Becoming academic writers: Author Identity in a Malawian University.

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Abstract

This project explores the dialectic between the identities which social essayist literacy traditions encourage and novice writers' view of such identities (Lillis, 2001) as novices transition to university education in a Malawian university. To do this, the study adopts the view of academic writing as social semiosis with identity implications (Ivanič, 1998). This position is predicated on the view that saying something is a performative act which hails a social being (Gee, 1996). Therefore, in asking novice writers to write in a certain way, the academy implicitly asks them to take on new discoursal identities. The study examines the dialectic that ensues from this. Such dialectic is largely examined from an Ubuntu perspective which stipulates that selfhood is brought about in interaction with and because of the "other" (cf., Swanson, 2007, 2009).

To achieve this, the study adopts "ethnography as method" (Lillis, 2008) or "talk around text". Novice academic texts were analysed to isolate the identity positions which they performatively enacted. Then, in a discourse based interview set up (Hyland, 2012a), participants were given an opportunity to explicate why as well as how they created the positions identified. The emerging data from these talks were then analysed using Bamberg's (1997) model of interactive positioning to explore further how these novices perceive themselves in light of the emerging positions in their written texts.

The findings of this study point to academic writing as a "stage managed form of interaction" (Thompson, 2001) in which what goes into the essay is hardly determined by the individual writer. The study's findings highlight that the contents of most novice essays are determined by "the reader/assessor" (Ivanič, 1998) and the impressions novices want to create for this authoritative "other". Novice writers' attempts to performatively take up authoritative positions in their writing are however hampered by both a lack of knowledge of academic writing conventions as well as a reverence for secondary discourse. This makes their writing to be either "voiceless" or mildly assertive. They thus struggle to dialogically assert themselves as authoritative since authoritativeness in academic writing is contingent on the "other". This is something novice academic writers in Malawi struggle to negotiate.

Acknowledgments

List of abbreviations

UNIMA: University of Malawi.

CoP: community/ies of practice.

ESL: English as a second language.

EAP: English for Academic Purpose.

NS: native speaker.

NNS: non-native speaker.

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

UK: United Kingdom.

TV: television

CD Kai1/2:   Kai's essay 1 and 2 on accompanying CD.

CD KH1/2:   Khumbo's essay 1 and 2 on accompanying CD.

CD FE1/2:   Felipe's essay 1 and 2 on accompanying CD.

CD HPE1/2:   Hope's essay 1 and 2 on accompanying CD.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introducing the self

This thesis is about self or identity. It is developed on the understanding that identity is both "brought along" to as well as "brought about" during the discoursing moment (Baynham, 2015). As such, it traces the self which novice academic writers "bring along" to their writing as well as the self which they "bring about" as they write during their transition to university education in a Malawian university. Such a dual focus has been taken on the understanding that there are oftentimes tensions between the kinds of identities that the social essayist literacy privileges and the student writer's sense of identity(ties) (Lillis, 2001, p. 78). Against this understanding, the thesis explores the dialectic between the identity which novice writers in Malawi bring along from school and/or home and those identity positions they are expected to perform as they write for the academy during this transition to university.

This chapter therefore sets the scene for the entire thesis. This it does by examining the theory of the self on which this study is based. It highlights that my view of selfhood has been shaped by African cultural or epistemological frames. In locating my*self* at the centre of this research, I will highlight two fundamental philosophical positions. First of all, I will highlight the notion of Ubuntu particularly its emphasis on becoming and interdependence as the basis for selfhood. Then, I will highlight that in placing the "social" ahead of the individual, Ubuntu shares important overlaps with dialogism. Perceived in this light then I will highlight how Ubuntu and dialogism form the philosophical basis for this study. Having outlined these philosophical foundations, the final part of the chapter outlines the organisational framework of this thesis.

1.2 I am an African

In alluding to my being African, I foreground one of the very many "I positions" (Hermans, 2002) which I occupy. This loaded "I position" however is crucial in our understanding of how this study has been conducted. This is so as this claim has been made not just based on some mental picture I have of myself but rather after a careful retracing of my "self" from my past socialisation experiences. Evoking this grounding of my*self* within the socialisation experiences I have had implicitly alludes to me as a social being; as a multi-voiced self within whom others occupy positions (Hermans,

2001). So, what triggered this search for an exploration of who I am vis-à-vis others in this study?

1.2.1 Beware your ideology

Having defined ideologies as "group schemata" or abstract cognitive complexes located in the minds of members of groups based on *accumulated experience* and *socialisation*, Blommaert (2005, p. 162) further contends that such schema constitute deep structures of social behaviour which organise the way members think, speak, and act. It is perhaps with the abstract nature of these group schema in mind that Blommaert warns that the most dangerous ideology then is "the invisible and systemic core which we fail to recognise as ideological because it is *our* ideology" (2005, p. 160, his emphasis). It was largely with this "warning" in mind that I then begun to re-examine how my accumulated experiences from times past have socialised me to think and act in certain ways. Such an exploration of myself from a socialisation perspective led me to a deeper understanding of my being African; a being which has not only emerged within the environment I grew up but is also intertwined with the "otherness" of those I have grown up with and continue to live among. One such incident which heightened this sense of self-examination was an encounter which I had with Felipe, one of the research participants to this study.

1.2.2 Felipe[1]

Research has the potential to change the researcher (Patton, 2002). This is something I can indeed attest to. When Felipe, one of my research participants observed that academic writing "gives a sense of looking deep within you", I felt that his observation resonated with me doing this research project as I begun to perceive that this project had indeed "made me look deep within me". This was arguably the first time I perceived that my being or self was intertwined with the research project as well as with the "otherness" of those around me. This inspired me to deeply examine my self. Such examination led me to realise that who I am is "constituted by" as well as "constitutive of" the words of those with whom I either share or seek to share membership (Block, 2000, p. 759). To me, this in turn meant that:

> all meaningful reality is contingent upon human *practices* being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 2003, p. 42).

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[1] This is not his real name (see 4.7 below).

This understanding, particularly that "reality" is contingent upon human practices and constructed in interaction between human beings operating within a social milieu, drove me to a deeper search for the self within; the African within.

1.2.3 I am a human being

The deeper search within for a sense of biographical self which I brought along to the study led me to a simple but fundamental realisation that *I am a human being*. From an African frame of thinking however this seemingly simple statement is loaded with a lot of philosophical as well as epistemological perspectives. This is the case as "being human" or "humanness" is a fundamental African concern which can find a comprehensive expression under the Ubuntu philosophy or ethic.

1.3 Ubuntu/uMunthu

Generally, Ubuntu essentially refers to the quality of being human (cf., Kamwangamalu, 1999; Nussbaum, 2003; Swanson, 2007, 2009; Gade, 2011, 2012). Morphologically, the term Ubuntu has been traced to the Nguni proverb *ubuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* which transliterates into "a human being is a human being through (*the otherness of)* other human beings" (Louw, 2001, p. 23). Despite being traced to a South African proverb, various morphological equivalents to the term Ubuntu exist across Africa. Across the continent one finds evidence of Ubuntu particularly some of its cardinal tenets like communalism and interdependence for instance (see Kamwangamalu, 1999). It is not surprising therefore that in Malawi, the term uMunthu carries the same ontological potential as Ubuntu (see Tambulasi and Kayuni, 2005; Sharra, 2009). As such, the two terms are oftentimes used interchangeably as will be the case in this study. How is this part of my biographical self important in the course of this study? What does this "philosophy of being" (Swanson, 2009) stipulate and how does this relate to this study?

1.3.1 Becoming

Due to the diversity in African cultures and perspectives, Ubuntu has come to mean different things to different people across the continent. This has made coming up with a generalised definition of Ubuntu become a contentious issue (see Matolino and Kwindingwi, 2013; Metz, 2014). However, considering the richness and diversity of the African cultures and therefore outlooks, we cannot expect everybody to experience and describe Ubuntu in the same way. Against this background, I agree with Cornell and van Marle (2005, p. 207) in saying that what I am driving at here is not a fundamental

search for a definition of Ubuntu but rather I aim at highlighting "certain key aspects". One such aspect is the notion of becoming.

At the heart of this "African humanism" (Venter, 2004; Gade, 2011, 2012) is the idea of becoming. One key focus of this ethic is attaining a measure of "humanity" or "humanness" (Gade, 2011, p. 307) a measure which is attained through and perpetuated by participating in social norms. In this vein, the Ubuntu ethic contends that people become human or attain the desirable traits of humanness through such *socialisation* into the collective ideals of Ubuntu. From an Ubuntu perspective, becoming a person is attained through other persons. Such becoming involves:

> Going through various community prescribed stages and being involved in certain ceremonies and initiation rituals. Before being incorporated into the body of persons through this route, one is regarded merely as an "it" not yet a person (Louw, 2001, p. 18).

It is perhaps evident here that "becoming" refers to the on-going or unfinalizable nature of the process by which one attains certain traits and not necessarily to the idea of selectively appropriating the discourse of others (Bakhtin, 1981). Furthermore, it should be evident here that from an Ubuntu ethic, the society precedes the individual. While I identified with this understanding as I begun to look at myself as going through "initiation rituals" to become a researcher, a view which also meant that in the meantime I am an "it" not yet a person in the world of academia, I also felt that this also resonates with the situation of the participants to this study. Thus, I begun to perceive their learning to engage in academic writing as part of their initiation process to be socialised into a "body of persons"; into the academia. Such intersection of our paths however made me further realise that "becoming *human* seems more than ever a work in progress than a given" (Caracciolo, 2009, p. xi). This is the case as Ubuntu's preoccupation with what it means to be human and to be in relationship with an – other (Swanson, 2007) stipulate that my being is intertwined with that of an "other". This in turn means that who I am "is never fixed or rigidly closed but adjustable and open ended" (Louw, 2001, p. 26). In this regard, the possibilities of who or what I can become seem endless as this will depend, to some extent, on my interlocutors. Furthermore, my being/self/identity cannot be irreducibly fixed to a particular characteristic, conduct, or function (cf., Louw, 2001) but is rather made manifest through my past, present, as well as future discoursing moments. It is this allusion to the past as an important part of my becoming which evokes Baynham's (2015) idea of "identity as brought along" as well.

From the foregoing, it should be evident that my "self" is something that is dependent on the "other". I am an interdependent being. This understanding is an important precursor to the view of intersubjectivity which I will expound later in this thesis (see Chapter 3 and 4).

1.3.2 Interdependence

The maxim which epitomises the Ubuntu ethic, "I am" because "you are" and "you are" because "I am", firmly puts interdependence at the heart of this philosophy. This in turn implies that the essence of Ubuntu is that an individual owes his or her existence to the existence of others (Kamwangamalu, 1999). This is something which I partially demonstrate above in explicating how I was inspired to "search deep within" for an understanding of my biographies brought along by one of the participants to the study, Felipe. While our interdependence goes deeper than this as I will explicate in chapter 7, it is perhaps clear that Ubuntu emphasises interconnectedness (Gade, 2012). However, this interconnectedness transcends the personal level and embraces the societal level as well. Thus, not only am I interconnected to others in my environment but I am also interconnected to the social and cultural milieu in which I live. The point that at this moment I am bringing out something of that environment from my past bears testimony to this.

Nussbaum (2003, p. 2) contends that the Nguni or isiXosa proverb on which Ubuntu is founded "essentially states that no one can be self-sufficient and that interdependence is a reality for all". Such understanding is buttressed by several proverbs and sayings from across Africa which highlight communalism and interdependence as the bedrock on which African societies are found (see Sulamoyo, 2010). In similar vein, Venter (2004) observes that a person in Africa is not just a social being but a being that is inseparable from the community. Venter further contends that as a result of this, in the African frame of mind, it is the community which defines the person as a person "not some isolated static quality of rationality, will, or memory" (Venter, 2004, p. 154). This is brought about as, out of the African ethos of respecting the individual within the realm of collectivism and communal responsibility (Sulamoyo, 2010, p. 45), "self" is rooted in community. In other words, "selfhood is achieved by what we do for others" (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 7). I will extend this understanding in my later explication of the social view of identity (See Chapter 3) to include the understanding that selfhood is also achieved by what we do *with* others. From the foregoing, it is not surprising therefore that from an Ubuntu perspective, the community precedes the individual. This is a

crucial point which I feel significantly applies to novice academic writers who are still an "it" as more often than not their individuality is made invisible by the community which they seek to align with (cf., Cooper, 2014).

The coexistence as well as interdependence with the wider community which I am highlighting here can perhaps be best summed up by the understanding that:

> Ubuntu defines the individual in terms of his/her relationship with others … individuals only exist *in* their relationship with others, and as these relationships change, so do the characters of the individuals. Thus understood, the word 'individual' signifies a plurality of personalities corresponding to the multiplicity of relationships in which the individual in question stands (Louw, 2001, p. 24).

This alludes to the view that the definition of the self takes place in a dialectic between self and other. In this dialectic, as I reflect in Chapter 3, the individual is both positioned as well as positions themselves via-a-vis the other. It is important to emphasise therefore that this mutual co-existence between the individual and the community points to the realisation that both are in an ever becoming process together. Thus, as Louw (2001) points out above, the changing nature of the relationships one has with others feeds a change in who one is and or can become. This makes sense when one considers that selfhood is brought about through what we do *for* as well as *with* others. This foregrounds the notion of positioning as a fundamental tactic of intersubjectivity in the identification process and is an issue which I will highlight in greater detail from chapter 3 onwards. Furthermore, in claiming that an "individual" signifies a "plurality of personalities", Louw's (2001) view of Ubuntu mirrors the notion of the self as dialogical (cf., Hermans, 2001, 2002); of the self as a plurality of voices (see Bakhtin, 1984) and is something that I will expound later in 1.4 below.

The mutual interrelationship between the two important pillars of Ubuntu namely becoming, on one hand, and interdependence, on the other, can perhaps be brought together by understanding that Ubuntu is about:

> the process of becoming a person, or more strongly put, how one can become a person at all (as) … In a dynamic process, the individual and the community are always in the process of coming into being. (Cornell and van Marle, 2005, p. 209).

From the foregoing, it is perhaps evident that my being or the "self" brought along to this study is something which has been intersubjectively brought about through socialisation into the various practices which I have engaged in thus far. However, a continued interaction with "others" as well as with other contexts brings about a

manifestation of a self which is born out of the discoursing moment. Such a self however is going to be influenced by the manner in which I have internalised a culture from my past encounters; by the identity I bring along. The dialectic between the identity brought along and the demands of a discoursing moment work together to feed what Louw (2001) calls multiple personalities; multiple identities or voices. This happens as "a past and with it an identity impresses itself upon us so that we inherit that impression as it constitutes us as a 'we'" (Cornell and van Marle, 2005, p. 199). Thus, as I *negotiated* with the impressions of my past on me through my interaction with as well as attempts to speak through the multiplicity of voices these interactions offered me, I have indeed become a "we"; a plurality of voices. I am, just like my participants to this study, a dialogical self.

1.4 Dialogical self

The notion of voice is arguably one of the central ideas in Bakhtinian thought (see Bakhtin, 1981, 1984, 1986). For instance, in his explication of the "polyphonic novel", Bakhtin contends that "interaction" and "coexistence" are the "soil" on which polyphony strives (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 31). This is the case as the utterances which we make are not necessarily taken from a stockpile of words but are rather taken from the "mouths" of other speakers (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). As each utterance is in turn "shot through" with the intentions as well as ideologies of those from whom we "borrow" them then within us exist "the interaction of several consciousnesses" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 18) an existence which makes us "multi-voiced". This reflects what Louw (2001), from an Ubuntu perspective, calls a "plurality of personalities". It is evident here that the idea of "borrowing" other people's voices brings to mind the notion of becoming as selectively appropriating the discourse of others (Bakhtin, 1981).

In dialogic terms then it can be summed up that an individual is a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6). As these voices intersect with other voices within an individual, they enter into an internal dialogue with those within the individual's consciousness. In light of this understanding every one of our thoughts is a *rejoinder* in an unfinalised dialogue (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 32). This stretches our understanding of self. In claiming to be a "social being" I am not claiming to be a "self-contained individual" who enters into social interactions with other outside people. Rather I am highlighting that other people or even institutions occupy *positions* within me (Hermans, 2001, p. 250). It is these *positions* which I choose to foreground depending on circumstances and

in foregrounding them I am, inadvertently or otherwise, indexing the context or the "mouths" from which I have "borrowed" them. This is an important precursor to the role of manifest intertextuality in writing.

The notion of *positions* is crucial in this study as, contrary to the idea of "roles" (cf., Goffman, 1990), it always implies and indexes relations (Davies and Harré, 1990; Hermans, 2001). Considering the crucial nature of "co-existence" as well as "interaction" as highlighted earlier, positions and positioning will afford us an opportunity in this project to understand how individuals not only enter into "dialogic" relations with their past, present, and future but also how they "reinvent" themselves in the discoursing moment across time as well as space boundaries (Batory, *et al* 2010). Such reinvention is made possible as individuals switch positions across temporal and spatial boundaries. In this regard, while not a "self – contained" individual one is then a "dynamic multiplicity of I – positions" (Hermans, 2002).

From the foregoing then, as already indicated elsewhere thus far, the self is not an isolated whole. Rather, the self is "an amalgam of other selves, voices, experiences" (Harris, 1987, p. 161) a plurality of voices which one ventriloquates. Such voices are then uttered as independent "I positions". In foregrounding or positioning a particular aspect of the self, one then perfomatively portrays an individuality that is "in constant evolution" (Batory *et al* 2010, p. 48). Such constant evolution helps us to capture and understand "the spirit of this world-in-the-state-of-becoming" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 19). This is made possible as "the plural I" (Harris, 1987) which constitutes the self enables one to imaginatively traverse different time as well as space configurations even in a single interacting context. It is not surprising to note then that, due to this switching across different I positions (cf., Hermans, 2001, 2002; Batory *et al* 2010), the individual, in constant co-existence and interaction with others as well as the wider society, performatively makes available for inspection an "I" that fluctuates among different and even opposed positions (Hermans, 2001; Batory *et al*, 2010). This means that the *I* in one position can agree or disagree, understand or contradict the *I* in another position (Hermans, 2001).

This then implies that it should not be surprising for us to encounter a surfeit of "I positions" in the narratives of people we interact with. This is something the reader will encounter from chapter 5 through 8 when they get a glimpse into the self of the participants to this study. However, one point worth highlighting from the above explanation of the dialogical self as well as the dialogic lens through which I will

examine the trajectory of self in academic writing of the participants in this study is that becoming is an on-going endeavour. This then implies that, just like Ubuntu encapsulates so well, who or what one is and or can be is always open to negotiation and contestation. Even though people bring somewhat stable identity positions to interaction with others, a multiplicity of other "identities", "personalities", or "I positions" are born out of a discoursing moment or encounter. This, as I later argue, is what is happening with novice academic writers in Malawi.

1.5 Thesis structure

Chapter 2 examines the research problem which inspired this study. It traces the intersection between self (of the participants), context and research problem and how these came together to inspire this study. In doing this, the chapter highlights some of the key literacy assumptions that are made regarding academic writing in Malawi further highlighting how this study sets out to critique such views. In bringing these views to the fore, the chapter will highlight how such perceptions "pathologise" the novice academic writers in Malawi. As this is tantamount to symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1977b), the chapter then identifies one key motivation for the conducting of this study namely placing the novice writer him/herself in time and space.

From an explication of the research context as well as the major motivations which prompted the study in chapter 2, chapter 3 will locate the current study as a *rejoinder* to an on-going dialogue more especially the dialogue which perceives academic writing as identity work. Built on such notions as positioning and performativity in discourse, the chapter will put forward a view of academic writing as identity work; as an act of identity. During this act of identity, the chapter will further contend, writers performatively bring about and occupy a multiplicity of "I positions" towards becoming who they can be in any given writing episode. This will then culminate into an outlining of the research questions which have guided the study.

Chapter 4 will then proceed to give insight into the methodological framework which has been used in the study. Questions regarding the philosophical foundations of research, in general, and this research project in particular, will be tackled here. This will lead to a rationalisation of the chosen approach for this project. Within such rationalisation, the chapter will also highlight how participants were selected, how data were generated with them, the challenges encountered in doing so, as well as how the data once generated were analysed. This chapter will highlight how attempts to do

research with a "humble togetherness" (Swanson, 2007) in a way highlighted how Ubuntu has indeed become "an ideal concept" (Venter, 2004) even among Africans.

Realising that nobody's life can be captured in its entirety, chapters 5 through 8 will give the reader a glimpse into the lives of the participants to this study. Thus, using Bamberg's (1997) model of interactive positioning, these chapters will endeavour to highlight how the participants to the study traversed different spatial as well as temporal terrains to performatively construct a multiplicity of "I positions" as they engaged in identity work even in the context of the research interview. Such positions will be examined alongside those taken in their written texts. Thus, using "talk around text" this chapter will highlight the oftentimes incongruous positions which participants took in the interview discourse vis-à-vis their written discourse. This is something which will further lead to the highlighting of the "inner/outer" tension in perception of self as an individual, in general, and as an academic writer, in particular.

Chapter 9 will bring the disparate narratives of the participants into a unified narrative. This will be done by isolating, expanding, and responding to the key narrative themes as they emerge from the individual narratives as well as how these narrative themes resonate with the research questions which will be presented in chapter 3.

In the final analysis, chapter 10 will draw out the key conclusions that have been made from the study. Furthermore, the chapter will also highlight some of the contributions which the study has made to the "on-going dialogue" on academic writing as identity work. Some implications for pedagogy will also be presented here.

Chapter 2 : Context

2.1 'Self'/context intersection

Following a reflection on the views of being/selfhood espoused in chapter 1, this chapter sketches out the research problem which prompted this self-reflection. This I do in this chapter on the understanding that every philosophical position is arrived at in response to basic human problems and an analysis of human experience (Venter, 2004). In this regard, in this chapter I trace how my response to and or my analysis of the academic writing problem in Malawi, as noted by several people, brought about a desire to search for an understanding of the experiences of those involved in this problem namely the students themselves. Thus I will highlight in this chapter how the intersection of the handling of that problem, on one hand, and my own "bias" pertaining to how things ought to be done, on the other, together fed the desire to search for student "voice" which hitherto remains "unheard". In so doing, this research represents an attempt at dealing with the problem of speaking *for* others as I put forward a case for speaking *with* others as the centre-piece of "research with a humble togetherness" (Swanson, 2007, 2009).

2.2 The problem

2.2.1 'They' cannot write

There have been sustained complaints from many sectors of society in Malawi that undergraduate students cannot write to the expected standards once they enrol into university. Lecturers, parents, administrators, and even employers of university graduates have time and again raised their discontent with the quality of university graduates and undergraduates alike. For instance, Katenje (2001) reports of complaints from the Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi (ESCOM) that graduates from the Polytechnic cannot, among other things, competently write reports required of them in the workplace. She also reports that many at the institution are of the view that the quality of undergraduate writing is not good enough. This, she contends, seems to be a result of the manner in which the language and communication module is taught at the institution, a manner which seems to emphasise basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) at the expense of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). To her, this seems to be one of the important factors to the status quo, one in which the cognitive academic language proficiency of these undergraduates remains undeveloped.

While largely agreeing with Katenje's (2001) observations, more especially regarding the sub-standard writing proficiency of undergraduates at the institution, Musopole (2006) adds a different dimension to the "problem".

In examining the efficiency of Language and Communication departments in the UNIMA using the Polytechnic's Language department as a case study, Musopole (2006) observes that the manner in which the courses in this department are taught, largely using a lecture method due to the large class sizes lecturers have to deal with, cannot produce the requisite competencies for survival and excellence in the university and beyond. The idea of large class sizes being an impediment to the proper development of writing "skills" of undergraduates is something which Musa (2013) also reports on.

In a newspaper article which reported of the withdrawal of 116 undergraduate students on academic grounds from Chancellor College, a constituent college of the UNIMA, Musa presents one lecturer's views from the institution. What seems significant about these views is that they seem to sum up the "master narratives" which purportedly explain the root cause of student inability to write in Malawi's higher education. Such narratives advance the understanding that what is at issue is the poor background which these students have (cf., Nsanja, 2009) a background which does not prepare them to communicate in English. As the lecturer quoted in this article is said to have put it:

> Most students seem to have a poor background I don't know what is happening in our secondary schools. You have students who cannot express themselves in English. In certain cases, you get students who speak very good English but when it comes to writing its unbelievable (Musa, 2013, p. 2).

The said lecturer, according to Musa, is said to have also observed that the problem is exacerbated by the fact that the lecturer/student ratio is too high. This, in turn, makes it difficult for lecturers to give closer attention to students. It seems not surprising therefore that in view of such working conditions many indeed tend to revert to the lecture method in the developing of "academic skills" like writing as Musopole (2006) observes. This then tends to be the only pedagogically convenient way out as despite understanding that there is need for closer attention to be given in monitoring student progress, even in the development of their academic literacy, most in the university fail to do so as they seem to be exasperated and end up asking; "how does one do that (give closer attention to each student) when you have a class of 200 students?" (Musa, 2013, p. 2).

Thus far, it should be evident that there are a number of issues at play here. To begin with, the point that the academic writing abilities and practices of undergraduates need a proper examination seems somewhat obvious if the foregoing is anything to go by. This ought not to be surprising considering that observations or complaints that literacy standards are falling as many complain that students can no longer write (Lea and Street, 1998, 2000) have also been made even among native speakers of English (cf., Cummins, 2000). Secondly, the deficit views of literacy, in general, and academic writing, in particular, prevalent in the context seem to come to the fore here. The view that these students ought to have been prepared to handle academic exigencies in the university by the secondary school curriculum prior to enrolling in university is the very essence of deficit views of literacy (see Hyland, 2009) and is a matter which I will expound on later (see 2.3 below). Generally, deficit views of literacy advance the understanding that:

> There is a single overarching literacy which students have failed to master before they get to university, probably because of gaps in curricula or faults in the learners themselves (Hyland, 2009, pp. 8 – 9).

In this regard, in blaming the "background" and the students themselves for this lack of proper writing abilities, the lecturer's views cited above, which index a wider societal understanding, in turn also indexes the deficit views of literacy in the context. However, a more pronounced pathologising of these undergraduates as being the embodiment of the writing problem in Malawi is presented by Ngwira (2007).

2.2.2 Who speaks for the subaltern?

In an article which had the subheading "Freshmen unable to write", Ngwira (2007) reporting on a workshop which had attracted lecturers, teachers, publishers, creative writers, college and secondary school students, observes that there are increasing reports of complaints from lecturers and employers about freshmen's inability to write academic essays and fresh graduates' inability to write and competently present reports in the workplace. There are a number of interesting views which Ngwira's article postulates.

To begin with, just like Musa (2013) before, delegates at this workshop "agreed" that the problem lay in the secondary school curriculum which at the time had separated the teaching of Literature from the teaching of English language by making them into two distinct subjects. Prior to this conference these had been treated as separate aspects of the same subject. However, to blame this split as being responsible for undergraduate

writing problems as well as for graduate inability to write reports in the workplace is, in my view, somewhat unreasonable more especially when one considers that Literature and language have since been recombined into one subject yet the academic writing problem in the university remains. Despite this, it is said to have been observed at the workshop that "the problem is not with how the students are being trained at the university; rather, *how they are being prepared for the university at secondary school*" (my emphasis). Such an understanding becomes difficult to comprehend when the same article claims that the vice chancellor of the university is said to have called for an "overhaul" of the university syllabi as a way of addressing the problem. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that despite their presence at the workshop, Ngwira does not engage the students who experience this problem so that their "voice" also gets heard. This can be taken to be indicative of the attitude of the wider population in Malawi, in general, and the UNIMA, in particular as hitherto I am not aware of any research which has tried to establish student "voice" on this problem. Thus, from the foregoing, it seems that the students who experience the writing problem when they come to university seem to be treated as either not worthy to be listened to or as not having anything to say on the matter. Either way, they remain unheard in the context as it seems to be only teachers, lecturers, and journalists who can speak and are speaking for them. In being denied an opportunity to be heard, these novices can be likened to the "subaltern"; subjects who are oppressively "othered" into silence (Spivak, 1988). Thus, novice writers in Malawi are "re-presented" by someone "filling in for them" a move which "fixes" them in a certain static way as opposed to the dynamic and becoming sense they embody (Spivak, 1988; Maggio, 2007).

From an ideological perspective of discourse (cf., Blommaert, 2005), this can be taken to indicate that "any Tom, Dick, and Harry does not take the floor" (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 649); that taking the floor involves an ideological power play which has identity implications (see Lillis, 2001). As such, it is perhaps important for researchers and educators alike to heed the call to search for "an adequate science of discourse one which seeks to establish the laws which determine who (*de facto* or *de jure*) may speak, to whom, and how" (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 648). This is one key motivation behind this research as I feel that the "silencing" of student voice over this matter is tantamount to symbolic violence (see Bourdieu, 1977b).

From the foregoing, I then decided to research into the self at the centre of the problem considering that hitherto not much seems to have been established from their

perspective. This means that, in exploring their academic writing trajectory from their past with a view to elucidating how this impacts their practices in the present, this study seeks to locate the self in space and time with a view to understanding what students are doing when they sit down to write. It is not surprising therefore that the focus in this study is on both the identity brought along to as well as identity brought about in discoursing moments. Furthermore, it should also not be surprising that the focus is on both what students do (i.e. write) as well as what they make of what they do as they write. This is what brings about the centrality of the self in the composing moment and beyond.

2.3 Rationale

The rationale for this study has been developed around two main themes. To begin with, I will highlight how this study endeavours to challenge deficit views of literacy prevalent in the context. To achieve this, first of all I will highlight how the study is developed around key theoretical concepts pertaining to new literacy studies more especially the view that literacy is a situational construct and one which is born out of discursive practices (see Baynham, 1995; Johns, 1997; Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1999); that literacy practices derive their meaning from and have different effects in different contexts (Gee, 2008, p. 82). This study therefore considers academic writing as social semiotic work, with identity implications, which takes place in "communities of practice". Realising that at the heart of understanding these practices is not just a description of what students do but rather an exploration of how they also perceive, describe, and understand *their own* learning practices (cf., Lea, 1999), the next part of the rationale will present how I set out in search of student "voice". Thus, I will highlight how the search for student "voice" in the context of this research is an important consideration from both a new literacy perspective as well as from an Ubuntu perspective. As I present this rationale, I will keep on shedding light on salient aspects of the context.

2.3.1 Deficit views of literacy

2.3.1.1   In the wider society

As something that emerges from and/or responds to particular contexts, being literate entails acquiring the "ways of being" (Gee, 1996, 2008) which enable one to participate in "secondary discourses" (see Baynham, 1995; Gee, 1996, 2008). Secondary

discourses refers to all uses of language which transcend the oral modes which are used in primary processes of enculturation (Gee, 1998, p. 55). As it is a construct which emerges in particular contexts, it is not surprising that the notion of multiple literacies (multi-literacies) is now a common understanding. It is from such notions that we get the idea of academic literacy to imply a "specialised" way of dealing with "academic discourse"; of dealing with "the ways of thinking and doing things which exist in the academy" (Hyland, 2009, p. 1). As it is evident from Hyland's point here the *ways* of thinking in higher education are multiple and varied. It therefore follows then that these *ways* also differ from those of secondary school; they differ from those ways which students are used to when they enrol in university. It is these "ways of being a person like us" which are also referred to as "socially situated identities" which I call, following Gee (2008, p. 3), "big 'D' Discourses". All instantiations in which these ways are evoked and enacted in language will be referred to as "discourses" (with a small 'd'). As such, we ought to note that, as many students making the transition to university soon do, learning at university involves adapting new ways of knowing: new ways of understanding, interpreting, and organising knowledge (Lea and Street, 1998; Lea, 1999) as the ways which have served them so well hitherto "don't seem to matter here" (Lea, 1994). Thus, making the transition to university requires undergraduates to become academically literate; to take on/adapt/performatively construct new socially situated identities even in their writing as I will expound in the next chapter.

Writing from a South African perspective Mgqwashu (2014) contends that the process of becoming academically literate transcends acquisition and/or development of skills, as seems to be the understanding in Malawi,

> and includes the students' ability to take a different position derived from values and attitudes related to what counts as knowledge, and how it can be known within various disciplinary discourses (Mgqwashu, 2014, p. 90).

The idea of a "different position" here is, like I introduced in the previous chapter, an important precursor to our understanding of the process of identification which these students will have to grapple with (see chapter 3). Thus in becoming academically literate, these novices will be expected to juggle a number of positions (see Positioning in Chapter 3) in their quest to align themselves to various disciplinary positions. Such attempts to position themselves in alignment (or dis-alignment) with various epistemological positions takes place, as I will explore fully in my reflection on the nature of the academy in the next chapter, in a "contact zone" and is something which

has implications on selfhood/identity. In a nutshell, participating in literate practices has identity implications (cf., Lave and Wenger, 1991).

From the foregoing it seems erroneous therefore for the academia and wider society in Malawi to expect undergraduates to come to university having been already prepared, by their secondary school education, for the literate practices of higher education. It is against this background that this study seeks to offer a critique of such deficit views of literacy by highlighting that what is at stake here is how such novice writers need to be helped to become academically literate; to come to understand how they can respond to the values and attitudes of knowledge as well as the identification processes which particular disciplines they study evoke.

2.3.1.2   In the academy

An examination of the deficit views of literacy in Malawi would not be complete without highlighting how such views also permeate the academy. Thus, the manner in which literacy programmes are handled in higher education indicate the prevalence of the deficit views of literacy even at that level. For instance, the task of "inducting" novices into the academy once they enrol seems to be left to the Language and Communication department alone. Such thinking seems so prevalent and/or entrenched that even some of the respondents to this study were of the view that the task of exposing students to the literate practices of the academy is indeed a preserve of the Language and Communication department alone. How does such "induction" happen? What implications does it have on literacy understanding?

To understand this I will turn to the Polytechnic, a constituent college of the UNIMA I am more familiar with to explicate how literacy induction is handled. Furthermore, it is important for me to highlight here that the Polytechnic is the research site on which this study was conducted partly because I have worked there for over a decade. In this regard I felt that the "appreciative knowledge" (Volosinov, 1971) which I have of the institution will make the study more worthwhile particularly realising that "the more an ethnographer knows (about a context) on entering the field, the better the result is likely to be" (Hymes, 1996, p. 7). I will shed more light on this in Chapter 4.

Novices who enrol into the Polytechnic are taught EAP for one semester by a servicing department, the Language and Communication department. In this module, they cover such aspects like time management, listening in lectures, reading, and academic writing. They attend this module alongside other modules which they study from their respective

faculties and departments. The understanding is that the "skills" learnt in the EAP module will equip them to handle all the academic exigencies which they will encounter in all the modules which they study in the first year and beyond. Thus, the institution

> expects us (EAP practitioners) to succeed in an effort to prepare students for any rhetorical or linguist exigency that may arise; to "fix" student illiteracies once and for all so that they can get on with the "real" academic work (Johns, 1997, p. xi).

Such understanding disregards the point that literacy is a discursive practice which makes sense in particular contexts; in discourse communities. Such views therefore seem to suggest that academic literacy development can be divorced from the contexts of use as literacy skills can be transposed across time and space. This presupposes that literacy is something we *have* and not something we *do* with others in particular contexts. For instance, teaching students that an essay has a structure made up of an introduction, a body and a conclusion with each paragraph addressing a unique topic sentence does not make them ready to handle all writing needs in the academy as seems to be the understanding at the Polytechnic at the moment. Writing is a social semiotic practice at the heart of which is the writer's relating with knowledge and what counts as knowledge (an epistemological consideration with relational/power implications) and has implications on selfhood (who they feel to be as they write and how they can foreground such 'I positions'). The approach in the institution however seems to suggest that "there is a single overarching literacy" or a monolithic way of writing across the academy. Scratching the surface of what goes on in the institution, as my encounters with the research participants later on suggests, paints a different picture. Where then do such understandings emanate from?

As an on-going attempt to shed more light on the research context, I will respond to this question essentially by highlighting three aspects which I feel have led to the fossilisation of such deficit views in the academy. These aspects range from misunderstanding of literacy, through practitioners' attitudes to revert to entrenched ways of teaching, to pedagogic convenience.

2.3.1.2.1 EAP status: Misunderstanding literacy

Gee (1996, 2008) contends that literacy is not about just being able to read and write as seems to be generally understood in Malawi and her academic institutions. Rather, it is about using "secondary discourses" (reading and writing) to perform those functions required by the (academic) culture in ways and at a level judged acceptable (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988, p. 8). Thus, learning, acquiring, and participating in literacy practices is

not an "autonomous" undertaking but is rather an "ideological" one (Street, 2003a, 2003b) imbued in power relations (see Gee, 2008). This understanding is an important precursor to the multiple literacies view and one which makes the idea of academic *literacies* sound a plausible idea. In this vein then, writing in the academy, just like other literate practices like reading for instance, ought to be perceived as "a *social practice* which is embedded in the values, relationships, and institutional discourses constituting the culture of academic disciplines in higher education" (Lea and Stierer, 2000, p. 2). In this vein, it is not surprising then that due to the multiplicity of disciplines available on university campuses today, including on the Polytechnic campus (see Chapter 4), what constitutes successful writing is not only a contested notion (cf., Hyland, 2006) but is also as varied as it is a situational construct (cf., Lea and Stierer, 2000; Coe, 2002). However, despite such an understanding, it seems that in expecting the secondary school education as well as the servicing department on campus to "fix" all writing "problems" which students "have" and make them ready to get on with the "real" academic work elsewhere, we in Malawi are promulgating the view that writing is both homogeneous and transferable; that it is not unreasonable to expect students to be able to write before entering the academy (Lea and Stierer, 2000) or if they have any problems to have these "fixed" in the servicing department. Such study skills views (see Lea and Street, 1998, 2000) are perhaps responsible for relegating the status of EAP work at the Polytechnic to the "ivory ghetto of remediation" (Swales, 1990). This has in turn misled many into thinking that literacy is about a set of "neutral" skills which can be taught to students in order to make them read (and write) "academically" (Boughey, 1998, 2002).

Such thinking sees many perceive the challenges encountered by students in engaging with the literacy practices in higher education "are attributable to issues related to 'language'" (Boughey, 2002, p. 295). Such reductionist views are also evident in the views of the lecturer Musa reports on more especially when s/he alludes to writing as a skill and not a literate practice (see 2.2.1). As such, it is not surprising that the narrative pervading the context seems to be summed up by the view that "writing inability of students in our universities is a mechanical problem 'remediable' by a disciplined application of mechanical answers" (Taylor, 1988). Such a view then implies that while most, including the content faculty, see the literacy of their students as a problem they perceive such a problem as something far removed from their disciplinary interests and pursuits (see Taylor, *et al*, 1988; Nsanja, 2009).

2.3.1.2.2 Old wine, old wine skins

The common-sense allure to the neutrality of skills as being the solution to the writing problem in the UNIMA could, in one way or another, also be attributed to practitioners working in the academy. To begin with, almost all adjustments which have taken place at the Polytechnic in an attempt to deal with the writing proficiency of undergraduates (e.g., realigning the syllabus, introducing Literature into the EAP module, etc.) have been done "based on common-sense rather than sound research and theory" (Boughey, 2002, p. 302). Thus, while Literature has the potential to develop analytical and expressive abilities in some ESL contexts (see Spack, 1985; Leki and Carson, 1993), it remains doubtful that literature teaching would produce accomplished academic writers. This is the case as the Literature and academic writing favour the performing of different discoursal identities. Furthermore, even with Literature as part of the curriculum, exposure to literate practices continues to be done in an "autonomous" manner. What is responsible for this?

This could come down to the notion of "received tradition". In reflecting on a similar setting in South Africa, Boughey (2002, p. 304) highlights the plight of adjunct courses, like the EAP course at the Polytechnic, where:

> people employed on the basis of their experience in researching and teaching Literature are called upon to teach language and can envisage no other way of doing so than repeating the experiences of their childhood. Unfortunately, the effect of that teaching is to discipline, rather than empower, those taught.

A close examination of the expertise of most personnel in the Language and Communication department at the moment indicates that most are trained in either Communication Studies, or its associated disciplines, or Literature. This suggests that anyone who can score highly in a degree in Literature or Communication Studies can then successfully handle EAP. However, considering that "paraphrasing, citing, reviewing the literature, and other standard features of EAP courses are not uniform practices reducible to generic advice" then it indeed follows that "the varied academic practices of reading and writing cannot be seen as general skills that can be taught in marginalised university "Language Centres' by *anyone* with a reasonable grasp of English and a textbook" (Hyland, 2000, p. 145, my emphasis).

Furthermore, most of the content faculty members are also alumni of the same institution. This implies that they would therefore rather repeat their "childhood experiences" in their classrooms, a repetition which sees most view academic writing, and its attendant literacies, as a preserve of the servicing department (see Nsanja, 2009).

In my time working in this servicing department I have had many occasions when content faculty members have sent students, through written feedback on their essays, to me to "fix" a "language" issue in their writing (e.g., referencing). This they have done perhaps unaware that they are making specialised demands on their students which cannot be simply dealt with by "extra instruction in grammar, syntax, word structure, punctuation and spelling" (Taylor, *et al*., 1988); that these demands cannot be dealt with by paying attention to surface features of language but are rather demands which are steeped in the epistemological makeup of *their* own discipline.

