'Authority is everything': A study of the politics of textual ownership and knowledge in the formation of student writer identities

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Abstract

The relationships between text, knowledge and power in the construction of writer identities have been the source of much debate among philosophers, literary scholars and language educators (e.g., Bakhtin 1981; Kristeva 1986; Pennycook 2001). Such interrelationships are played out in the transcultural encounters that occur between students and their lecturers on a daily basis in our contemporary university classrooms. This article explores how two undergraduate students from different language backgrounds, studying at a major Australian university, struggle to deal with the politics of text/knowledge construction in their quest for a sense of ownership and authorial control over the assignments they produce. Data consisting of interviews and assignments by students from different disciplinary fields have been selected from a larger study into plagiarism and intertextuality. Drawing on the work of Bakhtin (1981), Kristeva (1986) and Howard (1992; 1995; 1999), my analysis indicates firstly, that students feel constrained by the *homogenising* (Holton 2000) forces of the academic writing conventions that they feel obliged to imitate; and secondly, confused by unified and autonomous concepts of authorship and originality that fail to take account of the 'shared' nature of the processes of text/knowledge production. I conclude by suggesting that the development of writer identity needs to be seen as part of the ongoing epistemological negotiations that occur between students and lecturers as they struggle to construct desired meanings across texts. I then consider the implications of these findings for academic writing pedagogy.

Keywords: intertextuality, politics of text and knowledge, identity

Background

As researchers such as Bartholomae (1985), Ivanic and Camps (2001), Penrose and Geisler (1994) and Starfield (2002) have shown in their studies into academic composition and university student writer identity, the ways in which students learn to construct the language and knowledge of their academic disciplines in order to 'sound' authoritative, is a key and complex feature of writer identity formation in academic writing. Such discussions about authority, the nature of 'originality' and the relationships between text, knowledge and authorship still occupy centre stage in the academy today (see Sutherland-Smith, 2005).

Scholars such as Scollon (1994; 1995) and Pennycook (1996) have highlighted the role of particular cultural, social and political forces in influencing the ways in which concepts of textual ownership and authorship are conceptualised. They refer to notions of Utilitarian Discourse Systems (Scollon, 1994; 1995) and "possessive individualism" (Pennycook, 1996), which they claim are synonymous with current 'Western' views of the author as a unified and autonomous individual capable of generating original thought and language (Scollon, 1995). Ideas become encased in words that constitute texts (or works) that are owned by authors. Foucault (1984) argues that what this represents is "the priviledged moment of

individualization (emphasis in the original) in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy and the sciences" (p. 101) and has its origins in the 18th century philosophical movement in Europe known as the Enlightenment. Both Scollon (1995) and Pennycook (1996) argue very forcefully against privileging such representations of the author as an individual/original creator of text. They suggest that an interpretation of textual ownership that is bound by such culturally specific parameters constitutes a form of intellectual arrogance.

Questions concerning originality and textual ownership are also intricately linked to the notion of 'common knowledge': a concept that is difficult to define, yet crucial to students' developing understanding of what they should and should not acknowledge in their writing. Recent developments in cultural and social literacies (Hallam & Street, 2000; Hirsch, 1987) highlight the facilitating role played by common knowledge in enabling individuals to be functional within demographically defined settings. Such definitions however, fail to capture the complexities surrounding common knowledge in relation to student writing and the very different kinds of interpretive frameworks students bring with them when they engage in textual production and consumption. Establishing what we understand to comprise 'common knowledge' therefore in university classrooms consisting of students from increasingly diverse cultural and educational backgrounds is becoming ever more difficult. As I/we have argued elsewhere, commonality can only be negotiated at the local level between students and their lecturers (see Chandrasoma, Thompson & Pennycook, 2004, p. 190).

