students on different courses over 13 months in order to identify the discourses and practices espoused on their courses, and examine how these interacted with language, power, identities, agency, and affordances in the students' experience (Salter-Dvorak, 2011). My insider position in the context enabled capture of naturally occurring qualitative data through an instrumental case study approach (Stake, 2005). (For a discussion of my positioning in the research, see Salter-Dvorak, 2016a.) The three research participants were my students on a non-credit-bearing EAP module during the first semester; they were then tracked for the rest of the academic year. Data collection comprised their written texts with lecturer feedback, monthly semi-structured interviews on these, their journals and emails (sent to me), interviews with their lecturers and course leaders, course documents, a recorded dissertation tutorial, class observations, and field notes. Following Lillis's methodology of 'talking around texts' (2008), these were read reiteratively, coded, and triangulated, and thick descriptions built up. In line with qualitative research of this nature, new themes were identified inductively. Guided by the principle of non-maleficence in research ethics, I was aware that my analysis, which presented some participants' experiences in a negative light, could have caused considerable harm if they had read it; therefore, respondent validation was not sought.

Progressive focus

I conducted individual interviews with student participants about their learning experiences on average every three weeks (45 minutes). In accordance with the longitudinal nature of the study, my focus was increasingly on shifts in individuals' attitudes and how these shaped their identities over time; participants' accounts of their experiences, different in each case, created my research agenda. These interviews were generally comfortable events in which I felt we were both at ease, although they were characterized by clear differences between the three participants. As the year progressed, all three experienced uncertainties and difficulties relating to the dissertation; I realized that my positioning as an EAP lecturer would enable me to track the dissertation process, taking an emic perspective on my participants' experiences of various 'backstage' literacy events. One principal challenge of such research is identifying what lies beneath the phenomena described during the interviews. Here, I drew on Hymes's insight that 'how something is said is part of what is said' (Hymes, 1974: 17). My increasing familiarity with the students' ways of speaking and writing enabled a nuanced understanding of the salience of aspects of their accounts.

The interviews with lecturers were less straightforward. Of the three, Angela, a visiting lecturer in English literature who taught Shahrzad, was the most willing to be interviewed. She seemed genuinely interested in addressing student diversity, and in accommodating students from different educational backgrounds. This led to an opportunity for collection of serendipitous or unplanned data: on one occasion, when arriving at Angela's office for a pre-arranged interview, I found that she was just finishing her dissertation tutorial with Shahrzad. On seeing me, they both invited me to sit down and join them; the relaxed atmosphere suggested what Belcher referred to as a 'constructive mentoring relationship' (Belcher, 1994: 33) between them. This led me to think that, while I would feel my presence intrusive at such an event, they might agree to it being recorded. A week later, having secured their agreement, I left an audio-recorder in the room during their tutorial and returned after an hour to collect it. The recording provided me with insight into the backstage literacy event of the individual tutorial, which had hitherto been made visible only from the self-reports of Shahrzad and Angela. By the time I came to hear this tutorial, I was aware that Shahrzad was Angela's first and only master's dissertation student, that she held Angela in high esteem, and was grateful for her support in choosing her dissertation topic (for a full account, see Salter-Dvorak, 2014). I had already interviewed Shahrzad seven times, observed Angela teaching twice, interviewed her three times, seen her written feedback on Shahrzad's drafts, and heard the student's perspective on these.

Data analysis

In what follows, I present an analysis of this 57-minute-long event. All names of courses and individuals have been anonymized in line with BAAL (2016) ethical guidelines for research. Quotations presented are all verbatim. All names in the student's text have also been anonymizsed. The analysis addresses the following questions:

1. Which institutional discourses relating to academic writing can be recognized from the tutorial?
2. Are face-threatening acts present?
3. How did the participants view the above?
4. What are the implications for developing advanced academic literacy of L2 master's students?

The analysis follows three stages: first I 'look at' rather than 'read' the transcription in order to identify dominant discourses in the text (Blommaert and Jie, 2010: 72). Second, as I am interested in power and identities, I draw on Goffman's notion of 'face' (1967) and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). Following Copland, (2015: 102), I look for face-threatening acts, by identifying points where 'negotiation or demonstration of power were particularly apparent' (Copland, 2015: 107). Third, I triangulate the findings with post-recall interviews with the two participants, the dissertation itself, the feedback, and course documents, and, drawing on my 'situated knowledge of the university context' (Lea and Street, 1998: 160), I consider how the participants' interactions are 'embedded in wider social contexts and structures' (Copland and Creese, 2015: 13).