Thus, the positioning of the Language department as an "ivory ghetto of remediation" could be down to the institutional received tradition. Such a tradition encourages the employment of Literature and Communication practitioners into EAP as well as institutional alumni who, in repeating their "childhood experiences" perpetuate the view of literacy work as something removed from their disciplinary interests and pursuits. This is not helped by lack of sound research and theory as the basis for explaining and alleviating the situation an issue made more pronounced by the institutional insistence on "pedagogic convenience" and not "pedagogic effectiveness" (Bhatia, 2002).

2.3.1.2.3 Pedagogic convenience

One of the reasons behind some institutions' offering wide angle EAP/ESP courses is pedagogic convenience (Bhatia, 2002). This comes about as institutions, like the Polytechnic for instance, in offering a study skills style EAP course to students subtly assume that there is a common core of linguistic and stylistic elements which students can master and transfer to all academic exigencies on campuses. This view is based on reductionist tendencies which I allude to earlier (cf., Taylor *et al*., 1988; Ballard and Clanchy, 1988). Such understanding underestimates a great deal, chief among which is the view that while some similarities can be drawn across some academic work in academia perhaps the differences among these practices are more telling than the perceived similarities (see Lea, 1994; Lea and Street, 1988, 2000; Lea and Stierer, 2000; Johns, 1997; Hyland, 2006; Starfield, 2001).

It can therefore be surmised that:

> Although it is economical, convenient, and cost-effective in ESP course design to look for an academic core in disciplinary discourse, it could be less effective and counterproductive in a number of ways to ignore the sophistication and subtleties of variations across disciplinary boundaries (Bhatia, 2002, p. 39).

However, despite such realisation, it still seems that the Polytechnic continues to find pedagogic convenience not pedagogic effectiveness the way to go in offering EAP courses. This is happening as a result of the institution's reliance on common-sense understanding of the literacy problem pertaining to writing as such understandings, as I allude to earlier, are not steeped in any meaningful research and/or theory. In this regard, it is perhaps apparent that the deficit views of literacy at the institution are to some extent propounded by tendencies which lean towards pedagogic convenience. Thus, such search for a common core without any meaningful insight into the nature of the problem seems to offer solutions to pedagogic problems before the problems can be identified (Bhatia, 2002, p. 26).

2.4 In search of student 'voice'

Realising that the "voice" and or views of the students themselves regarding the identified academic writing problem in Malawi remains "unheard", this study examines what undergraduates do and how they talk about what they do when they write academic essays. The latter strand provides insights into what they themselves make of this (a "practice" perspective). In this vein, I have been inspired by the work of Michael Fielding especially his interest in student voice in research and on institutional campuses more generally.

Fielding's work emphasises a "dialogic alternative" to research, one in which practitioners "let students speak for themselves" (Fielding, 2004, p. 305) as an alternative to practitioners speaking for students (see 2.2.2 above). While he laments the situation in most educational research which seems to mirror the imbalance in power across academia in as far as who is allowed to speak is concerned thereby awakening the need for a more comprehensive theory of discourse (cf., Bourdieu, 1977a earlier), Fielding (2004) proposes and advocates speaking *with* students rather than *for* them as an avenue towards a more comprehensive understanding of what happens in the academy. This he proposes as most of the times students are primarily treated as sources of data rather than agents of transformation (Fielding, 2001, p. 101). Thus, students are not treated as responsible agents who can theorise their own experiences (Harvey, 2014). This then in turn implies that students and respondents more generally who are treated in this way are regarded as "epistemologically passive and as mere vessels of answers" (Elliot, 2005, p. 22; see also Silverman, 2001; Block, 2004). Contrary to this approach, this study is developed on the understanding that student respondents are

human beings who have a story to tell, the telling of which makes their humanness come to the fore.

The initiative to treat students/respondents as "epistemologically responsible" as propounded by Elliot and Fielding above mirrors an important intersection between Ubuntu and education. An analysis of Ubuntu from a narrative perspective strongly indicates that Ubuntu "is therefore a way of telling one's story, drawing on symbols and emotions to recount relatable and historically continuous experiences" (Fox, 2011, p. 107). It is therefore not surprising that Swanson (2007, 2009) proposes the practicing of research with a humble togetherness as a humane way of doing research, one in which the "voices" of the respondents are heard and responded to. At the heart of such views, as Fielding suggests above, is the drive that learners should learn to tell their own stories as well as listen to others' stories (Venter, 2004).

In this vein, this study has been conceptualised with a view to engaging in research with a humble togetherness by providing a platform to novice academic writers making the transition to university to have their "voices" heard. Thus, contrary to the status quo at the moment which only provides a platform to practitioners to speak for students regarding the academic writing problem in Malawi, this study will endeavour to demonstrate how I, in speaking with participants about their own experiences, allowed them to tell their own story of becoming academic writers. This is paramount considering that one becomes a social subject when their voice enters into a social space and gets a response in that space in which it enters into a dialogic relationship with other voices. Denying one an opportunity to have their voice enter a social space is therefore tantamount to symbolic violence (cf., Bourdieu, 1977b) and is something which this study seeks to redress albeit in a small way.

It should be pointed out here that the term "voice" will be used in different but somehow interrelated ways. What I have presented above following Fielding (2001, 2004) is what I will call "practical voice"; the voice for doing (Batchelor, 2006). This is the "voice" responsible for an individual's "emotional-volitional tone" as it indicates that "I am doing this". Furthermore, I will also refer in the course of this study to "epistemological voice" or a voice for knowing. This evokes what has been referred to elsewhere as the "antecedent voice of authority" (cf., Groom, 2000). Both perspectives of voice in turn feed the "ontological voice", the voice of being and becoming (Batchelor, 2006). In this regard, it is possible for a subject to talk about themselves (practical voice) while reflecting on a "voiceless" essay; one that is devoid of

established ways of knowing or ways of being (epistemological voice). Either way, a certain form of being or becoming will emanate from how such a subject positions themselves using whatever voicing strategy they have adopted (ontological voice).

2.5 Final thought

In examining the academic writing problem in Malawi as well as how it has been both handled and constructed discursively, I hope to have indicated the inexplicable link between context and problem. Considering the social view of identity on which this study is developed, one which considers identity not as something which people have but rather as something that is performatively constructed "out there", it is extremely important that we understand the context in which such identity work and its attendant literacy practices take place. Thus it is important for us to understand something of the "out there" where novice writers I interacted with operate (see Chapter 5 through 8).

In this chapter therefore I hope to have foregrounded the need to perceive and understand academic writing as something that is impacted by both the "context of culture" as well as the "context of situation" (cf., Fairclough, 1992); of writing and talking about writing as a means to becoming a social being with something to say. This is contrary to the narratives as well as the pedagogical interventions to the academic writing problem in Malawi which seem to have significantly shaped the way academic writing is perceived and handled; as largely a skill which is performed in "autonomous" contexts and as such can be transferred across time and space. Such views have largely led to a pathologising of the students themselves as well as their educational backgrounds as being responsible for undergraduate inability to write. All the while, we seem not to have yet asked the question; what are students doing when they sit down to write for us? It is largely such perceptions which this study critiques as, beginning from the next chapter, I will highlight that contact with higher education is something that not only "deskills" undergraduates but also pushes them towards taking up different identity positions; pushes them to come across as a different type of person in their written discourse.

Chapter 3 : Identity and Identification

3.1 Because of the 'other'

This chapter traces the key influences which have informed this study. In doing so, this study enters into a dialogic relationship with other voices. This chapter therefore endeavours to demonstrate that this study is and has been because of the *otherness* of other voices and studies. I begin the surveying of these "voices" by examining how the encountering of a "different culture" which is higher education unsettles as well as deskills novices. Then, I move on to explore how it would be unreasonable to, as Bartholomae (1986) observes, expect novices to write like "us" the moment they arrive in this threshold. From such an exploration of the gap in expectation and practice, the next phase explores some of the key theoretical lenses through which higher education can be examined. Here, I argue that while such notions like "community of practice" have been and still offer a useful heuristic for understanding how learning can and does take place in the academy, there is need to expand our theoretical lens for examining higher education. I therefore argue for the need to view higher education as a "contact zone" a view which highlights the power play which informs the practices in academia. This will foreground the social view of writing which I expound in the following section.

The last two sections of this chapter will then highlight that since writing is a "semiotic social practice" (Clark and Ivanič, 1997) which takes place in a "contact zone", through the various linguistic choices which novices make as they strive to write both *for* as well as *like* "us", they then in turn, inadvertently or otherwise, are engaging in identity work; they are foregrounding various aspects of their selves or different "I positions". Thus in this part I strive to demonstrate that "whether consciously or not, writers textually convey a sense of who they are" (Starfield, 2004, p. 69). In the final part, the chapter further explores how such semiotic processes of identification impact and manifest themselves in written discourse through Ivanič's (1998) notion of the multidimensional self. All this exploration of other voices will lead to a conceptualisation of three main questions which guide the study of the novice academic writing problem in Malawi. These will be presented at the end of the chapter.

3.2 Entering higher education

3.2.1 Mind the gap: The transition

Leaning in higher education, as indicated in the previous chapter, requires adapting to new ways of knowing; new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge (cf., Lea and Street, 1998; Lea, 1999). Therefore, moving to higher education represents a transition in the lives of novices. Transition here refers to "learners' experience as they enter new literacy practices of the university" (Thesen, 1997, p. 489). Of late, it seems that interest in this transition is growing making the first year experience become one of the increasingly high-priority research areas (Gourlay, 2009; Palmer, O'Kane, and Owens, 2009). This study adds to that interest. Most of this attention however has not been directed towards academic writing as identity work in an ESL context as this study seeks to do. The understanding that transitioning leads to emotional as well as other forms of instability should not be strange if research on migration as well as the narratives which capture such experiences are anything to go by (cf., Blommaert, 2005).

From the foregoing, it seems evident that in crossing this threshold, just like migrants, students enter a new discourse practice (Thesen, 1997); a new culture (Bartholomae, 1986); a new community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). It is not surprising therefore that as they encounter all these "new ways of knowing" for the first time the first year is when transitions are sharply experienced (Thesen, 1997). This is the case as these novices bring a different "culture" with them to university. They thus bring to the discursive events of higher learning orientations which they have accumulated and embodied over time. These then become stable identity positions which they have sedimented over time through, among other things, repeated encounters (Baynham, 2015). These repeated encounters transcend those of schooling and embrace even those encounters they have had in the wider community. This means that novice academic writers in Malawi will bring to university writing tasks different perceptions of academic writing accumulated from the various encounters they have had with literacy practices. Such perceptions will likely have sedimented into a particular "habitus" about writing as well as their self in writing. This makes "historicizing" our understanding of identity work an important dimension towards obtaining a comprehensive picture of such work (see Baynham, 2015). This is why in an attempt to place novices in space

and time, this study will also seek to understand something of the accumulated and embodied orientations to writing which novices in Malawi bring along to university.

In this vein, since culture is not "out there" but is rather constituted by the individual, one who brings along a certain accumulation of identity positions, then we perhaps ought to understand that:

> The conflict between the disciplinary discourses encountered at university and the autobiographical identities which have been shaped by very different traditions of literacy encapsulates a clash of cultures (Hyland, 2012a, p. 129).

This brings about the dialectic which I mentioned in Chapter 1 (see 1.0). This then in turn presupposes that the academic writing problem is, to a certain extent, a problem of negotiating a new identity; of negotiating who one can be in a new community as novices seek to reposition their autobiographical identities vis-à-vis the disciplinary discourses being encountered. This is something that takes place in a particular space and time. Perceived in this way, it becomes questionable that these novices can then be adequately prepared for the exigencies of higher education by the secondary/high school experience alone (see Marland, 2003) or by an adjunct study skills course offered in a servicing department. This sounds a plausible understanding especially considering that literacy practices and the identity work they evoke take place in particular social contexts from where they can be meaningfully "taught" and appreciated. If this is anything to go by, then it should be understood that the academic writing problem in university emanates, not from a lack of writing "skills" on the part of novices (as most of them have been successfully writing in various contexts prior to enrolling in university) but rather, from the:

> Unsteady transition between cultures (as they try) to fathom what constitutes acceptable behaviour in a new cultural context where the deep rules of engagement are rarely made explicit (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988, p. 13; also in Ivanič, 1998).

As "the deep rules of engagement are rarely made explicit" to these new comers even in the UNIMA then the academy's role in the failings of these novices need to be carefully examined. This is so as with this understanding in mind, the academy might not be entirely innocent in this matter as some might want us to believe (e.g. Ngwira, (1997) and Musa (2013) in Chapter 2).

For instance, Lillis (2001) demonstrates that the lack of clarity pertaining to academic writing tasks in the academy as most of the requirements surrounding these practices are taken as "given", not in need of explanation, often results in these practices becoming

"an institutional practice of mystery" for many (Lillis, 1997, 2001, 2013). Such "mystery" disadvantages those who did not have prior exposure to these practices before entering the university (cf., Starfield, 2002; Blommaert, 2005). Furthermore, in his examination of the experiences of first year Law students' construction of professional identity through writing, Maclean (2010, p. 192) observes that most of their problems "may not derive from lack of skill but from difficulty in coming to terms with their positioning". Struggles with appropriate positioning is something which Flowerdew (2001) also notes of both NS and NNS writers who are said to struggle to position themselves in relation to the voice of authority in their writing.

Positioning is the centrepiece of identity work (see Chapter 1) as this discussion demonstrates later below. As such, Maclean's (2010) observation here can be rephrased to say that these students had difficulties, as most novices often do, coming to terms with new identity positions they were "asked" and/or "encouraged" to "perform". Thus, their inadequacy is "not inherent but down to a mismatch between social contexts which have defined identities and the new social contexts they are entering" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 12). This seems to be an important issue with all novices learning to write in the academy more especially realising that higher education favours the performance of certain types of identity and not others (Hyland, 2009). With this understanding in mind, this study will seek to understand how the novice Malawian writers position self in relation to the other as they attempt to construct an academic writer persona in their essays. How then do university lecturer's expectations position novice academic writers?

3.2.2 The expectation: write like 'us'?

Bartholomae's (1986) claim sums up the expectations most in academia seem to have regarding novice writers and writing. Such expectations position novice writers as outsiders who should identify with "us"; with "our" modes of analysis and relating with knowledge if they are to be deemed successful students. He observes that:

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he (sic) has to invent the university … he has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community. Or perhaps I should say various discourses of our community (Bartholomae, 1986, p. 4).

This offers interesting insight into the "novice/expert" relationship in academia. To begin with, in observing that "students have to learn to speak *our* language; to speak as *we* do" if they are to identify with "*our*" community, Bartholomae alludes to the

centripetal force which forms an important undercurrent to academic writing as more often than not the academy does not recognise and/or favour the performance of practices learnt elsewhere. It is not surprising then to note that the essays which novices write contain and reflect "a range of acceptable writing behaviours dictated not by the individual but by the academic community" (Dudley Evans, 2002, p. 229); a social structure perspective (see Giddens, 1984; Giroux, 1986; Bazerman, 2013). This is the ideological side of the academy which makes tracing the motivations behind the manner in which novice writers represent themselves as they write in Malawi important. Such an exploration will help us understand the dialectic they find themselves in as they grapple with "acceptable writing behaviours" expected of them.

Furthermore, Bartholomae's understanding above indicates how "we" position novice writers as outsiders who have to learn to speak "our" language if they are to identify or align with us. This postulates the understanding that "we" expect novices to performatively take on different identity positions or front different "I positions" in their writing as writing in a particular way means appearing to be a certain type of person (Ivanič, 1994, p. 13). Furthermore, the statement above somehow alludes to novice academic writing as a unique discourse in its own right. Observing that novices have to "*try on* the peculiar ways of knowing" foregrounds the view that what they are expected to do is simply "mimic" what "we" do; to enact their (legitimate) peripherality on the fringes of a community (cf., Brown, Collins, and Duguid, 1989; Lave and Wenger, 1991). This makes sense considering that they are being exposed to these ways of knowing which are peculiar to "us" but strange to them. It is perhaps along this line of thought that Bartholomae (1986, pp. 4 – 5) continues thus:

> They have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialised discourse … they have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language, finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline.

This statement once again evokes the understanding that in coming to university, novices come with their idiosyncrasies or personal histories; with an identity brought along (Baynham, 2015) or with an autobiographical self (Ivanič, 1998). Such personal histories enter into a dialogue with the "requirements of convention" or a history of a discipline which for most largely remains an institutional practice of mystery (Lillis, 2001). It is such dialogue which brings about a clash of cultures as Hyland (2012a) observes (see 3.2.1 above). It is then through such a struggle that novices performatively construct who they are becoming. Thus, from the foregoing, it is evident

that the moment of writing is not simply a moment in which novices have to speak like "us" and talk like "we" do but is also a moment in which their personal histories come through (cf., Starfield, 2002). In "inventing the university" novices, just like every academic writer, invent themselves through their discourse choices which either position them as seeking alignment with the discipline or engaging with the discipline with a view to coming across as having something of their own to say (cf., Gulleff, 2002).

Furthermore, Bartholomae makes an important observation which this discussion develops in greater detail later below. Thus, in observing that the writing moment is a synthesis of "idiosyncrasy" or "personal history", on one hand, and the "requirements of a tradition", on the other, he foregrounds the view that writing is indeed a juggling act between feelings of authoritativeness and having something to say (cf., Sheridan, Bloome and Street, 2002); a double voiced act in which a community voice as well as the "authorial I" (Baynham, 1999) come to the fore. Thus, he foregrounds the dialogic nature of writing. This in turn implies that both "social structure" and "individual agency" are at play in this discursive endeavour and is a matter that will be examined fully under Positioning later below.

How then do "we" end up with such views or expectations regarding novice academic writing? What "we" have come to internalise as normative expectations is something which we ourselves have also accumulated and sedimented over time. Our expectations are not a representation of an objective fact out there but are rather a product of our repeated encounters with academic Discourse which has in turn predisposed us to think in a certain way. Thus "we" think this way because "we" have been socialised to think this way by our repeated encounters with ways of doing and thinking that pervade the academy (cf., Hymes, 1996). For instance, Ivanič, Clark and Rimmershaw (2000, p. 48) contend that:

> The amount of time and details tutors put into their responses to students' work depends primarily on their values, their beliefs about university education, about the role of writing in learning, and about their role in all this. They will have developed particular working practices to support these beliefs.

The symbiotic relationship between practice (what people do and what they make of it) and belief or attitude is an important one here. The repetition of practices leads to a fossilisation of our beliefs pertaining to such practices, something which in turn feeds our habitus (Bourdieu, 1977b); a "set of durable dispositions that people carry with them that shapes their attitudes, behaviours, and responses to given situations" (Webb,

Schirato, and Danaher, 2002, p. 114). Thus, our expectations are not matter-of-fact positions but rather positions we have arrived at through "subjective plausibility" (Hyland, 2006); through implicit induction into such ways of thinking by our encounters with "significant others". In this vein even our expectations as well as positioning of novices are discursively arrived at.

From the foregoing it is evident that there is a gap in practices novices engaged in at secondary/high school, on one hand, and those of university, on the other. Such differences oftentimes throw novices off balance as they bring about a "clash of cultures". This clash notwithstanding, "experts" in academia seem to expect novices making this transition to write like them; to try on their ways of doing things as though they were putting on a garb; "as though they were one with us" (Bartholomae, 1986). Thus, this crystallised expectation as well as the whole academic milieu with all the affordances it makes available provides an opportunity for novices to "invent" themselves. This makes it important for us to understand how novice academic writers take up and relate with the voice of authority in the academy as they write (see 3.5 below). As I have so far hinted at the nature of the academy as a space in which "cultures clash", the next section explores some key theoretical lenses to further understanding this space.

3.3 Higher Education

In this section, two theoretical aspects which inform our understanding of higher education will be discussed. These theoretical positions will be informed by the concept of situated learning partly as it perceives writing *in situ* as a key constructivist ideal. Such ideals are an important precursor to the social view of identity which will be discussed later below. I round up this section by suggesting that the view of the academy as a CoP needs to be supplemented with those which perceive the academy as a contact zone. This will hopefully offer an important theoretical backdrop to our understanding of the background against which the stories of the participants will be told (see Chapter 5 to 8).

3.3.1 A community of practice

The notion of situated learning (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989; Lave and Wenger, 1991) highlights that knowing and doing are interlocked and inseparable as learning is an aspect of social practice which involves the "whole person". In this sense, people entering a new culture like the novices in this study need to "observe how practitioners

at various levels behave and talk to get a sense of how expertise is manifest in conversation and other activities" (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989, p. 40). Thus, new comers need to be granted access to "a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 101) if they are to become a member of a community. This is the case as participation in these practices takes place in a CoP to which new entrants, while not yet members, are only legitimate peripheral participants. From an Ubuntu perspective these peripheral participants are said to be an "it"; not yet a person.

In similar vein, it could be argued that novice writers entering the academy are peripheral participants to the sites of privileged work which takes place in the academy. This implies that what they need to attain membership is to be given opportunities to interact with old-timers and other members to see how they manifest expertise. Such an understanding then implies that studying the integration of new comers into a community, like this study does, represents an interest with what happens around the margins of a CoP (Lea, 2005). The CoP model then is an important heuristic which enables an exploration of how learning does and does not take place and foregrounds, among other things, constraints on full participation in a community's practices (Lea, 2005, p. 188). This is why in understanding what is happening on the margins of the UNIMA as a CoP it is also important that this study examines some of the "constraints on full participation" in this community's practices (see 3.6 below). In other words, one important focus of this study will then be on how the dialogue between personal histories brought along and the rules of academia index some of the constraints on the Malawian novice writer's chances to be seen as an insider in this CoP.

The CoP model then has been applied to various contexts one of which is the academy as the idea of a community alludes to the point that people typically come together in groupings to carry out activities in everyday life (Barton and Tusting, 2005). Thus, the academy then can be taken to be a CoP as people from diverse backgrounds with different embodiments of "cultures" come together to carry out activities which matter to them. In this regard, this model is an important way of looking at the academy as, among other things, it will assist us "understand a social model of learning as participation in practice" (Barton and Tusting, 2005, p. 183) a participation made possible by interaction and/or dialogue with others particularly significant others (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Furthermore, this model will afford us an opportunity to examine

how different discursive practices might generally contribute to marginalisation and exclusion from a CoP, in this instance in higher education (Lea, 2005). This ties in nicely with the social view of identity which I will expand later as this model then will in turn assist us further:

> Shift the focus away from the individual student to the broader social context of the academy by focusing on, among other things, texts, genres, discourses, and practices of higher education and how these impact learning and attainment of full membership by novice writers; undergraduates (Lea, 2005, p.194).

Lea's point here drives home the need to place the novice in Malawi in space and time with a view to understanding how in operating in these specific episodes novice writers project a certain sense of self and how they perceive, understand and describe that self. In this regard, the CoP model will enable us to turn our attention to written texts as instantiations of the practices of higher education in Malawi; from "what's wrong with the student" to "what features of the curriculum are preventing students from succeeding" (Badenhorst, *et al.*, 2015, p. 2); to locating academic practices within a broader historical and epistemological framework to reach an understanding of what is involved in student writing (Lillis and Turner, 2001). In other words, the CoP model will help us focus our attention away from the individual as self-contained to the social milieu as the one which is responsible for shaping individuality or identity. This will help us to further understand that selfhood is discursively arrived at in dialogue with an other.

However, the CoP model is not flawless. To begin with, the idea of a "community" can be misleading as it presupposes "belongingness" and close knit personal ties among people which is not always the case (Gee, 2005) even in academia. Furthermore, most applications of this model seem to overemphasise novice/expert interaction as the only mode of interaction for accessing the privileged sites of practice and acquiring the requisite expertise. Thus, most applications seem to overlook Lave and Wenger's call for the need to grant novices access not just to "old timers" but also to "other members; other sources of information" through which they can also be inducted (1991, p. 101). This has since been questioned (e.g., Fuller and Unwin, 2004). Besides, since the model was formulated as a reaction against cognitive processes which seemed to focus exclusively on the individual, in this model the 'individual' "has seemingly become an unfashionable and tainted term" (Billet, 2007, p. 56). This in turn has seen most applications of this model shun the individual in favour of "social structure alone as the determining factor in shaping individual identity" (Hughes, Jewson, and Unwin, 2007,

p. 4). Such rather "unfortunate and uninformed" perceptions and applications of this model (Billet, 2007, p. 56) have often meant a neglect of the prior knowledge of participants (Goodwin, 2007). However, realising that all individuals (novice and expert alike) constitute and are constituted by the social world from which they enter any CoP, then it is imperative that any model focusing on learning as social practice need to "historicize" that "identity brought along" among other things (cf., Baynham, 2015). This is what this study will do as part of its attempt to place the individual in space and time. This ought to be the case as applying this model to the academy often suggests that "old timers may simultaneously belong to multiple CoPs" thereby making higher education a *multiple* CoP in which academics engage (James, 2007, p.140). This model can then be summed up by noting that:

> the question what is learned by participants is answered in terms of identity formation (rather than the acquisition of knowledge products). People learn (through participation) to become full members of, or 'knowledgeable practitioners' in, the relevant community(ies) of practice (Fuller, 2007, p. 19).

From the foregoing, the essence of operating on the margins of a community, to observe how old timers manifest expertise, is identity formation; so that one identifies with the community in question by being able to reproduce the desired practices which they have observed in a manner judged acceptable by the community's gate keepers.

This is what happens with novice writers who enrol into the academy as they need to be given access to the sites of privileged practices as they learn their way through the academy. However, the point that they bring their own histories and experiences with other "communities" beyond the academy pits them in a conflict with academic Discourse as well as with its custodians. This implies that the process of them taking up these identity positions is a complex proposition which requires constant *negotiation* involving a plethora of factors (see 3.4 below). This is what makes identification a never ending process (see Chapter 1). Such understanding further implies that accessing and participating in a CoP is not an autonomous endeavour but an ideological one which evokes a power play. I elaborate this next.

3.3.2 A contact zone

In reconsidering the "models of community which most of us rely on in teaching and theorising", Pratt (2008) proposes the contact zone model. Contact zones are:

> Social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power such as colonialism, slavery,

> or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world (Pratt, 2008, p. 173).

From this point, it is perhaps evident that this model offers something which its CoP counterpart above does not. To begin with, the idea of a "social space" is a more expansive understanding than that of community. The expansiveness of "social space" which Pratt proposes here is crucial as space can be physical, geographical, or even virtual (Gee, 2005). This is perhaps the reason why in also proposing an alternative model to community Gee (2005) suggests "social semiotic space" as a more viable alternative. I indeed find this a viable alternative particularly as it emphasises social semiosis as the basis for interaction. Gee (2005) goes on to contend that one important feature of this space is that "leadership is porous and leaders are resources". Later on I will extend Gee's observation here to show that it is not only "leaders" who are resources but other "members" or novices at various levels of expertise in the academy can be resources as well (see Chapter 5 through 8). These leaders however are not at the same level of importance with novices who find themselves in this space. This leads to the second important dimension of Pratt's model.

In observing that in this space "cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" Pratt echoes Hyland's (2012a) view presented earlier. This is perhaps the backdrop against which Hyland claims that the coming together of novices and the academy represents a clash of cultures; a dialectic (Lillis, 2001). However, Pratt adds another layer to this "clash". In stating that this clash occurs in "contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power", she adds an important layer to our understanding of this space. Thus while Lave and Wenger (1991) as well as Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) emphasise the impact of social structure on identification work, their model does not highlight the asymmetrical power relations which make up this 'space'. The asymmetrical nature of power relations in the academy is something that is captured by the model of the contact zones here as does Freire (1970) and Bourdieu (1994) elsewhere. Thus, the academy is not just a "community" which novices seek to identify or align with as they are inducted to its Discourses. Rather, at the centre of such efforts is a power play which determines who speaks, how, as well as what they can eventually become (see Lillis, 2001). Thus, the metaphorical periphery in academic communities is not a neutral place but a political and social position (Casanave and Vendrick, 2008, p. 6). This is the position novices find themselves in as they enter the university in Malawi.

In a nutshell, this section has highlighted some key aspects which will help us understand some of the issues pertaining to the identity work which novice writers do when they enrol into higher education. Perhaps the main points to be borne in mind as we move forward include the realisation that the need to grant access to privileged sites of practices in the academy culminates in not only acquisition and/or accumulation of knowledge but the taking up of an identity. This is so as "learning to write in a particular community is also learning who you can be in that community" (Waterstone, 2008, p. 56). I will elaborate on this in greater detail later below. Secondly, all this "work" does not happen among equals; it takes place in a contact zone; in a power-filled social space. Having established this, the next section will then move on to highlight arguably *the* most important mode of semiosis in the academy; writing.

3.4 Writing in Higher Education

3.4.1 Its centrality

The importance of writing in the academy cannot be over emphasised. While other discursive practices like teaching students and doing research abound, writing is the stand out semiotic practice. This is partly evidenced by the attention which it has received in books as well as in research articles and journals (Flowerdew and Miller, 2005). Thus, contrary to the view that writing exists on the periphery of the "real" academic work and as such can be handled by "servicing" departments (cf., Johns, 1997), it is through writing that academic standards in any disciplinary community are set (Hyland, 2002a). One has to consider, for instance, the influence which the research article has as a forerunner in breaking new grounds in any disciplinary thinking. With this understanding it is not an overstatement to state that "universities are ABOUT writing" (Hyland, 2013, p. 53, his emphasis). It is not surprising therefore that in complaining of the falling literacy standards in the academy it is writing which is used as the yardstick (cf., Lea and Street, 1998, 2000; Cummins, 2000; Katenje, 2001; Musopole, 2006; Ngwira, 2007; Musa, 2013). Furthermore, writing is arguably the most important gatekeeping discursive practice through which novices at various levels of the academy have to prove themselves. This extends even to beginning researchers like myself.

Besides all this, writing also does something else. In addition to its role of setting the standards in academic discourse communities (Hyland, 2002a), writing also provides us a window into the nature of the academy and what goes on behind the scenes. This

stems from the understanding that disciplines are defined not by just *what* they write but *how* they write as well (Hyland, 2004). This feeds the notion of disciplinary variation as it in turn implies that every discipline has its own distinct way of writing; its distinct way of constructing knowledge. This is what Bartholomae alludes to earlier when he observes that it is the peculiar ways of knowing, reporting, and arguing which in turn make up the discourses of our communities (1986, p. 4) (see 3.2.2 above). In this vein it can be said that writing produces disciplinarity. Thus disciplines come into being via the topics on which as well as the manner in which its members write. In this regard, texts embody the social negotiations of disciplinary inquiry, revealing how knowledge is constructed, negotiated and made persuasive (Hyland, 2004, p. 3). In a nutshell, writing in academia is a central social semiosis as it:

> helps to create those disciplines by influencing how members relate to one another, and by determining who will be regarded as members, who will gain success and what will count as knowledge. Texts therefore carry traces of disciplinary activities in their pages; a typical clustering of conventions – developed over time in response to what writers perceive as similar problems – which point beyond words to the social circumstances of their construction. They offer a window on the practices and beliefs of the communities for whom they have meaning (Hyland, 2004, p. 5).

Thus, apart from forming the basis for setting the standards within any disciplinary community, writing creates the disciplines themselves by, among other things, determining what is important and how it ought to be discussed or tackled - an *epistemological* perspective. Furthermore, such discursive practices surrounding writing also determine how members relate with each other not only in constructing disciplinarity but also in determining, as Hyland observes above, who will be regarded as a member – a *social* perspective. This conjures the earlier understanding that in taking to writing in the academy novice writers are not only "inventing the university" but they are also "inventing themselves"; they are inventing who they can be in the academy – an *identity* perspective. Furthermore, all this in turn implies that texts then do indeed carry "traces of disciplinary activities in their pages" which "point to the social circumstance of their construction" – an *indexical* perspective.

From the foregoing it should be evident that there is more to writing than mere inscribing of words. This is the case as the writing moment represents an attempt at coming across as a certain type of person; a coming into being which is imbricated in the epistemology of a discipline one is writing for. This then makes indexicality an important semiotic process of identification (Bucholz and Hall, 2004) as it raises our

awareness to the point that texts point to and bring to bear on them other entities and or practices in the academy. This understanding buttresses the need to shift our attention away from the individual to the social; from the individual as "self-contained" to one that is implicated in the social; to a "social-individual" (Scott, 1999). In a nutshell, the centrality of academic writing as established here alludes to the point that key to this important social semiosis in the academy is an engagement which transcends the confines of the page.

3.4.2 Beyond inscribing words

The argument above begins to highlight that academic writing is more than inscribing words on a page. Rather, academic writing has a social and epistemological dimension to it that has identity implications (cf., Ivanič, 1994; Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Ivanič and Camps, 2001; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). To understand academic writing in this light, this section addresses the theoretical aspects which shed light on how in writing one produces both a unique text as well as writes themselves (cf., Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). For this we turn to two theoretical underpinnings namely performativity and positioning. These theoretical perspectives will assist us to appreciate that in attempting to write like "us" novices, just like all academic writers, are indeed "inventing" themselves. The discussion of these theoretical perspectives will culminate into our consideration of academic writing as identity work in which multiple "selves" are evoked (see 3.5 below).

3.4.2.1 Performativity

The world around us is "identitized"; full of resources for making people's identities (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014, p. 37). It is full of "possibilities of selfhood" (Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010); "representational resources" (Lillis, 2001) or "funds of identities" (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014). It is these which we draw on as we write. This implies that "any instance of writing, just like all communication, is built on and out of existing semiotic resources" (Lillis, 2013, p. 100). These "resources" however are not "free-floating" but are tied to conventions (Lillis, 2013, p. 101); they are ideologically shot through with the intentions of others (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). This then presupposes that social structure (cf., Giddens, 1984) is an important determiner in the interpellation of social subjects. However, individuals are not passively hailed as social beings by social structure alone. The individual in constant negotiation with these resources performatively comes into being.

In discussing the individual's "socio-culturally mediated ability to act" (Canagarajah, 2002), Duranti (2004) identifies two dimensions. The first he calls "performance" or the enacting of agency; its being brought into being. The other dimension he calls "encoding" or a depicting of human actions through linguistic means. The idea of "performance" has been used in identity studies for instance by Bucholtz and Hall (2004) who in explicating "semiotic processes of identification" identify "performance" as one of them. For them, "performance" represents a "highly deliberate and self-aware social display" which makes available this display for evaluation by an audience (2004, p. 380). Such an understanding of performance seems to resonate with Goffman's (1990) use of the term. However, the notion of performance encourages the perception of the self *against* the other. In this regard, I would rather use the term "performative" to refer to this enacting of agency and the depicting of human actions through linguistic means. This is the case as performativity encourages the adoption of analytical tools which place discourse in a social constructionist perspective where the other is in the self as well as self as an Other (Kramsch, 2015, p. 219) (See Chapter 1).

From a performative point of view, subjects are formed in and by language (Loizidou, 2007, p. 35) as it is by the speech act which, though it is uttered by the individual, remakes the subject of that enunciation (Butler, 2010, p. 155). This resonates with Duranti's (2004) idea of agency as "depicting human actions through linguistic means" expressed above. Such notions can be traced way back to Austin (1962, p. 6) who contends that "to utter a sentence is to be doing or to state that I am doing". He contends that an utterance is a performative as saying something is tantamount to the performing of an action. In this light, we can say that utterances have "emotional-volitional tone" (Bakhtin, 1993; Vitanova, 2004). These views point towards the understanding that identity is constituted in and does not precede discourse. Thus:

> there is no 'I' who stands behind discourse and executes its volition or will *through* discourse. On the contrary, the 'I' only comes into being through being called, named, interpellated, and this discursive constitution takes place prior to the 'I'; it is the transitive invocation of the 'I'… paradoxically, the discursive condition of social recognition *precedes* and *conditions* the formation of the subject: recognition is not conferred in a subject but forms that subject (Butler, 1993, p. 18, her emphasis).

From the foregoing, it is evident that the subject is constituted in and by discourse which socially constructs him/her. In this regard, by speaking through the already available "possibilities of selfhood" or "identitized" positions available in the context of

their interaction, novice writers not only constitute self but also speak through the voice of the community; the voice of power (cf., Bartholomae, 1986). They thus position themselves to come across as a certain type of person. It is such a constant repositioning in and through discourse which indeed feeds "the transitive invocation of the 'I'"; the unfinalised being that we all are.

3.4.2.2 Positioning

From a performative perspective espoused above, it seems evident that "everything we write says something about us and the sort of relationships we want to set up with our readers" (Hyland, 2002b, p. 352). Thus in any interaction, including written interaction, a positioning takes place. The notion of positioning has been traced to the field of marketing where it was then used to describe the position of one item in relation to others (Harré and Langenhove, 1991, 1999). This relational aspect has remained one of the important aspects of this notion. In discourse, from a sociolinguistic perspective, positioning entails "personhood" (Who am I?) as it is one and the same person who is variously positioned in a conversation (Davies and Harré, 1990, p. 46). Thus, positioning enables us to understand how we dialogically engage with fellow interactants as well as with the discourses which make up our environments and how such an interaction offers us the opportunity to eventually foreground a multiplicity of "I positions". This is made possible as the constitutive force of each discursive practice, as argued above under performativity, lies in its provision of subject positions (Davies and Harré, 1990, p. 46).

From a positioning perspective therefore subjects have the opportunity to invent and reinvent themselves in discourse as not only do their utterances carry constitutive power but also offer an opportunity for this reinvention of self vis-à-vis other. However, subjects "are positioned" just as much as they position themselves in interaction. This is why the notion of "self positioning" (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999) offers important insight into the individual agency facet of positioning. Apart from being positioned in a certain way, individuals in interaction also have the opportunity, albeit constrained by socio-cultural factors, to determine how they are to come across. This makes agency (and positioning) to be "bi-directional" (De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg, 2006). On one hand, dominant discourses and master narratives position subjects within certain situated practices and thereby determine who they are. On the other hand, subjects exercise individual agency and position themselves as responsible for

constructing the way they want to come across vis-à-vis others as well as dominant discourses and master narratives (De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg, 2006, p. 7).

In this sense positioning then provides a "bridge between identity and Discourses" (Hyland, 2012, p. 35); between text and context as it enables us to appreciate the relational aspect between personhood (Who am I?) and "dominant discourses" or "master narratives" specifically in how one is implied in and by the other (see Chapter 4). This blurs the line between performativity and positioning. It therefore follows that becoming a social subject is then not entirely dependent on some internal feature within ourselves as I echo in chapter 1. Rather, performativity is as much about self-performing as it is about being formed through, and within, discourse and language (James, 2013, p. 112). In this regard, subjects are neither fully determined nor fully agentive (James, 2013, p. 113). This is an important precursor to the view of identity which I will take forward (see 3.5.1 below).

In the meantime it is important that we bear in mind that novice writers are constituted in and by the discourse which they produce. Their interpellation happens in such a way that as they draw on dominant discourses or master narratives of academia they are in turn positioned in a certain way; as a certain type of person. On the other hand, as they express their "will" or "volition" though the same discourse, they also position themselves as a certain type of person. Such understanding is behind this study's interest in the constitutive power which positions as well as by which novice writers in Malawi position themselves as they write in this threshold. This will be done by keeping an eye on how the identity positions they are used to occupying from previous discoursing encounters impact such positioning and performativity. These three facets namely, stable identity positions brought along, being positioned by dominant discourses, and positioning self in relation to these dominant discourses is going to form the triangular space within which novice academic writers in Malawi performatively position themselves as they enter the university for the first time. In other words, it is a dialectic which is brought about by these three chords through which we will examine and appreciate the identity work that novices in Malawi perform as they compose texts for the academy.

From the foregoing, particularly the idea that agency or positioning is "bi-directional" and that as they write novice writers are performatively positioning a certain sense of "I", it therefore follows that there is more to writing than inscribing words. We can therefore begin to perceive that academic writing is an "act of identity" (Le Page and

Tabouret-Keller, 2006); it is identity work through which novice writers identify themselves both as unique individuals as well as part of a group of people who write in a particular way.

3.5 Writing as identity work

3.5.1 Identity and identification

From Chapter 1, I have alluded to identity as something which emerges in interaction; in the discoursing moment (cf., Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg, 2006; Bucholtz and Hall, 2004, 2005; Kramsch, 2015). This view of identity enables us to appreciate how social subjects are perfomatively positioned and/or position themselves into being as they seek to identify with other sites of discursive practice. In this regard, Bucholtz and Hall (2004) contend that one of the most important basic ingredients of an identity is minimising differences and highlighting sameness. This comes about as "who am I" is no longer a question about my ethnicity or cultural background *per se* but rather a question which seeks to establish whether I can be trusted; whether I belong (Kramsch, 2015). This idea of identity as belongingness then implies that in dealing with various people as well as ideologies, one is bound to shift the way they come across so that they, among other things, gain acceptance and establish a niche for expressing something unique; for expressing personal views or stance (see Gee, 1996). Therefore, the process of academic writing for novices and experts alike is a process of identification.