In this paper I explore how 'Elizabeth' and 'Tony', two undergraduate students from different language and disciplinary backgrounds, studying at a major Australian university, struggle to deal with issues surrounding originality, textual ownership, writer identity and the construction of knowledge in their written research-based assignments. I argue that a pedagogy for writing needs to be based on an understanding of the dialogic and evolving nature of the processes of text/knowledge construction, subjectivity and emergent-student-authorship. It is only then I suggest, that as educators in the transcultural learning and teaching environments that characterise our contemporary university classrooms, we can begin to make sense of the differences and tensions that are so deeply embedded in writing for the academy.

Methodology and analytical framework

Data for this paper were collected as part of a larger study into plagiarism and intertextuality in undergraduate student writing. Data sources consist of semi-structured interviews with Elizabeth and Tony; both students' end-of-semester research-based written assignments and semi-structured interviews with two academic staff (Luke and Leila) from matching disciplinary backgrounds. Bakhtin's writing on dialogism (1981; 1984; 1986), Kristeva's concept of intertextuality and identity (1986; 1996) and Howard's work on textual ownership and writer development (1992; 1995; 1999) have been central to the construction of the analytical framework used in this paper.

Bakhtin (1981) argues that speakers and listeners and writers and readers are engaged dialogically in a process of negotiation over meaning-making. His theory of communication is sociohistorically grounded where the boundaries delineating individual ownership of words and ideas are blurred. Texts he claims, are "filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of 'our-ownness' …" (1986, p. 89). He claims further (1986, p. 162), that this interaction between texts or dialogic forms, does not denote contact between objects or "things" but constitutes an engagement between "personalities" (or subjects). Thus, dialogic relations (1981, p. 427) may occur between different people ('external' dialogue), and also within the same subject ('internal dialogue'). Bakhtin has also termed this 'internal dialogue' a "dialogue with the self" (1984, p. 213) in which all words are "double-voiced", containing within them a "conflict of voices" in which each is reflected in the other and interacts with the other in a continuous process of call and response (1984, pp. 74-75).

These crucial insights by Bakhtin have provided a pathway into the development of a theory of subjectivity that is at once discursively constructed through struggle, as others have also argued (e.g., Norton, 1997; Pennycook 2001, p. 148), yet also dynamic, multiple and ongoing: a theory of identity which Kristeva (e.g., 1996) has articulated through the concept of 'intertextuality'.

Kristeva emphasises the interconnectedness of all texts and has developed a concept of intertextuality that is synonymous with a theory of subjectivity. Kristeva argues that different identities are realised both in the production and consumption of texts; furthermore, textual meanings are neither fixed nor stable, but are created in the "continuous movement back and forth in the space between the origin and all the possible connotative meanings" (1996, pp. 190-191). For Kristeva, such an intertextual framework provides the means through which all experiences of reading and writing can be understood. From this perspective therefore, the subject can be seen as forever 'evolving' and in a constant process of becoming (1996, p. 190). This evolving 'subject' is not only dynamic and mercurial but (following the connotations of the expression in French: *'le sujet-en-proces'*), also 'on-trial': a subject-in-process awaiting judgement from her/his interlocutors or 'assessors'. The analogy of the 'subject-in-process (and) on-trial' to the student-as-emergent-author awaiting assessment/confirmation as a legitimate academic writer from her/his lecturers is particularly apposite for students writing for the academy.

Building on notions of writing as a form of social and political practice and authorship as being forged on the borderline between what has already been written and in anticipation of possible future responses from readers, Howard (1999) has suggested that all writers pass through a series of developmental stages. During the early stages, writers may be particularly likely to copy 'chunks' from their sources which they then modify by substituting synonyms and/or altering grammatical structures. Howard terms this process of textual construction 'patchwriting', as opposed to wholesale copying (see for example Howard 1992, p. 233) and suggests that it should be viewed as positive and non-transgressive because it is an attempt on the part of the writer to engage with the linguistic and discursive forms of particular disciplinary fields. Students therefore should be viewed not as failed authors and untrustworthy 'Others' if they practice 'patchwriting', but as legitimate learner-writers struggling to engage with the discursive practices of their disciplinary fields. Thus, patchwriting can be conceived as a form of intertextual engagement that facilitates learning: a process of writing which may be particularly valuable for 'novice' writers and for students for whom English is an additional language (Howard, 1999).