Findings

Shahrzad reported that Angela responded to her drafts as follows:

- printed out the draft chapter and wrote feedback on it by hand
- wrote global advice at the end of the draft
- corrected grammatical mistakes
- indicated if a word was used incorrectly, leaving Shahrzad to correct
- indicated parts of the text that were insufficiently paraphrased or referenced
- underlined unclear sentences and wrote a question mark.

(Shahrzad, interview 6)

In the transcriptions that follow, one full stop represents a one-second pause, capitals indicate emphatic stress, and brackets […] indicate overlap.

The two discourses that Angela draws on in the tutorial, 'avoiding plagiarism' and 'writing accurately', are, I suggest, apparent from the outset. The event begins as follows:

Angela: Basically what I've done is corrected the English again and I've also put some question marks where I wasn't sure about the wording

Shahrzad: But how did you find the whole argument?

A: I found it fine…..(tails off) oh yes one thing I wanted to ask you was ARE YOU REFERENCING your material?

Shahrzad's opening question (underlined) is dismissed by Angela, who seems to have her own agenda, and responds by asking another question (underlined). This is followed up with nine face-threatening acts, all implying that sections of the draft are plagiarized, as the following example shows:

Angela: Yeah I'm just wondering (1) if your use of English is sufficiently sophisticated for you to write something like that it's quite a sophisticated sentence and you know (2) I might be misjudging you and I KNOW you wouldn't do this deliberately (3).

Here, Angela is articulating what Pennycook (1996: 203) describes as 'the spectre of doubtful ownership'; like Pennycook's colleagues, her suspicion is raised by the absence of grammatical errors in her student's writing. Her accusations are, however, mollified by considerable attention to face. She begins with a distancing device (1, above), uses fillers, (2), and softens her criticism (3).

Angela goes on to advise Shahrzad to go through the draft and rectify all such instances. Shahrzad, whose chapter contains 36 footnotes, asks:

Shahrzad: So how have you shown the part that as we said should have been mine or? Have you marked….?]

> Angela: [I haven't marked I haven't marked those parts….it was just something that started to occur to me
>
> Shahrzad: Yeah because I also wanted to ask you but you know <u>I don't know if I can find it</u> right it isn't properly you know now I'm not because and then as you said
>
> Angela: Well really only YOU can answer that question and you're going to have to read through it again and you should be able to tell really what's what's your own wording and what isn't… YOU should know your own style well enough…..so I'm going to have to leave it up to you really because I can't say…

Following Shahrzad's reponses (underlined), Angela changes tack, adopting a 'bald on record' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 75) approach, as her direct statement above shows. Shahrzad's stumbling and fragmented speech here evidences her discomfort, as she imagines the daunting task of reading through her notes and drafts to ascertain which parts are copied verbatim and which are paraphrased. Like students in Shi's study (2008), she may be envisaging problems distinguishing between sections that have been copied and constitute 'textual borrowing' and those that have been partially paraphrased (Shi, 2008: 19). However, the fact that there are 36 footnotes to references in the chapter suggests that she is aware of referencing conventions, unlike students described by Pecorari (2003), who had included citations without references in 50 per cent of their work, but appeared unaware of this when interviewed.

As Angela moves on to discuss language and expression, the mood of the tutorial changes dramatically to a light-hearted one. She refers to the following sentence:

> In this amazing story Waverley starts just about anywhere (as it is a typical technique of her narration especially in short stories) and presents characters without any proper explanation about them.
>
> (Shahrzad, dissertation draft, month 6)

Pointing to her corrections (she has crossed out 'amazing' and 'just about anywhere' and underlined the words in brackets, adding a question mark), Angela advises:

> don't say 'in this amazing story'….just say 'in this story'……because actually everyone can decide whether it's amazing or not.

Amid their joint laughter, she adds:

> it's like you're writing the blurb, which you're not.

Shahrzad has now become a spectator, as Angela makes corrections by handwriting on her draft. She continues:

> what do you mean by 'a wired character'? Do you mean 'weird'?