Here I am using identification in both senses which Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (2006) do. This implies that academic writing is about both identifying self as a "part of some larger entity" while simultaneously asserting one's uniqueness. This is what novice academic writers are doing as they sit down to write often resulting in the dialectic between the identities favoured by essayist literacies and their own understanding of identity(ties) (Lillis, 2001). This is arguably the heart of the academic writing problem for novice writers something which in turn implies that the academic writing problem could be an identity/identification problem. So, how does perceiving academic writing as identity work in this manner give us an opportunity to understand something of what is happening in the research context? How does academic writing lead to a "multidimensional self"? What implication do all these have on novice academic writing?

3.5.2 A double-edged sword

Writing cannot be separated from identity (Clark and Ivanič, 1997). Writers always grapple with authoritative concerns, with what they want to say and how saying something leads to self-representation, as well as with experiences of conflict between what they would ideally say and the constraints imposed on them by conventions (Clark and Ivanič, 1997, p. 134). The point that conventions impose constraints on academic writing implies that writing is a "risky" undertaking (Thesen, 2014) which has social implications. This in turn feeds the view that identity is negotiated. Identity is indeed not a unitary construct within people but is rather "the active *negotiation* of an individual's relationship with larger social constructs through language and other semiotic means" (Mendoza-Denton, 2002, p. 475). Clark and Ivanič's view of identity and academic writing propounded above lays an important groundwork for our understanding of the dual focus of this identity work. This I will expand in a moment.

Since writing is then identity work, asking a person to write in a particular way using particular resources in any given context is tantamount to "requiring that person to identify with other people who write in this way" (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010, p. 228). Thus, "writing in a particular way means appearing to be a certain type of person" (Ivanič, 1994, p. 13). This means then that writing demands in educational settings are also identity demands (cf., Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). This implies that as novice academic writers enter the university for the first time and are asked to write in a certain way which is different to any they have been used to, they are being asked to take on new identity positions and become someone else on the pages of their essays. As such, considering that each one of them is a plurality or a "we" which embodies "multiple personalities/I positions/identities" (see Chapter 1), then it can be said that writing provides them a medium for the mediation of these multiple positions. Thus, writing contributes to identity formation as it enables us to "coordinate our identities across different interactions and activities" (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010, p. 234). This ushers in the notion of the multidimensional "self" to which I will return later below. In the meantime, it is worth highlighting and/or reiterating that as novice academic writers write they both produce a unique text as well as write themselves into being (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). This can be explained by returning to the "bi-directionality" of positioning introduced earlier.

Sheridan, Street and Bloome (2000, p. 152) observe that viewing oneself as an "author" is often tied to feeling authoritative, on one hand, and feeling the right to exert a

presence in the text, on the other. Thus, authorship and or identity as an author evokes the need to come across as being authoritative as well as having the right to exert a subjectivity into the text. It is not surprising therefore that others have analysed academic writing from a double voicing perspective. For instance, Baynham (1999) contends that while referring to others' words "to authorize truth statements" is a central and constitutive activity in the academic essay (p. 492), it is however still required that the writer take up an evaluative position in relation to the quoted words" (p. 493). Thus, in "representing the words of others, the reporter is simultaneously required to take up a speaking/writing position, to comment on, evaluate, and position themselves in relation to those words" (Baynham, 1999, p. 486). He further observes that it is this process of evaluating the words of others which bring about the authorial voice; the "scholarly I" (p. 489). In this vein, it is the "truth statements" of others which brings about authoritativeness while the "evaluation" enables one to exert a presence in the text; enables one to foreground the "authorial I".

This is the reason why in exploring how novice academic writers in Malawi position themselves as academic writers I will use "voice" and "engagement" as the basis for understanding how these novice writers display authoritativeness as well as bring about their "authorial I" (see below). This will be done as several studies suggest that at the heart of successful academic writing is indeed a dialogism between "voice" and "engagement" (e.g. Groom, 2000; Fløttum, 2005; Tang, 2009).

For instance, from a dialogic account of authority in academic writing, Tang (2009) notes that merely being aware of the conversations taking place within a discipline is not sufficient to construct textual authority. A writer has to demonstrate an ability to assert his/her own voice within that conversation (p. 184). This, she further contends, is the case as authority in student writing is "the product of a manner of engagement with disciplinary ideas" one which positions a writer as a "*contributing participant* in the intellectual exchanges of his/her disciplinary community" (Tang, 2009, p. 181). From such views, it can then be observed that academic writing is indeed a negotiated social semiosis involving "idiosyncrasy", on one hand, and "the history of a discipline" on the other (cf., Bartholomae,1986). This implies that academic writing is double voiced (cf., Baynham, 1999). However, in this study such double voicing will be examined under "voice" and "engagement". This will build the platform on which we will explore the multidimensional self.

3.5.2.1 Voice

In dealing with dominant discourses or master narratives discussants encounter authoritative discourse or voice (Bakhtin, 1986). Expressivist views consider voice as the sound of the individual on a page (see Stapleton, 2002; Helms-Park and Stapleton, 2003). Contrary to this, sociolinguistic perspectives of voice which this study adopts propound a relational view of voice.

Bartholomae (1986, p. 6) observes that one of the problems which novice academic writers encounter is that it is very hard for them to take on the role – the voice, the person – of an authority whose authority is rooted in scholarship, analysis or research. Even though I have moved on from such notions like "role" in favour of the relational "position" earlier, Bartholomae posits something important here. To begin with, he presupposes that writers, novice or otherwise, have to engage in identity work; they have to come across as a certain type of person (cf., Ivanič, 1994) as they have to "take on" a "role". Secondly, this "role" or position is not something that is to be found within but is rather something that is to be attained relationally with an other. Thus, they have to take on the voice of authority which is rooted in scholarship. This makes intertextuality (cf., Fairclough, 1992; Bazerman, 2004, 2013; Prior, 2004; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006) an important element in both establishing as well as understanding voice. So what is voice? How does it relate to performativity and positioning? How central a notion is it in our understanding of academic writing as social semiosis?

The views of some editors of some of the leading TESOL journals offer important insight into the centrality of voice in academic writing. Flowerdew (2001, p. 137) reports that the editors he interacted with observed that "lack of voice or authority saying that I am part of this discourse community" was identified as a major problem by most editors. This implies that taking on the voice of authority performatively positions one as not only having authority but also aligns one to the community from which that voice emanated. Thus, taking on the position of an authority using voice in this manner enables one to intersubjectively adequate to the discipline; to pursue socially recognised sameness (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004, p. 383). This is the heart of the discoursal self (see 3.5.3.2 below). This in turn enables interlocutors to "speak" as an insider as this move positions them as having an authority which is rooted in scholarship and research. This therefore exemplifies how one can be positioned by the discourse which they engage with as in doing this it is largely the Discourse which positions the interlocutor. Thus in deliberately choosing to "entextualise" a text (Bauman and Briggs, 1990), one speaks

through a community product which positions them in one way or another. I will return to the agentive side of the argument later in discussing engagement below.

Such views of voice abound in the literature. For instance, Matsuda (2001, p. 51) contends that in order to construct and establish their authorial presence writers often align themselves with other sites of discursive practices. Such alignment, he continues, implies that finding one's voice is not the process of discovering "the true self" within but rather is a process of "negotiating a socially and discursively constructed identity" (p. 39). This makes voice the quality that makes impersonating or "mimicking" possible (p. 40). In similar vein, Kubota (2008, p. 79) contends that texts manifest not the autonomous voice of an individual writer but intertextual reinvention or reproduction. A text then is an assemblage of other voices (Hartman, 1992; Kamberelis and Scott, 1992; Boughey, 2000) meaning that voice is "intertextual, social, political" (Kamberelis and Scott, 1992, p. 369). This comes about as:

> Many, if not all of the ideas we hold have been shaped by those around us especially in an academic setting. For example, when I sit down to write a term paper, I see so many different readings, professors, and colleagues reflected in my work (Lee and Norton, 2008, p. 33).

The "many different readings and professors reflected in the work" constitute the voice of authority; a "community product" which enables one to speak as an insider (Hyland, 2012a, 2012b). This is what Matsuda means when he refers to voice as "the quality that makes impersonating or 'mimicking' possible" as voice is something that is brought about in any text through entextualisation – the transposing of a text across temporal as well as spatial boundaries. Voice in this sense is indeed not an individual "product" but rather a quality that aligns one to other discursive sites. This is the reason why voice predominantly indicates how one is positioned by the dominant discourses or master narratives from which one, in borrowing and speaking through, simultaneously aligns self to. This, however, is just one side of the coin. After one has been positioned in this way by "master narratives", in order for the "(re)invention" of self to be complete, one is also expected to engage the discourse which they have "appropriated". This is the case as "writers are said to have an identity when they establish a strong authorial presence in their writing" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 30). This is the preserve of engagement.

3.5.2.2 Engagement

As Baynham (1999) observes above, a credible academic text is expected to include the author's personal evaluation of the information they are reporting on. Thus it is not

enough for a writer to simply report the debates of the discipline they are writing on. Rather, they also need to present themselves as a "contributing participant" to the disciplinary debates they are engaging with (cf., Tang, 2009). Such "contributions" like personal pronouns, metadiscoursal constructions and hedging are examples of the manifest expression of the self in academic writing (Fløttum, 2005). This means that it is through such personal contributions or emotional-volitional tone that one positions themselves as an author (see later below). Of late, such expression of personal subjectivities in writing seems to have been studied under the notion of stance or stancetaking. This has made both voice and stance to become arguably two of the most important and most contentious notions in our understanding of academic writing as semiotic social practice (Hyland and Sancho Guinda, 2012). Their contentious nature comes about as, just like Ubuntu, these notions, particularly stance, have come to mean so many different things to so many different people (cf., Engelbretson, 2007). This has resulted into a plethora of terms which have been used interchangeably to refer to the exertion of personal subjectivities.

Terms like "footing" (Goffman, 1981), "hedging" (Hyland, 1994), "evidentiality" (Chafe, 1986), "metadiscourse" (Hyland, 1998, 2004, 2005a), "evaluation" (Thompson and Hunston, 1999) and "stance" (Gray and Biber, 2012; Sancho-Guinda and Hyland, 2012) have all been used in a somewhat similar manner to refer to the projection of personal subjectivity in written discourse. However, the common denominator to these different terms seems to be that in written discourse the writer has to assert him/herself to establish a relationship with either the content they are writing about or the readers they are writing to. This means that writers project themselves into their written discourse to, among other things, show their level of commitment to the propositional information presented (Biber and Finnegan, 1988; Hyland, 1994), to explicitly organise the discourse and show their position towards the content as well as readers (Hyland, 2005), to "take up positions and align themselves with readers in a particular context" (Hyland, 2005a, p. 4) or generally to "evaluate" what they are writing about (cf., Thompson and Hunston, 1999).

The relational nature of this aspect mean that writers overtly express their attitudes, feelings, dispositions, judgments, or commitment concerning the message (Biber and Finegan, 1988; Gray and Biber, 2012). This they do to identity with others who think in this way or to identity self as a unique being. This is why such linguistically articulated form of social action (Du Bios, 2001) which is observable, interpretable, indexical and

interpersonal in nature (Engelbretson, 2007, p. 10) will be used to examine how novice writers in the threshold phase in Malawi project themselves as authors (see later below). This will be the case as, from a performative perspective presented earlier, in engaging in this relational work, novices will be seen to be positioning themselves as well. In this regard, this study will proceed on the understanding that as they do this:

> Writers are necessarily engaged in positioning themselves vis-à-vis their words and texts (which are embedded in histories of linguistic and textual production), their interlocutors and audience (both actual and virtual/projected/imagined) and with respect to a context they simultaneously respond to and construct linguistically (Jaffe, 2009, 4).

In this regard, this study will proceed on the view that novice academic writers in Malawi are expected to engage in a "public interactional act" (cf., Kärkäinnen, 2006, 2007; Du Bois, 2007; Keisanen, 2007; Jaffe, 2009) with both their content as well as with the reader either perceived or real (Thompson, 2001). This they do on top of and apart from their summoning other disciplinary voices of authority and power to discoursally construct themselves as a certain type of person as argued above. However, considering a plethora of terms which have been used to refer to this social action, this study adopts Kärkäinnen's (2006) view in using "engagement" as a term that covers all relational social action writers do as they write. This use of the term "engagement" resonates with Hyland's (2004b, 2005b, 2005c). In this regard, unlike voice which is a community product which largely positions interlocutors, "engagement" represents an attempt at "self-positioning". These concepts form the basis for our separation of the discoursal self, on one hand, and the self as author, on the other, as I explicate later below.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the process of academic writing is indeed a social semiotic action (Clark and Ivanič, 1997). Thus I have argued that the process of writing is something which transcends a mere inscription of words on either a page or a computer screen. Rather, this process indexes some fundamental practices which are taking place in this process as they point towards something beyond the writing moment itself. In this regard, it has been argued that this process of social semiosis is tantamount to a social action in the sense that as interlocutors write they are in turn performatively doing something; they are performing an action which produces a unique text as well as writes them (cf., Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). It is the performing of this action which in turn then sees interlocutors enter into a dialogue with both the Discourses, on one hand, and with the reader as they perceive him/her, on the other. Such a dialogic relationship

with other sites of discursive practices sees interlocutors being positioned as well as positioning themselves in a certain way. This is something that is accomplished through voice and engagement respectively. As they evoke a polyphony of other voices as well as engage with both the reader and the discourse itself writers foreground multiple "I positions". They performatively foreground multiple selves.

3.5.3 Self in academic writing

The exploration of how writing is an act of identity in which the writer seeks to identify self as a unique being and at the same time identify with a community ends by highlighting how such a performative act brings about a multiplicity of "I positions"; a multicity of selves. To explicate this I turn to the work of Roz Ivanič particularly her view of the multidimensional "self" implicated in academic writing.

3.5.3.1 Autobiographical self

As already indicated elsewhere, novice writers have already been writing prior to their entering the academy. This then implies that, these novices bring a certain perception of self as a writer from the accumulated experiences they have had with writing from wherever they enter the academy. These novices thus bring along a certain identity as writers (Baynham, 2015). Such identity brought along is their autobiographical self (Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010).

The autobiographical self is a person's sense of self as a writer which they bring to the act of writing. This represents a sum of all the "unique consequences of selfhood of all experiences of life up to that moment with her associated interests, values, beliefs, and social positionings" (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010, p. 238). This "unique consequences of selfhood" is itself "discoursally constructed" (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010, p. 242); shaped by all aspects of a person's life up to the moment of writing (p. 244). With this view in mind, this study will try to situate the stories of participants in their literacy histories with a view to getting an understanding of this identity brought along; with a view to understanding something of this autobiographical self. In situating the participants' autobiographical self as a basis for understanding how they performatively inscribe themselves into their written discourse, this study heeds Baynham's (2015, p. 69) call for the need to "historicize our understanding of identity work while paradoxically maintaining an emphasis on its performativity". This is an important step towards understanding these participants' encounters with academic discourses as the autobiographical self determines, among other things, the "textual capital" to which

they make recourse for "linguistic features of authority within the essay" (Starfield, 2002, p. 121). This means that the autobiographical self determines, to some extent, a writer's crafting of authority and this is why Ivanič (1998, p. 26) observes that self as author is likely to be to a considerable extent a product of a writer's autobiographical self (see 3.5.3.3 below).

In this regard, then we should expand our understanding of identity to take on board this view that novices, just like all writers more generally, bring a certain understanding of self as a writer from an accumulation of various discursive practices in which writing is implied. Thus, while all along we have defined identity as emergent in interaction, as "brought about" (Baynham, 2015) to take on board the "brought along" aspect, from this point forward we understand individual identity as something which emerges from "a *synthesis* of internal self definition and the external definitions of oneself by others, particularly powerful others" (Hyland, 2012a, p. 13, my emphasis). Thus, from this point forward we consider identity as emergent from a dialogue between an internal self definition brought along to the discoursing moment, on one hand, and a definition of self by "others", on the other. This evokes once again the dialogical view of self (see Chapter 1). Having established this side of identity and how it will be operationalised in this study, the next section moves on to consider how writers discoursally make an impression of self in the written text.

3.5.3.2 Discoursal self

The discoursal self is essentially about "self representation" (cf., Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). It refers to the "impression, consciously or unconsciously conveyed in a text of oneself" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 25). This comes about as "whatever we do consciously or unconsciously makes a statement about our identity" (Clark and Ivanič, 1997, p. 143) as Hyland (2002b) observes earlier. Thus all forms of social action, including writing as a semiotic social practice, give an impression of the "persona" behind the text. This impression comes to the fore largely through the available possibilities of selfhood or subject positions which are available to an interlocutor. In this sense, the discoursal self is made possible through "voice" as it has been established in this discussion so far.

From a relational perspective therefore, as opposed to an expressivist perspective, "there is no such thing as personal 'voice' … just an affiliation to or unique selection among existing discourse conventions" (Clark and Ivanič, 1997, p. 151). In this regard, writers

construct a "discoursal self" when they portray themselves through the discourse conventions which they draw on intertextually (cf., Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998). Due to its emergent nature in a dialogic relationship between autobiographical self, on one hand, and other sites of discursive practice, on the other, the discoursal self is not unitary neither does it represent the true self but rather a constructed one. Thus, an exploration of the discoursal self oftentimes indicates that "writers often find themselves attempting to inhabit subject positions with which they do not identify or feel ambivalent about" (Clark and Ivanič, 1997). This means that:

> Self-representation is not unitary or even coherent. Writers may shift from one subject position to another, creating multiple and possibly contradictory impressions of themselves, even within a single text. Writers often feel more comfortable with the subject positions they have constructed for themselves in some pieces of writing or parts of writing than in others (Clark and Ivanič, 1997, p. 144).

The shifting and conflicting nature of the discoursal self, the impression which a writer makes as they make recourse to other sites of discursive practice, firmly places dialogism at the centre of this work (see Chapter 1). It is against this understanding that the study will endeavour to highlight that in taking up multiple "I positions" in their writing in this way largely through voicing strategies, novice writers performatively create multiple and at times contradictory positions. This is why it will also be important to give them an opportunity to reflect on and respond to these positions discoursally created and occupied.

In a nutshell, the tracing of a sense of self as a writer which this study will do through the literacy history of participants will allow us to understand something of the identity they bring along to university as well as to the writing moment. The examination of their voicing strategies (Baynham, 1999) on the other hand through "intertextual tracing" will enable us to appreciate how they, inadvertently or otherwise, are positioned to come across as a certain type of person. However, "adequating" to other sites of practices is not the only thing writers do; they also create an impression of self as a writer through an expression of their "authorial I" (Baynham, 1999); the writer's engagement which signifies their own ideas and beliefs; their positions and opinions.

3.5.3.3 Self as author

This mode of "self" relates to engagement; the projection of subjectivities into a piece of writing. As noted in the discussion on engagement earlier, it is not enough for writers to marshal other voices to discoursally construct a certain impression. The

authoritativeness of a writer also depends on how they "establish a strong authorial presence in their writing" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 30); on how they project what can be called an individual voice. This is what I have called engagement in this study. "Self as author" refers to the extent to which a writer asserts themselves as saying something or as being the source of something in the text. This is an important aspect especially in academic writing as "writers differ considerably in how far they claim authority as the source of the content of the text, and in how far they establish an authorial presence in the text" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 26). Thus writers' claim to authority will differ as it depends on the extent to which they have dialogically engaged the discourse they are constructing (cf., Groom, 2000; Tang, 2009). This is the case as oftentimes the absence of an "individual voice" or engagement with discourse often leads markers to dismiss a paper as "a tissue of quotes" devoid of individual argument (Baynham, 1999, p. 493). In this regard, self as author is primarily about indicating in the text that the text has an originator someone who is responsible for the argument of the text; someone who in essence says "I am behind this" or "I am doing this". This means that the writer is not merely an assembler of text or a mere ventriloquator of other people's voices but is also, and equally importantly, a composer of one.

Thus, the self as author through the "authorial I" differs from the discoursal self in the sense that while the latter is developed through intertextual practices as one makes recourse to other sites of discursive practice the former is "constructed through particular ways of using language that are not tied to specific discourses but implicated in social relationships of power in a more general way" (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010, p. 240). Considering how broad this notion is it is not surprising that we have such a plethora of terms all of which claim to advance something of how this individuality is attained in writing (see 'Engagement' above).

In a nutshell, in this study the discursively constructed sense of self which undergraduates bring to the university in Malawi will be examined under the term "autobiographical self" and as something that is emergent in one's literacy history. Furthermore, their voicing strategies as well as engagement practices will be studied under such terms as "discoursal self" and "self as author" respectively. All this will be done on the understanding that asking them to write in a certain way, a way different to what they are used to hitherto, is tantamount to asking these novices to engage in identity work. Academic writing demands are identity demands. Such a broad social perspective to analysing academic writing in this threshold, in general, and the indexical

perspectives, in particular will give us an opportunity to understand something of the context in which this writing is taking place. This will in turn provide a window into the discursive practices of this social semiotic space and identify which aspects of this space might be responsible for confining novice writers to the periphery; to a perpetual "it".

3.6 Research Questions

From the foregoing it has been established that academic writing is identity work in which writers seek to identify self as a unique individual and at the same time identify self as part of a group (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 2002). In other words, it has been established so far that the process of academic writing is one in which the writer performatively positions self as a certain type of person; a positioning which varies even within a single text. With this understanding in mind, it is important to note that attempts to project self as a writer revolve around two main axes. On one hand, a writer has to perform authoritativeness. Considering that novices do not have any authoritativeness, they have to write their way into authoritativeness (Somers, 2008) by riding on the back of the authoritative other. This implies that to be authoritative, a novice text has to make recourse to other discursive sites of authority; to other voices. Thus an important dimension to positioning self as a competent academic writer rests in marshalling other voices. This positions the writer as, among other things, in alignment to disciplinary practices.

On the other hand, a competent writer persona has to also endeavour to assert something which the individual writer has to say. In other words, authoritativeness is dialogic (e.g. Tang, 2009). While taking up a position of authority is paramount in creating a strong writer persona, it is important to note that the writer is also expected to project an emotional-volitional tone (Bakhtin, 1993); the "authorial I" (Baynham, 1999). This means that identity as an academic writer does indeed revolve around self definition, on one hand, as writers strive to assert their individuality in their writing. On the other hand, writers have to situate their authoritativeness in the authoritative other. For novice academic writers who have perhaps not done this before such attempts to clap with both hands (Thompson and Thetela, 1995) are likely going to be challenging. This is why it is important to bring their voice to this effort to understand what they are doing as they write in this threshold.

It would be important therefore to find out from the perspective of the novice academic writer in Malawi how they not only position self as an academic writer but also how they themselves perceive the projected self in particular writing episodes. From an indexical perspective, this will shed some light on the contexts which their written text both create and respond to. Doing this is the pinnacle of placing the novice academic writer in both space and time as argued in Chapter 2 with a view to hearing their voice on the matter. This has been denied them for some time. This study therefore seeks to address the following questions:

1. How do novice writers position themselves as academic writers in their assignments?
    a) How do they adopt and relate to the "voices" of the disciplines?
    b) How do they "engage" self as a writer?
2. How do they perceive themselves as academic writers?
3. What challenges do they encounter as they attempt to come across as academic writers?

Chapter 4 : Researching self in academic writing in Malawi

4.1 Chapter preview

In building on the research questions set out at the end of the previous chapter, this chapter sets out to show how this research was conducted in order to have the research questions answered. In trying to understand the lived experiences as well as the reflective voice of novice academic writers in Malawi regarding their own writing practices, this chapter highlights how such a concern fits into the qualitative research paradigm. In situating this study into a qualitative framework, I emphasise that the qualitative paradigm is a legitimate paradigm in its own right and does not need to make any recourse to its quantitative counterpart for validation (Creswell, 2013).

The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first part I provide the theoretical basis for the chosen approach to this study. This I do by highlighting the theoretical basis for qualitative research at the heart of which is the coming together of the researcher's and participants' subjectivities. Then I move on to further elucidate how this study has been influenced by ethnography as method as well as by the narrative turn in the social sciences. The second part of the chapter takes a more practical approach as I reflect on how the research site was chosen, access negotiated, participants selected, and data generated with them. I will then move on to show how this data were analysed before ending with the ethical considerations which were made in the course of this study.

4.2 Paradigms debate

4.2.1 'Us' versus 'them'?

While a lot has been said about the differences between quantitative and qualitative paradigms, this study has been conducted on the understanding that both are legitimate approaches for conducting (educational) research (Creswell, 2005). This implies that all research falls within a continuum between qualitative and quantitative (Dornyei, 2007). As such, realising that there are some aspects of social reality like people's views, feelings, attitudes and or the essence of things generally which statistics cannot measure (Silverman, 2001), studies which are devoted to these fall under the qualitative paradigm. This study's focus on "how", "why", and "what" questions as outlined in the research questions places it in a qualitative paradigm. Since the qualitative is an independent and valid paradigm in its own right, this study is developed within "a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration without apology or

comparison to quantitative research" (Creswell, 2013, p. 6). So, what is the qualitative paradigm about? How can we further problematize the "subjective" nature of qualitative research? I address these questions next beginning with the latter.

4.2.2 The intersubjective perspective

Qualitative research is about "constructed reality" (cf., Greene, 1994; Lather, 1994; Richards, 2003; Dornyei, 2007). "Constructing" reality presupposes the coming together of at least two subjectivities. Therefore, qualitative research can be perceived as an intersubjective undertaking as the "languaged data" (Watson-Gegeo, 1988; Polkinghone, 2005) at the heart of research captures peoples' as well as institutions' "lived experiences" (cf., Sullivan, 2012). Qualitative research therefore brings to the fore how people enter into dialogic relationships with other people as well as institutions and how this coming together shapes their world view as well as how they share that world view. This implies that qualitative research is *intersubjective* and not subjective.

In similar vein, Cunliffe (2011) proposes a three-tier perspective to research. He contends that research falls into any one of the following categories: objective, subjective, and intersubjective. The first two categories can be equated to the quantitative and qualitative perspectives respectively. On the other hand, the difference between subjectivism and intersubjectivism is the latter's emphasis on "we-ness; our complexly interwoven, actively responsive relationships which are neither fully within nor outside our control" (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 658). This constructed and relational view of reality evokes the performative/positioning interplay (see Chapter 3) particularly the view that one is neither fully agentive nor fully positioned. In this regard, qualitative research is about "dialogue"; about "lived experiences" (Sullivan, 2012) which are never finalised but are always emergent in fluid, relational, responsive, embedded, and embodied interactions leading to a multiplicity of meanings which are embedded in time, place, and in relation to others (Cunliffe, 2011). Such understanding in turn enables us to "focus on life and research as a process of becoming rather than already established truths" (Helin, 2013, p. 226); on research as a "shared activity" in which what happens between people in a dialogic interplay becomes the focus. Such understanding becomes the bedrock on which we build our understanding of "the spontaneous moves between self, other, and social context" (Sullivan, 2012, p. 37). Sullivan's point here is an important precursor to how interview data in this study has been analysed (see 4.6.2 below) as in adopting Bamberg's (1997) model of interactive

positioning, this research elucidates how participants are in an active interplay involving self, other and context.

The intersubjective perspective advanced by Cunliffe (2011) here seems to be a plausible one considering the ontological as well as axiological perspectives which have shaped this study. Thus, considering that we all indeed are constitutive of and are constituted by different cultures and or voices which we bring to the research process, then research represents a coming together of subjectivities. This makes it an intersubjective endeavour. Such views indicate that the subject (both researcher and researched) is never finalised but is rather a relational one who comes into being in "dialogue" with others. It is plausible then that researchers perceive subjects as *always* in the process of becoming and endeavour to capture that becoming; that unfinalizability. These perspectives also echo the Ubuntu ethic (see Chapter 1).

4.3 Qualitative research paradigm

4.3.1 Preliminary considerations

Qualitative research is an umbrella term used to refer to a variety of methods, approaches, and techniques that use "languaged data" (Watson-Gegeo, 1988; Polkinghorne, 2005). Due to their exploratory nature, qualitative studies aim at providing understanding of complex psychological issues making them most useful for answering humanistic "why" and "how" questions (Marshall, 1996). This is why the main concerns of qualitative research are directed towards social routines, their conditions, as well as the (*inter*)subjective experiences of those who take part in them (Carspecken and Cordeiro, 1995, p. 88). These social routines and the conditions in which they are both experienced and relayed during the research process constantly point to their constructed nature. Thus, even the subjectivities brought to the research process are not "found" but are rather constructed (cf., Crotty, 2003). As such, research ought to highlight such a constructed nature of phenomena and/or reality. This is what this research project endeavours to do.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that this project falls into the qualitative paradigm as it largely seeks to understand, largely from an emic perspective, 'how' novice academic writers position self as academic writer when they enter a new culture. In other words, the choice of a qualitative paradigm is in line with the research questions as they have been formulated. Furthermore, Creswell (2013, p. 48) observes that a qualitative paradigm is the logical option when we seek to obtain a complex and detailed

understanding of an issue, an understanding which can only be obtained by talking directly with people and allowing them to tell their stories unencumbered by what we expect to find. "Talking directly" with people and letting them "tell their own stories" point towards semi-structured/depth interviews and narrative perspectives respectively. I will expand on these later below in highlighting how this study has been influenced by the narrative turn in the social sciences (see 4.3.3 below). Furthermore, Creswell (2013, p. 48) observes that the qualitative becomes the paradigm of choice when the goal is to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimise the power relationships between researcher and participant. This is the essence of doing research with a "humble togetherness" (Swanson, 2007, 2009) as this study hopes to give participants a platform on which to articulate as well as hear their voice. I will later on highlight how narrative perspectives are among those better suited to minimise power relationships and bring out participant "practical" as well as "epistemological" voice (cf., Batchelor, 2006; Baynham, 2011).

In a nutshell, this section has highlighted how this study leans towards the qualitative perspective. This is the case as its major concern with "what" participants are doing as well as "how" they are doing it, on one hand, and the stories they tell pertaining to it all, on the other, places this study in the qualitative paradigm. These are aspects which statistics cannot measure. Having situated the study in a qualitative purview, the next section will examine the key influences which have informed the conducting of this study. These are ethnography as method and the narrative turn in the social sciences.

4.3.2 Ethnography as method

As academic discourses encompass multivariate ways of thinking and using language in the academy (Hyland, 2009), then adopting ethnographically oriented perspectives to unravel them sounds a plausible thing to do. Ethnography, writing about people (Flowerdew, 2002; Hyland, 2006; Paltridge, Starfield, and Tardy, 2016), provides an important way of understanding people's everyday lived experiences. Ethnography therefore enables us to deeply theorise seemingly mundane experiences and encounters something which in turn enriches our understanding of phenomena.

However, considering that an ethnographic study requires the researcher to spend an extended time in the research site with participants and generate data using multiple methods (cf., Richards, 2003; Dornyei, 2007), this study cannot be labelled ethnographic *per se* but rather ethnographically inspired. Following Lillis' (2008)

categorisation, this study leans towards and has been influenced by "ethnography as method". This stems from her argument that ethnography can either be a method, a methodology, or a deep theorizing tool. As a method, ethnography can and has been used in academic writing research mostly through "talk around text" a method popularised by Roz Ivanič (cf., Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič and Weldon, 1999; Lillis, 2009). "Talk around text" gives writers of texts an opportunity to have their voice(s) heard regarding the choices they made in writing the way they did. This in turn enables us to close the gap between text and context (Lillis, 2008; Paltridge, Starfield, and Tardy, 2016) as this approach helps us to situate writing within a context and understand something of that context as well. Such understanding is made possible by indexicality; the explanation of how linguistic elements have their roots in and/or point to the social milieu.

In this regard, it is evident that this approach is useful in locating the discursive practices of higher education into a broader historical and epistemological framework for understanding what is involved in student writing (Lillis and Turner, 2001). However, one drawback with ethnography as method operationalised in this way is that it can lead to a reification of snatches of data as the norm regarding participant lives. I have attempted to mitigate this by adopting an expanded view of data. In looking at the data as both indexing specific aspects of the self, on one hand, and as a performance by both the researcher and researched through which identity positions were enacted in specific moments in time (Lillis, 2009), on the other, I have provided a richer and more consistent view of data. Such an enactment and a taking up of identity positions mean that within ethnography as method a platform was provided for participants to narrate their own stories.

4.3.3 The narrative turn

Since the narrative turn in the social sciences, narrative research has become an important and at the same time contentious perspective in research. The latter has been partly due to the lack of agreement over what constitutes narrative research (cf., Elliot, 2005). However, here I am using narrative to refer to *all stories* of (lived) experiences rather than events (Squire, 2013) around which we can understand phenomena especially from the perspective of the people whom we research with. This is so as narratives carry traces of human lives that we want to understand (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou, 2013). Apart from these traces of human lives, narratives are also sites on

which identity work happens (cf., Baynham, 2011) as in recounting lived experiences a positioning takes place (Czarniawska, 2004).

The narrative perspective therefore, especially the "small stories" tradition (cf., Bamberg, 2006; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012) encourages not only the studying of narratives ELICITED in interviews but also narratives discursively arising IN interviews (De Fina and Perrino, 2011, p. 6). Such a duo focus on both the "whats" as well as the "hows" of interview data (Silverman, 2001) championed by narrative research and from which I borrow in this study, also echo Lillis' (2008, 2009) call under ethnography as method above particularly the need to focus on talk around text as both discourse/indexical (what) and performative/relational (how). In this regard, narrative perspectives, just like talk around text above, are important foundations on which participants will be given an opportunity to have their voices heard. This will be possible as talk around text as well as narratives minimise the power differentials between researcher and researched (Lillis, 2008, 2009).

Apart from such practical considerations, the influence of the narrative turn on this study can also be traced to narrative's theoretical roots. Patton (2002) contends that narrative research has its roots in phenomenology and hermeneutics. From a phenomenological point of view, narrative research emphasises understanding "lived experience" and "perceptions of experience". On the other hand, from a hermeneutic perspective, narrative research advocates extending the study beyond written texts to include in-depth interview transcripts (Patton, 2002). In line with this understanding, with a dual focus on both what participants do as they become academic writers and how they perceive this becoming, the narrative influences on this study are evident. These form the basis on which this study has been conducted.

Having outlined the philosophical foundations of this study, the next phase moves on to explain how these were actualised in the conducting of this study. This I do by outlining how the research site was chosen, participants recruited, as well as data generated with them.

4.4 The research context

The higher education sector in Malawi can be demarcated into three: public, private, and religious owned/run institutions (Jamu, 2017). With such a surfeit of higher education institutions, I decided to conduct this study at any one of the public institutions under the UNIMA. This I decided on as I am familiar with the workings of

the public institutions having studied at one of them as an undergraduate and worked at another as a lecturer. Since the UNIMA is organised along a federal system which has four constituent colleges under it, I decided further that this project be conducted at The Polytechnic, a constituent college of the University. Thus despite other institutions which operate under the UNIMA like Chancellor College, Kamuzu College of Nursing, and College of Medicine, I decided to conduct this study at the Polytechnic as I had worked at this institution for over a decade prior to the commencement of this study. This was a significant move as I felt that my prior knowledge of and familiarity with the research context could positively influence the research project (see Hymes, 1996).

4.4.1 The Polytechnic

The Polytechnic specialises in technical and vocational programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The college has five faculties which are further divided into several departments under each. These are Engineering, Commerce, Applied Sciences, Education and Media Studies, and Built Environment. All of these offer various undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. In order to get a focused and an in-depth understanding of what is happening with the writing of undergraduates as they enrol into the Polytechnic, I decided to use the faculty of Commerce as the focal point on this research site.

4.4.2 Faculty of Commerce

The faculty of Commerce at the Polytechnic offers a number of undergraduate as well as postgraduate courses. At undergraduate level the faculty offers degree programmes in Internal Auditing, Marketing, Business Administration, and Commerce. At postgraduate level, on the other hand, the faculty offers a wide range of courses including the Master of Business Administration as well as various postgraduate diplomas. In this regard, I chose the faculty of Commerce as I felt that its multidisciplinary nature is likely going to give us a rich understanding of how undergraduates grapple with shifting how they have to identify and/or position themselves as they write. This I felt would be the case as:

> Accounting … emphasises primarily collecting, classifying, recording, analysing, and interpreting financial data, economics emphasises devising theory, collecting and analysing data to verify or refute theories, whereas the emphasis in marketing is on practical applications of marketing theories (Bhatia, 2002, p. 32).

Bhatia (2002, p. 32) goes on to observe that most of these disciplines in Commerce "crucially depend on business case studies and reports, letters, memos to construct and communicate their disciplinary knowledge". Such multidisciplinarity I felt would not only help highlight the sharpness of the transitions these first year students undergo (cf., Thesen, 1997) by bringing them sharply into focus but would also help us appreciate and understand the shifting identity positions they are expected to take up as they construct who they can be in this community. Student grappling with different text types in the modern university has also been highlighted elsewhere (cf., Baynham, 2000; Chihota, 2007). In this vein, I felt that the faculty of commerce would give us an important opportunity to understand how novice writers perform as well as perceive a shifting sense of self as writer across different domains. This is something I felt would be feasible in a faculty of Commerce as:

> A student in business studies … may be expected to confront texts from the disciplines of Accountancy, Economics, Financial Management, Corporate Organisations, Marketing Studies, *inter alia*, all of which give rise to a plethora of different text-types (Candlin and Plum, 1999, p. 196).

This was indeed the case as I later found out that my participants were studying such modules as Law, Organisational Behaviour, Business Numeracy, Economics and English for Academic Purposes. This then meant that they indeed had to deal with a surfeit of text-types and in the process deal with an "ever moving target" (Chihota, 2007).

Furthermore, despite a proliferation of studies into identity and identification in academic writing, not much has been done on how undergraduates transition into multidisciplinary contexts like the faculty of Commerce and the sort of identity implications this has (Hyland, 2012a). In exploring the transition into a multidisciplinary faculty of Commerce that Malawian novice writers make this study heeds Hyland's call and is an attempt to fill this gap in the research. Against this background the next section goes on to address how participants were selected for this study.

4.4.3 Getting access

As a qualitative researcher I realised the importance of conducting the study in a "natural environment" as well as the necessity of getting as close as possible to the research participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Silverman, 2001; Patton, 2002; Dornyei, 2007; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2005, 2013). This makes

negotiating access to a research site, the "natural environment" in which a researcher can then get as close as possible to the participants, an important part of the research process.

Silverman (2001) distinguishes two types of research sites; "open" or "public" where access is freely available, and "closed" or "private" where access is controlled by gate keepers. In this regard, the Polytechnic could then be said to be a "private" or "closed" setting as access to its site has to be negotiated with its "gate keepers". Thus, despite being an insider to the Polytechnic having worked there for over a decade and from which I was on study leave at the time of this research, in returning to the institution as a researcher I returned as an outsider who needs to be granted permission to access its site. This points to the necessity of negotiating access into the research site.

Realising this, I first contacted the dean of Commerce via email a couple of months prior to my visiting the site alerting him of what the study was all about as well as asking for his permission to recruit participants from his faculty. While he indicated that he had no problems with me working with students from his faculty, he nonetheless advised me to contact the college registrar to request formal permission from her. She in turn advised that I put this request on a headed paper bearing the credentials of the institution I was studying at with a view to making "the request formal". After negotiating with these two important "gate keepers" at the institution, access was eventually granted to both the institution as a whole and to the faculty of Commerce in particular.

Silverman (2001) further observes that depending on circumstances, access can either be "covert" or "overt". The former refers to accessing a site without the subjects' knowledge while the latter is done based on informing subjects and getting their individual agreement. Considering that one important rationale of the study is to have participants' voice heard as they share their own narrative pertaining to their fledgling sense of self as a writer, the participants were overtly approached. This was done so that, among other things, their consent is sought and obtained; an important ethical tenet (see 4.7 below).

4.4.4 The participants

4.4.4.1   Theoretical considerations

Careful selection of participants who will help answer the research questions as well as meet the overall objectives of a study is an important step in any research project. This is so as it is rarely practical, efficient, or ethical to study whole populations (Marshall, 1996). As such it is crucial to carefully select individuals who either have had or have a direct personal knowledge of the phenomena under investigation and are willing to share their experiences with the researcher (Sandelowski, 1995). Thus, since it was impractical for me to study the whole first year population at the Polytechnic, the key in selecting participants lay in identifying "the most productive sample to answer the research question" (Marshall, 1996, p. 523). While the phrase "most productive sample" sounds vague and ambiguous, Sandelowski (1995, p. 183) sheds some light on this by noting that:

> An adequate sample size in qualitative research is one that permits – by virtue of not being too large – the deep case oriented analysis that is hallmark of all qualitative inquiry, and that results in – by virtue of not being too small – a new and richly textured understanding of experience.

Sandelowski's point here clarifies to some extent "most productive sample" but still falls short of addressing how qualitative researchers ought to go about selecting this sample.