I will now move on to consider the intertextual writing worlds of Elizabeth and Tony, students in their first and third years of undergraduate study.

Elizabeth's intertextual struggle for authorship and legitimacy
Elizabeth was born in Australia and speaks English as her first language. At the time of her interview, she was in her late teens. Elizabeth presented as an extroverted, vivacious and confident student who was enrolled in the Faculty of Arts at a major Australian university. The assignment she submitted for this research was the first she had completed at university level and comprised the semester's assessment for the subject "Inequalities in Australian Society". It was designed to be an essay in response to the following prompt: *"On every measurable scale the Aboriginal element of the Australian population remains at the bottom of the heap" (Oodgeroo Noonuccal). Is this so, and if so, why is it?"*

As Luke, the marker of the essay explained, the assignment was divided into three parts: the initial statement which was based on a quotation from Noonuccal, an Australian indigenous poet and political activist, might constitute a position which would be "part of their (the

students') general knowledge", but they would need to research into and reference the evidence they would draw on to support (or refute) the opening proposition; Luke expected that students would "tie together" the answers they provided to the two questions (*Is this so, and if so, why is it?*) in their conclusion.

Elizabeth was keen to demonstrate her understanding of and desire to comply with what she perceived to be the demands and attribution requirements of academic writing. As she explained in her interview, she had been writing bibliographies since her first year at primary school because her father had encouraged her to do this when she had had to research information for her school projects. Elizabeth was keen to point out that referencing and bibliography writing were also required at high school: " We were told, if you're found to be copying someone's words without acknowledging it, you'd lose points and be penalised and get in lots of trouble." She also understood the importance of referring to a broad range of source materials and of using terms that she could fully understand:

> *There's no use just chucking a word in for no particular reason.*
> *People can pick out if you know what you're talking about or not.*
> *If you just throw in a word, or words, people know if you're*
> *using it in the right kind of context, if you know what you're*
> *talking about.*

Elizabeth's construction of herself as an experienced academic writer however, was not always borne out by other comments she made. For example, when discussing different referencing guidelines she had been given for assignments from faculties outside Arts, she stated:

> *If I'm going to do an assignment with a faculty I've never done before,*
> *I usually check and say, 'Is it OK that I'm going to do it like that?' The*
> *message I get loud and clear is that as long as it's exactly the same sort*
> *of style, it should be fine.*

However, when I asked Elizabeth which other faculties she had studied in, she replied: " I don't think I have, really". This comment by Elizabeth is difficult to interpret in the light of her previous statement and throws into question the consistency of her former claims. Elizabeth demonstrated a sense of further tension and conflict when she stated on the one hand, that she would always acknowledge another's material, but that if time were lacking it would be easy to copy from someone else and claim ownership over this text:

> *When I take quotes from somewhere, I always put*
> *inverted commas around it ... But if you're in*
> *a rush and you're doing something quickly, you could*
> *easily copy out a quote and then think of it as your own.*

When I asked her specifically about whether the proposition "Other contributing factors include homicide/purposefully inflicted injury, Aboriginal people 677.1 per 100,000, compared to 28.6" (see Table 1 below) needed to be referenced, she became uncertain and found it difficult to account for her own writing practices:

> *I think that was just one of those 'day before the essay's due in*
> *mistakes.' I think what I've probably done, I don't know what*
> *I did. Maybe I just thought that they'd (the marker) realise that*
> *the chunk of words beforehand is related to that one (pointing to*
> *footnote 10 at the end of the preceding paragraph).*

The sentence in question is highlighted in Table 1 below and appeared on page two of Elizabeth's assignment as a paragraph (although it only consisted of a single sentence) sandwiched between two other short paragraphs, each of which contained a footnote:

Table 1: Elizabeth's Assignment Extract

Elizabeth
(p. 2, paragraphs 1-3)

These factors (various health, alcohol and drug-related issues), among others, contribute to the lower life expectancy of Aboriginal people (*sic*) to non-Aboriginal people. For males it is 56.9 to 75, respectively. For females, 61.7 to 81.1.[10]

Other contributing factors include homicide/purposefully inflicted injury, Aboriginal people 677.1 per 100,000, compared to 28.6.