As they both laugh, she adds:

> I thought they were wired up somehow.

Angela's focus on lexis here reflects findings in the literature on practices surrounding assessment of L2 academic writing, in which faculty report lexical errors to be the ones that obscure meaning the most (Santos, 1988).

It is not long, however, until the mood changes again as the question of attribution rears its head. Angela commends Shahrzad on her analysis, but then follows it up with the face-threatening question:

> Angela: 'Did you write this all by yourself?....(laughs) I mean did you is that your……understanding of the story? Because I think it's a very good response okay……
>
> Shahrzad: yeah I'm…..]

> Angela: <u>I KNOW when you read lots of secondary readings…..sometimes it IS difficult to work out what..</u>
>
> Shahrzad: yeah I'm…..]
>
> Angela: [yes and then you feel almost cheated really if somebody's actually written what you've thought yourself too.
>
> Shahrzad: No I think that perhaps I mean out of my readings idea remains in my mind but I can't I go through the same idea without referencing I mean my idea too it's gonna be assumed that it's plagiarism or not…
>
> Angela: Well what you could always do to get round that well say 'it's also noted in blah blah blah' and as a way of sort of backing up your idea or acknowledging that this is sort of in fact quite widely thought.

I suggest that this excerpt exemplifies what has been called 'transgressive intertextuality' in Shahrzad's writing, echoing findings in the literature on the difficulty of disentangling what one thinks about a subject from the sources one has read (Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2012). As academic writing scholars argue, such a phenomenon may stem from lack of resources (the gap between a writer's linguistic level and that of the readings), as well as from lack of expertise in deploying primary and secondary sources in writing, rather than an intention to cheat (Li and Casanave, 2012: 178). Angela's underlined words above indicate that she is aware of this and is empathizing with her student.

Thereafter, the frame of the tutorial shifts back to correction of language, although Shahrzad returns repeatedly to questions relating to plagiarism and referencing, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

> Can I just ask you about the reference? I mean the page number of novels…..is it a good way or can I just say that the book..
>
> So do I need to put a footnote here as well?
>
> I've got another question about the…referencing for instance I've used the reference for the chapter do I still need to give the complete one?

Next, as Angela points out, Shahrzad has failed to integrate a quotation into her text:

> Angela: It's Waverley's language yes you've quoted her but you haven't put the quote in a way that makes proper sense so not declared you
>
> Shahrzad: What do you exactly mean? Can I change the quotes in a way that……]
>
> Angela: [you can't change the quotes the wording of the quotes
>
> Shahrzad: So do I need to put these two references?

Here we have an example of what Pecorari (2006) identifies as a feature of academic writing that is 'occluded'. Quotation marks signal that the writer is repeating the words accurately (Pecorari, 2006: 6), something that Shahrzad does not seem to be aware of here. This involves 'skill and integrity on the writer's part, as well as expertise of acceptability within the discourse community' (Pecorari, 2006: 6).

Overall, then, the data here show that Angela draws on the institutional discourses of 'avoiding plagiarism' and 'writing accurately'. Noticeable by its absence, though, is reference to argumentation; of the 57 minutes, only 10 are spent discussing content. At one stage, Angela points to a section that she thinks is not well supported, and advises:

> be specific here and maybe give an example about…about where she starts you know

She also wraps up the tutorial stressing the importance of coherence, by saying 'you need to make a thread in this chapter'.

To conclude, the clear contrast between the parts of the tutorial related to plagiarism, which sound tense, and those related to language, which sound light-hearted, seems to be directly related to the onus placed on Shahrzad by Angela; while identifying 'plagiarized parts' will be time-consuming and tricky, assisting Shahrzad in proofreading and editing her work is not. Both participants are convinced, I suggest, of the usefulness of this latter exercise, and their seemingly joint effort is reflected in the bonhomie that characterizes this activity. There is a balance in the tutorial, then, between confrontation brought about by the 'avoiding plagiarism' discourse, and apparent collaboration brought about by the 'linguistic accuracy' discourse. What also emerges from this analysis is that Angela's spoken accusations, albeit mollified by hedges, provide an unequivocal message, in direct contrast to findings in the literature on written feedback, where, as Hyland shows, tutors' uncertainty regarding the student's intention (2001: 375) may lead to indirect written comments that may be so oblique that they are not understood by the student.