Patton (2002) however seems to be an authority on qualitative sampling. However, I would rather use "participant selection" over "sampling" as the latter has overtones of "representativeness" and "generalisation" (cf., Polkinghorne, 2005) aspects which are not of interest in this study. Nevertheless, I still find Patton's coverage of "sampling" comprehensive and useful. His view can be summed up by saying that all participant selection in qualitative research is purposive (cf., Sandelowski, 1995; Coyne, 1997) as the qualitative researcher strives to select particular individuals in relation to the issue under investigation. This implies that while there were many first year students who were undergoing the transition to university life, the richness of that experience as well as the willingness to share that experience with the researcher varies. As such, in order to get to the "lived experiences" qualitative researchers operate on the understanding that:

> Inquiry typically focuses on small samples collected *purposefully* to permit inquiry into an understanding of a phenomenon *in depth* … (leading to the

selection of) *information rich* cases for study in depth (Patton, 2002, p. 46, emphasis his).

From this understanding it is evident that the researcher has to "purposefully" select those participants who not only will help answer the research questions but will also provide rich data in doing so. This in turn implies that it is not every person in the research population who can help the researcher achieve this. Here, Patton (2002) seems to be alluding to the understanding that information rich cases, those cases that have had rich and meaningful experiences with the research issue, are the ones that provide a deep understanding of phenomena. As such, these cases have to be carefully and purposefully identified if a phenomenon is to be carefully studied. While he then goes on to delineate other fifteen "sampling" approaches, all of them can still be categorised under the umbrella "purposive sampling" (cf., Coyne, 1997) as I demonstrate how this was operationalised in this research below.

4.4.4.2   Initial approach

The dean of Commerce pointed out that the faculty offers the following undergraduate degrees from which I could recruit participants: Business Administration (Generic), Business Administration (Marketing), Accountancy, Internal Auditing, and Entrepreneurship Studies. The first two are offered by the Administration department and the next two by the Accountancy department. The last degree is offered by the Management Centre, an arm of the faculty. With this information in mind, I decided to purposefully draw three participants each from Business Administration (generic), Accountancy, and Internal Auditing as these are the more "established" degree programmes being the oldest among the five.

Following this, I approached various course lecturers and explained the nature of the study to them. These lecturers gave me permission to approach their students during class time and explain the study to them as well. At this stage, I was using a homogeneous selection criteria. Thus, one way of selecting participants is to select participants from a group whose experiences are likely to be somewhat similar (Patton, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2005; Creswell, 2013) in order to describe the experiences of a particular group in depth. However, despite such initial homogeneous selection, the intention was not to explain or describe the experiences of the group but rather to capture the richness and variety in individual experiences as individuals deal with the demands of a new culture. Homogeneity was just a first step towards identifying individuals whose experiences were to form the basis of this study.

4.4.4.3   Participant selection

I first approached the Business Administration group through their Business Numeracy lecturer. After explaining what the study was about, ten people showed interest to participate. However, five decided not to take further part upon being told that there are no monetary rewards for participating. Afterwards, I had a chat with the remaining interested group to have a feel of the background which they will bring to the study. Here, I was trying to identify participants with the most divergent forms of experience (Patton, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2005; Creswell, 2013). This is also called maximum variation "sampling". Getting a feel of their "identity brought along" as well as their previous encounters with literacy practices was an important consideration early on as these factors are likely to impact the richness of their engagement with writing as identity work (see Chapter 3) and consequently the richness of the experiences to be shared with the researcher. From this exercise I identified and invited to participate in the study the following participants: Saul, someone who had a turbulent journey to university as he had to drop out of school several times along the way in order to work and sustain himself; Felipe, who had a straight albeit not smooth journey to the academy; and Hope, a middle aged woman who had a somewhat smooth path to university. This process was also replicated as, in a maximum variation tradition, after interacting with the Accountancy group through their EAP lecturer, I identified Jeff and Coman, middle aged men who have had to leave school to work at various points in their lives due to different circumstances, and Momo whose journey to university has been more straightforward compared to her two counterparts.

The recruitment of the remaining three participants was however different. As I had problems tracing the Internal Auditing group due to inconsistencies in their time table, I contacted the group's class representative through the secretary of the head of department. After arranging and meeting him and explaining to him the nature of the project, he immediately expressed interest to participate. As he had told me during this initial chat that he had attended higher education before, was a qualified dentist who was also working for the Malawi Police Service, I allowed him to participate. This is how Kai came on board. However, contrary to the maximum variation route I had taken with the first six participants, I asked Kai to find two other willing participants who have a different profile to his. To this end, he recruited Khumbo, who came to university straight from secondary school, and Joshua who had a brief encounter with higher education as he had briefly studied at the Malawi College of Accountancy prior

to his enrolling at the Polytechnic. In this regard, the last two participants were recruited through a "snowballing strategy" (Polkinghorne, 2005). That is, in asking Kai to identity two other participants with a different profile to his, I was deploying a participant to identify others who might be informed participants for the study. Thus, I was relying on someone to identify cases which might be information-rich (Creswell, 2013). However, despite the different approach in recruiting participants as highlighted here, the approach nonetheless yielded similar variation in terms of the participants recruited as the table below sums up.

Name	Degree program	Year of birth
Kai	Internal Audit	1977
Khumbo	Internal Audit	1996
Joshua	Internal Audit	1994
Saul	Administration	1986
Felipe	Administration	1996
Hope	Administration	-
Momo	Accountancy	1997
Jeff	Accountancy	1992
Coman	Accountancy	1989

Table 4. 1: Summary of participant profile

4.5 Data generation

4.5.1 Textual data

When I met the participants, they had already written their first essay in university. The Internal Auditing group wrote their first essay in the module Organisational Behaviour while the other two groups had written an essay in Business Numeracy. I asked the participants to share with me copies of these texts which they did. This I did with a view to examining how they had performatively positioned themselves in their writing in order to use this as the basis for the "talk around text" which we had later. This was done on the understanding that the written text is a site on which discursive practices are played out. As such, texts offer insight into the circumstances of their creation as they index the contextual factors which have impacted their being put together. Furthermore, I asked for those texts which they had submitted for assessment to their tutors realising

that "for both pedagogic and validity purposes, it is better to study naturally occurring data as opposed to contrived data that has been produced for the research purpose" (Ivanič and Weldon, 1999, p. 181). I later went on to analyse and had a chat with the participants over another essay they wrote later. Before I did all this, I interviewed each one of them to get a feel of their literacy histories within which I could get a sense of their "autobiographical self".

4.5.2 Literacy history interview

In an attempt to conduct this study with a "humble togetherness", I decided to meet the participants in an informal space. Initially I wanted to meet them in the junior staff common room. This became untenable as the place was too noisy. Such noise could have been disruptive as well as adversely affect the quality of the recordings as each interview was recorded onto a portable device. Furthermore, I also encouraged the participants to informally address me by my first name something some seemed uncomfortable to do perhaps due to socio-cultural factors. Most debilitating however was the participants' inability to take on the role of "co-researcher" as I had envisaged in the proposal for this study. In the proposal I had indicated my desire to treat the participants as "co-researchers" by, among other things, encouraging them to set the agenda of what we could explore together. This I felt would be the zenith of "research with a humble togetherness" (Swanson, 2007, 2009).

This notwithstanding, the first interview was conducted in a somewhat abandoned computer lab. This was largely done to elicit participant literacy histories (see Appendix 1). The second interview was a discourse based interview or "talk around text" which centred on the first essay they had written. Due to the intertwining of the analysis of the texts and the subsequent "talk" I will move on to elucidate how these texts were analysed and how the analysis formed the basis of the talk. To do this, I will use one participant in the study, Kai, to highlight how my analysis of his written text in turn informed the "talk" I had with him later. This reflects the pattern which was used to analyse all the other texts as a basis of the subsequent talks I had with all participants including those whose data is not presented in this thesis.

4.5.3 Analysing textual data

As the analysis of data may begin the moment the data are there (Blommaert, 2005), the moment I got the essays I started analysing them. My analysis focused on how

intertextuality has been enacted as well as how the participants had enacted their subjectivities in their writing.

4.5.3.1 Intertextual tracing

No text is ever an *ex nihilo* creation (cf., Bakhtin, 1986; Hartman, 1992; Kamberelis and Scott, 1992; Bazerman, 2004, 2013; Prior, 2004). As such, a text is a palpable and visible representation of interaction as "every text is made possible by other texts prior to it" (Bartholomae, 1986). Texts are interdependent on other texts. In this vein, intertextuality refers to "the explicit and implicit relations that a text or an utterance has to prior, contemporary, and potential future texts" (Bazerman, 2004, p. 86). To distinguish the level of explicitness of this relation, Fairclough (1992) separates "manifest intertextuality" from "interdiscursivity" with the former being an explicit relation and the latter an implicit one.

As argued in Chapter 3, intertextuality is the basis of co-articulation of voices. An intertextual analysis therefore unveils the relationship which an utterance has with other utterances and also indicates how a writer appropriates the voice of authority and in so doing creates a "discoursal self" (see chapter 3).

In examining intertextuality, I used "intertextual tracing" (Prior, 2004) to examine how novice texts related to "initiating" or "source texts". I narrowed my focus to manifest intertextuality alone. This was the case as I wanted to explore how my participants explicitly brought along, interacted with, and explicitly responded to the voice of authority (cf., Groom, 2000; Bazerman, 2004). This I did on the understanding that references and citations are explicit manifestations of the other (Fløttum, 2005). To achieve this I focused on direct and indirect quotations (Bazerman, 2004) as these are the most visible and easily identifiable forms of manifest intertextuality (Ivanič, 1998). Besides this, manifest intertextuality makes it possible to examine how "a text draws on prior texts to be used as a source of meaning" as one text takes a statement from another as authoritative and repeats that information or statement for the purpose of the new text (Bazerman, 2004, p. 86). I was therefore interested in examining how novice academic writers in Malawi explicitly relate with the authoritative other in their texts. How then did I actualise this manifest intertextual tracing?

When I got Kai's essay, I marked all instances of citation and or attribution (see Appendix 2). I did this so that later I should find out from him the rationale for doing this (see Appendix 3). Having isolated the traces of manifest intertextuality through

both direct as well as indirect quotation in this way, next I isolated and marked all forms of engagement in the text.

4.5.3.2 Engagement

After isolating his use of "voice" via manifest intertextuality, I then moved on to mark all instances of engagement in the essay. To do this, I isolated all instances which indicated that it was Kai himself exerting a sense of self into the discourse. From Groom's (2000) perspective, I can say that here I was looking for all forms of "averral" in the text; linguistic forms which indicate his asserting "self as author". In other words, I isolated instances which explicitly manifested his individuality or his "emotional volitional tone".

I observed that his engagement largely fell into two broad categories namely "hedging" and "metadiscourse" (see Appendix 3). Just like with the highlighting of voice above, this I did so that I later ask Kai to explain how as well as why he took these positions in his essay. Considering that identity work is largely accomplished unconsciously, the use of written texts in this way I felt would stimulate a rationale for the positions he had taken and as I had identified them. This I did realising that "interviewee responses become richer when the person interviewed has some external stimulus, some object that can trigger and support memory as well as serve as a source of new reflection" (Prior, 204, p. 188 – 189). This is exactly what I felt the text and my analysis of it in this manner would bring to the talk around text later.

4.5.4 Talk around text

Talk around text is akin to discourse based interviews (see Hyland, 2012a). The centrality of such talk is that it helps to bring the voice of the writer to writing research (Lillis, 2009). This is a departure from textual approaches which rely exclusively on the text to explicate what is happening when people sit down to write. Such a departure is important as both written texts and students' accounts of them need to be at the centre of academic writing research (Bizzell, 1986; Lillis, 2001) if we are to bridge the text/context gap.

Such talk then:

> Requires participants to respond to features in selected texts as either writers or members of the community for whom the texts were composed. The method seeks to make explicit the tacit knowledge that writers and readers bring to the act of composing, allowing them to interpret meanings, reconstruct writer motivations, and evaluate rhetorical effectiveness. These discourse based

sessions then move to a semi-structured, open-ended format to explore participants' social and ideological perspectives to their discipline and how they see themselves as writers (Hyland, 2012a, p. 62).

From the foregoing, the talks I had with participants gave them the opportunity to reflect on and rationalise the tacit identity work they engaged in as they wrote their essays. Such a reflection, guided by the questions which I developed from the analysis of their writing (see Appendix 3), was approached from a semi-structured/depth interviewing perspective. This means that, while these questions formed the basis of the talk, I more often than not left the "script" aside to follow up on emerging aspects which I felt were interesting. In line with Hyland's (2012a) observation above, the talk around text I had oscillated between "scripted questions and open ended conversations" (Prior, 2004, p. 188).

Since I have used Kai's case as an example here, it is important to bear in mind that this is the approach which was used with all texts and the subsequent talks I had with all participants following such analysis. However, as I only managed to examine one essay per participant on top of the literacy history interview prior to leaving the research site, I had to continue interacting with the participants in a different space. This was the case as I felt that there was need for sustained dialogue so that we get a decent understanding of their on-going development as academic writers; their selectively appropriating and relating with the voices of others towards their becoming "someone in education".

4.5.5 Dialogue in cyber space

Researchers should expect the unexpected especially in the data generation phase (cf., Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Bampton and Cowton, 2002). This is something I later found out in this research. While I had anticipated to have done a total of 27 interviews (9 literacy history interviews and 18 talk-around text and 18 texts analysed) by the time I left the research site after one semester, I had only managed to have done 18 (9 literacy history interviews and 9 talks on 9 texts analysed). This was the case as I was interested in analysing naturally occurring textual data in the form of written essays for the reasons I highlight in 4.5.1 above. This approach put me at the mercy of the content lecturers. As the semester approached the end, I perceived that the content lecturers had opted to give other forms of assignments and not essays. I later established from a chat I had with the faculty dean that this might have been the case as the faculty does not have assessment guidelines which detail how as well as how often students should be assessed. This leaves the prerogative of when and how to assess students squarely in the

hands of individual lecturers. This necessitated the need to continue interacting with the participants across time and geographical spaces. This was something which could be achieved using the e-interview (see Mann and Stewart, 2000).

Using technology in qualitative research mean that it is possible for one to "go digital and remain qualitative" (Brown, 2002). In this vein, in order to maintain contact with participants who were in Malawi, I turned to computer mediated communication (Walther, 1992, 1996; Mann and Stewart, 2000) particularly to "e-interviews" (Bampton and Cowton, 2002). With time and space separating us as I had to return to the UK, I turned to "on-line interaction" with my participants (Flick, 2009) so that I get their views over at least one more task. Realising that there is a plethora of on-line modes of interaction which are either synchronous or asynchronous, I realised that synchronous approaches like the use of Skype would be as spontaneous as a face to face interview. This would have brought about and maintained spontaneous synchronous interaction just like in a face-to-face interview. However, technological challenges on the part of my participants made this an untenable alternative. This left asynchronous modes as the only remaining option. This is what led us to the asynchronous e-interview.

Interviewing using the internet is on the rise (Opdenakker, 2006). The internet and the email in particular seems to offer new ways of conducting qualitative research, in general, and qualitative interviews, in particular (Gibbs, Friese, and Mangabeira, 2002). This is increasingly opening up opportunities for conducting research with participants who are dispersed across different time and geographical zones in a manner which hitherto would not have been possible (Mann and Stewart, 2000; Bampton and Cowton, 2002). With this in mind, I asked participants, all of whom have access to the internet and have email addresses, to revert to this mode of interaction. Even though the email is an asynchronous means of interaction both in terms of time and distance, I still felt that it could provide a meaningful way of keeping the dialogue with participants going.

Some have however been critical of the e-interview observing that, unlike in face to face interviewing, the distance between the two interlocutors means that there are no visual cues to help the researcher interpret the physical environment in which utterances are made (Mann and Stewart, 2000; Opdenakker, 2006). This criticism stems from the point that the researcher only gets to meet the participant "in *persona* not in person" (Mann and Stewart, 2000, p. 58). While this is an honest observation, it is one which holds especially in multimodal studies in which the physical space figures prominently

in the analysis of data. This is not the case in this study. Thus, the lack of visual cues is not critical to data quality in this study (cf., Struges and Hanharan, 2004).

In this vein, after analysing the second essay (see appendix 4), I developed questions around the text which I sent to Kai (see appendix 5). This notwithstanding, one important drawback of on-line interaction is that the lack of an "embodied social presence" of the researcher in the conversations makes it easier for participants to ignore the researcher's requests (James and Busher, 2006, p. 416). This is something which I have experienced in this study. For instance, it took about three to four months before I got responses from participants over the second talk around text which I had sent via email. For some, like Saul and Coman, I am yet to hear from them to date despite having sent them reflective questions around their essays over eight months ago. For others, like Momo, this mode of interaction proved to be too difficult to sustain as she did not have access to a scanner and a computer through which she could send me her second essay as at the time she only had hard copies of her essays. Nevertheless, despite such shortfalls, the data which were generated in the on-line interaction is as good as if not in places better than that which was generated in face to face interaction. This might have come about as the e-interview afforded participants an opportunity, which face to face interaction does not, to frame their responses at a time and in a physical environment convenient to them (cf., Mann and Stewart, 2000; Bampton and Cowton, 2002; Opdenakker, 2006; Flick, 2009).

From the foregoing, it is perhaps evident that the second round of data generation via on-line interaction has been fruitful as the asynchronous mode used allowed participants opportunities to carefully analyse and reflect on in-coming messages and compose careful responses to them (Mann and Stewart, 2000). This comes about as "discourse that has been thought out and organised prior to its expression (asynchronous) is more intersubjective and less egocentric than its unplanned (spontaneous) discourse" (Walther, 1996, p. 26). It is to this intersubjective analysis of the interview data which I now turn to elucidate how interview data was handled.

4.6 Interview Data

4.6.1 Theoretical perspectives

The constructionist and intersubjective nature of qualitative research (see 4.2.2 above) comes to the fore much more pronouncedly during the interview. That is, it is during the interview that data is *generated*. This comes about as both researcher and participant,

who are inherently a plurality or a "we", deliberately respond to each other in ways which co-construct the interview context as well as the data. Thus:

> Throughout the interview process, the interviewer and interviewee simultaneously send and receive messages ... The exchange is in part a conscious *social performance* (as) each participant is aware of the other's presence and intentionally says something and acts in a certain way for the other's benefit (Berg, 1995, p. 50, my emphasis).

As such, the interview is a co-constructed social performance (see Baynham, 2011). In saying that interlocutors "say something or act in a certain way for each other's benefit", Berg (1995) could be alluding to something significant. In being aware of the other and speaking and/or acting for the other's benefit, he subtly but importantly alludes to the point that both interlocutors endeavour to come across as a certain type of person. This implies that interlocutors in an interview are engaged in identity work since coming across in a certain way implies performatively positioning who one can be in that moment. This echoes Lillis' (2008) view of data as "performative/relational" and of qualitative research as being "intersubjective".

From the foregoing, it can then be surmised that in the talk around text with my participants we were both involved in identity work of some sort, a work which was made possible by the coming together of the inherent plurality which we both brought to this space. For instance, while my participants must have strived to portray themselves in "a morally favourable light", I, on the other hand, must have been striving to come across as a "neutral, facilitative interviewer" (Rapley, 2001); as warm and empathetic. Such neutrality I indeed strove for when I constantly referred to the interview sessions as either "talks" or "chats" when talking to the participants with a view to creating a relaxed and informal air about it. In this regard, what we call interview data is:

> Highly dependent on and emerge from the specific local interactional context and this local interactional context is produced in and through the talk and concomitant identity work of the interviewer and interviewee (Rapley, 2001, p. 316 – 317).

Such understanding has had important ramifications on how the data has been analysed more especially realising that the interview site is a space on which identity work happens; a space in which the interpretive processes of both researcher and participant as well as their relationship influence the outcome (see Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In this light, the interview is not merely a "technique" for generating data but is also a "local accomplishment" (Silverman, 2001) in which both parties perform and evaluate

each other's performance (Berg, 1995). This in turn calls for an analytical approach to the data which accounts for both the "what" as well as the "how" of the data. This is a plausible call as only focusing on what participants are saying disregarding how they are performing this identity work in saying what they are saying, disregards an important aspect of qualitative data.

4.6.2 Analysing interview data

Proceeding on the understanding that in every conversation, including a research interview, a positioning takes place (cf., Czarniawska, 2004), then it follows that the positions which interlocutors take in a research interview are never fixed but are rather transitory. Thus, from a dialogic perspective, there are a multiplicity of "I positions" across which interviewers switch from time to time. This is one of the aspects which I felt needs to be captured in this data to reflect how, in making their voices heard, participants also emplot themselves. This I felt was an important tenet which demonstrates that in narrating a lived experience (practical voice), participants are also positioning themselves in a certain way (ontological voice); they are simultaneously doing identity work. Following the understanding that research is an intersubjective endeavour, an intersubjectivity which gets more pronounced during the interview process, then I felt that it is important that this analysis demonstrates how individuals are in a constant dialogic relationship with self, other, as well as social context (see 4.2.2 above). To accomplish this, I turned to Bamberg's (1997) model of interactive positioning.

Before applying Bamberg's model to the data, the interview data was largely divided into two parts. One captured the literacy history and the other encounters with textual production. After iteratively going through the literacy history data, I developed the following thematic areas around which I made sense of the literacy history data:

Literacy history

General background
- Demographic data (age, family background, etc.)
- Siblings and schools attended
- General circumstances of life growing up

Early literacy practices
- Reading and writing (in primary and secondary school)
- Understanding of "good" writing and or writers (how is this arrived at?)

Evaluating self as a writer
- By self
- By others (who are the others?)
- Motivations for self evaluation as a writer

Making the transition to higher education
- Understanding of "academic" writing
- Comparisons between university and secondary school writing
- Impressions of academic discourse conventions

Table 4. 2: Literacy history thematic areas

On the other hand, the data on writing practices around the two essays discussed were

grouped under the following thematic areas.

Talk around text 1 and 2

Prefatory understanding
- Interpreting task rubric
- Dialogue with lecturer responsible
- Dialogue with peers
- Reading/writing connections

Voicing strategies
- Relating with other voices
- Motivations
- Evaluating the "discoursal" self

Engagement strategies
- Modality
- Metadiscourse
- Intersubjectivity
- Motivations/rationale

Challenges with academic writing – an overarching motif

Table 4. 3: Talk around text themes

Within the identified thematic areas presented above, I searched the participant

narratives for "turning points". These are points in the narrative which indicate either

the participant encountering some dialectic of some sort or exhibiting a change in

thought, approach or action. This I did on the understanding that selfhood is crafted in moments of struggle and tension (cf., Bakhtin, 1981, 1984, 1986). As such, I identified these moments realising that it is in and around these moments that participant selfhood was enacted. In this regard, using Felipe's narrative as an example, I identified his inability to write in second grade and being sent back to a lower grade as the first turning point which signifies his first encounter with "secondary discourses"; the written discourses of school as opposed to the oral (primary) discourses of the home. Then, I isolated his being forced to read newspapers and other fiction by his dad as another key turning point in his life, one which raised his awareness to modelling as a technique on which he can develop his writing competencies. The next tension I identified pertained to his comparing his writing abilities with those of his peers. This led to his evaluation of himself as a "poor" writer. Despite his feeling that he is a "poor" writer, Felipe also demonstrated his struggle with secondary school writing especially its "guided" nature which he felt was responsible for his failings in secondary school writing. The final tension I isolated in Felipe's literacy history was his recounting the differences between secondary school and university writing.

In the second chat I had with Felipe, I isolated his struggles to understand the writing task, his feeling inadequate in the face of an authoritative Discourse, as well as his view of himself which oscillated between perceiving himself as a student and/or an administrator and how all these culminated into the challenges he faced over this task. In the final chat, I noticed that Felipe implicitly struggled with understanding the lecturer's steer of the task, avoided marshalling other voices leading to his entextualising texts without proper citation practices, and a departure from his earlier understanding of academic writing as something that involves presenting both "voice" and "engagement". These are the moments of tension around which I analysed Felipe's narrative which I later "restoried" as presented in Chapter 7. This is a process which was replicated with all participant narratives including those which have not been included in this thesis.

Each "turning point" was then analysed using Bamberg's (1997) model of interactional positioning. Bamberg (2007) contends that interlocutors position themselves at three different, but somehow interrelated, levels. Building on Davies and Harré's (1990) departure from "roles" to "positions", Bamberg claims that in conversation, people position themselves in relation to one another and in so doing produce one another, and themselves, situationally as "social beings" (Bamberg, 1997, p. 336). Such a position,

he further argues, operates at three different levels namely positioning of self vis-à-vis others in the reported events, positioning of self in relation to the audience, and position of self to themselves.

At the first analytic level, I examined how each participant positions him/herself vis-à-vis other characters in the "told world". This not only gives us an opportunity to understand the lived experiences through the eyes of the participant/narrators but also to understand how, in positioning "others" in a particular way, they also in turn position themselves. Thus, "other" positioning is a form of self positioning (Harré and Langenhove, 1991, 1999). This means that each statement in which the "other" was mentioned was examined in this light as detailed in the analysis chapters. At the second level, I examined how the local/interview context impacted the telling moment. Thus, at this level I was interested in examining how the audience, the researcher/interviewer, prompted the participant/narrator to say something the way they did. This is why the data in the analysis chapters has been presented to capture this "co-narration". The third perspective (positioning of self to themselves) also focuses on how wider social contexts, particularly through master narratives, position narrators. This is largely made possible through indexicality; "the process through which linguistic elements are connected to social meanings in an ongoing process of semiosis" (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012, p. 171). At this level, I examined how participants spoke through "master narratives" to present an understanding on a matter. This enables us to appreciate how their relating with Discourses changes over time.

In this light Bamberg's interactional positioning model will help us to link local telling choices to larger identities (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012); to link the "here-and-now" to the "there-and-then". Following this analysis, the narratives were "restoried" in a chronological order which reflects the manner in which they were told. This restorying captures the participants' emergent, fluid, embedded, and embodied interactions which are embedded in time, place, and in relation to others (see Cunliffe, 2011). In other words, this approach affords us the much needed opportunity to capture both the "what" and "how" of interview data (see Chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8) thereby placing participants in time and space. In examining the interview data in this way to explain how participants perceive their own becoming as academic writers, Bamberg's model provides an analytical framework for examining how they are performatively creating multi-layered identities or multi-layered I positions. This will, among other things, elucidate that

indeed such positions are not always congruent to each other but are, more often than not, conflicting.

4.7 Ethical considerations

It is evident from the participant selection above (see 4.4.4) that none of the participants to this study was coerced to take part. Rather, all participants decided out of their own volition to take part. This they did after they had the nature of the study explained and potential benefits for doing so outlined to them. Their informed consent was ratified when they signed and returned to the researcher copies of the informed consent forms. Furthermore, all issues concerning negotiating access to the research site were done in a transparent manner (see 4.4.3 above).

In addition to this, the identities of the participants to this study have been kept confidential as their names have been anonymised. Even though complete anonymity might be difficult to attain in a narrative study like this one (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Elliot, 2005), efforts have been done to anonymise the participants by identifying them using pseudonyms. This means that participants have been protected from being identified.

Furthermore, coming from an interpretivist perspective where knowledge and/or reality is a social construction between interlocutors, one ethical tenet on which this study has been developed has been a relational ethic (see Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Realising that the closer the researcher gets to the participants the better the quality of data (Toma, 2000; Melterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2015), I tried as much as possible to relate with the participants at their level. This I largely did by adopting a completely informal approach to things. For instance, against cultural stipulations, I encouraged participants to address me by my first name. While some were comfortable to do so (e.g. Kai, Khumbo, Jeff), others were not (e.g. Momo). Against this background, it is clear from the data that such proximity to some participants, most notably Khumbo, Kai, and Felipe, produced richer data. This explains why their cases have been included in this thesis. This goes to buttress the point that the analytic quality of data does not only depend on interviewer skills and participant articulateness alone but also on the chemistry between the two (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2015). Such informality in the approach also meant that I had to meet the participants in an informal space. This is how we ended up conducting all the "talks" or "chats" with the participants in an abandoned computer laboratory.

In the final analysis, having considered validity as "craftsmanship, as communication, as action" (Kvale, 1995), the final ethical practice used has been the use of an "audit trail" (Creswell and Miller, 2000). In running my interpretation of the data by my supervisors, I used them as "outsiders" who in scrutinising my interpretation and presentation of the data simultaneously brought about the much needed rigour to the data analysis and interpretation. This has led to narrative accounts which have hopefully created enough verisimilitude to "transport" the reader into the research setting as well as into the lived experiences and encounters of the participants as outlined in the following four chapters. Such rigour has also hopefully made the presentation of this research process as transparent as possible to enable replicating this kind of study in a different context.

Chapter 5 : The subaltern speaks

5.1 Foreword

Chapter 5 through 8 is an invitation to the reader to "meet" the respondents on whom this study has been based and to hear their "voices". These chapters attempt to achieve this from a perspective where the researcher has taken an "advocacy role" (Preece, 2009); a role from which this study has been conducted *with* and *for* respondents with the intention of making their "voices" heard. In this regard, in adopting Michael Bamberg's model of interactive positioning (Bamberg, 1997; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2006), these analytical chapters bring to the fore the respondents' "practical voice" within which we can deduce their "epistemological" and "ontological voice" (Batchelor, 2006) (see 2.4 above). As such, I believe that the concept of interactional positioning presents arguably the best way of understanding this coming to voice. However, in attempting to do this, I am not under any illusion whatsoever that the voice the reader will encounter will purely be that of the respondents. Coming from a background which is "unashamedly interpretive" (see Chapter 4), the reader will encounter the analytical and interpretive voice of the researcher as well. This makes these analytical chapters to be double voiced. Despite such double voicing however, I have attempted as much as possible to foreground the voice of the respondents; the ones who matter in this research.

As a forerunner for the rest of the analytical chapters, this chapter highlights the trajectory which Kai's life has taken in his quest to become an academic writer; towards becoming an insider in a CoP. I will explore how, in positioning himself vis-à-vis other people in his life, the interviewer/researcher, as well as the master narratives from which he draws, Kai performatively constructs himself as "a certain type of person" (cf., Ivanič, 1994). Thus, in talking about his life history as well as engaging in "talk around text" Kai simultaneously engages in identity work.

5.2 Kai

5.2.1 Literacy history

5.2.1.1 A dentist and a police officer

Born in 1977, Kai entered university having been trained and practiced as a police officer/dentist. After leaving secondary school, Kai attended the Malawi College of

Health Sciences (MCHS) where he qualified as a dentist. Following this, he joined the Malawi Police Service where he works in the medical branch. At the time I met him, he was on study leave pursuing a degree in Internal Auditing.

5.2.1.2 Early literacy encounters

Having grown up in an environment where books were scarce, Kai recalls that the only reading he used to do in primary as well as secondary school was for utilitarian purposes. Thus, he observes that he "only read to pass the exams" further highlighting that "*we* were growing up in a set up where *we* don't have that culture of reading". In using plural pronoun "we" to explicate what he used to do, Kai alludes to his behaviour as something that was the norm among his peers as well; as a collective practice.

Regarding writing, Kai recalls that he has written a multiplicity of text types in his life. These range from poems, which he wrote in secondary school, to reports which he was taught to and still writes in his role as a police officer. While acknowledging that there is a difference between these text types, he further reflects on the differences between the writing practices of the MCHS and those of the Polytechnic observing that:

> I've also discovered that there is a big difference and here at the Polytechnic …
> the academic has a lot of ah I can say what a lot of procedures I'm supposed to
> follow … different from what I had at Malawi College of Health Sciences …
> whereby we just summarise what was there and present to make somebody or
> some people understand.

In claiming that academic writing has "procedures" *to be followed*, he positions himself in a subservient position to the academy as he presupposes that he has to follow what the institutional "procedures" stipulate. This becomes something of an interesting motif in his positioning vis-à-vis the academy and it is something to which I will return later. Furthermore, his bringing out the issue of "procedures" could also index something else. This could index the point that, as someone who has been educated at a "tertiary" level before (with the MCHS) and comes to university from the workplace (as a dentist/police officer), Kai enters the university anticipating to grapple with a bureaucratic system as he feels that there are "a lot of procedures to follow". This, in turn, indexes the point that he enters university aware, at least implicitly, of the power play which pervades the academy and is a realisation which sets him up on a collision course with the academy later on (see 5.3 below).

5.2.1.3   Autobiographical self – Just an average writer

In this regard, Kai enters university against a backdrop from which he considers himself as somebody who still "has a lot to learn" despite others having pointed out otherwise.

> **Geoff**: so what have others said about your writing abilities?
>
> **Kai**: ah one or two people maybe they just say you're good but sometimes you can evaluate yourself ah I'm not that good but I can rate myself to be a little bit average.
>
> **Geoff**: so who are these other people who have said you're good?
> **Kai**: classmates ah even I said I've worked when maybe I come up with a report … with a document to present they'd say it was well presented it was well written.

As this interaction exemplifies, Kai positions his classmates as well as his colleagues at work as people whose evaluative comments about his writing abilities he does not take seriously observing further that "maybe they just want to flatter me". In this regard, he rather maintains that he considers himself as an average writer considering that he still has a lot to learn. In this vein, it can be surmised that, in saying that the compliments which he got from his peers cannot be taken seriously, not only does he position them as questionable in constructing him in a certain way but also indicates that Kai would rather construct a view of his "autobiographical self" which is independent of what others felt about him. In positioning himself in this way vis-à-vis his peers, he makes a departure from core social constructivist as well as Ubuntu perspectives. Thus, in so doing, Kai, unlike social constructivist and Ubuntu perspectives, refuses to be positioned and or constructed by "others" choosing instead to bring to university an "autobiographical self" which he largely constructs himself.

5.2.1.4   Academic writing: 'Rules and regulations'

In reflecting on what he expects of academic writing, Kai returns to the "rules and regulations" motif mentioned earlier.

> **Geoff**: … what in your view is unique about academic writing? In other words, what sets it apart from other forms of writing?
>
> **Kai**: yeah academic writing I take it as something which is very unique because it has … rules and regulations … and there are also like some policies to be followed in these other writings we can write we can quote maybe not even giving consideration to say I should recognise the one I've quoted but in academic writing I felt I discovered to say when I am using somebody's writing like I have get something from other books I am supposed to recognise that.

In raising the issue of "polices" or "rules and regulations" Kai, as I indicated earlier, returns to the motif of academic writing as something which reflects the bureaucratic

power play which pervades the academy. In this regard, he augments the position which he takes in relation to the academy, in general, and academic writing, in particular, as someone who is largely complicit to the demands which regulate how he has to come across. Such indexing of the power play in academic writing suggests that Kai recognises that the institutional norms or policies, as he calls them, will largely determine what he can/not say, how he can/not say it, and eventually who he can/not become (see Lillis, 2001); that his engagement with the academy and what he will eventually become following this engagement will not be done entirely on his own terms (see Bazerman, 2013). Furthermore, this explanation of academic writing also indexes the point that, perhaps coming from a background where he has already had contact with academic Discourses (Gee, 1996), Kai, unlike those who are coming straight from secondary school, is aware of the "regulations" guiding citation practices. This is also an important realisation in his journey towards becoming an academic writer as I will illustrate below. In observing that the institutional social structure is brought to bear on his writing through "policies" and "regulations" however could be his use of work place discourse to explicate the academy. In other words, in saying that academic writing is guided by "policies" Kai could be using work place discourse, which he is familiar with, to explain himself in a new environment. This points to an important hybridisation of discourses which takes place during this liminal phase as I explain later in chapter 9.

5.2.2 Making the transition

5.2.2.1   "They expect too much from us"

Generally, Kai takes up a critical position in relation to the education system in Malawi, in general, and the university set up, in particular. It seems that Kai uses the interview space to position himself as a critic of the "system". For instance, in explaining the differences in the writing practices between the MCHS and the Polytechnic as pointed out earlier, Kai feels that this difference is down to the point that "there is no collaboration in tertiary education in Malawi". He is of the view that the:

> Basis is not the same here it's like I am starting from the ground again but there (at the MCHS) I was able to write and convince and pass exams while here I feel like I'm learning from step one again which I feel like also sometimes is a hill to climb.

Here, it could be said that Kai alludes to the transition as something that has "de-skilled" (Gourlay, 2009) him in stripping off the competencies he had in one context

and demanding that he "learns from step one again" to be a competent writer in another context. While such views and or experiences are not uncommon (cf., Lea, 1994; Lea and Street, 1998) in making this erroneous assessment which assumes that a one-size-fits-all approach is viable to prepare all students to meaningfully function across different disciplinary orientations in Malawi, Kai draws from "master narratives" which pervade the Malawian higher education setting; narratives which are built on deficit views of literacy (see Chapter 2). While this is the case, he, on the other hand, continues to use the interview discourse to performatively construct himself as critical of the institutions of higher learning in Malawi. In further explicating the nature of academic writing he re-enacts this critical stance as he is of the view that regarding writing, "lecturers expect too much from students". This point not only positions the lecturers as unaware of what is going on elsewhere in the education system of the country, as I will illustrate below, but also indexes the disconnect in terms of expectations which is there between the lecturers and the students they teach.

5.2.2.2   Crossing without a bridge

Following his understanding that lecturers expect a lot from students, I asked Kai to explain how "lecturers expect students to do something they do not know". To this, he responded by saying that:

> I feel like I think the lecturers take it for granted that when students come from secondary school … he knows how to handle academic writing and when he joins the university before maybe they have been told how to … present the way the lecturers are expecting you to do they are maybe asked to do something.

Such understanding indexes that the "gaps between tutor and students' understanding and expectations" surrounding academic writing tasks which has been noted elsewhere (cf., Lea, 2005) could also be a significant concern in Malawi. This is so as Kai is not the only respondent I interacted with who raised this issue. While I will return to this issue later, Kai further sheds more light on this by noting that:

> They (lecturers) take it for granted to say if somebody has gone through a secondary school education … is supposed to be in this level while it's not the same outside there and these lecturers are confined in the university but they don't have that time to go into the secondary schools and know the future students … what they've learnt how they're writing.

Interesting to note is the point that in claiming that the lecturers take their students' entry level writing competencies "for granted" due to their being "confined" to the university a move which makes them "unaware" of what these prospective students are learning "outside there", Kai positions himself as not just critical of the institution but

also positions the lecturers as unaware of the realities facing the students they handle in their classes. He positions the lecturers as people who have lost touch with the realities of an education system they are part of. It is not surprising that he therefore wraps up this point by stating that he finds this difference "puzzling" choosing to sum up the whole point by saying that:

> It's like a bridge which one has to jump (sic) but … somebody has to build that bridge but when it comes to like this writing this academic writing feels like the lecturers expect you to write according to what they expect you to do while you sometimes you don't know what they really want so it's like a river in between and there's no bridge for you to cross.

This bridge metaphor sums up the disconnect which is there between what novice writers bring along with them and how their lecturers treat this in their evaluation of the autobiographical selves which they bring. If this is anything to go by, then it could perhaps be true that in bringing the wider context to bear on the writing process and explicating writing from such a social purview, we are bound to understand something of the "context of culture" (Fairclough, 1992) which impacts writing development in any local context (see Lillis, 2001). This could be true of the Malawian context as well. Further worth pointing out is the point that such observations, which might lead to the indictment of an entire system, do indeed suggest that the issue with novices like Kai might not be intelligence or lack thereof but rather having to engage with a system whose modes of engagement remain largely unknown (see Ballard and Clanchy, 1988). This continues to confine novice writers like Kai to the margins of the community as academic literacy practices continue to be nothing but an "institutional practice of mystery" (Lillis, 2001, 2013) to them.

In a nutshell, it can be surmised that Kai enters the university having brought along identities as a dentist and a police officer. With previous encounters with "ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy" (Hyland, 2009), he positions himself as somebody already aware of the "contact zone" which the academy is as well as somebody already aware of the disciplinary politics he will have to write himself into. He therefore used the interview set up to performatively construct himself as a critic of the institution as he, in an attempt to explain the "gap" in expectation between lecturers and students, positions lecturers at the institution as having lost touch with reality. How then do all these impact his becoming an academic writer as well as his view of this becoming?

5.3 Talk around text 1 – "This does not represent who Kai is"

5.3.1 Context of situation: Lack of dialogue

Kai wrote his very first essay in university in the module Organisational Behaviour (CD Kai1). The title of the essay, as given by the lecturer, was "How job attitudes affect an organisational performance and how they influence behaviour". When asked what the lecturer was specifically looking for in this task, he observes that:

> … it gives a headache to say what is the lecturer expecting me to do … because you might interpret the topic in your own understanding different from what the lecturer is expecting you to do.

The problem for Kai was exacerbated when, in trying to seek clarification from the lecturer concerned, she "refused" to engage with him.

> **Geoff**: … did you have an opportunity to discuss with the lecturer concerned exactly what she was looking for?
>
> **Kai**: ah yeah at first I tried to contact her I called and when she picked she said oh I'll come back to you I'm like busy some kind of then this other time when I was texting him her on Whatsapp she said just go by what you understand …

Here he positions himself as someone who was willing to talk to the responsible lecturer to clarify the demands of the task. On the other hand, he positions the lecturer as unwilling to talk to him over this. He then goes on to take a critical stance to the academy more especially when he points to the institution's "role" in fostering such attitudes. In his view, such lecturers shun engaging students in a dialogue over assessment partly because they are employed on a part time basis and "have other responsibilities somewhere". According to Kai, this makes it difficult for such lecturers to engage their students properly since "when you are contacting them it's like maybe you're disturbing them or maybe you're giving them tough time or else sometimes some lecturers have this perception to say students they have to research and understand things on their own".