Health problems can also be linked to other social problems. The majority of the Indigenous community deemed their housing inappropriate by those living in them "usually because the dwelling needed repair or did not have enough bedrooms."[11]

10 COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION; <u>Overcoming Disadvantage,</u> (2000), pg 1-18.
11 1994 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey, Year Book, Australia, 1996 (ABS Catalogue No. 1301.0).

By universalising her writing behaviour as something common for people operating under time constraints ("I think that was just one of those 'day before the essay's due in mistake"), Elizabeth seems to be asking for understanding for what she perceives to be an instance of unacknowledged textual reproduction (or transgressive intertextuality) for which she believes she may get into "big trouble". She also highlights the problem of the lack of clarity in academic writing over exactly how much of the text that precedes or follows a reference can be covered by the same reference: "Maybe I just thought that they'd (the marker) realise that the chunk of words beforehand is related to that one (pointing to footnote 10 in Table 1 above). Elizabeth's writing also I suggest, presents us with an example of the kind of 'patchwriting' that Howard has described (1992; 1999) that enables students to participate in the construction of the discourse of their disciplines.

Elizabeth's uncertainty and confusion can be understood in terms of Bakhtin's dialogic notion of a "conflict of voices" (1984, pp. 74-75) where each 'voice' vies for position as it interacts with another: Elizabeth's struggle to present herself in a way that she thought would meet my approval had resulted in her providing information that was inconsistent. As Angelil-Carter has pointed out (1997, p. 272), the interview situation is representative of a context in which the student interviewee may be in unequal relations of power with the interviewer, especially when the latter may also interact with the student in a teaching capacity (as I had previously with Elizabeth, although not at the time this research was in progress).

It is precisely such moments of conflict and struggle that poststructuralist theories of subjectivity enable us to address. As Lather explains, a poststructuralist approach to identity conceives of subjectivity as:

> both socially produced in language, at conscious and
> unconscious levels, and as a site of struggle and potential
> change. In poststructuralist theories of the subject, identity
> does not follow unproblematically from experience. We are
> seen to live in webs of multiple representations of class, race,
> gender, language and social relations; meanings vary
> within one individual. (1991, p. 101)

Elizabeth continued that there could be a number of reasons why a writer might fail to reference their sources. For example, if they were "unsure of their own views", or because of "bad intentions", which would indicate that "you mean to pass something off as your own". However, a writer with "good intentions" also might fail to reference a source text surmised Elizabeth because firstly, a writer might not understand the question; secondly, the writer might feel "too nervous" to express their own opinions because they are not as "learned as professor so-and-so"; thirdly, the writer might be pressured for time and "could easily copy out a quote and then think of it as (their) own"; finally, the writer might have failed to acknowledge a source because they had forgotten where a particular quotation was from.

Although Elizabeth believed that her previous educational experiences of writing and using source materials provided her with the kind of cultural capital that would equip her to write the sort of essays required of her at university, this capital did not enable her to establish a sense of writer identity and authorial presence in her assignment, at least according to Luke her marker, who referred to her writing as "over-referenced":

> *It read a bit like a kind of series of quotes strung together. I would*
> *have liked to have seen this student try and put some of the more*
> *general ideas into her own words and even perhaps a bit more*
> *paraphrasing, rather than straight out quoting of other people's*
> *ideas, 'cos it really does read like an-essay-of-strung-together-*
> *quotes... in a way which is kind of almost exclusively parroting*
> *other people's ideas.*

As Starfield has noted in her research into writer identity (2002, p. 135), "over-referencing" is a feature of student writing that can be indicative of a lack of authorial presence. In addition, as many educators have acknowledged (e.g. Angelil-Carter, 2000; Starfield, 1999; Wilson, 1997), paraphrasing (as mentioned by Luke above) is not straightforward: it not only raises questions about interpretation and the re-construction of text/knowledge, but also about ownership of such textual re-configurations.