Participants' perspectives

When discussing plagiarism with Shahrzad during the tutorial, Angela does not mention paraphrasing, but focuses on 'annotating' and 'crediting'. Similarly, when reflecting on this in the subsequent interview, she does not complexify the reasons behind textual borrowing as discussed in the literature (for example, Pecorari, 2003; Pecorari, 2006; Shi, 2008; Shi, 2012); possibly, she is unaware of the multilayered literacy practices required for intertextual writing in an L2. However, what is interesting here is that, while Angela's accusations are often face-threatening, they do not cause a rift between her and Shahrzad; rather, it seems that it is the warm, trusting relationship between apprentice and expert that enables these highly critical comments. Shahrzad accepts Angela's feedback although she finds it painful, as shown by the underlined words from the subsequent interview:

> At the beginning she gave feedback you know it made me a bit stressed because she said 'probably you need to go back and there are some parts..like you know plagiarism' but I think yeah I don't think I've done that on purpose 'cause she said 'I don't see that this is your language <u>I know that you know your language is not good enough</u>' so that you know that made me feel …..and then second because ehm I don't know how to find those parts and she said that 'I can't say for sure it's you who should decide which parts.'
>
> <div align="right">(Shahrzad, interview 10)</div>

Shahrzad subsequently reported that she spent much time checking her work, as Angela had recommended, and found three sections to which she added references. Her words 'I don't think I've done that on purpose' suggest that she may have been engaging in what Howard (1995) characterized as 'patchwriting', a phenomenon seen by many as a necessary stage in academic writing (Pecorari, 2003).

In terms of 'writing accurately', Shahrzad was also deeply hurt by Angela's comments on her language; clearly, similar criticisms from earlier essays had returned to haunt her. Her voice faltering as she spoke the underlined words above, she paused after the word 'feel', leaving the sentence uncompleted; as Hymes says, 'how something is said is part of what is said' (1974: 17). Yet Angela's detailed and punctilious corrections show that she is effectively performing the role of a proofreader, a role that, as recent research has shown, is neither expected nor generally carried out by lecturers (Turner, 2011; Harwood *et al.*, 2012). As she explained to me:

> I mean it's different it depends on who her supervisor might be how much time they're prepared to put into it….I don't have to do it but I'm kind of just you know…I'm happy to do it.
>
> <div align="right">(Angela, interview 5)</div>

This focus on language rather than content is out of line with research findings that show that faculty judge content more severely than language (Santos, 1988; Johns, 1981; Leki, 2006), and that their summative feedback focused largely on content (Knoch *et al.*, 2015: 48). From the data, it is clear that a large proportion of Shahrzad's writing was intelligible, but required some 'tidying up' at sentence level; in the chapter discussed, only three sentences were unintelligible.

Shahrzad's dissertation (second marked by Angela) received a mark of 58 per cent. The first marker's feedback read:

> What lets the dissertation down is a weak structure and the absence of a methodological framework. There is little sense of an explicitly stated argument which is set up at the beginning and then progresses to the end. Your argument isn't stated till chapter 3, and because of the lack of a progressive structure, there is far too much repetition. There are also far too many mistakes in your English.

Here, it seems that the marker was focusing on the content rather than the language, in line with findings in the literature.

Discussion

While Shahrzad's opening question in the tutorial, 'how did you find the argument?', evidences her awareness of the importance of knowledge transformation in academic writing, Angela's reframing of the agenda to plagiarism and language thereafter results in minimal discussion of argumentation. Her assumption, then, seems to be that 'the meaning is already there' (Sommers, 1980: 382), and that it is the presentation of the meaning that needs to be non-transgressive and clear. How, then, is Angela's attempt to act as 'guardian of honor and truth' (Pennycook, 1996: 214) embedded in wider social contexts and structures? I suggest that this can be explained in terms of three identities linked to the above. First, as a scholar in English literature, in which quotations play a key role, she draws on a broad disciplinary discourse of plagiarism as unacceptable. Second, as a new visiting lecturer, she may be unsure to what extent plagiarism is policed in the particular social context of the department, and concerned that, like the EAP teachers interviewed by Sutherland-Smith, she will be tainted as 'professionally negligent' (2005: 91) if her student is found to be plagiarizing in her dissertation. Third, my researcher reflexivity suggests a discursive perspective: as a participant in my research, she is aware that I will be analysing the tutorial; as is clear from previous interviews, she sees the 'avoiding plagiarism' discourse as one that drives the agenda for EAP provision at the university. Her focus on plagiarism, then, demonstrates how research is co-constructed as it unfolds.