From the foregoing, Kai alludes to the difficult situation in which part time lecturers, like the one he dealt with over this assignment, put their students. The point that the institution plays a role in the academic writing problem of its students is not unique to the Malawian context (e.g., Lillis, 2001; Lea, 2005). Failure by the experienced other to clarify task requirements implies that these novices seek "expert advice" from elsewhere. It is not surprising therefore that most novices end up having to rely on their fellow novices for such advice as I will highlight throughout these analytical case chapters. Such a move seriously calls to question the presupposition that socialisation

into a community is a preserve of the "expert/novice" interaction alone (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

In the context of this assignment, Kai had problems with this lack of dialogue especially as "the question … had a lot of diversions as you can see … so I couldn't like join all the pieces the way she responded to me". In this regard, he positions the interviewer/researcher as someone who agrees with his position (as you can see) further implicitly arguing that anybody, but the lecturer concerned, can see that the task needed clarification. In assuming a collective stance with his interlocutor, Kai cleverly establishes credibility to his position as a legitimate one. Furthermore, due to this lack of dialogue, Kai observes that he had to change the draft of the essay more than five times in attempting to figure out what the lecturer might have been alluding to. This is perhaps the "headache" he alluded to earlier. This brings to mind the observation that due to such lack of dialogue over assessment requirements, students spend inordinate amounts of time trying to figure out assessment requirements. Such time could have been spent on other precious activities (Lillis, 2001).

It is interesting to note that lack of dialogue between lecturers and students over the academic tasks which they set seems to be a common issue with these participants (see Hope, Felipe, and Khumbo's stories). Such perceptions have also been reported in other contexts elsewhere (e.g., Williams, 2005).

5.3.2 Taking up voice

Voice is a "community product" (Hyland, 2008) which makes one's writing credible (Bartholomae, 1986). Taking up a voice or "co-articulating other voices" therefore is attained through intertextual practices. In this regard, Kai manages to establish an authoritative persona in this essay (see CD). Through attribution he manages to summon other credible voices as well as speak through them while observing the necessary "rules and regulations" regarding citation practices. He perhaps manages to achieve this in his very first assignment because of the prior contact he has had with academic Discourses (see 5.2.1.2). Thus, it could be said that his literacy history and the "autobiographical self" which he brings along has had an impact on his ability to summon and relate with other voices. This in turn helps him to construct a certain impression of himself in the text. Why then did he marshal other voices the way he did?

5.3.2.1 "I wasn't sure of myself"

Kai's rationale for bringing other voices into his text seems to point to his attempt at making an impression; to be seen to be a certain type of person (Ivanič, 1994). To begin with, he points out that he made recourse to other texts because of the distrust he had in himself. He recalls that "I wasn't sure myself to say I can come up with a good essay just from understanding the topic". This response strongly suggests that academic writing cannot indeed be separated from identity as it evokes feelings of "authoritativeness" (Bartholomae, 1986; Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Sheridan, Bloome and Street, 2002; Sommers, 2008). It would seem that Kai feels that he does not have the "authoritativeness" that would enable him to be favourably seen as an insider in this community hence his summoning other voices. In this regard, he perhaps considers the "portable resources" (Blommaert, 2005) which he brings to this task as insufficient to enable him to put himself in good stead with the "other". Such understanding could further imply that his "being" is intertwined with that of others; with those voices he summons, on one hand, and those who are to assess his work whom he tries to impress, on the other. This highlights that in an encounter with academic Discourses he positions himself to himself as "inadequate" or "lacking" hence the need to summon other voices.

Furthermore, embedded within his desire for authoritativeness is perhaps his desire to make an impression; to be seen to be a certain type of person. A further exploration of the rationale behind his intertextual practices leads to him saying that:

> … we were also told that … whatever you have used in text you should also acknowledge … that it also attracts marks … so the other reason can be I was looking at ah I should get good marks in this essay.

In grounding his response in the observation that "we were told that …" signals his acquiescing to the "demands" of the academy and could signal his being taken over by "hegemonic tales" (Erwick and Silbey, 1995) in explaining himself (see 5.4.3 below). The point that getting good marks implies wanting to make an impression and/or being seen in a favourable light as a certain type of person was augmented in the following exchange which immediately followed the above response.

> **Geoff**: so would I be correct in saying that you constantly referencing or citing other sources was a way of you wanting to make an impression?
>
> **Kai**: [yeah yeah
>
> **Geoff:**   [you're talking about wanting to get more marks and …
>
> **Kai**:   [yes I can accept that one I can accept that one

Here Kai draws from master narratives of academia which stipulate that in order to appear authoritative and get good marks one ought to cite other sources. This is augmented by his use of "we" again to situate this practice as one that applies to all in academia. While here he seems to be fine with this understanding and he makes mention of it as something which he exploited for his benefit, later on he finds fault with this understanding as he felt that it prevents his individual voice from coming through and subsequently makes him look and sound alien even to himself (see 5.3.4 below). In a nutshell, it is indeed evident that the academy favours the performance of certain identities and discourages others (Hyland, 2009) as Kai's desire to summon other voices and be seen as someone else illustrates here.

5.3.3 Engagement

5.3.3.1 Metadiscourse

Issues of writer identity are not only associated with feelings of "authoritativeness" but also feelings which writers have pertaining to having something to say (see Sheridan, Bloome, and Street, 2002; Thesen and Cooper, 2014). While "authoritativeness" is attained through other voices, having something to say is a preserve of engagement. Kai engages personal subjectivities in this essay through both "metadiscourse" (Hyland, 2005a) as well as "epistemic modality" (Gray and Biber, 2012).

Kai sporadically "evaluates" the discourse he constructs thereby aligning with some aspect of it. One way through which he manages to do this is through metadiscourse as highlighted in the box below.

- **Secondly**, affective is the emotional or feeling … (paragraph 3 line 1)
- **Mainly**, this component of an attitude is portrayed through … (paragraph 3 line 2)
- Therefore **it is imperative to elaborate** that cognitive deals with … (paragraph 4)
- **In continuation** job satisfaction describes **a positive feeling** about a job …(paragraph 6 line 1)
- A **positive relationship** appears to exist between organisational commitment and job productivity … (paragraph 8)

In the examples above, Kai projects his subjectivity into the discourse he is constructing thereby coming across as "having something to say". He therefore constructs "aspects which explicitly organise the discourse" or indeed his stance towards either the reader or its content (Hyland, 1998, 2005b). For instance, in the first bullet point, Kai clearly

indicates that what follows is a "second" point while in the last bullet point he evaluates the relationship as "positive". At this stage however he does not engage the reader through either self – mention or reader – mention (see Hyland 2005a, 2012). This is something he does later. Through the sporadic engagement strategies he uses as highlighted here as well as the intertextual practices discussed earlier, it can be said that Kai reasonably manages to performatively construct himself as an academic writer in this essay. This is also evidenced by the mark of distinction which he got for this assignment. The question that perhaps remains is; how does he rationalise such engagement practices?

5.3.3.2   Rationale: "This is what I am going to cover"

Kai explains his metadiscoursal constructions by stating that "… coming up with those statements … is like bridging say from this paragraph the following paragraph I may go like through like telling you like A B C D …". Thus he seems to be aware of the need for him to engage in a framework of communication as social engagement (Hyland, 2005b, p. 4). This is the case as "you" here does not refer to the researcher/interviewer. Rather, it refers to the "reader/assessor" and to some extent seems to also evoke and/or construct the "reader in the text" (Thompson, 2001). In so doing, it seems that Kai is aware that academic writing is social semiosis in which the propositional is as important as the relational. Perhaps due to the autobiographical self which he brings to university Kai is better equipped to handle the projection of "self as an academic writer" (engagement) as well as his discoursal self (voice) as evidenced by both his practices doing so and the rationale he provides for such practices. However, this has not been smooth sailing. He had to negotiate some challenges along the way.

5.3.4 Challenges

In concluding this talk, Kai reflects on the challenges he encountered in writing his very first essay in university. To this he begins by stating that:

> … the first one I'll *repeat* is for me not to express myself in that essay because that essay in some sort it cannot reflect who Kai is ah rather how much research I did to get the information bring the information together to come up with that essay.

The point which he is "repeating" here is his reflecting on how "rules", '"egulations" and "policies" affected how he positioned himself in this essay. While earlier he seemed happy that citing other sources made him confident in what he was saying in the essay, here he seems to be indicating that the regulations guiding academic writing have stifled

his individuality. He seems to be of the view that "the problem with these policies and academic writing" is that they exert a centripetal force on writers to conform to a certain way of writing. This affected his essay "a great deal" in the way he expressed himself as partly he had to leave out the "life experience you've had about the topic" as "some lecturers feel like when you quote books they feel (im)pressed to say ah this guy is studying". In saying this, he positions lecturers as people who have been socialised into having a "textual bias"; a distrust for anything not published (see Angelil-Carter, 2014). He therefore sums up this observation by saying that:

> … when I am faced with an essay I might not express myself freely in that essay because I have boundaries I have boundaries I have like rules to apply and guide me through it.

Such observations seem to augment the point made earlier that despite the knowledge which he brings to university about the politics he is to write himself into Kai positions himself as subservient or compliant to the demands of the academy; demands which affect how he is to come across. Such subtle but powerful coercive force which these "rules and regulations" have had on him validates the observation that in favouring writing in a certain way the academy does indeed favour the performance of certain identities and not others (Hyland, 2009). In this vein, like I alluded to earlier (see 5.2.1.2 above), his awareness of these rules and regulations sharply conflicts with his view of how he ought to express himself in his writing. Despite such a conflict however Kai does not resist the imposition of these rules and regulations on his writing and identity work opting rather to play along with these rules and regulations because of the rewards doing so promises. This is so considering that he did all this aware that lecturers consider the one who has summoned other voices to be the one who is "studying". It could therefore be argued that his being complicit to the regulations of writing represents his attempt to fit in; to align with the academy. This is the case as he seems to be aware that in observing these rules he is playing an "impressions game" with his lecturers and is a point which suggests that he is using other voices as part of this identity work game.

Apart from the rules and regulations subduing his individuality, Kai also indicates that lack of dialogue with the lecturers concerned (see 5.3.1 above), is also another challenge he encountered in writing this essay. He specifically posits that:

> Lecturers … don't come open to say they expect A B C D … giving us a hint how are going to go about the topic because most of the students we go astray yeah we go astray because we don't get the topic.

In reiterating this point using plural pronoun "we", Kai seems to be speaking for his colleagues thereby insinuating that this is a problem not only for him but for "most of the students". This point is reiterated by other novices who see lack of dialogue with an experienced other as a problem in their development trajectory (e.g. Khumbo and Felipe in Chapter 6 and 7 respectively). In a nutshell, it can be surmised that while Kai uses the interview to position himself largely as a critic of the institution, it is also evident that the autobiographical self which he brought along from elsewhere has had a huge impact on how he has interacted with academic discourses. Such impact has largely been positive as it has enabled him to do this identity work.

5.4 Talk around text 2: Kai the literary critic

The second assignment which I discussed with Kai was an essay which he wrote in the module EAP (CD Kai2). The task required him to "analyse the themes of jealousy and racism in the play *Othello"*. Despite my earlier decision not to consider texts written in EAP due to their "unauthentic" nature, I considered this task as I felt that it could throw up interesting permutations. Thus, I was interested to explore how an aspiring internal auditor would position himself as a literary critic within the wider context of academic writing as well as how he would rationalise such positioning.

5.4.1 Context: Two blind men leading each other

Through this essay Kai continues to demonstrate an understanding of what it means to write as an academic writer. Just like with the previous task, in this essay he also manages to summon the voices of literary criticism as well as assert himself much more forcefully than in the previous text (see 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 below). When asked how he has arrived at this stage in his academic writing, he explains that:

> It has not been easy … I had to learn and practice a lot of new things in a hard way, no lecturer or continuing students come close to help how they do things at the university. Sometimes we had to help each other as first years which is like two blind men leading each other. I believe being one of the participants of your research has made me to be confident.

This suggests that the "more experienced others" in the academy have done very little to socialise him into the discourses of higher learning as they (both lecturers and continuing students) did not help with "how they do things at the university". Such implicit acknowledgment that "there are certain ways of doing things at the university" indexes the point that the university is indeed a "separate culture" (Bizzell, 1987) and underscores the need for proper socialisation into its ways. However, the point that the

more experienced others in this context do not help with "how things are done" strongly implies that the novice-expert relationship is not the only way of explaining socialisation into a community (see Fuller and Unwin, 2004). Despite their "reluctance" to help him out, Kai, with the assistance of his fellow "blind men", somehow manages to successfully engage in this identity work. In this regard, by using the "blind men" analogy he positions himself as well as his fellow novices as unknowledgeable in the ways of the academy. In attributing his burgeoning confidence with academic writing to his participation in this project, Kai positions the researcher as someone who has had a hand in his development trajectory as an academic writer. This was also a recurring theme in the focus group interview I had with the participants shortly before I left the research site.

5.4.2 Voice: adding depth

Just like with the previous assignment, Kai continues to demonstrate an ability to summon the "voices" that matter in this community. The table below highlights some of the manifest intertextuality in the essay.

- **Oxford dictionary** defines jealousy as … (page 1 paragraph 1)
- The themes of jealousy, racism, and revenge have consistently interested scholars throughout Othello's critical history (**Leslie and Jeffrey, 1973**) (page 1 paragraph 1)
- **Robert H (1966)** has described Othello as … (page 1 paragraph 2)
- **Stephen Reid (1968)** argued that … (page 3 paragraph 2)
- **Most critics** of Othello chose to blame his insecurities on his advanced age (page 3 paragraph 2 line 1)

As this sample suggests, Kai summons the voice of literary criticism and manages to speak through it to establish a point which he seeks to advance. Such intertextual practices enable him to discoursally come across as an academic writer and also a literary critic; as someone else. In other words, in summoning the voices of literary criticism and engaging them in a scholarly style Kai performatively constructs himself as an academic writer as well as a literary critic. He rationalises this practice by observing that:

> Incorporating other writings or sources … is very important in academic writing to avoid plagiarism because readers have balanced point of views, arguments, or critics about the play. They correctly place me (writer) at the right position after understanding what I want to put across and my stance in the subject. These quotations or references help to critically and academically depth (sic) the understanding and resources used to drive home the writer's point of view.

It is interesting to note that his narrative seems to be evolving. Earlier he had cited his feeling inadequate as the core reason for summoning other voices in his writing. Such feeling, he had observed, led him to using other voices to make an impression to be seen as a certain type of person. However, here Kai seems to be positioning himself as an "insider" in the academy. To begin with, his rationale is no longer centred on self but is rather steeped in what "academic writing" demands namely "to give the reader a balanced view". While he seems to be implicitly aware that such a practice "positions" him "at the right position" vis-à-vis other voices in the community, his saying that this adds "criticality" and "depth" which helps to "drive the writer's point of view home" seems to indicate his awareness that his source of authoritativeness lies elsewhere; in this community product called voice.

While in the earlier interview he had positioned himself as an outsider, here Kai seems to be positioning himself as an insider now. In seamlessly drawing on the master narratives which explain citation practices in the academy Kai thus positions himself as a member of the academy who, in this assignment on *Othello* "totally controlled the podium because I had to bring in other people's ideas agree or criticise them the (sic) bind my stand/view on the same". This seems to mark a departure from his observations that the previous assignment did not reflect who Kai is as he now observes that:

> Gradually I have found/rediscovered myself taking part in the writing and express my views both either as an author or a reader and still balance my arguments (laughter) … was in the thick forest then.

As someone who credits his rising awareness as an academic writer to the input of his fellow "blind men" Kai seems to be more confident with his view of self as author as he observes that his "taking part in the writing" enables him to "express his views as an author" and still retain the ability to "balance his arguments". He thus seems to be getting round the idea that academic writing is argumentative. In saying that "he was in the thick forest then" implies that he is coming out in the clear now regarding his role in academic writing and is a point which announces his changing relationship with academic discourses. His claim that he is now able to express himself as an author alludes to his ability to engage with the discourse he constructs. How then does he do that?

5.4.3 Engagement

5.4.3.1 Metadiscourse

In the introductory paragraph of the essay, Kai ends the paragraph with the following statement:

> *In this essay, the author shall zero in on how the themes of racism and jealousy contributed to the downfall of Othello.*

This is an important metadiscoursal construction which not only explicitly announces the intentions of the author and as such constructs or positions him as an author, but also simultaneously sees him engaging in a framework of communication as social action (see Hyland, 2005b). In his understanding of this move, Kai observes that "as academic writing is concerned … a writer is supposed to introduce what that piece of work is comprised of (as) this helps direct or guide the reader to what he/she is expected to come across". The key point to note here is that while in the first talk he treated and talked about "rules and regulations" as out there and influencing his writing in the "here and now", in this talk he seems to be positioning himself in a way which suggests that these rules and regulations are part of normative behaviour in academic writing; part of him. He now seems to be positioning himself as being familiar with these rules and regulations as evidenced by his rationalising such practices as a requirement "in academic writing". His doing so can be seen as his gravitating towards "hegemonic tales" (Ewick and Silbey, 1995). In other words, in shifting from talking about academic writing rules as out there to a view which sees them as part of him is an indication that Kai is becoming a "social-individual" (Scott, 1999); one who is internalising a social view of perceiving a practice. This in turn indicates that after engaging in a dialogue with academic discourses, it is the discourses which are taking pre-eminence. Such a realisation points to the understanding that the social indeed precedes the individual; that individuality can only be understood through a social lens.

Kai's becoming a social subject in this manner suggests that taking a longitudinal perspective to narratives reveals something beyond a shifting I position. Rather, this approach also shows us how social subjects are appropriated by Discourses thereby allowing these master narratives to sustain rather than subvert inequality and injustice (Ewick and Silbey, 1995, p. 217). This is the case as subjects like Kai here, end up losing their individuality with a view to aligning with hegemonic sites of power, with "structural arrangements that are so securely embedded in the social fabric that they literally go without saying" (Elliot, 2005, p. 146). It seems therefore that in constantly

drawing on the master narratives of academia without questioning them the way he used to do in the first two talks, Kai seems to be speaking through these narratives as if they "go without saying". He seems to be selectively appropriating these "hegemonic tales". This notwithstanding, he engages in metadiscourse appropriately as well as provides a rationale for it by using the hegemonic tales available to him.

5.4.3.2 Self and reader mention

Apart from metadiscourse, in this task Kai also asserts himself as having something to say through "self-mention" (see Ivanič, 1998; Hyland, 2002, 2005a, 2012). Consider the following statements through which he achieves this.

- '… which **I** believe was intentional …' (page 2 paragraph 1)
- '… but most importantly, **I** base my critic on …' (page 2 paragraph 2 line 1)
- '… **I** strongly believe the implications

Alongside the metadisoursal constructions above where he used the expression "the author", I asked him to explain why he used such expressions which refer to himself in this way. To this he responded by saying that:

> In academic writing, indeed personalising work is not recommended BUT at the same time in every writing expressing the author's take or critic is paramount. That is why the 'I' is evidenced in this piece of work just to introduce the author's views in the tragic play, Othello.

By now, it should be evident that the "hegemonic tales" are a prevalent feature in Kai's narrative. It is also important to note that Kai recognises the need to assert himself as he alludes to himself as an author; as someone who has something to say. Through such explicit reference to himself using personal pronoun "I" or expressions like "this author", Kai claims authority as a writer. He asserts his "authorial presence" (Ivanič and Camps, 2001) bearing in mind that "self-mention, more especially the use of personal pronoun 'I' is a powerful way of projecting a strong writer identity" (Hyland, 2002b, p. 354). Thus, "reference to the first person position reflects the writer as asserting the right to have a 'voice' … to have something to say" (Ivanič and Camps, 2001, p. 25).

Apart from projecting such a strong authorial presence, Kai also manages to perform interaction with the reader whether this be the actual reader or the reader in the text (Thompson, 2001). This he largely manages to achieve through his use of collective pronouns.

- Having said that this leads **us** to explore his (Othello) take on his confidence … (page 2 paragraph 1)
- This proves the theme of appearance and reality – that nothing is always what it seems to be and **we** must be aware before we take any course of action (Conclusion).

From the above examples, Kai manages to evoke the "reader in the text" (Thompson, 2001) through his use of collective pronouns. He rationalises this move by saying that:

> As a writer, I try to put myself in the shoes of a reader and at the same time balance both sides to move together with the thoughts of the readers just to draw their attention.

A fundamental observation here could be his referring to himself as a "writer"; as an "author whose take is paramount". This indicates a shift in the way he is perceiving himself as he appropriates the ways of thinking and doing things in academia. Having been in the academy for some time now and been exposed to its Discourses, Kai seems to be positioning himself to himself differently. His positioning seems to have evolved from a view of self as restricted by "rules and regulations" to someone who relates with these regulations as normative behaviour around academic writing. He seems to be looking at himself through the prism of the discourse he is appropriating; the discourse he has made sense of and internalised. This points to two main things.

Firstly, this suggests that it is that discourse which has become internally persuasive to him which he uses to evaluate himself by; that his becoming is not achieved entirely on his own terms (cf., Bazerman, 2013). Rather, it is his interaction with the institutional social structure which determines who he can/not become (Lillis, 2001). Secondly, this understanding points to his "unfinalizability"; to his becoming as an ever going process predicated upon his ability to make authoritative discourse internally persuasive. The journey continues.

Chapter 6 : Khumbo

6.1 Literacy history

6.1.1 Straight from secondary school

Khumbo was born in 1996. Unlike others who have taken a "vocational route to the academy" (Hoadley-Maidment, 2000), Khumbo comes to university straight from secondary school. This implies that unlike Kai, who has had an experience with higher education before and comes via the work place, Khumbo comes to university having been exposed to secondary school and home discourses only. At the time she decided to participate in this study she was at the start of her first year studying for a bachelor's degree in Internal Auditing.

6.1.2 Early literacy practices

Khumbo recalls that books were not readily available in her home. She nonetheless had a voracious appetite for books which she could read at a local library as well as the school library. She recalls that "books weren't that available but then we'd find books maybe when we go to school". In taking up the plural pronoun "we" she assumes that this was a general situation with those she was acquainted with. She went on to observe that:

> … we'd go to the library maybe sometimes after classes just to check some story books and read but then sometimes it was just out of curiosity that I wanted to know more so I had maybe cousins they'd bring novels so I'd read that some literature books.

In this assertion, while she refers to visiting the library as something which most of her peers did (we'd), she simultaneously identifies her desire to read more as something which set her apart from her peers. In claiming that her wanting to know more (than her peers) led her to novels which her cousins brought home she positions herself as a more avid reader than her peers. Such positioning of herself as a more inquisitive scholar than her peers is something which she takes up again later when she recalls sourcing reading materials from another university college to help her understand the issue of referencing. Apart from the literature books which were brought into the home by her cousins, she also observed that:

> … I've read a lot of newspapers so they were sometimes available in the home but not that frequent but then when you go to the library … they've lots and lots of newspapers so you'd just go there and read a paper and leave the place.

In stating that she would visit the library just to read newspapers Khumbo reinforces her view of self as a voracious reader who, in her own estimation, is set apart from her peers. This is a position which she takes up as she views reading textbooks for school as something which everybody did. She on the other hand went the extra mile to read other texts like novels and newspapers as "out of curiosity I wanted to know more".

While growing through the education system, Khumbo also recalls writing various text types as well. She recalls that in primary school she wrote "compositions" while in secondary school she wrote essays.

> **Geoff**: … what types of writing have you been doing in your life so far?
>
> **Khumbo**: ah writing generally I'd say when I got to secondary school then we'd write essays maybe in primary school we'd write compositions
>
> …
>
> **Khumbo**: so more I've written a lot of essays in my secondary school so yeah the writing has been more of essays yeah just essays.

Composition writing is a term used to refer to primary and sometimes secondary level writing in Malawi. As such, here Khumbo draws from "master narratives" on writing across Malawi's education system. Furthermore, she recalls writing essays in almost all the subjects she studied in secondary school like History, Social Studies, English, Biology, and Physical Science. In recalling this, she implicitly alludes to the differences between the writing practices of primary and secondary school as in writing the 'compositions' "they'd give you a lot of information say write a composition more like based on this information". In so doing, she points to the "controlled composition" approach (Paltridge, 2001) to writing at primary school something which Felipe also does (See Chapter 7). On the other hand, in differentiating essay writing practices in secondary school and 'composition' writing in primary school, she inadvertently draws some similarities between essay writing in secondary school and university. She recalls that:

> … in secondary school it also depended on the subject let's say biology they'd give you say write an essay on this so it'd depend on you going to the books and read it'd also depend on how you understand that topic and then you write an essay.

Her explicit reference to the teachers as the ones who determine the parameters of the writing tasks (i.e. "they'd say …") creates an important "us" and "them" dichotomy (Bramley, 2001). This is an important dichotomy, one which alludes to the power differential between novice and expert (see Freire, 1970; Bourdieu, 1997a; Webb, Schirato, and Danaher, 2002; Blommaert, 2005). Her response also alludes to the

double voiced nature of writing (cf., Baynham, 1999) as on one hand it depends on "going to the books" and on "how you understand that topic" on the other. It could therefore be said that in explaining her secondary school writing in this way, Khumbo brings to university a subtle understanding of the dialogic nature of authoritativeness (cf., Tang, 2009). This seems so as in further explaining this point she went on to note that:

> So we'd read the notes they were just more like points you get that point when you understand that point you've to explain it the way you understand it but then I gave this point in my understanding it means this this this.

Her point here seems to allude to the view that in writing one is expected to respond to the subjectivities read ("in my understanding it means this") as opposed to just presenting other voices (cf., Baynham, 1999; Tang, 2009). Her understanding that she needs to respond to the voices of authority led to confusion especially when she was told otherwise by fellow novices (see 6.2.2 below). Her understanding of (academic) writing as a "balancing" act between voices and engagement is further augmented in her reflection of a good writer as someone who "gives a balanced view of issues"; someone who "weighs both sides".

Realising that academic writing is the bedrock of academia (cf. Hyland 2002a, 2013), I asked Khumbo to compare essay writing practices of secondary school with those she is being asked to do in university. But, prior to this, Khumbo sheds some light on the autobiographical self which she brings along to university. It is to this that I first turn.

6.2 Coming to university

6.2.1 Autobiographical self: *"I was a good writer"*

Against her view of writing presented above, I wanted to know how Khumbo perceives herself as a writer. Her response points to her changing view of "self as author" as she crossed the threshold.

> **Geoff**: … when you look at your writing abilities how would you describe yourself as a writer?
>
> …
>
> **Khumbo**: ah *it depends* maybe because I'm in college but then when I was in secondary yeah I was just above average … but now then coming to college it has been a difference from how I used to write in secondary (school) maybe even as we were in secondary we did not know that where we are going there is academic writing ….

Her response refers to "academic writing" as something which she has "found" in college. This presupposes that the writing she did before was not academic *per se*. If we are to understand "academic writing" as writing "concerned with learning a subject and demonstrating learning of it" (Ivanič and Satchwell, 2008, p. 102), it indeed follows that the "controlled" writing she did in secondary school (see 6.1.2 above) cannot be regarded as "academic". This is the case as controlled composition, an offshoot of behaviourism, seems more interested in "the manipulation and imitation of a model" (Paltridge, 2001, p. 55); a model which, according to Khumbo, the teacher provided. Furthermore, her view that evaluation of herself as a writer *depends* on context can be taken to mean that writing practices are inextricably linked to a context's discursive practices. A change in context therefore implies changing the "possibilities of selfhood" available and eventually who one can become in that context. This feeds a difference in self evaluation as well. It is not surprising therefore to note that while she feels that her secondary school writing "was good" as "the teachers would say", her encountering "academic writing" has changed her self evaluation as a writer. There are a number of points worth highlighting here.

To begin with, her feeling that she *was* a good writer in secondary school is a position which was discursively constructed in interaction with her teachers particularly through their responses to her work. This implies that she perceived herself as a good writer based on the "otherness" of her teachers. This evokes the understanding that "the self is not an essential expression of the individual but is rather a historical and interactional construction subject to work and revision" (De Fina, 2015, p. 352; see also Giddens, 1991; Holsten and Gubrium, 2000). Thus, here Khumbo's narrative demonstrates that identity emerges from a synthesis of internal self-definition and the external definitions of oneself by others, particularly powerful others (Hyland, 2012a, p. 13; see also Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 2006); as a construction that is interpreted by other people (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006) and hence evolves through time and space (De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg, 2006). This understanding further alludes to the fundamental Ubuntu principle (I am because you are) as well as to social constructivist perspectives which stipulate that nothing is found *per se* but only constructed (see Crotty, 2003). Furthermore, her shifting sense of self alludes to how identity forms and changes over time; as a process of identification rather than a static entity (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010, p. 233). Her point that a view of self depends on a context's discursive practices subtly insinuates that an identity is negotiated and performed through participation in

practices. This evokes the point that participation in or learning of new literacy practices breeds identity (see Lave and Wenger, 1991).

In this vein, in crossing the threshold to university, Khumbo considers herself as an "average writer" as she feels that "I'm yet to learn a lot of things concerning writing here". This further highlights her shifting sense of herself as a writer.

> **Geoff**: what about in college sorry in secondary school did you also feel that you are an average writer?

> **Khumbo**: in secondary school *I was a good writer* actually most of the essays I wrote let's say history essays and social studies essays were marked out of 20 I'd get 18 out of 20 but then in English maybe it was about grammar and the like maybe I'd get 15.

Khumbo's response here further highlights that a view of oneself as a writer emerges in interaction with a significant other. In awarding her good marks her teachers made her perceive herself as a good writer. What happened in a social space made her perceive herself as a certain type of person; as a good writer. However, realising that she has a "lot to learn" in a new context makes her to lose confidence in her sense of self as a writer. She instead perceives herself as an average writer once again evoking a "processual view of identity" (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). Such loss of identity and/or confidence in self as novices cross the threshold into higher education has also been reported elsewhere (e.g. Preece, 2006; Gourlay, 2009).

In this regard, unlike Kai who brings to university an autobiographical self which is largely constructed by himself as he defies the construction of self which others seem to confer on him, Khumbo's shifting autobiographical self (as an average writer) is constructed in interaction with "significant others". Her shifting sense of self also indexes the emergent nature of identity. In this regard, it is largely her encounter with academic Discourses, with "ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy" (Hyland, 2009, p. 1), which prompts this revision of her sense of self as a writer. What specifically leads to this?

6.2.2 "What is academic writing anyway?"

Khumbo's shifting view of herself as a writer can be traced to her "confusion" born out of a lack of clarity regarding academic writing.

> **Geoff**: so what has happened this sounds interesting „, you were a good writer in secondary school and then you come here you don't consider yourself as a good writer anymore can you shed more light on that?

Khumbo: yeah I said earlier on about the *confusion* to say what is academic writing what is it and when you say academic writing most people they focus on referencing then maybe I don't know if there is anything else to academic writing apart from referencing … you'd be *confused* say what is it that is academic writing apart from referencing what else is it that is in academic writing to say what is your point as a writer coz with the point that we were given that academic writing is more like somebody said what you write doesn't matter what matters is coz a lot of people have written a lot of things on that topic so whatever you wrote that is from of your own point of view is more like its nothing coz you're just a student and a lot of people have written about a lot of things so you can just go and get what they've written and write and reference that's simple so it was more of a *confusion* say what is academic writing actually when we came for orientation they'd say here whatever you write you have to write it academically you have to reference you have to do this so I feel that there's a lot more to academic writing than referencing it's just that we don't know ….

She sums up this "confusion" by stating that:

Coz like you're getting information from a book you're trying to answer a question by the lecturer and you're getting information from a book but then what is your point of view how do you understand that something … so as more like your identity as somebody who is writing that essay it's not in the clear coz it's more like we're just told to get something in the copy and then reference so it's really *confusing* so we really don't know what this thing is … this is causing *confusion*.

This is the confusion I mention earlier (see 6.1.2 above). As someone who comes to university with the understanding that writing is a balancing act between "voice" and "engagement", Khumbo struggles to accept to be a mere "ventriloquator" of other people's voices as "somebody said". She thus refuses to be a mere "animator" but seems keen to position herself as the "author" and "principal" (Goffman, 1981). Failing to do this, she feels, would make her identity "as somebody who is writing that essay not in the clear". This once again evokes the understanding that academic writing cannot be separated from identity concerns as implicit within this social semiosis are issues of self-representation (Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Lillis, 1997, 2001).

In alluding to the conflicting advice she got from different sources, Khumbo's point paints a cogent picture of the academy. Considering that novices like her face a "mismatch between social contexts which have defined identities and the new social contexts they are entering" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 12), such conflicting advice points to the academy as a space in which knowledge is constructed not by objective rationality but rather by subjective plausibility (Hyland, 2006). This is the case as her fellow novices who advised her to simply "reference" what more significant others have already written seem to have misunderstood the notion of "referencing" in academic writing.

Such understanding does not sit well with her view that she has to give her understanding (engagement) if her "identity as the one writing is to be in the clear". From a CoP perspective, this point indicates that novice/expert interaction is not the only route to inducting novices (see Fuller and Unwin, 2004) as novices also get information elsewhere. This poses a challenge as novice/novice interaction can be misleading as illustrated by the response above.

This confusion adversely effected the quality of her first essay (see 6.3.5 below) as she observes that:

> **Khumbo:** … the main problem everybody agreed in class the main problem was with referencing and the academic writing part
>
> **Geoff**: mhm mhm
>
> **Khumbo**: we really didn't understand what it was and everybody said that was the problem and if we're to fail this essay I think it is based on those problems say academic writing but then all in all it was just a simple question.

Thus, she fears that the conflicting information obtained about the nature of academic writing might have led to an unsatisfactory response to an otherwise "simple" question. This point suggests that novice struggles might not necessarily stem from their lack of ability or intelligence but rather from their lack of understanding of institutional norms guiding academic practices (cf., Ballard and Clanchy, 1988; Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 2001). Such lack of understanding makes "essayist literacy" to be an "institutional practice of mystery" (Lillis, 2001) for novices like Khumbo.

6.2.3 University writing: "Visit other books"

In reflecting on the writing she is being asked to do in university, Khumbo reiterates the importance of intertextuality. In doing this, she also positions her lecturers in an interesting way.

> **Geoff**: … what about now in college so far what sort of writing have you done?
>
> **Khumbo**: in college mostly its essays we've written two essays so far …
>
> **Geoff**: mhm mhm mhm
>
> …
>
> **Khumbo**: … but then this time around they wanted you to reference they wanted you to recognise the author coz you weren't just getting what the lecturer was saying but then that lecturer was also getting that from another book
>
> **Geoff**: mhm mhm

> **Khumbo**: you had to point those other books you had to visit those books and then when you wrote a point you had to refer to recognise the author in the reference by saying I got this point from this book.

She observes that university writing demands that the writer "recognises the author". This can be said to allude to voice as a community product (Matsuda, 2001; Matsuda and Tardy, 2007; Kubota, 2008) as well as to the centrality of citation practices in marshalling other voices (cf., Groom, 2000). Her getting information from other sources in addition to what the lecturer said could be explained as her aligning with other sites of discursive practices (Matsuda, 2001, p. 51) as the lecturer also did the same (i.e. get what they were saying from somewhere else). This positions the lecturers in an "ambiguous role" as they are identified as a "dominated faction within a dominant group" (Webb, Schirato, and Danaher, 2002, p. 135). In positioning them as the ones who set and assess tasks earlier, Khumbo had positioned lecturers as a "dominant group" in their relation to the students. However, here in saying that they also "take what they say elsewhere", she indexes the "dominated" position which they simultaneously occupy in relation to other sites of authority. This is the case as her positioning them this way suggests that their authority is delegated as they take what they say from "elsewhere".

Furthermore, Khumbo's view that in university writing one has to "visit" and "point" to other books could be said to evoke the centrality of "entextualisation" (Bauman and Briggs, 1990) in voice construction. Her point here brings to mind the importance of transposing texts/voices across time and space with the intention of bringing about authoritativeness to one's writing. "Pointing" to these other texts seems to suggest citation practices as key in manifest intertextuality. If this is anything to go by, then such views could be taken to indicate Khumbo's taking up of a "scholastic disposition" (Bourdieu, 2000) early on in her trajectory to becoming an academic writer.

In a nutshell, it can be said that Khumbo comes to university with a negotiated or constructed sense of herself as a writer. She therefore comes to university with the understanding that being a writer is a double-voiced act involving "voice" and "engagement". Realising this, she refuses to be a mere animator of other people's voices opting to show that she has something of her own to say. It would therefore be interesting to examine how such "identity brought along" (Baynham, 2015) impacts her writing as well as her view of her developing sense of self as academic writer.

6.3 Talk around text 1

6.3.1 Context of situation: A complicated question

Khumbo wrote her first essay in the module Organisational Behaviour (CD KH1). The title of the essay was "How Job attitudes affect an organisation's performance". This was her own restructuring of the question as in its original state it continued to say *with the mention of major components of major job attitudes and how they influence behaviour.* Against this background, Khumbo felt that "the question was of course complicated but I tried to restructure the question to put it in such a way that I would be able to write it". In saying this she positions herself as someone who was ready to exercise individual agency over this task (see Giddens, 1984; Duranti, 2004). From such an understanding, I asked her to reflect on the process she went through to write the essay from the time she "restructured" the question to the time she submitted it for assessment.

6.3.2 Portable resources: "I used secondary school knowledge"

In recounting how she wrote the essay, Khumbo recalls that they were asked to do this assignment before they were taught how to write essays in university. She recalls that "we've just been taught now it was about last week how to write essays taught academic writing". This is interesting considering that at the time I was talking to her about this essay it had been written almost a month before. This brings to mind Kai's observation earlier that lecturers at the institution seem to have a misunderstanding of the writing competencies of these novices (see 5.2.2.1). In the absence of academic writing competencies Khumbo recalls that:

> Writing this essay was more of a combination of what I let's say got from secondary school how I wrote essays and then coming here the information that I have so it's more of a combination I had to combine whatever thing I had found so as to make this essay better.

Her use of secondary school knowledge could be explained from the perspective of "portable resources" (Blommaert, 2005). These are resources which can function across space and time boundaries. In using what she got from secondary school in a different space, it could be said that Khumbo uses portable resources to make sense of this task. Her observation that this essay is a "combination" of these "portable resources" and "whatever I had found" forms an important step towards our understanding the hybrid nature of discourses novices produce in this liminal phase. I elucidate this in greater detail in Chapter 9. Furthermore, her claim that they were asked to do this task before

they had been exposed to the necessary norms and competencies of academic writing also alludes to something else. This suggests that the academy in Malawi seems to largely leave the responsibility of adjusting to the institution they are entering to the students themselves (Ivanič, 1998).

6.3.3 Just a novice: "I don't know how you write here"

In further explaining her recourse to portable resources, Khumbo positions herself as an upstart in academe.

> **Khumbo**: … so I said let me use that knowledge coz here I don't know much about how you write here so that's how I wrote this essay and then I had to go into books
>
> **Geoff**: mhm mhm
>
> …
>
> **Khumbo**: yeah that's how I did it then I got to books trying to search for information trying to understand the information of course I couldn't understand some information by then asking from friends what does this mean they'd tell you …
>
> **Geoff**: so when you talk about bringing in knowledge and understanding from secondary school is it just to do with things like paragraphing for example?
>
> **Khumbo**: yeah paragraphs how to begin a paragraph you have to say firstly secondly and the like …
>
> **Geoff**: mhm mhm
>
> **Khumbo**: that's basically the knowledge I got from secondary school that's the knowledge that I used here
>
> **Geoff**: mhm mhm
>
> **Khumbo**: but then in terms of writing the laying down the putting down things into paper it was what I had learnt here from friends and books and everything I had to gather all those and put them into the essay …
>
> …
>
> **Geoff**: so would I be correct in saying that this essay is largely a reflection of the knowledge which you brought from secondary school?
>
> **Khumbo**: yeah

There are a number of issues coming out of this chunk of data the least being her reiterating that she made recourse to "portable resources". Furthermore, in stating that she did this as "I don't know much about how *you* write here", she positions the researcher/interviewer as an insider in the academy. Through her use of "you" here it could be said that she engages in the "politics of the pronoun" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 176) to construct difference between herself as a novice and researcher/interviewer as insider who is knowledgeable about how writing ought to be done in the academy. In

claiming this, she postulates that there is a particular way of writing in higher education which she is not aware of. In saying that she also used what she "had learnt here from friends" whom she consulted, she implicitly positions them as a valuable resource in her becoming an academic writer. As earlier pointed out, this alludes to interconnectedness as a fundamental principle for all as one's being is intertwined with that of others.

Apart from positioning the researcher as an insider to this community which she seeks alignment with as well as positioning her fellow novices as valuable resources in her becoming an academic writer, Khumbo also reiterates the importance of intertextuality. In saying that in order to understand the task she also "got books" and "learnt from books" she echoes her earlier point that academic writing in university requires "visiting" and "pointing to" other books (see 6.2.3 above). She expands this later below (see 6.3.5).