The concluding paragraph of Elizabeth's essay included five footnoted references, which Luke found particularly disappointing. By the time the student had reached the conclusion he stated, he wanted them "to have arrived at their particular take on it (the essay question)":

> *I'd like to see the student grappling with the ideas in such*
> *as way that they actually expressed an opinion which is*
> *coming more from themselves.*

Luke noted that the strength of this essay was that it was obviously well-researched and that he would probably award it an H2B grade (70 – 74%) because it was "reasonable without being outstanding" (an average mark for a first year Politics essay would be 70%). However, exactly how Elizabeth could create an authorial identity that moved beyond simply "parroting other people's ideas" to the point where she could "express an opinion", Luke found difficult to explain.

Tony's search for authority in his writing

Tony was in his forties at the time of our interview, was born in Turkey and speaks Turkish as his first language. He had been living in Australia for 38 years, completing his final years of primary and all of his secondary schooling in English, returning to study after 24 years to enrol in a Law degree. The essay he submitted for this research was entitled *"What are the implications of the decision in Osland v R (1998) 73 A.L.J.R. 173 for women who resort to deadly force against their abusers and are charged with murder?"* The assignment was set for the subject "Criminal Law and Procedure" and required students to discuss the difficulties involved in deciding whether or not women who had experienced periods of physical abuse by their partners ('battered woman syndrome'), whom they subsequently killed, were entitled to be treated differently (a plea of 'manslaughter' might be considered acceptable) from other cases where 'deadly force' had been used.

In contrast to Elizabeth, who accepted and attempted to ventriloquise the authority of her source texts without question, Tony explained that although in legal writing "authority is everything", he saw his role as comparing and criticising the "underlying philosophies" of the writers of his reading materials. Tony's previous experience of university study in Australia he believed, had equipped him to approach his source texts in a 'critical' fashion. Tony discussed the precise and mechanical nature of legal writing, saying that he found the requirements of citation and the use of footnotes to be particularly "stringent" and time-consuming. Legal writing was especially onerous he claimed, because the consequences of misquotation could be far-reaching:

> *Someone could misquote and it could have bad repercussions.*
> *You've got to be precise in saying what a judge said (otherwise)*
> *someone could sue you. That's why a lot of importance is placed*
> *on it.*

As the first paragraph of Tony's assignment shows (see Table 2 below), the first three sentences contain footnotes. The fourth and fifth sentences are without references, and were highlighted by Leila (the Law lecturer participating in this research) as problematic and in need of supporting footnotes:

Table 2: Tony's Assignment Extract

Tony (p. 1, paragraph 1)
Osland v R[1] is significant because for the first time the relevance of battered woman syndrome (BWS) has been considered by the High Court. In R *v Runjanjic*; R *v Kontinnen*[2] it was said that BWS was 'so special, so outside ordinary experience' that expert evidence should be made available to the courts to judge the situations[3]. The *Osland* case was complicated by, and turned on, the question of inconsistent verdicts in the context of defendants who acted in concert[4]. While BWS was discussed in *Osland*, Kirby and Callinan JJ said that there was no place in Australian law for a defence of BWS. The appeal did not proceed on that basis.   1 (1998) 73 ALJR 173.   2 (1991) 53 A Crim R 362.   3 Ibid, at 118.

Leila explained that she placed considerable importance on the need for acknowledgement of the work of others, saying several times that for her "it is just a question of honesty":

> *There is a level at which there is an important honesty point,*
> *if you like, of which the student needs to be made aware and*
> *that is that there does have to be full disclosure of precisely*
> *what sources you have consulted and if you've not directly*
> *consulted sources, you must make that clear.*

Studying Law, claimed Leila, "changes the way you think" and "the way you approach arguments" because any proposition needed to be supported either by reference to a Case or to a statute, which could lead to "a quite narrow frame of thinking." As an educator, Leila believed that it was her responsibility to provide students with "the tools to work with" so that they could "develop their own style." Tony could have achieved this by developing an argument that "sounded" convincing:

> *This student, if they'd simply had a more coherent argument,*
> *could have sounded as if they were expressing more of a line.*
> *One of the problems with this (Tony's writing), is that it's*
> *never really clear what the line is.*

Leila elaborated that it would have been acceptable for the student to have simply repeated the ideas contained in their sources providing that they had demonstrated that they had consulted and understood a range of material and had developed a well-structured argument. A more sophisticated writer would have had "a much greater sense of what their argument is" and although this would still have been derived from their readings, they would have been able to present their argument "more creatively", Leila added. However, clarifying exactly how students could be 'more creative' in their writing was difficult. She commented: "It's such an intangible, I think. They can put the argument in just a slightly better way, perhaps not so pedestrian."

The rest of Tony's assignment contains a similar density of footnoting, with the exception of the final two paragraphs where the absence of references is striking. This was seen as quite acceptable by Leila, since Tony had not introduced any 'new' information that warranted further referencing. Her principle criticism of the essay was as follows:

> *There's no sense in which the student (Tony) has set out what*
> *they're claiming and there's no sense in which they bring that*
> *together at the end … that student has never got beyond simply*
> *putting down what other people have said; never been able to*
> *extract from that and say, 'Well, that then supports this'.*

It was precisely how to get "beyond simply putting down what other people have said" to the point where (as Tony put it) "a mutated expression/idea become(s) one's own", that he found so difficult in legal writing. Tony exclaimed that he "didn't see how else (he) could do it", because it was always necessary to find support for any arguments presented:

> *As far as the arguments go, they're all said … so as a student I'm*
> *not going to be able to contribute with much original material*
> *because it's all there.*

If knowledge claims are viewed as unauthored, unassailable and 'true', then the authorship function becomes synonymous with that of a reporter who reports on 'truths' (Penrose &

Geisler, 1994). The author as "outsider" view of textual production subscribes to an information-transfer model of learning and is in marked contrast to constructivist notions of knowledge production (Penrose & Geisler, pp. 514-515) in which the role of the writer is conceived as that of an (inter)textual creator. On the one hand, Tony seems resigned to holding a fixed view of legal writing as a source of finite arguments ("they're all said") and knowledge ("it's all there") produced by non-agentive writers, yet on the other hand he states that legal writing is not as formulaic as a Mathematical equation where " $2 + 2 = 4$ " since "subjectivity always comes into everything". Dealing with two such conflicting positions is clearly very problematic for Tony. He commented that he was criticised by his marker for using other people's ideas, but then asked "how else could (I) do it?". He described his frustration and powerlessness at only being awarded a Pass grade of between 50% and 64% ("I thought that was a bit subjective. Who am I to question, I suppose'), adding:

> *I really should have helped myself more. I didn't consult the lecturer at all. I did it on my own...Writing a paper you've got to get some feedback and get some pointers and then you're on to a better track but ... doing it on your own, not knowing really what the lecturer wants is not a good way to go.*

Here, I suggest that Tony is the *subject-on-trial* writing for assessment, tapping into what Kristeva has termed the subject-addressee (or writer-reader) dimension of intertextual production and meaning negotiation (1986, p. 37). Although he did not in fact discuss his assignment with his lecturer, he conceives of academic writing as interactive and consultative ("Writing a paper you've got to get some feedback and get some pointers"). Here Tony is highlighting the intertextual and *dialogic* nature of the struggle that he has experienced in the processes of text/knowledge construction and writer identity formation that constitute such an integral and complex part of writing for the academy. As Penrose and Geisler have pointed out, it is only by "understanding the development of knowledge as a communal and continuous process" (1994, p. 517) that student writers can gain control and authority over the texts they produce.

Concluding comments and suggestions for teaching
What can we learn from the nature of the interrelationships between the students, their texts and the reactions of the academic staff discussed in this study? Both Elizabeth and Tony demonstrate how their perceptions of themselves as academic writers are unstable, contradictory and evolving. These self-perceptions (or subjectivities) are forged dialogically: 'internally' through their changing experiences of themselves as academic writers, and 'externally' through their experiences of themselves through the eyes of others, notably their assessors (and in the case of this study, through my eyes as 'the researcher'). Yet we can see from the reactions of Luke and Leila, that it will be far from easy for Elizabeth and Tony to meet their expectations.