In her discussion of written feedback on L2 academic writing, Hyland (2001) argues for a 'balance between being sensitive to students' feelings, understanding potential cultural differences, and being clear and helpful in the message we give (Hyland, 2001: 381). While Angela comes close to achieving this balance, the question arises: does she provide Shahrzad with sufficient opportunities for the knowledge transformation required of advanced academic literacy at master's level? I suggest that the work of Bourdieu on language, symbolic capital, and 'right to speak' (1991) is relevant here; Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), writing about academic settings, theorize that those who are not speakers of the official language/standard variety and who believe in the legitimacy of that variety are subject to inequality in their group. For example, in a seminar, the words of those in possession of symbolic capital will carry weight, endorsing them with a 'right to speak', and leading to 'symbolic domination' by those with more power over those with less. While the authors are referring to spoken interaction here, these principles arguably apply equally to writing of master's students, whose development of advanced academic literacy is contingent not only on a 'right to speak' on content, but also on a 'right to response'

in the shape of formative feedback. If the feedback and subsequent revisions focus on linguistic inaccuracies, this will detract from the development of disciplinary knowledge, as I have argued elsewhere (Salter-Dvorak, 2015, 2016b). Although Angela's commitment here is unquestionable, I see that her focus on accuracy has two effects: first, the time is dedicated to correcting linguistic errors at the expense of content; second, it deflates Shahrzad's confidence, as evidenced by her recalling Angela's words 'I know your language is not good enough' in the subsequent interview. Thus, while Shahrzad is aware of the importance of argumentation, and uses her agency to attempt to set the agenda for the tutorial, the asymmetrical power relationship, in which she nevertheless trusts her supervisor, leads to a different focus. Had this student writer received more feedback on argumentation and structure, she may have gained a merit; instead, she has been denied the 'right to speak' on content. The irony, then, is that Angela's well-intentioned use of power has served to disempower Shahrzad from knowledge transformation. Here we have an example of how linguistic inequality can lead to 'symbolic domination' in anglophone universities.

Conclusion

The linguistic ethnography above has enabled a glimpse into the 'backstage' of student academic writing production between novice and expert, rendering visible dynamics of social power and status in one student's experience. As Stake states, 'people can find in case reports certain insights into the human condition, even while being well aware of the atypicality of the case' (Stake, 2005: 456). I see that the case study above can be considered both typical and atypical: while Shahrzad can be seen to be experiencing the difficulties typical of L2 master's students, both in the literature and in my practitioner's experience, Angela's focus on plagiarism and accuracy are not typical of master's supervisors. Here we have a novice writer advised by a novice supervisor.

What, then, are the implications of this case for enabling development of advanced academic literacy of L2 students such as Shahrzad? While studies such as this often end in a call for further research, I suggest that, given the difficulties involved in collecting live tutorial data, and the complex social layers in the analysis, resources would be better utilized by piloting a more consistent and transparent course-specific approach for dissertation feedback. First, master's students are advised clearly to focus on content in course documentation. Second, experienced supervisors working in the same area draw up guidelines for the focus and quantity of feedback to be provided on dissertation drafts. Third, new lecturers work with a mentor for the first year of dissertation supervision. Piloting and evaluation of such an initiative, which foregrounds the importance of knowledge transformation at this stage, would render the feedback process less invisible. This would constitute a step towards enabling the development of knowledge transformation instead of re-enforcing linguistic inequalities in our universities.

Notes on the contributor

Hania Salter-Dvorak teaches on the M.Ed. TESOL and supervises doctoral students at Exeter University. Her research centres on the development of academic literacy of L2 graduate students, particularly in relation to lecturer feedback on academic writing, proofreading practices, and norms relating to communication in universities. By focusing on processes relating to identity, power relations, and language, she is interested to identify ways in which universities can accommodate these students through appropriate course design and community building.

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