6.3.4 Unfinalizability: Always becoming

In trying to understand the writing process of this essay, I asked Khumbo if she had shown this essay to anybody else apart from the lecturer responsible. This I had done in order to understand how she would have been evaluated and/or positioned by "the other". Her response to this question brings up some interesting issues. Firstly, she observes that she "could have done better" on certain aspects like "referencing" as "there are some shortfalls which I am going to improve the next time I write essays". Then, she went on to say something which can be said alludes to becoming as unfinalizable. In reflecting on her father's advice, whom she had shown the essay, she reflects that:

> … I've learnt that this is a learning process you don't have to do it all just at one time … you can't incorporate everything into one piece at the same time so it's a learning process and it has to continue I have to learn even if I go up to fourth year still more I have to learn more and more.

Two main points are worth highlighting here. To begin with, it seems that since she has been learning about academic writing from the time she wrote it, Khumbo comes back to her essay with "a new layer of understanding"; with an interpretive framework which has changed over time (Andrews, 2013). In hindsight, this enables her to see shortfalls in her own identity work as she now examines it with a framework of understanding that has evolved. Apart from this, her observation that "I have to learn even if I go up to fourth year still more I have to learn more and more", evokes something else. This observation suggests that becoming is a never ending process as "the individual and the

community are *always* in the process of coming into being" largely through their interaction with others (Cornell and van Marle, 2005, p. 206). This understanding further stipulates that "who one is is always an open question" (Davies and Harré, 1990, p. 46).

In a nutshell, it is evident from the foregoing that Khumbo approached this "complex question" using a blend of portable resources brought along from secondary school and whatever advice she got from her fellow novice writers. In the course of recounting this, she positions herself as a novice who does not know how writing is done in university. While this is the case, in revisiting her essay she demonstrates an evolving interpretive framework which alludes to her unfinalizability. Having understood her views of writing in relation to this essay, next we will examine how she positions herself in this essay as well as her explanation of such positioning.

6.3.5 Voice: "It gives credibility"

Throughout the essay (CD KH1), Khumbo marshals and or "entextualises" other voices (Bauman and Briggs, 1990). Going through the essay it is evident that she had indeed "visited" other texts which she "points to" as well. For someone who claims to have learnt this from friends and books, she demonstrates an effective handling of other voices given the circumstances. The table below exemplifies her marshalling other voices.

- According to **business dictionary (2015)** …
- There are three major components of attitude namely cognitive, affective and behavioural (**Robbins and Coulter, 2012**)
- According to one researcher, Leon Festinger, attitudes follow behaviour (**Robbins and Judge, 2013**)
- This is so because, according to Leon Festinger … (**Robbins and Judge, 2013**)
- … will increase one's desire to give up the dissonance (**Robbins and Judge, 2013**)
- … an individual's goals and wishes to remain a member of it (**Robbins, 2013**) is also another job attitude.

From the table above, it is evident that Khumbo ubiquitously refers to "Robbins" either in isolation or alongside "Coulter" or "Judge". She justifies this as "even when the lecturer teaches she uses that book Robbins". Her reliance on an author the lecturer also uses could be taken to represent her attempt at aligning with the lecturer. However, in the context of voice, she sums up this attempt at aligning with the discipline and the lecturer as something that enabled her to "express those things in my own words it

helped me to really understand to say yeah I'm really writing something I really really know". It seems that it was these other voices that gave her the confidence and/or platform to express herself.

She therefore manifestly referred to other texts because:

> … we were taught that academic writing is also about referencing so whatever you write coz they say whatever you write let's say I got this information from a book actually it wasn't my own idea so when I write that information I have to reference if the lecturer can decide to go back to check to say is it really true.

This implies that she marshals and refers to other voices as a way of identifying with a community norm she has been taught about academic writing. Furthermore, she justifies this by stating that such practice is meant to give the lecturer an opportunity to "verify" the claims made. While this is an often-cited reason for intertextuality (e.g. Angelil-Carter, 2014), from a relational perspective it also points to the unequal power relations that are there between novice and lecturer. Khumbo further poignantly alludes to the academy's centripetal power when she recalls having to "attribute" even her own experiences brought from secondary school to some authoritative other. She claims to have done this "to be on the safer side". Further inquiry into this reveals a much more dynamic process which brought her to such a point.

> **Geoff**: … you seem to be talking about you referencing to be on the safe side you referencing because it's like you are afraid of the consequences if you don't ahm why are you doing that because it's like you're positioning yourself in a certain way because you are afraid
>
> **Khumbo**: [yeah
>
> **Geoff**: [is is is would that be have I got a correct understanding?
>
> **Khumbo**: yeah coz when I wrote this essay firstly like I said I write it without referencing I referenced later
>
> **Geoff**: mhm
>
> **Khumbo**: and I had to do some just some referencing and then when I was crosschecking my essay I found that my friends had done a lot of referencing so … they were like wow you haven't done much of referencing and I was like yeah I have just explained some of the points the way I have understood them but they said no you have to reference then so I came back and I had to reference again to be on the safer side say ok my friends maybe they have got they have got an idea about how things are supposed to be done
>
> **Geoff**: mhm mhm
>
> **Khumbo**: so I had to reference but when I read through the essay again I suppose maybe I should've just referenced those points I got from the book and then those that were mine just leave them that way I think could have been better

This suggests that the attribution that appeared in this essay was to a greater extent "forced" on her. Khumbo seems to have been coerced into surrendering even her own views to a pseudo-authority by her friends' advice. This is so as initially she recalls just attributing those voices she had brought from elsewhere. This is the standard procedure which, it can be said, she had understood. However, it seems that being in a position of uncertainty as a novice she ended up deciding to go with the group "to be on the safe side". Such approach to an aspect of academic writing alludes to the interim nature of the discourses which these novices produce as I highlight later in Chapter 9.

Apart from giving her the platform to express herself, Khumbo further justifies that need to bring in other voices into her essay as this:

> … gives the essay credibility to say I think this essay depending on the information that is in it I think its credible if maybe they trust those books yeah these books are written by people who are well informed on this particular subject so when you also refer to those books I think it gives the essay credibility to say I think we can get something from this essay and use it.

Her response here can be taken to mean that "referencing" brings about authoritativeness to a text. In this case, by "visiting" and "pointing to" other voices which are "trusted", Khumbo can be said to align with other sites of discursive practice (Matsuda, 2001); she is writing her way into authority (Sommers, 2008). In doing this, it can further be said that she creates a certain impression of her discoursal self as someone who speaks through the "language of power and authority" (Bartholomae, 1986) which the lecturer marking the essay also respects. In this regard, just like Kai, she seems to be aware that academic writing is a game of impressions. She takes up the voices of authority and power to be seen as a certain type of person; as an insider. This exemplifies the impact of social structure on the decisions writers make during the composing moment (see Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 1997, 2001). Such understanding alludes to the point that essays mostly reflect "a range of acceptable writing behaviours dictated not by the individual but by the academic community" (Dudley Evans, 2002, p. 229) as it is the community which favours the performance of certain identities and not others (Hyland, 2009). In becoming and identity terms, this indicates that while we are indeed constructed by circumstances, these circumstances are hardly of our own choosing (Bazerman, 2013). The social indeed tends to be more prominent than the individual.

6.3.6 Projecting subjectivities

6.3.6.1   Metadiscourse

One of the key portable resources which Khumbo claims to have brought to university is metadiscourse. In explaining "paragraphing", she highlights "how to begin a paragraph you have to say firstly secondly …" (see 6.3.2 above) as key knowledge which she brings along. Such knowledge brought along indicates her awareness of the need to "explicitly organise text and engage readers" (Hyland, 1998, 2005a). This is the essence of metadiscourse and is something which, in offering us an understanding of writing as "social engagement" (Hyland, 2005a, p. 4), also affords us an opportunity to explore how writers construct the "reader in the text" (Thompson, 2001). Against this understanding it is not surprising that Khumbo manages to explicitly organise her text and engage the reader as the examples below indicate.

- **This essay will discuss** how job attitudes affect an organisation's performance with a mention of the major components of attitude, major job attitudes and how attitudes influence behaviour (Introductory paragraph last line)
- **To begin with**, are the major components of attitude (paragraph 2 line 1)
- **The next part of the essay explains** … (paragraph 3 line 1)
- But the desire to reduce dissonance is dependent upon three factors. **The first** one …. **The other** one …. **The final** one … (paragraph 3)
- Having explained how attitudes influence behaviour, **the next part of the essay discusses** the job related attitudes and how they affect an organisation's performance (paragraph 9)
- **The first of these** job attitudes is job satisfaction (paragraph 10 line 1)
- **The second attitude** to be discussed is job satisfaction (paragraph 17 line 1)
- **In conclusion**, it can be said that …

These instances indicate that Khumbo explicitly organises her essay. For instance, bullet point I, 3, and 5 indicate that she projects her subjectivity into the discourse to guide the reader around the text. This indexes her recourse to "interactive resources" (Thompson, 2001); to her implicit attempt and/or awareness to create and even respond to the "reader in the text". This is an important "I position" which she takes up (cf., Tang and John, 1999). How does she explain these metadiscoursal aspects of her writing?

For Khumbo, such aspects represent her attempt to "coordinate the paragraphs" and subsequently "coordinate the (whole) essay". Such understanding forms part of the portable resources she brought from secondary school as it is part of the knowledge she brought from there. The way she talks about metadiscourse differs from the way she had talked about attribution earlier. In presenting the latter, she seemed uncertain of what to

do opting at the end to go with the group to be safe. In presenting the former however, she seems confident of her practice. Such a difference can be said to highlight the point that level of familiarity with a practice prior to entering the academy indeed impacts the ability to function using knowledge garnered from such practices even in a new context. Thus, one's literacy history as well as autobiographical self indeed impacts both the impression they make in their writing as well as how they project themselves into their writing in university (cf., Ivanič, 1998; Starfield, 2002).

6.3.6.2   Authorial presence: Running away from the 'I'

Nowhere in the essay does Khumbo refer to herself using the personal pronoun "I". As someone who had indicated her desire to make her identity as the one writing clear (see 6.2.2 above), I felt that this was interesting especially realising that writers are said to "have an identity" when they establish a strong "authorial presence" in their writing (Ivanič, 1998, p. 30). Authorial presence, a way of claiming authority as a writer, is largely achieved through explicit reference to the self through the first personal pronoun (Ivanič and Camps, 2001, p. 25). Self-mention therefore, especially through personal pronoun "I", makes the projection of a strong writer identity possible (Hyland, 2002b). This is the case as it is such self-mention which reflects the writer as having something to say (Ivanič and Camps, 2001, p. 25). This is why I found the absence of such aspect fascinating. The closest hint at authorial presence is in the conclusion where she writes:

> *In conclusion, **it can be said that** positive job attitudes have a positive effect on an organisation's performance while negative ones have a negative effect on the performance of the organisation.*

In using the phrase "it can be said that", Khumbo engages in the "politics of the pronoun" to take up an interesting "I position". She implicitly takes an objective approach to hide her subjectivity. This is the case as "*it can be* seems to function as a means to establish objectivity, to generalise, and to conceal the existence of a specifically located subject with opinions" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 177). Objectifying a presentation with the intention of concealing a presence has been identified as an important "I position" especially among novice writers (Tang and John, 1999). I will return to this in Chapter 9. By concluding using such a generalised statement, Khumbo "obscures her speaking position" and "conceals her existence as a subject with opinions". It is against such a background that I asked her to rationalise her not personalising this statement by stating something like *I have come to the conclusion that ....* To this she responds by saying that:

> **Khumbo**: I was just trying to run away from the 'I' having said that you have to write in the third person and then the last point then the I would maybe spoil the whole thing then I just said maybe let me be on the middle ground and say *it can be said* … if somebody were to read this essay maybe they would also come to the same conclusion.
>
> **Geoff**: mhm mhm
>
> **Khumbo**: so I was trying to run away from the I actually I wanted to write the I thing but we were taught about the third person point of view so to bring in the I again so I was like to be on the safer side let me put it.

Khumbo's point here exemplifies the dialectic which she faced in writing this. On one hand, she wanted to use "I". On the other, she felt constrained by institutional advice not to. Such dialectic between what she feels ought to be done, on one hand, and what she is told should be done, on the other led her to occupy the "middle ground" to once again be on the "safer side". Just like with her attribution earlier (see 6.3.5 above), here it seems that the decision she makes and the position she eventually takes up following that decision results from the tension she feels between her understanding of what needs to be done and what others say needs to be done. Her uncertainty, which constructs her as a novice, is a state which is born out of a struggle between an understanding brought along and the essayist literacy practices (Lillis, 2001) as they have been propounded by other people. At the end of the day, she decided to generalise her presentation as Pennycook (1994) observes on the understanding that perhaps somebody else reading this might come to the same conclusion.

6.4 Talk around text 2

6.4.1 Writing in EAP: Training in academic writing

The second assignment which I discussed with Khumbo is an essay which she wrote in the module EAP (CD KH2). This module is offered by the Language and Communication department, a servicing department, as a bridging "course" between secondary school academic competencies and university academic competencies. Thus, students like Khumbo do this module to develop their interpersonal and cognitive academic language skills.

This task required students to discuss the themes of racism and jealousy in Shakespeare's play *Othello*. Since Khumbo enrols into university to train as an internal Auditor, I felt that this task would bring about interesting positioning issues both in the write-up as well as in her talk about the write-up hence its inclusion in this project.

6.4.2 Understanding the task: *Style matters*

To set the ball rolling, I asked Khumbo to reflect on how she understood the task and what the lecturer was looking for in setting the task. She responded by saying that:

> The main purpose of EAP is to train us students in academic writing which would help us to write whatever documents we are expected to write during the course of the programme in a way that is acceptable in the academic circles. So that is mostly done by writing a number of essays in which we practice a number of academic writing principles including referencing.... so in my understanding of the task in as much as the lecturer wanted us to analyse the themes of racism and jealousy he also wanted us to learn how to reference a play.

Her explanation alludes to and draws from the general aim of the EAP module at the Polytechnic. At the institution, EAP is indeed regarded as a training ground meant to prepare students for all academic exigencies which they will encounter "during the course of the programme". Her use of institutional narrative to explain her action in a local context can be said to represent Khumbo's selectively appropriating the discourse of the academy. This could also imply that as part of her becoming an insider in this community, she is beginning to speak through and/or reproduce the institution's "hegemonic tales". This is the case as her point here evokes deficit views of literacy prevalent in the context (see Chapter 2). Such views advance the point that literacy development can be divorced from the contexts of use; that academic writing can or should be taught in Literacy departments where students should be "helped to write whatever documents we are expected to write".

A further probe into how she arrived at this understanding reveals some interesting insight into how she is beginning to relate with academic Discourses in her new environment.

> **Geoff**: how did you establish what the lecturer was looking for?
>
> **Khumbo**: one thing I realised about writing in college is that …. One has to ensure that principles of academic writing are followed the main one being referencing one's sources. The lecturer had also said it in class that one's writing will be deemed unacademic if they do not reference their sources. So I realised that I am in an environment where my writing has to be academic and I knew that the lecturer needed just that.

Just like Kai earlier, Khumbo also presents her actions as given; as the norm in academia. This could signify her appropriating an institutional habitus into her frame of reference. Her view of the task as meant to train them to "reference a play" as part of the broader training in "academic" writing affects the marshalling of other voices as I

illustrate later below (see 6.4.4). In the meantime, it is important that we keep an eye on how Khumbo keeps using institutional narrative to explain herself.

6.4.3 Putting the essay together: *Consulting classmates*

In reflecting on the writing process of this essay, Khumbo raises familiar concerns which she also did in the previous assignment. She explains that after understanding the task, she "had no problems finding where the themes of jealousy and racism were portrayed". Her only problem was "how to write my essay academically in terms of referencing as this was a play and I had never referenced a play in my writing before".

Just like with the previous task, she turns to classmates to resolve this problem. She recalls consulting some classmates who gave her some ideas which she found "really useful". Furthermore, she also consulted "some friends from another programme who were given a similar task" as well as turned to Google to learn more especially about how to reference a play. She did all this "to make sure that I was getting the right information". In the final analysis, she recalls mostly relying on what her classmates told her as she found their advice "more consistent" than even Google. Khumbo recalls that:

> When I wrote the first essay I had no problems with the themes but in-text referencing seemed to be tough. I would go back to cross check with my mates and make necessary changes. When I wrote my final piece and printed, I asked a friend to cross check who said the in text referencing was not consistent and I had to do it again.

This response, just like Kai's earlier (see 5.4.1), points to the vital part of the socio-academic networks (Leki, 2007) which these novices seem to have developed as evidenced by the narratives of all focal participants. Such aspects of the narrative evoke the view that interdependence and coexistence are an important part of these novice's trajectory to becoming an academic writer. It is not surprising therefore that their understanding of the academy and aspects of it happens in their interaction with an "other". Khumbo's point above indicates that fellow novices are also a vital part of her induction into this new community (cf., Fuller and Unwin, 2004) as she kept checking with "my mates and make the necessary changes".

6.4.4 Voice

In this essay, Khumbo hardly engages in manifest intertextuality (see CD KH2). The only manifest intertextuality in the entire essay is a reference to '*dictionary.com*' as well as to the play on which the essay is based. This is a significant move considering that in

the first essay she managed to coarticulate other voices and attribute them accordingly. Her awareness that, apart from saying what one thinks, academic writing also requires one to "visit other books and point to those other books" (6.2.3), makes her not doing the latter even more significant. What could have prompted such a move then?

The reader might recall that Khumbo approaches this task as a "training in referencing a play" (see 6.4.2 above). Against this background, she feels that intertextuality is "not possible" in this essay (see 6.4.4.2 below) as the essay is only meant to provide practice in in-text citation of a play. It could be surmised therefore that her understanding that "real" academic work takes place away from EAP sees her approach this task with a narrow view. In other words, it seems that she perceives assignments done in EAP as inauthentic as they are meant to focus on a particular aspect alone. This explains why she does not bother to explicitly relate with other voices in the course of her discussion. This in turn means that one's understanding of a writing episode affects how they approach the writing task itself; that each one of our students uniquely combines and reconfigures the writing demands in their own way (cf., Ritchie, 1998).

As she feels that intertextuality is not possible in this essay, why then did she define "jealousy" and "racism" from the perspective of "*dictionary.com*"?

6.4.4.1   Dictionary.com: I'm not the first to write on this topic

Against the understanding above, I asked Khumbo why she defined "jealousy" and "racism" by using *dictionary.com*. She responded by saying that:

> I assume that the lecturer is a layman in the field and has to be told what each term means so as to be able to follow through the essay and understand what it is all about. One thing I learned in academic writing is that a lot of people have already written on the topic you are writing and it is best to consult their work so that you know which part you can tackle.

This response suggests that this bit of intertextuality which she engages in could partly be her attempt at constructing the "reader in the text"; "the reader as enacted by the writer" as well as promoting convergence between reader (lecturer) and reader-in-the-text (perceived layman) (Thompson, 2001, p. 60 - 61). In saying this she implicitly positions herself as knowledgeable of the differences between the reader in the text and the "perceived reader" (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). Furthermore, her response could also be taken to subtly insinuate the dialogic nature of (academic) writing as it has to be situated in what has gone before ("a lot of people have already written on the topic") if it is to be meaningful ("so that you know which part to tackle"). This evokes the point

that every utterance enters into a dialogic relationship with those that have gone before (Bakhtin, 1981). In similar vein, Khumbo's point here subtly but powerfully indexes the point that academic writing is dialogic as it has to be situated in what has gone before.

As I pursued this line of thinking further, from a somewhat general perspective, Khumbo reiterates and reinforces the point made above.

> **Geoff:** … more generally what is the role of other texts in crafting your own in academic writing?
>
> **Khumbo:** like I said above *I am not the first one to write on the topic which is the case with a lot of academic literature*, therefore I have to visit the materials others have written … to see the current stand on the issue and when I refer to such material it shows that I have researched well enough that I am conversant with the topic and its current stand in academic circles. So in short referring to other texts shows how much you know about the topic and how much research you have which is very crucial in academic writing.

From the foregoing, she seems to refer to intertextuality as a means of "adequating" to the discipline (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005); as a means of identifying with the discipline. Her response also seems to reiterate the dialogic nature of academic writing a dialogism made possible by intertextuality. In the same response, she also seems to refer to intertextuality as a means of "appearing to be a certain type of person" (Ivanič, 1994); as a means of doing identity work. This comes out in her observation that intertextuality makes her to come across as "well researched and conversant with the topic". As someone who understands all this, why then did she not "visit" and refer to other texts which have been written on the themes she was addressing as Kai did?

6.4.4.2   Intertextuality: Not possible in this essay?

In the first chat I had with her, Khumbo had indicated that academic writing requires or expects one to "visit other books and point to those other books". In view of this, I asked her to reflect on how this understanding has been actualised in this essay. To this she responds by saying:

> It was not possible in this essay as it was different from all other essays because it was a play. The only reference I made was to the *dictionary.com* for the terms racism and jealousy. But I think in this essay I had to refer to the book itself as the information that was asked for was in the book and the essay was based on this book.

Her claim that "this essay is different from all other essays" suggests that she is aware that academic texts are different as they respond to and enact different contexts. Writing these different text types therefore implies performing different identities as each text type will require one to position themselves differently (see Johns, 1997; Baynham,

2000; Chihota, 2007). However, in claiming that intertextuality is not possible in this essay as it is based on a play, it can be said that Khumbo foregrounds her ignorance of literary criticism as a discipline. In claiming this, she subtly asserts that in literary criticism it is acceptable to write a "voiceless" essay; an essay which is not based on "research" or reference to other texts to "show how much you have understood about the topic". She therefore launches into a voiceless composition on the understating that this essay is different from the rest as it is a mere exercise in referencing a play. The voicelessness of this essay is therefore a result of how Khumbo had understood the discipline in which it was situated as despite this lack of voice she seems aware of what is expected of her in academic writing more generally. Her not doing what she knows, namely refer to other texts to show understanding of other views on the subject, could be her enacting the "training" that EAP writing is to her.

From a different perspective, it could be said that her taking such a narrow view to this task might also signify a gap in understanding writing tasks between lecturers and students (e.g. Nelson, 1990; Lea, 2005; Williams, 2005). This is so as Kai's response to the same task is properly voiced meaning that he managed to display a more credible discoursal self. This cannot be said about Khumbo though. Such a contrast indicates that response to writing tasks varies even in the same classroom (cf., Ritchie, 1998).

6.4.5 Personal subjectivities

6.4.5.1 Metadiscourse

Since Khumbo brings metadiscoursal competencies from secondary school, it is not surprising that she displays these competencies in this task as well. Thus, the essay features statements which signify her engaging with writing as a social practice; statements which both construct the reader in the text and direct the perceived reader around the text. These are exemplified below.

- **The essay therefore discusses** how these themes have been portrayed in the play (paragraph 1 last line)
- **The first way** in which this theme has been portrayed … (paragraph 2 line 2)
- Racism **also** comes into the limelight in the play … (paragraph 3 line 1)
- The theme of jealousy **has also had** a wide portrayal in the play (paragraph 7 line 1)
- The theme of jealousy **is also portrayed** though on a lighter note when … (paragraph 11 line 1)
- **In conclusion** the themes of jealous and racism have been (last paragraph line 1)

The selected instances above indicate that Khumbo is mindful of the reader whom she attempts to lead around the essay. With this view in mind, I asked her to explain the necessity or significance of such statements in her essay. She feels that such statements "provide coherence in the essay, it shows how different parts of the essay are related". A further probe into who is meant to benefit from such statements prompted Khumbo to state that:

> the statements are directed at the reader who is the lecturer in this case and like I said I assume that the reader does not know anything about the subject so it's some sort of direction.

This response once again implicitly alludes to the difference between the "reader in the text" (Thompson, 2001) and the "perceived reader" (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010) with the former being represented by the "ignorant reader who does not know anything and needs guidance" and the latter by the reader/assessor him/herself. In saying this, she seems to claim that her taking up the identified metadiscoursal positions is something she did in an attempt to interact with the reader/assessor (a social interaction dimension) an attempt which in turn saw her create the reader-in-the-text. Such implicit understanding of academic writing as social semiosis which these novice writers in Malawi seem to bring to university needs to be harnessed so that they are used to make them understand the identity work they are doing as they write.

6.4.5.2   Authorial presence

Earlier Khumbo recalled "running away from the 'I'". Regarding the second essay, I asked her a hypothetical question about authorial presence specifically her potential use of personal pronoun "I".

> **Geoff:** referring to the statement in the introduction (*This essay therefore discusses how these themes have been portrayed in the play*) why did you not say something like *In this essay I will discuss how these themes have been portrayed in the play* since you are the one who was writing the essay and in essence doing the 'discussing'?
>
> **Khumbo:** in secondary school where we were first taught how to write essays we were discouraged from using personal pronouns but I cannot point at a specific reason as to why. Coming to college I think it's been difficult to move away from that but I must say as I have written and read more I find no problem with using personal pronouns because I have seen lots of people do that
>
> …
>
> **Geoff**: what can you tell me about personalising academic presentations more specifically using personal pronoun "I"
>
> **Khumbo**: I think it's great to personalise because it clearly shows your view or stand on a subject matter it shows the audience that those are your views

> regarding the subject based on the research you have carried out it doesn't seem like you have summarised other people's ideas from the research and that you are just presenting what's already there but that based on the research which can provide different views on the topic you choose which one can be right or recommended.

This chunk of data highlights that the perception of academic discourse as "objective and author evacuated" (Hyland, 1998) which she holds can be traced to her secondary school days where she was "first taught how to write essays". This indexes the prevalent thinking about academic writing at that education level. However, the point that she has all along complied with this even though she "cannot point to a specific reason as to why" suggests that "accommodation" has been her default response to this "rule" in academia. "Accommodation" seems to be a common response to academic Discourse by many neophytes (see Canagarajah, 2002; Wingate, 2012). However, exposure to different texts in university seems to be causing a change in her frame of reference as she now has "no problem with using personal pronouns because I have seen lots of people do that". This could indicate the beginning of her "unlearning" old practices which she had accommodated for some time in favour of new practices she is picking up along the way. It could however be said that she perhaps has had no problem adopting this view about personalising her writing as it resonates with her deep seated perception that it is important to say what you want to say "if your identity as the one writing is to be in the clear" (See 6.2.2 above).

Furthermore, her view that personalising academic presentations "is great" evokes an important interface between voice and engagement. Khumbo claims that personalising a presentation gives one an opportunity to "not just present what is already there". Rather, it enables one to "*use this research* which can provide different views on a topic" to "choose or recommend what can be right". This evokes Du Bois' (2007, p. 163) stance triangle at the heart of which is evaluating something, positioning self or other, and aligning with others. In similar vein, Khumbo's response seems to suggest that it is through evaluating ("choosing what is right") other voices ("the research") that one can show their views regarding the subject (self positioning). Thus there seems to be a correlation between level of intertextuality and intersubjective rigour as I contend in Chapter 9.

Despite her feeling that it is now okay to personalise as it is "great" to do so, Khumbo does not explicitly refer to herself using personal pronoun I in this essay. She explains this mismatch between knowledge and performance by saying that "currently I see no

problem with using words like 'I' in writing but am yet to adapt because it's like a transition". She further observes that "coming to college it has been difficult to move away from that (not personalising)". This positions her as occupying the space between school/home literacy practices and those of the university. In this space, she seems to be struggling with unlearning old practices and identifying with new ones. It will indeed take some time for her to unlearn some aspects of her habitus brought along before she gets comfortable to fully embrace new practices in a new context. Her becoming continues.

Chapter 7   : Felipe

7.1 Early literacy encounters

7.1.1 Starting school early

At the time I asked him to participate in this project, Felipe was in the first year of his studies in Business Administration. Born in 1996, Felipe recalls starting school at a very young age due to the career demands of his mother who resorted to placing him and his elder brother in a day care. He thus started school so that his mother should have the space to concentrate on her career. This shaped the course of his literacy journey early on. While waiting for his elder brother to finish school Felipe was introduced to materials meant for classes ahead of him. He recalls that:

> Because my brother was knocking off later than me … I could stay in school like hours waiting for him to finish his classes so by that the teacher started teaching me … the things for the other class at the end of the day I ended up knowing more stuff because of that instead of starting first grade I just went straight to second grade.

In recalling this phase of his literacy development, Felipe's point indexes the view that it is knowledge of and participation in the practices of a group, not age, which determines access to such a group (see Gee, 1996). It was thus his exposure to and ability to acquire knowledge of classes beyond his age (day care) that warranted him access to two classes further ahead. However, such catapulting had a sting in the tail. This is the case as he recalls that:

> **Felipe**: so I think I was a bit young in the whole class so the headmaster just said hmh hmh he can't handle it I only knew the stuff but I couldn't write them down
>
> **Geoff:** Okay
>
> **Felipe**: so he said you can't handle it so instead of sending me back to day care I went back to the … first grade ….

This incident represents arguably his first encounter with literacy practices as it required "using language in secondary discourses" (Gee, 1998, p. 56). For the first time in his life he had to call upon his "capacity to use written language to perform those functions required by the (school) culture in ways and at a level judged acceptable" (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988, p. 8). Being sent back to a lower level because he could not write what he had learnt alludes to the value of writing as a determiner of individual advancement (see Hyland, 2002a, 2006, 2013). Even though he knew the content of the class he was fast-tracked to, his inability to demonstrate this knowledge in writing made his participation "unacceptable". This incident therefore arguably represents Felipe's first

encounter with (academic) writing as a "determiner of acceptable knowledge and standards within a discourse community" (Hyland, 2002a). This incident sums up the view that in academia one does not know it if they cannot write it as writing represents arguably the most valued means of participation (cf., Hyland, 2009, 2013).

7.1.2 Literacy via the TV

Felipe recalls that books were not readily available in the home in which he grew up. He then went on to recall that "the only mode of … education was the TV that's how I learnt how to speak English how to write it was I think the TV only cartoons". In further shedding more light on how the TV was "the only mode of education", he explained that:

> … they weren't just cartoons and fun and they would teach you A B C how to write A how to write B how to write C so then they'd put a word try to write it since they are teaching you A B the whole alphabet kind of like copied that's how I kind of learned (that) oh this is how you write an orange a banana this and that an apple yeah.

This implies that Felipe learnt basic orthography rules at home through the TV. The point that he learnt basic orthography through imitating what he saw modelled on the television evokes the point that imitation is an important step in the acquisition of new discourses towards becoming who one can be in these discoursing moments (cf., Ivanič, 1998; Casanave and Vendrick, 2008; Pecorari, 2010; Angelil-Carter, 2014). Furthermore, in pointing to the television as a mode through which he learnt such vital literacy foundations, Felipe's narrative can be said to raise our awareness of a variety of affordances through which one can acquire literacy competencies. Thus literacy development does indeed take place in a multiplicity of contexts via a multiplicity of modes.

7.1.3 Other literacy practices

Felipe recalls that later when he started staying with his father, he would force him and his brother to read novels and newspapers.

> **Geoff**: … before you came to college what sort of reading have you been doing?
>
> **Felipe**: ah I'd say novels my dad used to force us to read newspapers so that's pretty much the whole thing (that) I read
>
> **Geoff**: mhm novels and [newspapers
>
> **Felipe**:   [newspapers

Unlike Khumbo earlier (Chapter 6), Felipe positions himself as someone who did not have an innate drive to read since he had to be forced to read. Despite this he later recalls that reading novels "gave me kind of a picture (that) if you want to write your own story you can just write it in this way". This can be taken to be an implicit acknowledgement of the central role of the other in writing development as "many of us began to write … by modelling our submissions on articles we were reading" (Casanave and Vendrick, 2008, p. 6). In this vein, Felipe's point that the novels he read gave him "a picture" of how he could structure his own compositions seems to allude to the centrality of "modelling" as an important technique in the reading/writing interface. Thus, drawing on what is read enables one to be grounded in the generic conventions (Hirvela, 2004). This is a point that resonates with many in academia as Casanave and Vendrick (2008) observe.

Regarding writing, Felipe recalls that he used to write poems and lyrics when he was in secondary school. He recalls that he was driven to poetry by the school environment further observing that "we used to do a lot of poetry at that time". Taking up plural pronoun "we" could be his way of alluding to the point that "doing a lot of poetry" was the norm for his peers as well as it might have been part of the school curriculum. On the other hand, he could not specifically recall the motivation behind composing lyrics. He however remembers that after writing them he would:

> … give them to a friend maybe just explain to them the tune (that) this is what I was writing but I wouldn't pretty much explore it (that) I should be the one singing maybe just write it down and give it to someone.

In passing on his compositions to others to perform, Felipe could be implicitly positioning himself as someone who occupied the "composition gap" among his peers. Despite this, perhaps out of being modest, Felipe recalls disagreeing with the evaluation of his writing abilities by those who benefited from his lyrics.

> **Geoff**: so how did the people react really to your poems as well as to your lyrics? What did they say about you as a writer?
>
> **Felipe**: the lyrics … they just said good positive things but maybe they just did it because to impress me but the whole poems I never showed anyone …

Just like Kai earlier, Felipe chooses not to trust the valuation of his writing abilities by peers choosing instead to remain suspicious of and modest with regard to their evaluation of him as a writer (see 5.2.1.3). Such denial of a view of self as a writer conferred on him by the beneficiaries of his compositions is an interesting move as later on Felipe constructs an autobiographical self which he arrives at after comparing his

abilities with those of his peers. In so doing he seems to prefer to evaluate his own writing abilities rather that have that ability defined or evaluated by his peers (see 7.2.1 below).

Furthermore, his view of writing seem to have been shaped not by his own involvement in writing alone but also by observing others around him as already suggested above. In this regard, he mentions his cousin, who is a medical doctor, as his model of a good writer. To Felipe a good writer is someone who "will give an opinion". Apart from this, still using his cousin as a model of a good writer, Felipe observes that "one of the qualities that makes her a good writer … (is) she reads a lot". His response once again evokes the importance of intertextuality or the centrality of the reading/writing interface (see Johns, 1991; Leki, 1993; Kroll, 1993; Carson, 1993; Grabe, 2003; Hirvela, 2004; Bazerman, 2010) as it suggests that a "good" writer "reads a lot". This could further imply that a good writer depends on the otherness of others on whose authority s/he rides. It is perhaps this understanding, coupled with his own admission that he is not an ardent reader, which prompt him to look at himself as a writer the way he does below.

From the foregoing, it can be surmised that Felipe, who describes himself as not a keen reader, feels that a good writer is someone who expresses their opinions. As someone who recalled occupying the composition gap for his peers in secondary school for whom he composed lyrics, he seems to refuse their evaluation of him as a writer. Thus, he seems to refuse using what had happened in a social space to determine his view of himself choosing instead to look within himself for that definition. It can therefore be said that Felipe seems to rely more on "internal self definition" as opposed to "definition of self by others" to describe himself as a writer (Tabouret-Keller and Le Page, 2006; Hyland, 2012a). In making this transition to university then, how does Felipe perceive himself as a writer?

7.2 Coming to university

7.2.1 Autobiographical self: *"I am a poor writer"*

After largely comparing his writing abilities with those of other people around him, Felipe comes to university feeling that he is a poor writer.

> **Geoff**: ok now considering your writing abilities … how would you rate your writing abilities?
>
> **Felipe**: I'd say poor … I think I just saw (that) other people are good writers so I think I'm not good at it so let me just drop this maybe focus on school

…

Geoff: why? What makes you say so about yourself sounds like you're being too harsh on yourself (laughter)

Felipe: the thing is if I put my work and others like comparing them I'd say mine are not at that level than other people so I'd just say ah I think these are not my attributes so I just drop that

Geoff: so in which areas do you think your writing is lacking for you to describe yourself for you to consider yourself as a poor writer?

Felipe: maybe creativity

Geoff: mhm

Felipe: yeah creativity you can write something down but to make it sound alright not just straightforward but in a kind of ambiguity (sic) some sort of it means this other side it means this other one so giving the reader type of (that) should not just think about this but should start thinking about something else as well so I think that's the problem I'd say.

Two important aspects worth highlighting in this chunk of data. Firstly, Felipe's view of himself as a writer seems to have been shaped by those he was in contact with. Despite his denial to be defined by his peers earlier, it is still social contact with others that led to a certain definition of himself as a "poor" writer. This is so as it was in comparing his work with that of others that he arrived at a certain understanding of himself. Even though such a definition has its roots in a social intercourse, it is Felipe's own evaluation which he seems to prefer. In other words, his internal definition of self still has its roots in what happens in a social space. This can be said to allude to the prominence of the social over the individual. Furthermore, stating that his writing is "poor" because it lacks "ambiguity" or the quality to mean different things to different readers strongly suggests that Felipe's view of "good" writing is steeped in creative writing. This is so as it is in creative writing that ambiguity tends to be a feature of "good writing". This evokes the understanding that "good writing" is a relative term as "effective writing is rhetorically situated, good for *something*, and achieves *situated* purposes" (Coe, 2002, p. 201). The point that he dropped this writing "to focus on school" strongly suggests that the writing he used to describe himself as a writer is indeed not school based writing but perhaps the creative writing he was doing on the peripheral of his school work. Using creative writing to define one's writing abilities seems to be a common feature with these novices.

In view of the foregoing, it can be said that an important feature of Felipe's narrative thus far is its alluding to the "outer" or social dimension as well as an "inner" or self dimension as two important axes on which identity can be understood. This can be seen

in his attempt to define himself as a writer coming to university. His definition seems to oscillate between a definition of self as a writer (inner) and a definition of that self by other (social dimension). It is such oscillation between these two points that see Felipe describe himself as a poor writer. This inner/outer dichotomy is key in understanding the rest of his narrative as I highlight from time to time. From such a discursively constructed position as a poor writer, how does he view academic discourse, in general, and academic writing, in particular?

7.2.2 Academic writing vis-a-vis secondary school writing

Felipe recalls that writing in secondary school was "guided" as "we were instructed to write what they were expecting in that essay". He further observes that "they'd tell you oh write under this heading but we want you to maybe the first paragraph should consist of this and that". His point here exemplifies the "guided" nature of writing in secondary school and, like Khumbo earlier, also constructs the power play in the academy as it evokes the "politics of the pronoun" (Pennycook, 1994). In othering the teachers using "they" he "expresses different social relations" and subsequently "socially construct identities" (Bramley, 2001). This he does as such pronouns "are used to construct the identities of 'self' and 'other'" (Bramley, 2001, p. 16). In so doing, he positions the teachers (they) as having power over him as "they" both set the task and determine the content of the compositions hence his view that with secondary school writing "you are guided to write in that direction".

He however feels that university writing is different from this "guided" form as he now has the liberty to direct his own writing. He observes that:

> here you have a certain freedom at least you can construct your own draft … here they just give you a subject and you can explore it in different ways so I'd say it's good because you kind of like you direct it the way you want it's not like you're directed in a certain direction.

Felipe's summing up of the difference between school and university writing can be taken to imply that he feels that the latter provides room for individual agency (Giddens, 1984) unlike the former which restricted him to what the teachers wanted him to write. According to Felipe, university writing enables "you (to) direct the writing the way you want". Such a claim of individual agency however does not take into account the impact of the centripetal ideological force on novice writers. In evaluating academic writing in university in this way Felipe seems to be missing the point that, in the academy, individual agency is "mediated ability to act" (Canagarajah, 2002). Thus, even though

there is this "freedom" to direct the writing the way he wants, he might soon realise that he will not have it all his way as academic writing favours the performance of certain identities and not others (Hyland, 2009). This is the case as "schools embody representations and practices that construct as well as block the possibilities for human agency among students" (Giroux, 1986, p. 56).

This notwithstanding, Felipe enters the university feeling upbeat about the possibility of having to direct his own writing the way he wants. How does this perceived freedom make him feel about what to anticipate in university?

7.2.3 'I'll be doing good here'

Felipe attributes his failings in secondary school to its guided writing. He claims that "that's the whole point why I didn't get good grades at that point". He observes that being guided made him to write something which he did not like further recalling that he nevertheless wrote what his teachers told him to "for the sake of writing". This response subtly but powerfully evokes the unequal power relations which pervade the academy as it suggests that Felipe followed his teacher's steer for fear of reprisals. It could then be said that his writing for fear of reprisals might have been his attempt at "being seen to be a certain type of person" (Ivanič, 1994); one who pretends to identify with the teacher's demands. This suggests that he was writing as if he "shared the beliefs and ideas (thereby) performing hegemonic acts without subscribing to the ideology that gives them meaning" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 169). His writing at that level might have just been a form of "accommodation" (Chase, 1988).

Contrary to this, Felipe sounds optimistic about university writing. He observes that:

> … when you come here they give you a subject to write you'll be like oh at least I can read about it explored research then write it in your own words we are not given the direction so I think that's a bit maybe I'll be doing good here because now I'm pretty much doing my own thing putting my own person in the essays.