According to Luke, Elizabeth's "parroting" of her source texts demonstrated an over-reliance on the words and ideas of others which endured through to her concluding paragraph which contained six sentences and five footnotes. In contrast, although the final ten sentences of Tony's essay contained no footnotes, this did not convince Leila that he had in fact managed to develop his 'own' "line". While it might be argued that Tony's lack of referencing was an attempt to inject a sense of authority into his writing by "expropriating" and forcing the language of legal discourse to submit to his own intentions (Bakhtin 1981, p. 294), these efforts had not met with Leila's approval. Indeed, neither of the strategies adopted by Elizabeth and Tony produced the kind of authoritative writing they were each striving so hard to achieve.

For Tony on the one hand, the *homogenising* forces of legal writing that decree that "authority is everything" left him very little space to develop a sense of authorial presence in his writing;

yet, on the other hand, he was asked to provide more "original ideas" by his marker. As I have discussed above, finding a way out of this paradoxical impasse posed enormous difficulties for Tony, especially given the centrality of representing the ideas of others to the production of legal discourse. The contradictory demands placed on him as an emergent academic writer prevented him from finding a way of 'writing himself into' the text he submitted for assessment.

Despite Leila's assertion that transparency in referencing practices revolved primarily around questions of academic honesty (a claim that has also been made by others in the academy, e.g., Maslen, 2000; Walker, 1998), she struggled to clarify how students might work directly with their source texts in order to develop their writing and argumentation in "more creative" ways ("It's such an intangible, I think"). As others have also argued (e.g. Briggs, 2003; Howard, 1999), recourse to a universal notion of moral rectitude to explain how students incorporate source materials into their assignments, falls short of accounting for the difficulties experienced by emergent academic writers engaged in the complex processes of knowledge/text construction.

Conceptualising academic writing (and indeed all writing) as a form of patchwriting that is dialogically and intertextually constructed, allows us to move away from the paralysing concept of authorship as singular and unitary, which so often serves simply to block constructive ways of dealing with questions of knowledge production, writer development and textual ownership. By recognising that students writing for the academy are subjects-in-process-and-on-trial, engaged in forms of intertextual knowledge production, we are able to offer a way forward for emergent-student-writers such as Elizabeth and Tony and educators like Luke and Leila.

A classroom activity that draws on the notion of textual ownership as dialogically and sociohistorically produced could take the form of the following 'critical thinking', group-based task (see also Thompson, 2002). Firstly, students could be asked to co-construct a written response to a specific question using the knowledge they may already have of the assigned topic (which could be selected on the basis of students' fields of study), together with text extracts from writers who adopt different epistemological or methodological approaches to the issue in question. Next, students could reflect on and discuss the types of knowledge (or methodological) perspectives they have chosen to foreground in their writing and explain their reasons for privileging particular propositions and assumptions over others. Finally, students could be asked to annotate their writing in the form of specific questions addressed to the reader/teacher about the content and/or communicative quality of their texts, thus establishing a dialogue between students and assessors (see also Storch & Tapper 1997, p. 261). Such dialogues I suggest, have the potential to create the kind of pedagogical framework through which the co-constructed and ongoing nature of text/knowledge production and emergent student authorship can be explicitly experienced; a framework that allows for the circulation and negotiation of textual authority.

Celia Thompson studied French, German and Russian before becoming a language teacher herself. She has lived and travelled extensively in Europe and South East Asia and has been teaching Academic English and Communication subjects at the University of Melbourne, Australia for several years. Her research areas include critical pedagogies, writer identity and intertextuality. Celia first became interested in plagiarism because of its unclear connections with imitation and language learning. Her PhD study explores the politics of knowledge, identity and textual ownership in undergraduate student writing. Celia's work on critical literacies and plagiarism has appeared in Australian and U.S. publications.

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