This response suggests that even though there is also a power differential in university between students and lecturers who set the tasks, Felipe feels that the new context gives him the freedom to "do my own thing". This however is just part of the picture as I highlight earlier (see 7.2.2 above). This freedom, Felipe feels, will likely translate into his "doing good here" since now "I will be doing my own thing putting my own person in the essays". From an identity and identification perspective, it could be said that "putting my own person in the essay" evokes "self as author"; an authorial presence which underlines that one has something to say (see Ivanič, 1994; Ivanič and Camps,

2001; Hyland, 2002b). This view seems to be in line with his earlier point that a "good" writer expresses his/her opinion (see 7.1.3 above). It therefore seems that Felipe feels that since he will now direct his own writing then he will also exert something of himself in it which is a quality of a good writer. In a nutshell, his narrative seems to suggest that the new context gives him the opportunity to play a good writer; one with opinions. It would therefore be interesting to examine later on how he actualises this in his writing. Thus, it would be interesting to explore how he "puts his own person" in his essays as he suggests here. Furthermore, Felipe's point here also evokes the important interface between academic writing and identity (see Clark and Ivanič, 1997). This is so as his point here strongly suggests that academic writing provides opportunities for as well as evokes feelings of self-representation. Apart from making such self-representation opportunities available to him, how else does Felipe view the distinct nature of academic writing?

7.2.4 The uniqueness of academic writing

Following his excitement about university writing above, I asked Felipe to reflect further on the uniqueness or peculiarity of academic writing. He recalls that while the new found freedom is something he is optimistic about, initially this was not so as he had to struggle with deconstructing the habitus he brought along. He thus recollects that coming from a background where "you were pretty much given something to write" being asked to direct his own writing "becomes a challenge at first". This, he recalls, made him "confused". Confusion when novices encounter new practices of higher education seems common (cf. Gourlay, 2009) as learning new practices "involves disequilibrium, a stripping away of the old authorities" (Angelil-Carter, 2014, p. 76).

He seems to have resolved this confusion by understanding that "if I read this read that and bring my own opinions on it I think I can bring something out". This resolution seems to point to academic writing as dialogic since it involves bringing together what has gone before (read this read that), on one hand, and a projection of individual subjectivities (my opinions), on the other. His explanation of the importance of reading around a subject area can be said to further stress this dialogic aspect especially when he observes that:

> … you get what other people's views are … what others feel about the subject so it's like you're educated at some point (that) my opinions are not good maybe those ones are saying the truth based on what you've understood what they are saying.

Here, Felipe's rationale seems to evoke the understanding that reading is a way of immersing oneself into the debates and discourses in which writing is to be situated; a master narrative in academia. This further evokes the point that in order to be heard one has to use the other particularly the voices of significant others (see Bakhtin, 1986; Bartholomae, 1986; Casanave and Vendrick, 2008; Hyland, 2012a); that authoritativeness cannot be achieved in isolation. However, for Felipe "you can't just read and write what someone said"; it is vital that the writer asserts their individuality as well. Thus,

> when you bring in your opinions at least you are bringing something different even though the subject is maybe similar to anyone else but it'll be different because it's now based on who (sic) you feel.

This thought can be explained by saying that even though voices are available to everybody in academia, how individual writers evaluate these voices is an important step towards asserting individuality (cf., Groom, 2000). This has an important Bakhtinian echo.

According to Bakhtin (1986), our utterances are taken from other "mouths". These utterances will work for us if we "accentuate them with individual intention". In claiming that it is not enough to simply write what is there but one has to "bring out their opinions" as this is what makes writing "different", Felipe's view of academic writing echoes dialogic views of authority (cf., Groom, 2000; Tang, 2009). In saying this, Felipe also seems to be reiterating his stand that expressing one's opinions is an important aspect of academic writing, one which, in this case, brings out something "different". Against this background, Felipe feels that academic writing is unique or peculiar because:

> it maybe gives a sense of looking deep within you I think even though I am given this subject but what are my opinions what are my views on this subject so … you can write just write it based on your opinions so I'd say that's academic in the sense that you learn who you are within you it's like you're searching deep inside you and you're bringing those views on the subject at hand so I'd say yeah that's about the unique thing about it.

In this regard, Felipe seems to stress his earlier view that even though reading around and expressing of opinions form the two important aspects of academic writing, it is the latter which is paramount. This is a view which comes out clearly later (see 7.3 below). Furthermore, his view here also implicitly highlights the understanding that academic writing is indeed always associated with identity as every opportunity to write represents an opportunity to search for and performatively bring about a certain "self"

(Clark and Ivanič, 1997); to "learn who you are within". However, his claim that this search for a "self" starts with a search "deep within you" seems to once again lean more towards "self definition" as opposed to "definition of self by others" as the basis for his understanding of this identity work. In other words, in his understanding of himself, Felipe seems to give self definition (the inner perspective) more prominence over definition of self by "other" (the outer perspective). As alluded to earlier, this is a view which permeates most of his rationalisation of how he perceives himself as I will highlight later below.

In a nutshell, it seems that Felipe comes to university feeling optimistic that academic writing will give him the opportunity to express his opinions; to "put his person in his writing". In making this transition, he perceives himself as a poor writer. His construction of himself as a poor writer evokes the point that identity can be understood either from an "inner" or an "outer" perspective. This comes out in the manner in which he oscillates between how he seems to have been defined by both what happened in a social space as well as his own evaluation of himself. Since he believes that expressing opinions sets one apart, he seems to have come to university eager to not just "report" on what others have written but rather to have his own opinions heard as well. This evokes dialogic views of writing. In this vein, it would be interesting to explore how he positions himself in his writing and how he perceives and/or deconstructs that positioning.

7.3 Talk around text 1

7.3.1 Context of situation

Felipe wrote his first assignment in university for the module Business Numeracy (CD FE1). This module is offered by the department of Mathematics, a servicing department. The title of the assignment, as given by the lecturer, was "Using Mathematics in Business". In a chat I had with him, the lecturer explained to me that he decided to set this task "so that the students appreciate the importance of mathematics in their career" as he had observed that "most students from the faculty of Commerce usually have problems with mathematics".

7.3.2 Prefatory understanding

7.3.2.1 "I was confused"

In trying to understand how he made sense of this task, I asked Felipe what he made of the lecturer's main goal for setting this task.

> **Geoff**: what do you think the lecturer who set this assignment was looking for?
>
> **Felipe**: I don't know because I was confused myself … he just gave us that assignment after introducing himself so it was more like it was hard for you to think (that) what is this person looking for what is he expecting from me …
>
> **Geoff**: did he explain what he was looking for?
>
> **Felipe**: he didn't he introduced himself he just said using mathematics in business I need you to write an assignment based on this topic so yeah

In this exchange, just like Kai and Khumbo earlier, Felipe points to lack of dialogue with the experienced other in making sense of the demands of a writing task. This has also been noted elsewhere (cf., Lillis, 2001). Such lack of dialogue often implies that there is a gap between how novice writers understand these tasks and how their lecturers understand them (see Nelson, 1990; Lea, 2005; Williams, 2005). As these novices kept raising this issue, it might suggest that the nature of interaction between novice and experienced other in Malawian universities is an issue worth further exploration. Such "refusal" by the experienced other to clarify the demands of writing tasks set could be seen as a refusal by the experienced other to induct these novices to the workings of a new community. This lack of dialogue adversely affected Felipe's response to the task as he observes that:

> That was the first challenge finding out what he is expecting from us … because I was confused what is he really looking for what is he expecting from us at the end of the day you just had to sit down and think about it yeah.

In taking up plural pronoun "us", Felipe implicitly speaks for his colleagues with whom he aligns himself thereby constructing this as a general problem as opposed to a personal one. This "problem" later led him to describe his essay as a resolution to "bring this confusion together". Furthermore, Felipe highlights the enigmatic nature of this task in the way he refers to the lecturer. By saying that "it was hard to think about what *this person* is looking for", he draws on a socio-linguistic notion which distances him from the person being talked about. Such distancing through the construction "*this person*" is usually used in Malawi to demonstrate the enigmatic or disdainful nature of the person in question. In positioning the lecturer this way it could be said that Felipe's

response further constructs both the lecturer and the task as incomprehensible. In view of this, how did he proceed?

7.3.2.2 Looking in, looking out

In order to resolve the situation above, Felipe recalls that he used a combination of brainstorming, research, and consultation with friends. He recalls that "first of all I thought of the points that I had myself … on my own understanding so I came up with certain points that I had to research a bit on". This could be seen as reiterating his view that becoming is first about "looking deep within" (7.2.4) as the first thing he considers are "the points I had myself" before research. As I return to his views on researching later on, it is interesting that just like Kai and Khumbo earlier, Felipe also positions friends as an important resource in the trajectory of becoming. After brainstorming and research, Felipe recalls that he "asked some friends (that) what exactly does the person is he looking for". After gathering information and insight from these three perspectives he then went on to "bring them together and explain it". In this vein, it can therefore be seen that Felipe seems to have indeed actualised his view that searching within precedes social interaction. This he does since dialogue with the other, either through research or consulting friends, was preceded by a dialogue within; a deep search within. In turning to friends to try to understand "what this person wanted", Felipe's narrative evokes the view that he is not a self contained individual but rather one whose existence in intertwined with that of others.

7.3.3 Framing the essay: 'My point comes first'

When I asked him to reflect on how he had put the essay together, Felipe accentuates the importance of "looking in". He observes that "first look at yourself write down what you think about the subject then you research based on your assumptions". This implicitly emphasises that to him academic writing is, first of all, about "searching deep within". This view is further buttressed by the following observation.

> **Geoff**: so the first thing will be your views your opinions before you go researching
>
> **Felipe**: mhm
>
> **Geoff**: okay why the primary focus on your views?
>
> **Felipe**: the thing is you are the student … you have to apply yourself you have to put yourself in different situations so first of all you have to it has to be you thinking about it then go researching … you have to learn (that) you are going to go out there so what am I going to give the world pretty much so I think the central focus should be first of all what do I think about it before I add on the

research because basically if you start with researching you are going to end up using other people's ideas you might not explore your own ideas so I'd say I have to it has to start with me before I go to the research.

Felipe's view that the "inner" perspective ("what do I think") precedes the "outer" perspective ("research") once again comes to the fore here. Furthermore, it is also interesting to note that he seems to perceive making his opinions known as "giving something to the world". If we consider the act of reacting to other subjectivities as a process which feeds the scholarly "I" (Baynham, 1999), then it indeed makes sense to perceive this process as tantamount to giving something to the world as Felipe puts it. As someone who values his opinions, it is not surprising therefore that he seems sceptical to give "other people's ideas" prominence as doing this might jeopardise his chances of asserting himself and making an "individual contribution to the world". Thus he seems to be sceptical that donning the academic/social cloak without first of all asserting his individuality might make him invisible (Cooper, 2014). It would therefore be interesting to examine how he balances expressing his opinions with using other people's ideas in his writing. This also makes his rationale for using other people's voices in his writing interesting (see 7.3.4 below).

7.3.4 Voice

In this assignment, Felipe marshals other voices to help him sing the tune he wanted to sing (Boughey, 2000). Thus he manages to speak through the language of power (Bartholomae, 1986) which he takes from the "mouths" of the experienced other (Bakhtin, 1981). The table below exemplifies how he manages to do this.

- Business is any organisation or enterprising entity engaged in commercial, industrial or professional activities (www.investopedia.com) (paragraph 1 line 1)
- … mathematics will effectively communicate our ideas and solutions (Qualitative Methods for Business Decisions 5th Edition by **Curwin J and Slater** R. chapter 23, p. 549) (paragraph 1)
- Some of the expenses met in producing … just to mention a few (www.quora.com) (paragraph 2)
- Revenue is income earned by a business … (Business Accounting 2nd edition by **Richard** G part 2 p.22) (paragraph 3)
- Selling prices which are established on the basis of … (Cost Accounting Managerial Approach by **Backe M**) (paragraph 4)
- … of financial information (account records e.g. cash flow) to individual or organisation about their businesses (Finance and Accounting for Business 2nd Edition by **Ryan** Ch. 1 p.4) (paragraph 6)
- Statistics is the process of gathering … based on the analysis of data obtained (Market Research 2nd Edition by **Alan T. Shao** ch. 12 p. 350 − 351) (paragraph 7)

Apart from bullet point 1 and 3, Felipe's citation practices allude to the interim nature of his practice. This is the case as his in-text citations include information, like title and chapter, which does not normally appear here. This constructs him as a novice as despite showing that he has situated his essay in what has gone before, his citation practices suggests that he has not yet fully understood how this is done. Thus, while as a "soloist" or "conductor" he manages to "muster other voices to back him in the song he is singing" (Boughey, 2000, p. 283), Felipe fails to show an awareness of how "things are done". The unconventional manner in which he handles citation practices in this essay could be taken to be indicative of his using an understanding which is still developing. It is this unconventionality which positions him as a novice engaging in an interim literacy practice (see Chapter 9).

This notwithstanding, I asked Felipe to rationalise this practice.

> **Geoff**: … you draw information from different sources I was just curious why did you do that? (.) What was the rationale behind you doing that? Citing different sources the way you did?

> **Felipe**: I'd say that was more like putting weight on my points … I thought ok I have to put myself in it but first of all the lecturer has to know that you had a research you studied on the subject so I was more like as I said (that) I was bringing my point that I had and the backing point of it is the research … it was more like backing my points

> …

> **Geoff**: why do you feel that is important? (.) Why do you think it is important to back up your points? Why do you think it is important to give weight to your points using these other sources?

> **Felipe**: … I felt like if I give my points the lecturer will go like oh plagiarism and all that so … later on I shouldn't like oh I think you copied it from a book and pasted it but I did the research I knew about it I knew the topic at hand so I think that's the reason why I did this.

From the foregoing, Felipe outlines a number of reasons for his intertextual practices. To begin with, in claiming that he did this to "put weight on my points" implicitly assumes that his points on their own are "weightless". This then implies that mustering other voices could be seen as his attempt to speak through the language of authority and power (Bartholomae, 1986) or to "give greater authority to his statements" (Hendricks and Quinn, 2000, p. 451). Furthermore, he observes that he does this in order to make an impression on the lecturer by letting him know that he had studied or researched into the topic. This positions him as doing identity work or as wanting to come across as a certain type of person (Ivanič, 1994) as he seems to have used "adequation" as an intersubjective mode of identification (Bucholz and Hall, 2005). To him, it seems that

intertextuality is a means of aligning himself with the discourse community. In the final analysis, his response also evokes the mistrust that the "expert" (lecturer) has regarding novice personal experience. By saying that he manifestly referred to other voices because he felt that only giving his opinions might have been suspected as plagiarism, his motivation brings to mind the point that the academy often ignores the resources as well as the student life histories which novices bring (Giroux, 1986) by treating them with suspicion (Angelil-Carter, 2014). This incident therefore exemplifies how the academy's subtle yet powerful centripetal force favours the performance of certain identities and not others (Hyland, 2009).

7.3.5 Personal subjectivities

7.3.5.1   Reader engagement

Some ways through which writers engage their readers are "reader mention, personal asides, appeals to shared knowledge, as well as directives" (Hyland, 2005a, 2005c, 2012b). Reader mention and appeals to shared knowledge are interesting aspects of reader engagement since they are used to establish collegiality between the writer and the reader. Against this background, Felipe engages the reader in an interesting way in this essay as the following instances exemplify.

> Situation A
>
> …. Whether **we** are looking at production possibilities or constructing an economic model of some kind, mathematics will effectively communicate **our** ideas and solutions (Qualitative Methods for Business Decisions 5th Edition by Curwin J and Slater R Chapter 23, p. 549).
>
> Situation B
>
> Mathematics identifies whether **we** are making a profit or not, this can be done by knowing **our** total revenue and expenditures. Revenue is income earned by a business when it sells its goods and services while expenditure is total costs incurred by the business (Business Accounting 2nd Edition by Richard G part 2 p. 22). **We** can simply take one from the other to see if revenue exceeds expenditure or not, that is determining whether a profit is being made or not.

The sections above exemplify how Felipe engages the reader through reader mention ("we" and "our"). In doing this, he establishes collegiality with the reader. Such collegiality enables him to do this identity work as it presupposes that in "saying" this

he is "doing" something which constructs him as a certain type of person (see Gee, 1996). This is the case as "we" brings about an "immensely confident construction constructing a powerful authoritative discoursal self" (Starfield, 2002, p. 129). Thus "we" implies a "you", a reader whose relationship with the writer is one of solidarity and not expert to novice (Starfield, 2002, p. 131). In this regard, it can be said that in creating solidarity with his reader/assessor, Felipe creates a powerful authoritative impression of himself as someone who is at the same level with the reader/assessor. How then does he rationalise such reader engagement?

When asked to explain who "us" and "our" refers to, he observes that:

> we are business administrators so the lecturer pretty much we run businesses we are administrators so I pretty much felt like as we the administrators we have to have that mathematical concept in us so that our ideas are pretty much appreciated to the world (sic) so I was being more like we the students of the class or we the administrators the future we are going into the industry we have to be able to do that … we are part of the business we are going to be part of the business even when we go to the industry we are going to be part of the industry this is the reason why I wrote we and our ideas.

His response here exemplifies the multi-layered nature of identification and indexes the conflicting identity positions he simultaneously attempts to occupy or switch across. Part of his rationale here seems to suggest that he views himself as already belonging to the fraternity of business administrators as he considers himself to be part of a group of people who run businesses ("we run businesses"/"we are administrators"). At the same time, he refers to belonging to this group as something he aspires to; something that will be realised in future ("we are going to be part of the business"). Such ambivalence in perceiving self in the now vis-à-vis an aspired identity is not uncommon.

Burgess and Ivanič (2010) observe that "for most students, identities in educational contexts are transitory mediating identities". This means that they engage in academic practices for "extrinsic purposes" as these practices are not part of the identities to which they aspire for the rest of their lives. Engaging in literacy practices for "extrinsic purposes" evokes the notion of "orthopraxy" (Blommaert, 2005) which I allude to elsewhere in this discussion (see 7.2.3). Burgess and Ivanič (2010, p. 230) further contend that "students may be in an ambivalent relationship with this identity; partially desiring and partially resisting being constructed as 'someone in education'". In the quote above Felipe's response alludes to this ambivalence as he seems to describe himself as not entirely "someone in education" but as someone who favourably identifies and aligns with his aspired identity. This brings into focus the view that

identity is not a static entity but rather a process of identification. Such identification is accomplished through the linguistic choices by which interlocutors position themselves as they seek to align with one group or another.

7.3.5.2 Modality

Furthermore, in using the adverbial "simply" in the last sentence in Situation B, Felipe projects his individuality into the discourse he is constructing. Thus he "displays his evaluative orientations in discourse" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, p. 594) a move which sees him assess the knowledge (see Biber and Finegan, 1988; Conrad and Biber, 1999; Engelbretson, 2007; Gray and Biber, 2012). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that his evaluation is made in relation to the voice he has just cited. Such a move could be seen as Felipe's engagement with the discourse at an intersubjective level as it alludes to the "dialogic emergence of intersubjectivity" (Du Bois, 2007); the emergence of an individual's perspective from the words of those who have spoken before. This means that intersubjectivity is indeed born out of one interlocutor's reaction to the subjectivity of another (see Du Bois, 2007; Thompson, 2012). This represents arguably the most sophisticated level of engagement.

Apart from intersubjectivity, Felipe also hedges some of his points as the paragraph below shows:

> *Retail pricing is **mostly** equivalent to purchase price since retailers do not calculate production cost of the product but rather administrative costs like transport, wholesale price and the like. For businesses that **mostly** offers services, they **mostly** price their services based on labour (salaries and wages of working force) and period costs.*

He also sums up the paragraph following this with the following statement:

> ***Mostly**, small businesses will use these statements for the calculation of profits, credit keeping, inventory taking (stock taking) and pricing calculation ...*

In using the modal "mostly", he expresses a degree of certainty and/or commitment to what he is expressing (see Biber and Finegan, 1988; Conrad and Biber, 1999; Thompson and Huston, 1999). Such "epistemicity" (Conrad and Biber, 1999) or "hedging" (Hyland, 1994) is an important feature of academic writing as it "implies that the writer is less than fully committed to the certainty of the referential information given" (Hyland, 1994, p. 240). Considering such epistemicity or hedging as a "politeness device (as) a strategy in the maintenance of relations between writer and reader" (Thompson and Hunston, 1999, p. 10) helps us to keep in focus the view of "written texts as social interactions" (Hyland and Sancho-Guinda, 2012, p. 1); as

"interactive and interpersonal" (Engelbretson, 2007, p. 19). In doing this, it could be said that Felipe, inadvertently or otherwise, performatively constructs himself as an academic writer. Through these constructions, he creates a persona that is doing academic writing; doing something that is "tentative and hedged" (Hyland, 1994, p. 242).

Felipe rationalises this hedging by observing that these constructions had to be presented in this way because they do not apply to every situation. This rationale suggests an implicit awareness that he has to make his claims with caution (Hyland, 1994).

7.3.6 Challenges

Felipe stresses that one important challenge he faced in writing this essay was dealing with the confusion which came from the lack of dialogue with the lecturer over the specifications of the task. He therefore described this essay as a resolution to "just bring this confusion together". Furthermore, he also recalls having problems with "finding the research (as) by that time I don't think we had a course outline so it was pretty much hard for you to just think about it". He further notes that while others had one "it was maybe from last years' students". This is an interesting observation. Not only did the lecturer "refuse" to dialogically engage the students (see 7.3.2.1 above) but he also supplied the course outline after the module had started and this assignment given. Considering that most of the novices I interacted with pointed to the course outline as the first point of contact with the intertextual terrain of their disciplines (e.g. Khumbo and Kai), the delay in making this available signifies a delay in providing this roadmap. This represents a delay in introducing novices to the "voice" of the discipline.

It is not surprising to note therefore that Felipe recalls starting work on this assignment late claiming that:

> … I pretty much was one of the last people to write this assignment so I waited (laughter) after he gave the course outline so that's when I went to the library to search on the books.

Rather than do what his colleagues were doing, namely use the course outline from the previous year, Felipe decided to do things differently. He instead opted to wait for a new course outline to be provided. Such a move could be seen to further buttress the point he made quite strongly earlier that he leans more towards an "inner" perception of himself as opposed to an "outer" or a social view of self. From a social perspective however this point could be seen as implicitly alluding to the role of the social structure

in adversely affecting writing practices at the institution. In contending that he started working on his assignment late because the lecturer delayed making the course outline available his response implies that the lecturer might have contributed to him "not doing good here" in this assignment. From an indexicality perspective, this statement could also be taken to be an indictment of an entire institution as it suggests a failing on the part of the lecturer who is an institutional representative. This is how perceiving academic writing as social semiosis enables us to shift our focus away from the individual novice student writers to examine how the institutional space they find themselves in impacts this identity work (see Lillis, 2001).

In the final analysis, lack of dialogue with the lecturer concerned over the specifications of the task made Felipe confused. Despite such confusion, he demonstrates throughout the narrative that he is aware of the need to muster other voices as a way of "adding weight" to his points. The manner in which he cites these other voices however constructs him as a novice; someone who is yet to understand "how things should be done". In evaluating and responding to these "funds of identity" (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014) or "possibilities of selfhood" (Ivanič, 1998), he asserts his individuality by coming across as someone who has something of his own to say. A further reflective analysis of the challenges encountered in writing this essay seems to index institutional impact in this identity work. Even in the face of such institutional force, Felipe seems to still prefer "looking within" as opposed to having his conduct defined by what he sees happening in a social space.

7.4 Talk around text 2

7.4.1 Context of situation

The second assignment I discussed with Felipe was a task he had done in EAP (CD FE2). The task required him to write an essay on the communication barriers which students face. He recalls interpreting this to mean that the lecturer "wanted to see what barriers a student like myself encounters in the communication process".

7.4.2 Dialogic addressivity

Contrary to the task in 7.3 above, Felipe observes that this lecturer took time to explain the demands of this task. Such explanation provided an important steer to how he approached the task himself.

> **Geoff**: how did you establish the demands of the task as envisaged by the lecturer?
>
> **Felipe**: our central focus that week was mainly the general view of the communication process. So when the lecturer was giving the specs of the assignment he said that we do not have to look far for answers but rather look at myself and see what challenges I face to have ineffective communication during lectures. That is why my central focus was based much on the classroom communication barriers

In this task, the lecturer responsible took time to explain the "specs" of the task. S/he even situated the task in what was learnt that particular week. It is not surprising therefore that Felipe does not complain about lack of clarity which made him "bring together the confusion" in the previous task above. In this regard, contrary to the first task, the exchanges the lecturer had with his student novices over this task constitute dialogic addressivity. This then seems to suggest that the quality of dialogic addressivity seems to have an effect on how novice writers approach their writing as this time Felipe seems to approach the task with more confidence. This in turn implies that while novice/expert interaction is indeed not the only route towards inducting new comers into a community it still remains an important route as the novice to novice interaction can be misleading as Khumbo's encounters indicate (see 6.2.2).

By encouraging him to "look at myself and see what challenges I face" it seems that the lecturer encouraged Felipe to disregard all other views or voices on the subject and simply rely on his understanding. This advice seems to have played into his hands more especially considering that he is someone who favours an "inner" view of self over a social view (see 7.3.2.2 and 7.3.3 above). Following this advice and his inner propensity to explicating self, I anticipated that the essay would express a strong authorial presence more specifically using the personal pronoun "I" (see Ivanič, 1994, 1998; Ivanič and Camps, 2001; Hyland, 2002b). Surprisingly, in the entire essay Felipe neither uses personal pronoun 'I' nor asserts a strong authorial presence using other means. This is a matter which I will explain, from his perspective, later on.

Following this, I wanted to find out how he had brought along to this task and actualised a view of academic writing which he had established with me in our interaction earlier.

7.4.3 Academic writing: 'voice' and 'engagement'?

Before exploring some specific aspects on the essay itself with him, I wanted to find out how Felipe had actualised his earlier view of academic writing. Earlier he had indicated that he is getting used to academic writing since he has realised that "if I read this and

read that and bring my own opinions on it I think I can bring something out". This I had interpreted earlier to mean that he has come to an understanding that academic writing seems to be a "blend" of what others have said or voice ("read this and that"), on one hand, and what he had to say on the matter or engagement ("my own opinions"), on the other. This is an interpretation which he had validated (see 7.2.4 above). Against this background understanding therefore I wanted to find out from him how he had actualised this understanding in this particular essay.

Felipe explains that this is the pattern which he used to frame the essay observing that "I did have the ideas but now the research came in the explanation of those ideas". He then went on to claim that researching took him to other disciplines such as Law and Organisational Behaviour. These are modules which he also studied during his first year. He recalls that:

> The first point UNCLARIFIED ASSUMPTIONS although in the books they do not actually call it UNCLARIFIED ASSUMPTION this basically explains an error of perception called projection which is also a word inside the paragraph something that I learned in Organisational Behaviour but at the same time it's something that I personally face when am communicating with people and the same is learned in Law it's called a Mistake in a contract …

In observing that he made recourse to traditions of other disciplines Felipe's response implies that he engaged in cross module interdiscursivity. However, an "intertextual tracing" (Prior, 2004) for "manifest intertextuality" (Fairclough, 1992) indicates that he does not explicitly co-articulate other voices either from Law or Organisational Behaviour. Thus the essay does not explicitly cite other voices. This makes the essay to be voiceless and is a significant point in our understanding of how Felipe performed this identity work. It seems that Felipe did not manifestly refer to other voices in this essay as he was following the lecturer's advice "not to look elsewhere for answers". This is the significance of the lecturer's steer over this task as I indicated earlier in 7.2.4 above and is something to which I return in some greater detail later below. It is important then that we keep in mind the point that Felipe's approach to this task was greatly influenced by the lecturer's steering of the same. This in turn evokes the point that the contents of most novice writing is influenced, not by individual proclivities, but rather by the demands of a wider community working its influence through the lecturer (cf., Giroux, 1986; Lillis, 2001; Dudley-Evans, 2002). In a nutshell, this shows how the centripetal force of the social structure impacts what happens in the local composing moment.

7.4.4 Voice

7.4.4.1 Intertextuality: "I avoided doing that"

As pointed out above, an intertextual tracing of this essay does not show any instance of manifest intertextuality (see CD FE2). Furthermore, the paragraphs in this essay read as though they have been "entextualized" from elsewhere without following the necessary citation procedures as the example below suggests.

> Lack of attention, this mostly happens in oral communication where someone is not concentrating on the information given by the sender. It is sometimes because of lack of interest by the receiver for example students sleeping in class or making noise whilst during a lecture. It can be prevented by class participation in the process of lecturing like asking questions to the students, jokes or small stories relating to the subject matter.

Paragraphs like this one, for example, read as one which can be found in a typical Communication book or handout which makes the rounds at the Polytechnic. This strongly suggests that Felipe might have indeed made recourse to other texts in writing this essay. This is also indicated by the disjointed nature of the topic sentence suggesting that he might have been trying to fit his thought with another's. Such "incoherence" places this identity work as an "interim literacy practice" (Paxton, 2006, 2007) as I elucidate later in Chapter 9. In not manifestly marking off other voices, Felipe fails to create a "foil" or the other against which he could sound his voice (Leki, 2007). Unsurprisingly, in the absence of the other the essay is also devoid of intersubjective engagement considering the important interface between the two aspects (see Du Bois, 2007). How does this happen? How is this essay so devoid of manifest intertextuality?

When I engaged him on what I felt was fuzzy or unclear intertextuality Felipe conceded that indeed the sections in question had been drawn from other texts only that he did not cite the source within the essay itself.

> **Geoff**: in the same introductory paragraph in the penultimate sentence you provide a definition of 'communication barriers'. Is this 'your' understanding or you got this understanding from somewhere else?
>
> **Felipe**: I lifted that from my first semi presentation not exactly as it is in the notes but the idea they expressed so that I back the point I was making across….

> **Geoff**: if it's not yours then why did you not acknowledge the source from where you got it?
>
> **Felipe**: the lecturer wanted the assignment to be in one or two pages initially I like to put quotation and sources in the actual essay but I avoided doing that.

Felipe's rationale strongly suggests that he was put off citing other voices by the structural constraints imposed on the task by the lecturer. This scenario exemplifies the unequal power relations between novices and experienced other and how this often pushes novices to adopt accommodating the demands made on them as a position of choice. However, citing the structural constraints as being responsible for lack of manifest intertextuality seems incomprehensible.

Felipe acknowledges that he brought on board other views into his essay as his response to my probing the unclear intertextual practices indicates above. The only thing he did not do is mark these voices as separate to his. Considering that the essay does not exhaust the two-page limit set by the lecturer, it is evident that he had ample space to incorporate other voices and manifestly mark them off as separate. This implies that the explanation for lack of manifest intertextuality lies elsewhere. This can perhaps be put down to his understanding of what the lecturer meant in setting the task. Thus, it seems that Felipe avoided manifest intertextuality as he was mindful of what the lecturer had earlier said. It seems that the instruction given to him to "look to himself" for answers might have been interpreted to mean that he should leave out all other voices and simply present his own view of the matter. This is the case as leaving out other voices seems to have been a conscious choice as he explicitly recalls "avoiding doing that". This implies that he knew that he could do it but decided not to perhaps because he wanted to honour the lecturer's instruction.

In this vein, this incident represents arguably the most significant example in this study of how the power imbalance in this "contact zone" affects the writing of novice academic writers. This in turn implies that there is more to our understanding of what goes on in the writing of these novices as we cannot simply blame them when they do not perform to the expected standards. Such a scenario indicates that novice academic writing is a messy and complex social undertaking which is impacted upon by multiple layers of influence all of which the novice writer has to negotiate as they sit down to write. For Felipe in this instance, this meant literally looking to himself alone to please the lecturer.

7.4.4.2 Whose voice is it anyway?

Following the lack of manifest intertextuality, I asked Felipe about the "speaking voice" as it comes across in the essay. To this, he gives an interesting response one which sees him distance himself from the speaking voice around whose experiences the essay is developed.

> **Geoff**: when you go through the essay again who is doing the 'talking' in the essay? Are these your views or someone else'?
>
> **Felipe**: when I put myself in the shoes of the reader not like someone who wrote it in the first place it sounds like someone is telling me what the barriers are and solutions.

In this assertion he distances himself from the speaking voice in the essay. Considering that this is his own essay, in approaching it as a reader his response seems to suggest that Felipe the assembler of this text and Felipe the reader represent two distinct personae. Such a distinction could further be taken to mean that the speaking voice in the essay is not Felipe's "true self" but rather a socially and discursively constructed self (Matsuda, 2001) which his "self1" (Harré and Langenhove, 1991, 1999) can relate and interact with just like any other reader can. In positioning himself as a reader relating with a voice he had discursively constructed himself it could be said that this moment exemplifies how in doing this identity work Felipe constructs and traverses multiple "I positions". He might have distanced himself from the speaking voice and thereby create different I positions as in hindsight he recalls to have "leaned much on what the books had to say than what I had to say" in drafting the essay. It is not surprising that he admitted that this essay does not reflect his earlier understanding, which he still holds, that academic writing ought to be a "fusion" of what texts have said with that he has to say with emphasis on the latter.

In a nutshell, as someone who all along indicates his preference for defining himself by looking deep within it is ironic that an explicit instruction for him to do this (i.e. look within for answers) leads to him being significantly influenced from without. Felipe's lack of manifest intertextuality in this essay was not out of his own determination but a determination which was made for him from outside. Identity does indeed have a self and other dimension to it (cf., Tabouret-Keller and Le Page, 2006; Hyland, 2012).

7.4.5 Personal subjectivities

7.4.5.1 Reader engagement

Felipe opens the essay with the following sentence:

*Communication is at the centre of almost all the activities that take place in **our** daily lives.* (My emphasis).

In evoking such collegiality, he engages the reader (Hyland, 2004b, 2005a). Reader engagement is an important aspect which brings about the social interactive aspect of academic writing as it demonstrates that knowledge is constructed in interaction with either the reader in the text (Thompson, 2001) or with the perceived reader (Matsuda, 2001; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). In using this construction, it could be argued that he shows an implicit awareness of the need to engage in writing as social semiotic work. His rationalisation of this construction buttresses this view specifically when he observes that he did this because:

> I wanted the person on the other end to feel related to what I was saying, I think that's why I used OUR in the opening statement to kind of generalise everyone so it pretty much puts everyone reading it in the picture …

In this regard, it can be said that Felipe's response shows that he is aware of the need to interact or "converse" with the reader. Such a view seems to be a common response by these novices I interacted with. This implies that they come to university with an understanding that writing has a relational aspect to it. In other words, all the participants whose narratives are presented in this thesis seem to show that they are aware of the need to respond to either the perceived reader/assessor or the reader in the text. In observing that the construction above was aimed at "the person on the end" or "everyone reading it", Felipe's view alludes to the importance of "interactional resources" in writing (Thompson, 2001). Apart from these "interactional resources", he also deploys some "interactive resources" (Thompson, 2001) as well.

7.4.5.2 Metadiscourse

One key feature of academic writing as social semiotic identity work is the need to handle "written text as stage-managed form of dialogue" (Thompson, 2001). Felipe's essay evokes this through his use of "interactive resources"; resources that help guide the reader through the text (Thompson, 2001). This is an important aspect of metadiscourse (see Hyland, 1998, 2005c) as through such constructions he explicitly organises his text and engages the readers. This is buttressed by his rationalisation of reader engagement above as something he did so that "the person on the other end should feel related to" further observing that this is open to "everyone reading it".

In this essay, Felipe deploys such metadiscoursal features in three instances which are highlighted below.

- **This essay will emphasis** (sic) on some of the barriers that students face in the process of communication (Introductory paragraph)
- **Finally**, emotional barriers this encompasses all human emotions like anger (e.g. shouting), fear (e.g. lack of confidence) etc.(Penultimate paragraph)
- **In conclusion**, communication barriers exist in almost every case of our lives but what matters is how we can minimise these barriers … (Concluding paragraph)

The central aspect of metadiscoursal constructions is the desire to have "addressees to be drawn in, engaged, motivated to follow along, participate, and perhaps be influenced or persuaded by a discourse" (Hyland, 2005a, p. 11). For instance, the first bullet point seems to have been designed to "draw in and engage" the reader thereby prompting them to "follow on". This is the case as the statement promises the reader what the text will do. Furthermore, the second construction places the point in a chain of other interrelated points and signals its relationship to them. The third construction explicitly announces the "conclusion" of the discussion allowing the reader to know where they are in the discussion. Such metadiscoursal constructions will likely keep the reader motivated to follow along with the discourse as it is being constructed. What does Felipe himself make of such features?

When asked to reflect on the inclusion of the explicit phrase announcing what the essay will do (first bullet point above), he responds by saying that this is meant "to let the reader know what to expect in the essay or what the essay is all about". This indexes his desire to help the reader follow along as argued above as well as his "stage-managing" this dialogue. He then goes on to take an interesting position on the other two constructions.

Geoff: consider the following statements which are in various part of the essay:

- *Finally* emotional barriers … (paragraph 6 line 1)
- *In conclusion,* communication barriers exist … (concluding paragraph line 1)

What role do these statements play in the framing of what you wanted to say? Who are they meant to benefit?

Felipe: I think I am used to that sort of thing where I practically number the points in the essay like firstly, secondly, and so on. I personally can't say what role they play or to whom they benefit (sic)

His saying this could imply that he perceives metadiscoursal competence as an ingrained habitus which he carries along to all writing episodes ("I am used to that sort of thing"). However, saying that he does not know the role of these constructions suggests that he deploys these competences subconsciously. This is not a surprising point as most of the times "the production of contextually relevant socio-political relations of similarity and difference" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004, p. 382) is indeed done subconsciously as Felipe seems to have done here.

7.4.6 Summary

Felipe comes to university feeling enthusiastic that he will do well here as the writing he is being asked to do now gives him the opportunity to "place something of himself in it". This resonates with his view that an academic writer ought to express their opinions as this is what makes them a good writer. Along these lines, his narrative evokes the view that identity can be perceived from both an "inner" as well as "outer" perspective with the former being self-definition and the latter a definition of self by others. Since he is of the view that academic writing has to feature both what others say as well as the writer's opinions, it is not surprising that Felipe marshals other voices in the first essay. This he does so that he puts weight on his points as well as make an impression on the lecturer that he had studied. However, through his citation practices he "invents himself as a novice member of the various academic communities he encounters on campus" (Guleff, 2002, p. 212). Thus, his citation practices construct his writing as an interim literacy practice as they demonstrate a developing understanding of how things ought to be done.

His ability to evoke the other in the first essay through manifest intertextuality enables him to intesubjectively engage the discourse he is constructing. This cannot be said of the second essay. In following the lecturer's steering of the task, Felipe creates a voiceless essay. This voicelessness means that he did not create a space for intersubjective engagement. The highlight of the second essay however is how his rationalisation of the various moves he made in writing it indicate the important role of the social structure or the institutional centripetal force in making students like Felipe act in a certain way. This shows that while he is indeed becoming something in every writing episode, such becoming is hardly happening on his own terms.

Chapter 8   : Hope

8.1 Literacy history

8.1.1 First to come to university

Hope is the first born child in a family of five. Being the first born, she is the first child in her home to attend university education. Just like Khumbo and Felipe, Hope came to university immediately after her secondary education. At the time I met her and asked her to take part in this study, she had just started her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

8.1.2 Early literacy encounters

Hope recalls that she did very little reading while growing up. The reading she remembers doing was only related to school work. She recalls that "school books were (available) but the other books I wouldn't say they were available" further observing that "honestly, I was just reading the school books … I spent most of my time reading the school books". Only reading school related textbooks during the early stages of life is something Kai also remembers doing (see Chapter 5). In further reflecting on her reading during this period of her life, Hope describes herself in an interesting way.

> **Geoff**: Why do you think that is the case why don't you like reading?
>
> **Hope**: I think I'm just lazy that would be the case I'm lazy

Such perception of herself as "lazy" later on surfaced in the manner in which she approached her first essay. In the meantime, it is important to note that Hope observes that she did not go beyond school text books because of her laziness and not lack of opportunities to read. This is the case as she pointed out that her father, whom she considers to be a good reader, "has a collection of novels" which he "reads now and again". In this vein, unlike Khumbo who recalls that she travelled to libraries to read newspapers and books while she was growing up, according to Hope, she did not bother much to read because she was lazy. In this regard, it could be said that she describes herself by looking within as opposed to looking to the social space as being responsible for her limited reading as she seems to have done earlier when she hinted that "the other books were not available".

Just like with reading, Hope recalls that the text types which she wrote growing up were mainly those assigned to her by her teachers.

> **Geoff**: Okay now what about writing what sort of writing did you do growing up?
>
> **Hope**: I think only school things if I am given an assignment then I have to write.
>
> **Geoff**: so you did this kind of writing in all the subjects you were doing?
>
> **Hope**: I would say yes and maybe writing in a diary if you can say that at secondary school I used to write that a lot in the in my diary yes.

As she reflected on her writing experiences around this period in her life, Hope recalls looking up to her younger sister's writing as of a good quality. In other words, she recalls that she considered her younger sister as a "good" writer. When asked for further specific reflective analysis on what makes her sister a good writer Hope is of the view that she makes her "stories" believable and engaging; she writes stories which make the reader "feel like it happened somewhere" and as such makes one to "continue reading".

Her evaluation of "good" writing and or writers seems to lean towards fiction or creative writing as the basis for judging the quality of writing. Thus, just like Kai earlier who looks up to Chinua Achebe as a good writer who makes his writing come alive and believable, as well as Felipe's evaluation of good writing as something that has a touch of ambiguity, Hope could also be said to consider "good" writing through the creative writing lens. This should not be surprising as the most important sustained writing which these novices have been analytically exposed to prior to university is fiction. This observation seriously calls into question the view that an education system which largely exposes students to fiction writing could then prepare these novices for all writing demands which they will encounter in university (see Chapter 2). The repeated indexing of fiction or story writing as the point of departure in evaluating "good" writing by novices who come to university in Malawi could be taken to be indicative of the gap in understanding entry-level competencies which novices bring from secondary school as Kai alludes to earlier (see Chapter 5). This could be the case since, on one hand, novices consider story writing as the basis of "good" writing while lecturers, on the other, seem to expect these novices to come to university already prepared for academic writing as Kai observes.

8.1.3 Autobiographical self: *I was good*

Contrary to her view of self as a lazy reader, Hope came to university feeling more positive about her writing abilities. She recalls that while her sister whom she considers to be a good writer has not influenced her writing in any way, her teacher has. This largely came about in two main ways. Firstly, the teacher in question gave her advice on

"how to represent ourselves in writing". In saying this, it seems that the teacher might have been alluding to writing as identity work; as something that involves self-representation (cf., Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998). If this is so, then either Hope did not fully grasp this understanding or she feels that this does not apply to academic writing as she is of the view that self-representation is not an important aspect of academic writing (see 8.2.1). Apart from the advice, the teacher's feedback, mainly through grades, implicitly impacted how she perceived herself as a writer.

> **Geoff**: Okay what have others said about your writing abilities?
>
> **Hope**: ahm its only school … the teacher would congratulate you can see with the marks the teacher is giving you and you'd go like maybe she liked it that's why she's giving me these marks …
>
> **Geoff**: okay
>
> **Hope**: I can say I was good yeah somehow good I was.

From a dialogic perspective it could be said that Hope perceived herself as a good writer following the exchanges she had with a significant other; the teacher. Hope interpreted the marks she got from the lecturer to mean that "she liked" the writing which, to her, meant that the writing was good. This shows that her view of herself as a good writer was implicitly and discursively constructed in interaction with an "other". In using the marks obtained to describe herself in this way it can be said that her analysis highlights how identity is indeed a synthesis of an internal self definition and a definition of self by others more especially significant others (Hyland, 2012a). Furthermore, her response here seems to also allude to how she might have been made to "lose an identity" as a good writer as she made the transition to higher education. In saying that she *was* a good writer, Hope implicitly claims that this is no longer the case. This can perhaps be explained by saying that making the transition to higher education has "deskilled" her into feeling inadequate as a writer (cf., Preece, 2009; Angelil-Carter, 2014). So, how did she handle this transition more broadly?

8.2 Making the transition

8.2.1 A different terrain

Just like Kai and Felipe earlier, Hope observes that there are differences between the writing practices of secondary school and those of university. Mainly using an EAP assignment which I did not analyse for this project as I felt that it was not too dissimilar to the ones they are asked to do in secondary school, she observes that:

> I think it's so different because ahm … I had to express my views on that particular thing how I feel about it so I would engage more myself all of myself in it to write … so it's different because at secondary school you are just given a topic do this and you had just to research after finding the information you just write down the information … with the essay I was given it was so different because … I had to express my views unlike in secondary school just had to write something that is already there.

Hope observes that the writing she did in secondary school involved "writing something that is already there". This is an observation the other participants have also made (see Kai, Khumbo and Felipe's narratives in the previous chapters). This implies that the writing these novices do prior to coming to university in Malawi does not provide opportunities for the investing of self (see Ritchie, 1998). Her understanding of university and/or academic writing as reflected in this response at this point seems to suggest that expressing one's opinions or views is central in academic writing noting however that this (expressing one's opinions and or views) is something she is not used to as she did not do this in secondary school writing.

In further exploring how she managed this transition to university using the first two assignments she did as an analytical point of departure, Hope claims that she now seems to be more conscious and careful of how she comes across in her writing.

> **Hope**: … it was somehow hard you had to choose words to write you had to choose most of the things yes I can say words to write you had to choose you had to control …
>
> **Geoff**: … what made you to be so conscious of what you have to say and how to say it?
>
> **Hope**: people view things differently … I had to be conscious with how I'll represent myself yes because people feel view things differently
>
> **Geoff:** do you feel that this is a feature of academic writing? You having to be conscious of what you have to say and how to say it?
>
> **Hope:** no I don't think so

In this exchange, Hope's responses can be said to allude to some aspects of academic writing as social semiosis and/or as identity work. To begin with, her view here can be taken to exemplify how the reader affects the positions which the writer takes in written discourse (see Thompson, 2001; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). Thus, her observation that expressing herself was influenced by her realising that "people view things differently" could be viewed as her implicit acknowledgment that she is engaging in reflexive positioning via-a-vis the other (Harré and Langenhove, 1999). Furthermore, her view above could also be taken to indicate that she is implicitly aware that writing is a form of self representation; a form of identity work. She thus seems to be aware that in

controlling what she had to say in view of what "others" think and or feel, she is also simultaneously controlling how she is representing herself. Such inextricable link between writing and self representation alludes to the centrality of authorial identity in academic writing; to the importance of the "authorial I" (Baynham, 1999). However, despite such seeming awareness of the importance of the "authorial I", Hope feels that carefully controlling how one represents themselves is not important in academic writing. Her view here can perhaps be explained by the understanding that most times novice writers are not aware that they are engaging in identity work as they write in academia; they seem unaware that academic writing evokes authorial identity issues (see Pittam, *et al.*, 2009). Her response here can therefore be said to evoke an ambivalence of some sort. On one hand it seems to acknowledge that writing is indeed a "stage-managed form of interaction" (Thompson, 2001), a central feature of authoritativeness especially from a dialogic perspective (cf., Tang, 2009). Yet on the other it denies the centrality of this in academic writing. Such ambivalence could be alluding to Hope's lack of awareness that writing is identity work.

As she did not feel that representing oneself is an important feature of academic writing, I wanted to know from her what she felt made academic writing peculiar or unique. Her response to this led her to elucidating what she felt is arguably the most important motivating factor behind her doing academic writing.

8.2.2 Academic writing: Why I write

In reflecting on the uniqueness and or peculiarity of academic writing Hope feels that:

> You have to be specific you just base on one thing you can't go abroad you just have to write on what you have been taught to write you can't just write anything coz that will be so wrong you'd be marked wrong for that and you'll have maybe lower grades than expected I'd say that.

This view evokes the importance of the centripetal force in influencing what one can say, how they can say it, and who they can eventually become (Lillis, 2001). In explaining academic writing in this way, it can be said that Hope views academic writing as largely about conforming to the regulative norms which the assessor sets around the writing task. In observing that "you can't just write anything but what you have been taught" she seems to be alluding to the point that the role of the academic writer is largely that of an assembler of text, in line with what they have been taught, rather than a producer of one. Furthermore, she also alludes to "impression management" as an important part of academic writing. She feels that one has to write

within certain boundaries if they are to get good grades. This evokes a tacit view of institutional power; of how the institution through the "experienced others" (i.e. the lecturers) influence the contents of novice writing. However, the influence of institutional power over the contents of writing seem to extend to all writing in academia even at the publication level (e.g. Casanave and Vendrick, 2008; Hamilton and Pitt, 2009). In this regard, it can be surmised that from an identity perspective, Hope's assertion here suggests that academic writing is indeed identity work at the heart of which is the desire, implicit or otherwise, to come across as a certain type of person for the sake of the other (Ivanič, 1994). This view of academic writing as identity work which borders on impression management as influenced by a more experienced other sees Hope reflexively describe herself in an interesting way.

> **Geoff**: … how would you describe yourself as an academic writer?
>
> **Hope**: I don't know you just write for the sake of exams … for the sake of your grades if you want good grades you'd come up with something that would be good …
>
> **Geoff**: Okay
>
> **Hope**: but honestly I can't rate myself because I write for the sake of the teacher for the one who's going to receive it that's what I usually do
>
> **Geoff**: so in other words the sole reason why you write is to get a good grade?
>
> **Hope:** I don't know I don't know but come on maybe at least for the lecturer or the teacher I'd say the teacher in this case to know that you think you have good thinking ability

Hope's claim that she writes "for the sake of grades" seems to suggest that for her academic writing is largely an assessment and not a learning genre. She therefore feels that in order to attract good grades, she has to appear as someone else; as someone who "has good thinking ability". This further alludes to academic writing as a form of self representation. Such feelings indeed suggest that academic writing is identity work as in wanting to appear as a certain type of person it could be said that Hope is doing identity work. Following the "inner/outer" dimension to identity introduced earlier (see Chapter 7), it can be said that Hope seems to lean more towards perceiving her identity as a writer as something that is ascribed to her by the other and not as something she defines herself (see Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 2006). This view is further augmented when she refused to reflexively describe herself as a writer.

Unlike Kai, Khumbo and Felipe who all described themselves as "improving" writers when they came to university, Hope refuses to describe herself in any way because she

feels that it is the lecturer who can do that. This refusal can be described from the perspective of self regulation. Thus it seems that Hope refused to describe herself as a writer because she is not aware of the writing standards which are expected of her in university. Such lack of knowledge of these standards implies that she has nothing to base her evaluation of her developing writing as well as her developing sense of self as a writer. This means that in entering the university in this way, Hope fails to "self regulate"; to detect the writing standards developed on the regulative norms of higher education (cf., Draper and Nicol, 2013) and apply those standards to her "work-in-progress" towards developing an understanding of her writing (Sadler, 2013).

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that Hope comes to university having done very limited reading as she feels that she is a lazy reader. Contrary to such negative self evaluation of herself as a reader, she seems more positive about her writing abilities in secondary school as she feels that then she was a good writer. This implies that this is no longer the case. In recounting her writing encounters growing up she hints at an underlying understanding that (academic) writing is about self representation as taught to her by her teacher. Such a view she returns to when explicating her perception of academic writing as she feels that she writes to make an impression of self on the teacher/lecturer for whom she writes. It will be interesting next to examine how such views impacted her writing as well as her views of the self she projects in it.

8.3 Talk around text 1

8.3.1 Context of situation

The first task I talked to Hope about was an essay she wrote for the module Business Numeracy (CD HPE1). The task required her to write on the topic "Using Mathematics in Business". Before engaging her on some specific aspects of this task, I first wanted to find out how she understood the task and how she prepared to write a response to it. This I did in order to obtain an understanding of the prefatory aspects of the actual essay.

8.3.2 Monologic addressivity

Hope recalls that she found the task ambiguous. This was exacerbated by lack of dialogue with the lecturer concerned over the specific demands of the task. To the question "how did you understand the task?" she responded by saying that:

> Ahm using mathematics in business actually I was like maybe the purpose of mathematics how maths help (sic) people in business in running the businesses.

The uncertainty she had over the demands of this task which is here introduced by "maybe" clearly comes to the fore when she was asked how she figured out what exactly the lecturer was looking for in setting this task.

> **Geoff:** ok what do you think was the lecturer looking for?
>
> **Hope**: actually he was asked that question coz because you can get it in two ways using mathematics in business as in how you can use the maths in business how it can yeah work in business or how's the other way of using math in business how we can use maths or the importance maybe it's different huh?
>
> **Geoff**: mhm mhm mhm
>
> **Hope**: how the maths is used in business or its importance yeah so you can get it either way but he didn't specify he didn't actually tell he just went like ah using mathematics in business so it was up to you the person to go like how the math is used or the importance of using math yes.

Such ambiguity coupled with the lecturer not being forthcoming with an explanation of the exact demands of the task, Hope observed, affected her "because I was in a dilemma … so yeah I was in a dilemma I can say". Monologic addressivity, a lack of tutor and student-writer collaboration in the construction of meanings to elucidate the complex relationship between wording, meaning and identity (Lillis, 2001), seems to be a common feature of the context of situation in which tasks are framed at the Malawi Polytechnic as other novices report the same as well (e.g. Kai and Khumbo). It is not surprising therefore that Felipe, who did the same assignment as Hope here points to this lack of dialogue with the lecturer as an important challenge to his working effectively on this task. This scenario points to the understanding that despite the multiplicity of contexts in which academic writing research has been conducted, mostly to investigate the struggles with writing, "the gaps between tutor and students' understanding and expectations are remarkably constant" (Lea, 2005, p. 193). This point is an important step towards our understanding of how the academy could also be contributing to the struggles with academic writing which novices face. This is so as how one construes a task determines how they construct a response to it (Hirvela, 2004) meaning that an inappropriate construal of a task will likely lead to an unsuccessful or inappropriate construction of a response to it.

8.3.3 Writing the essay: 'The internet and me'

As she grappled with the ambiguity of the task, Hope recalls that in putting the essay together she relied on sourcing information form the internet as well as what she thought/felt/knew about the topic. She recalls that:

> I wrote this in a hurry so basically it was just me taking the information not applying it but the first the first copy was me the way I write but this was just taking information straight from the internet and not changing anything just pasting.

This is something she remembered to have done as she claims to have lost the original copy which she had intended to submit due to a technical mishap with the computer she was working on. As such, she hurriedly put together this essay hence her claiming that she was largely just copying information from the internet in order to meet the deadline. Even though this is the case, Hope still felt that there was a part of her represented in this essay as she says that the essay is not entirely made up of information from the internet.

> **Geoff**: so would I be right in saying that it's not you saying this but it's someone else you're just …
>
> **Hope**: [maybe part you can't take everything you can add up something yes and it's me half me no three quarter three quarter the internet and quarter me.

If we are to consider an academic writer as one who endeavours to sound authoritative and simultaneously assert the right to say something of their own (Sheridan, Bloome and Street, 2002), it can be said that here Hope's response implicitly alludes to the importance of striking this balance in academic writing. Observing that the composition of this essay is "three quarters the internet and a quarter me" could be taken to mean that she implicitly acknowledges the point that successful academic writing involves a dialogue between voice and engagement. However, a closer examination of the actual essay itself indicates that Hope fails to portray or depict a separation of voice and engagement (see 8.3.4 below). This failure positions her as a novice; as not yet an insider who knows how things ought to be done. How does this come about?

8.3.4 Voice: not necessary

Hope's essay bears no manifest intertextuality of any sort (Fairclough, 1992). In this vein, it can be said that the essay does not make any recourse to "the use of manifest intertextual markers to acknowledge the presence of an antecedent authorial voice" (Groom, 2000, p. 15). Lack of a discernible voice of authority in the essay makes Hope's voice to be "at risk" as she implicitly claims full responsibility for all claims

made (Groom, 2000). This lack of attribution is interesting considering that earlier she had said that the essay is made up of "three quarters the internet and a quarter me" (see 8.3.3 above). Furthermore, the essay has a list of references at the end which she included as "we were told to state reference biography (sic) so … this is where I got the different information so I just had to write the reference where I got the information". Here, it seems that she included a list of references at the end to accommodate the demands of a system which she does not yet fully understand. This should not be surprising as accommodation seems to be a popular choice taken by people new to a community, in general, and novice academic writers, in particular (cf., Hamilton and Pitt, 2009; Wingate, 2012).

When asked to explain why she did not attribute any of the information sourced elsewhere within the text itself, she comes up with a shifting position to this behaviour.

> **Geoff:** so why didn't you cite the sources of information within the essay itself when you are stating for example this is this and then cite the source immediately why didn't you do that?
>
> **Hope:** ahm the time I was writing this I didn't know exactly on how to write the references how to cite yes so all I did was write them at the back

From the foregoing, Hope claims that she did not engage in-text citation because she "did not know exactly how to cite". While this statement positions her as being ignorant at the time, it also alludes to the point that the education system expected her to engage in something she had not yet been taught to. However, a continued exploration into whether she now is familiar with these citation practices, considering that this was her state of mind "at the time", reveals a shift in her position on this. In turn, her new position unveils something more complex at play here.

> **Geoff**: is that (citation) something you are familiar with now?
>
> **Hope:** not really we were just told on what to do we haven't written anything since we were taught
>
> **Geoff:** okay
>
> **Hope:** so I can't say I'm familiar
>
> **Geoff:** so how did that lack of knowledge on how to cite how has that affected the quality of this essay? How did it affect the quality of this essay? Did it affect the quality of the essay?
>
> **Hope:** definitely it just have to affect the essay but maybe it depend with the lecturer … maybe ahm it has but I don't think it's necessary to cite with him with mr. X I don't think it's necessary
>
> **Geoff:** why not why do you think so?

Hope: it's all math he just gave us this as the first thing I don't think that matters to him the citing I don't think it matters to him I don't think

Geoff: is there something he has said explicitly to say citing sources does not matter to me?

Hope: he didn't say that but maths is most of the times about solving so I can't say this matters to him to him what matters is solving.

A number of underlying issues can be deduced from this exchange the obvious one being that she is departing from her earlier position regarding the lack of "antecedent authorial voice" in her essay. Here, Hope claims that she did not marshal other voices as this is not necessary. This is a shift from her earlier claim that she did not do this because she did not know how to. She now feels that citing other voices in this task was not necessary as this practice does not matter in this module neither does it matter to the lecturer. This could be explained by turning to the mathematics habitus which she brings to this task.

Since the lecturer, by her own admission, did not explicitly say that citing sources does not matter, she nonetheless sounds confident that this is the case as "maths is most of the times about solving". As such, she feels, lack of citation will not matter as what matters is solving. This sounds a plausible explanation considering that mathematics writing does not require voicing and citation the way other disciplines would. Such understanding which Hope brings to this task is perhaps also the reason why Coman and Saul, participants whose stories I have not included in this thesis, included extensive formulae and calculations in their essays as for them an essay on mathematics "cannot go without solving". In Hope's case, this suggests that the writing moment is affected or influenced by a plethora of factors some of which go beyond the writing moment itself. For instance, her leaving out in-text citation is something she claims came about from her understanding of the discipline of mathematics and what is expected in it. In so doing, she positions herself as someone who is aware that each task requires and expects the performance of different identities. Thus, leaving out other voices in this essay could be taken to imply Hope's playing the game of academic writing according to disciplinary expectations or norms.

Hope's understanding of voicing and attribution as "unnecessary" was further highlighted when in rounding off some key aspects of our talk she reiterated that she did not do this as "I thought it was irrelevant" due to "the nature of the module". She then went on to say that "I didn't think about it (attribution) or even if a thought had come about me writing I don't think I could've written". In reiterating this, it could be said

that Hope sounds confident that she understands the demands of this task an understanding she brings from her general habitus of mathematics. This positions her as a knowledgeable persona; someone who is in control.

8.3.5 Engagement

Hope engages the discourse albeit at a minimal level. Her engagement largely centres on epistemic modality. She fails to engage the discourse intersubjectively (Du Bois, 2007; Chafe, 2009) mainly because the essay does not explicitly mark off "the other" to which she could have responded. The table below highlights some of the moments around which such epistemicity is established.

- Mathematics **can** be used … (paragraph 2)
- … one **can** formally start a business (paragraph 10)
- The costs **can** be raw materials and machinery.(paragraph 10)
- Human resources **should be** responsible for … (paragraph 4)

Why such epistemicity? While it is generally understood in discourse that both "can" and "should" are modal constructions which can be used to save face as they indicate a level of detachment to the propositions made, Hope's understanding does not reflect this. She observed that she used "can" in paragraph 2 as well as "should" in paragraph 4 because "the source I was getting it from … used that" further noting that "I didn't change anything". In saying this, it could be said that she closely mimicked the source text. Such close mimicking evokes debates around how closely novices can be allowed to mimic a new discourse and try it on without being accused of "plagiarism" (cf., Ivanič, 1998; Pecorari, 2010; Angelil-Carter, 2014). By lifting a text across time and space without observing the necessary citation practices it could be said that Hope engages in "patchwriting", a transgressive intertextual practice which positions her as a novice (Pecorari, 2010).

Copying from sources with minor alterations however has been identified as "inevitable as writers learn to produce texts within a new discourse community"; as they learn to "flex their muscles guided by the linguistic choices of the source authors" (Pecorari, 2010, p. 5). By engaging in patchwriting Hope positions herself as a novice writer who is trying to "flex her muscles guided by the linguistic choices of the other". Such inevitability of patchwriting especially among novice academic writers is what leads to my proposition for us to view academic writing in transition as a unique discourse in its

own right (cf., Spack, 1993) as I expound in greater detail in the next chapter. Besides this, it could also be said that this episode represents Hope's attempts at "becoming". Her use of modal constructions in the same way they were in the original text could be taken to be indicative of her attempt to "selectively appropriate the discourse of others". This is something she did subconsciously. Her subconscious "becoming" in this sense also highlights the subconscious nature of identity work more generally.

8.3.6 Challenges

The challenges Hope faced in writing this essay can be traced to her reflexive positioning as a "lazy reader" (see 8.1.2 above). She observes that the first challenge was finding enough information to meet the structural requirements of the task. She remembered that since she had "nothing to write" on the subject matter as she had no prior knowledge of it, she found reaching the required page limit difficult. This was so even though, by her own admission, she had used the internet to source information. She recalled even struggling to understand the information she managed to source on line observing that:

> … getting the sense of what they are trying to mean what are they trying to say from the source … for you to really understand that it was somehow a challenge not a big challenge but somehow it was a challenge.

Difficulties understanding the information sourced could also be responsible for the expressive nature of this essay. If this is the case, this essay could to some extent indicate her falling back on a way of writing which had served her so well in previous episodes in secondary school. Falling back on old practices to make sense of a new context seems to be a common strategy by these novices. This leads to the hybrid nature of the discourses they end up producing as I highlight in the next chapter. Thus, to mitigate the struggle to understand the texts she was reading, she recalls sifting the on line data "taking the points that I was seeing that maybe the points that were important to me so it was still a challenge". These are the points which she recycled as her own as highlighted above. Such recycling mirrors the writing she used to do in secondary school. It is not surprising that in hindsight she does not identify with the persona behind the essay. Failure to identify with the persona behind one's own composition is something which Kai and Khumbo also did (see chapter 5 and 6).

8.3.7 Final remarks: "It wasn't me writing"

Perceiving the essay perhaps as an assemblage of other people's voices or other people's positions and not her own, Hope recalls that she did not return to the essay after submitting it. Thus, she had problems identifying with it as her own creation.

> **Hope**: I didn't even read it I didn't after writing I didn't go back all I did was edit I was even editing right there I didn't go back to read it again I didn't.
>
> **Geoff**: why did you not do that?
>
> **Hope**: I felt like ah this is not me writing or even if I go like I should read it again find some mistakes where am I gona find the mistakes it wasn't me writing as in it wasn't me I was just typing.

In this exchange, Hope echoes Kai's concern that his first essay did not reflect who Kai is. Rather, it reflected the preparation that had gone into its writing. While he had attributed this to the "textual bias" in the academy, a bias which he felt muzzled his personal voice and or edited his experiences out of his composition, Hope's failure to identify with the persona projected in her essay had a different motivation. As she felt that she was blank on the subject matter and at the same time was struggling to understand the data she found on line, she resorted to "ventriloquating" those other voices she could hardly understand. This is the source of her distancing herself from the projected persona. Her explanation above could be explained from Goffman's (1981) distinction between "principal", "author", and "animator".

Hope's claim that she did not identify with the persona in the essay to the extent that she saw no need to go back and edit it as she simply typed it could be said to indicate that she views herself as a mere "animator" of the text. She does not see herself as the "author" or the "principal" of the writing. This demonstrates how she perceives herself based on what had happened in a social space. In other words, in this regard, it can be said that Hope defines herself based on how she had performatively engaged in an act of identity. It is important to keep in mind the way she defines herself here as later on (see 8.4.7 below) this seems to change.

8.4 Talk around text 2

8.4.1 The task

The second essay I discussed with Hope was one she had written for EAP (CD HPE2). The task required students to "*discuss* the barriers to effective communication which students (might) face". EAP is offered by the Language and Communication

department, a servicing department, to all first year students as I highlighted in chapter 2.

8.4.2 Making sense of the task

To understand what happened prior to the actual writing, I asked Hope to explain how she made sense of the task. To this, she recalled that she understood the task as requiring her to "*state* barriers that affect communication in general and from then on relate the barriers to students". From this response, it became apparent to me that she could have construed the task differently from the way it had been intended. This is the case as "*discuss*", as outlined in the task rubric (see 8.4.1 above), is not the same as "*state*" as was her understanding. The view that she might have gone on a different tangent to the one intended by the lecturer was exacerbated by the manner she arrived at this understanding.

> **Geoff**: how did you establish the demands of the task …?
>
> **Hope**: … I did a lot of reading around the subject in question and a lot of internet searching.

While it is necessary to read around a subject to get a feel of the key debates and themes around a subject area, reading around a subject might do little to explicate the exact demands of a task. This is something that can only be attained through engaging the lecturer concerned in a dialogue so that they explain the demands of the task. Unfortunately, this is something Hope did not do. From a dialogic perspective, it could be said that in searching for clarity of the task Hope engages the wrong "other". Thus, in order to get an explicit clarification of the demands of the task, she was supposed to have engaged the lecturer himself; the authoritative "other" behind the task. In not doing this, she ended up misconstruing the task. This is the case as, more often than not, students new to university interpret and understand verbs used in assessment rubrics in a manner different to that intended by lecturers (Williams, 2005). Thus, most times novices' interpretation of tasks tends to differ from their instructor's intentions (Nelson, 1990) as Hope's interpretation of this task strongly suggests. This evokes the point that there is a general concern in most contexts that lecturers and their students tend to understand university writing tasks differently (cf., Lea, 2005). Previous cases highlighted so far indicate that in Malawi this gap seems to be largely brought about by the lecturers' unwillingness to engage in dialogue with their apprentices. Hope's case however, while pointing to the same gap in understanding, suggests that the interpretation of the verbs in the assessment rubric is what brought about this gap.

Having interpreted the task in this manner, how does she view herself as an academic writer now? This will show us how her sense of self as an academic writer has evolved as previously she refused to self-regulate due to what I contend seems to be a lack of understanding of the standards of a new context against which she could reflexively assess herself (see 8.2.2). Before we turn to this, first I explain how she generally prepared to write this essay.

8.4.3 Preparing to write

Hope recalled that in the build up to this task she "did a lot of reading and … a lot of internet searching". This is something which she reported having done even in her quest to understand the demands of the task as outlined above. Previously, her colleagues said that they read around the topic either to "put weight on their points", as Felipe indicated, or to show that they have studied, as Kai and Khumbo observe. Hope, on the other hand, explicitly claims that she read for a reward. She recalls that:

> I did a lot of reading around the subject in question and a lot of internet searching. I know I had to thoroughly understand the topic and come up with a good essay *in order to be given good grades* hence doing a lot of reading around the subject matter.

Unlike her colleagues who read in order to make an impression, to be seen as a certain type of person (Ivanič, 1994), Hope just wants to get a good grade. This is what she had also said earlier (see 8.2.2). This once again evokes the point that for her essay writing seems to be more of an assessment and not a learning genre. Despite her desire to get good grades via her reading around, an intertextual tracing of her essay does not indicate any manifest intertextuality. This is a trend which can be traced even to her first essay and is something I will reflect on later below (see 8.4.5). Despite this continued lack of manifest intertextuality in her essay her view of self as someone doing academic writing seems to be evolving.

8.4.4 Self and academic writing: "I was proud of my work"

An attempt to link this task, especially her view of self projected in the essay vis-à-vis the persona projected in the previous essay, shows that her sense of self is evolving.

> **Geoff**: when we were talking about your other assignment on using mathematics in business you indicated that prior to our talking about it you had not gone back to it since the moment you submitted it for assessment. The reason you gave me for this was that 'I felt like this is not me writing this'. Looking back over this essay now, does it feel like it was you writing this?

> **Hope**: during the essay writing I was proud of my work because I did it on my own. I spent time reading around the subject matter. I tried as much as possible bringing my own views and opinions which (wasn't) bad.

In talking about the previous essay, Hope refused to identify with the projected persona because she had just done "patchwriting". In this essay however, she feels that she can identify with the persona as "I tried to bring my own views and opinions". When asked to point out an instance in the essay which indicates her views and opinions, Hope points to "paragraph number 2 the last line … about remedies to physical noise". She further claims that "I did come up with most of the remedies to the barriers of communication in the essay". In the box below I reproduce the paragraph in question.

The noise is grouped into three main categories, the environmental factors, ranging from the literal volume of a setting to the speaker's comfort level in that setting can influence the effectiveness of anyone's communication skills. For students, this aspect is multiplied tenfold. Students often face a great deal of peer pressure and fear of judgment, and as such, self-impose barrier. Reduction of the noise or reallocation of the parties involved to a quitter environment negates the barrier (sic).

From an identity perspective, it can be said that Hope feels that by expressing her views and opinions she has underlined what she had to say (cf., Ivanič, 1998). Expressing one's views and opinions is however just one side of the identity or authoritativeness coin as such views need to be built on what has already gone before. One's opinions have to be built on the authoritative other. This lack of an "antecedent voice of authority" in her essay, just like in the previous one, leads to a projection of a weak discoursal self in the essay. This can be said to position her as a novice who is yet to understand how to control discourse practices of higher education (see Gee, 1996) especially those which call for a separation of the voice of the community, on one hand, and the "authorial I" (Baynham, 1999), on the other. This could be linked to her "laziness" as I explain later below.

8.4.5 Voice

As indicated above, an intertextual tracing of the essay reveals that no "attribution" has been made to the "antecedent voice of authority" (Groom, 2000). From this perspective, it could be argued that all points made in the essay can be "averred" to Hope herself. This, like I indicated above, leads to the projection of a weak discoursal self as it makes the dialogic interplay between voice and engagement almost impossible. Overall, such

lack of a clear separation between voice, a community product, and engagement, her intersubjective reaction to that product, works together to position Hope as a novice academic writer; someone "unfamiliar with the ideas and methods of a particular discipline or subject matter" (Sommers, 2008, p. 158). This is the case despite her feeling more confident that in this essay, as opposed to the previous one, she expressed her own views and opinions as highlighted above. While this might be the case, failing to clearly demarcate her views and opinions from those she had read elsewhere makes her essay monologic. Thus, the essay comes across as the sound of one hand clapping (Thompson and Thetela, 1995). This is an interesting observation especially against a backdrop of her claiming to have obtained more knowledge about what academic writing entails (see 8.4.7 below). This could be explained by the understanding that a level of knowledge about discourse does not necessarily translate into improved practice in the area(s) in which the knowledge has been attained. Furthermore, this could be interpreted to mean that the knowledge she claims to have now acquired about academic writing is still authoritative; not yet internally persuasive. This could be the case as it is only the internally persuasive discourse which can be reprocessed and reproduced in the discoursing moment.

Against this lack of antecedent voice of authority in the text, what mode of engagement does Hope come up with in the essay?

8.4.6 Engagement

The lack of voice in the essay rules out any possibility of an intersubjective engagement as intersubjectivity is attained when one reacts to the subjectivity of another (Du Bios, 2007; Jaffe, 2009). This in turn means that the only mode of engagement which Hope could and does come up with is metadiscoursal. This she does on two occasions in the essay. In introducing the third paragraph, she came up with the phrase "*on the other hand ...*" and she introduces the conclusion with the phrase "*In conclusion ...*". From a metadiscourse perspective, here she could be said to have "explicitly organised (her) text" (Hyland, 1998, 2004b, 2005a). Her rationalisation of the inclusion of such metadiscoursal constructions is interesting. She says that:

> Those phrases are linking words. I used those linking words to give the reader an insight of the paragraph, to give direction to the reader. They link one paragraph to another. In short I can just say that they connect the whole essay.

She went on to emphasise the importance or necessity of doing this by saying that "those words were directed to the reader. In my case, the reader was the lecturer". Such

a statement can be taken to indicate that she is aware of the "interactive" dimension of writing (Thompson, 2001); of resources that help to guide the reader, in this case her lecturer, around the text. What is interesting in her case is that she attributes this rising awareness of interactive resources to the texts she had been reading in preparation for this essay.

> **Geoff:** … how is this reading reflected in the actual essay itself?
>
> **Hope**: the reading around helped me in the way I connected one sentence to the other. The reading around was also reflected by how the essay was flowing and the way I was explaining each barrier to communication.

One outstanding feature of her response above is how she attributes the "flow" of the essay as well as how she managed to connect sections together to the reading she did. She thus seems to have "mined" (Hirvela, 2004) metadiscoursal and/or interactive aspects of texts from those she had been reading. Mining these metadiscoursal features, just like she did in the previous essay, could be taken to be her attempts at selectively appropriating the discourse of others. An understanding of the interactive and interactional side of (academic) writing seems to be a key theme with the participants I interacted with. If this is anything to go by, such knowledge could be used as a starting point in introducing student writers in Malawi to writing as social semiotic work that has identity implications (Tang and John, 1999).

In the final analysis, how does Hope feel about academic writing, in general, as well as about her trajectory towards becoming an academic writer, in particular?

8.4.7 Being appropriated by another discourse

Hope's change in her reflexive positioning vis-à-vis academic writing can be traced to the moment when she said that she feels proud of this work. This is in contrast to how she explained herself in relation to the previous essay. Such positive feelings about herself as a writer originate from "my views of academic writing (which) have changed drastically". She explains this "drastic change" by extensively quoting a text, supposedly on academic skills, by "Bailey, 2006". In quoting Bailey, she outlines "four parts" of academic writing. She further observes that the drastic change has come about after "I did a research about academic writing". This research made her realise that "there is more to academic writing than I ever imagine". In view of this she feels that:

> As an academic writer my writing skills have improved enormously. I realised it's not just a matter of using complicated words when writing but following the rules that are set when writing … we have to apply the rules whenever we are writing anything.

Two main points stand out here. To begin with, just like Kai earlier, Hope is now referring to herself as "an academic writer". This could be taken to indicate that her sense of self seems to be evolving. Initially, she perceived herself as someone who used to be a "good writer". Then, she felt that she could not even reflexively self-regulate. At this point however, she seems to have gained confidence as she perceives herself as an academic writer; someone who has to write to the rules. Secondly, just like the other novices in this study, now Hope also refers to academic writing as guided by "rules" which have to be applied "whenever we are writing". This could imply that she is now aware of the regulative power of the academy over how she writes (e.g. Lillis, 1997, 2001). At a more subtle level, this could also be taken to suggest that Hope is being appropriated by the discourse of the academy as she sounds comfortable playing the academic game.

In the first two chats, Hope largely spoke of what she feels and or knows. However, just like Kai, for instance, in the third chat she more often than not speaks through the language and from the perspective of the academy. She speaks about what she is doing as well as the rationale behind it in normative terms. Hope's change in speaking position strongly suggests that she is being "appropriated" by the discourse of higher learning (Bartholomae, 1986). Since a student is always made in discourse, such a change in the way she perceives herself emanating from the texts she has been "researching" on indicates that "the personal and the public, people and texts cannot be separated" (Welch, 1998, p. 223). This in turn points to the messy and unpredictable process of becoming an academic writer a "process of becoming an educated person 'with things to say', a process without an endpoint" (Sommers, 2008, p. 162).

Chapter 9 : Discussion

9.1 Saying, doing, being

This thesis has largely been presented on the understanding that saying, doing, and being are intertwined (Gee, 1996). From chapter 3 as well as the presentation of the analytical cases in chapters 5 through 8, the central argument has been that saying something is a performative act which brings about one's being/self/identity. In this vein, I have argued that in saying something in a certain way the novices I interacted with variously brought about a multiplicity of "I positions". Thus in "saying" something they came across as a certain type of person. This "identity brought about" (Baynham, 2015) is, among others, affected by the "identities brought along" (ibid) as the literacy histories as well as the autobiographical self indicates. As such, in asking "what are students *doing* as they write for the academy during their transition to university life in Malawi", this study has implicitly asked the question: "what are novices *becoming* as they write in this threshold".

Against such understanding, this discussion first of all reflects on how the repeated literacy encounters novices have had prior to entering the university impact their approach to academic writing as they transition to university. This will be done by highlighting how Literature in English as well as the "guided" writing which they are used to in secondary school impact initial writing attempts. This shifting across two writing contexts leads to a shift in how these novices perceive themselves as they enter a new community.

From a reflection of the impact of this habitus brought along, the next section of this discussion will examine how such views of writing brought to the university affect the novice's attitudes towards and relating with the voice of the academy through manifest intertextuality. This will lead to an exploration of how such relational work is tied to views of the self as well as to how novices understand each writing "episode". Such relating with voice and the views of self it evokes will lead to an understanding of how different writer/participants dialogically engaged this voice of authority and power. This will lead to my highlighting the three main modes of engagement which these novices deployed. In the final analysis, this discussion will highlight the various challenges which novice academic writers encounter in their quest to align with disciplinary traditions towards becoming who they can be in this community. These range from a lack of dialogue with the experienced other to their inability to dialogue with texts

which they largely consider to be "authoritative". The reader should note that throughout the discussion, the term "novice" will be used to refer to the focal participants whose narratives have been presented in this thesis. Even though this is the case, the discussion will occasionally refer to other novices whose narratives have not been included in this thesis. Whenever this is done, the reader will be notified of this.

9.2 Literacy history

That an individual's background impacts the way one writes has become common knowledge in academic writing research (cf., Ivanič, 1998; Ritchie, 1998; Starfield, 2002). An exploration of this understanding from Gee's (1996) interrelationship between "saying, doing, and being" implies that involvement in the performative act of "saying" something, which brings about a certain "self" or "I position", can be traced to one's background. This understanding necessitated the search for both the "identity brought along" and the "identity brought about" in the discoursing moment (Baynham, 2015) in this project. The exploration of the identity novice writers in Malawi bring along points to two main areas of their literacy history as worth highlighting. These are the nature of secondary school writing which the participants are used to as well as the impact of Literatures in English in the formation of that habitus. Leaving these forms behind to embrace a new way of writing, the discussion will highlight, profoundly affects novice sense of self in this liminal phase of their lives.

9.2.1 Secondary school writing: Hardly heuristic

Participant reflection on their literacy histories, in general, and their writing prior to entering university, in particular, reveals several aspects which seem to impact their academic writing in university. To begin with, all participants seem to agree that secondary school writing markedly differs from what is required of them in university. This is not a surprising point in itself. However, it is the *nature* of the secondary school writing which is of interest here. For instance, Hope (Chapter 8) recalls that secondary school writing was largely "guided" as it involved "writing down the information that is already there" (see 8.3.1). In similar vein, Felipe (Chapter 7) also observes that in secondary school, "we were instructed to write what they (teachers) were expecting in that essay". Picking up the same point, Kai (Chapter 5) also highlights the guided nature of the writing he used to doing, this time around, at the Malawi College of Health Sciences. He recalls that the writing he is familiar with from his training as a dentist was largely about "summarising *what was already there* to make somebody understand".

Such observations sum up the difference across the two writing contexts as "in college students are asked to do *more* than a plot summary, *more* than cut-and-paste presentation of secondary sources" (Sommers, 2008, p. 152, emphasis hers).

Sommers' (2008) observation above sums up these novices' transitioning very well. This transitioning both "de-skills" and confuses them (Preece, 2009; Angelil-Carter, 2014) but also highlights the view of writing which these novices bring to university. In writing only from sources in a prescribed manner to meet set requirements by the teacher as well as simply writing summaries of what is already there, these novices come to university having not done any academic writing *per se*. If we are to understand academic writing as writing that involves learning a subject and demonstrating that learning (cf., Ivanič and Satchwell, 2008), being told what to say does not constitute academic writing neither does simply summarising what is already there. This is the case as such form of writing simply involves "retrieving a fixed body of information and putting it in a correct form in order to meet the requirements of the teacher and institution" (Ritchie, 1998, p. 143). This form of writing is meant to discipline as it has its roots in behaviourist thinking (cf., Coe, 2002). Two important views emerge from this.

These novices then come to university with a view of writing as a means of conforming to the status quo; as a means of accommodating institutional norms as expressed by the teacher. This could explain why most undergraduates I have interacted with at the institution over the time I have taught there seem to have problems challenging and questioning texts rather choosing to view them as "authoritative". Such views of self as powerless in the face of authoritative texts also figures prominently in these participants' rationale for engaging in intertextual practices as they write (see below). Thus, most chose to adopt and perpetuate the position of powerlessness in their dialoguing with texts as I explicate later below. This attitude or approach can be traced to their literacy histories. Furthermore, such encounters impact how authoritative these participants come across in their writing.

One dimension to asserting authoritativeness in writing is taking a personal stand in the text, a move which establishes a credible scholarly identity (Ivanič, 1998) or an authorial presence (Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič and Camps, 2001; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). This is the case as authorial presence, or taking a personal stand in the text, indicates that the writer has something to say (Ivanič and Camps, 2001). Such moves establish the self-as-author (Ivanič, 1998). Unfortunately, for these participants

who have been inducted into writing as a means of conformity to the status quo, this is something they find difficult to achieve. Despite the university writing context expecting and/or requiring them to assert an authorial presence, most of these participants still prefer to edit out their presence from their writing. This can be attributed to their previous writing encounters which hardly gave them opportunities to appropriate language for their own intentions and imprint it with their own voice (Ritchie, 1998). The participants therefore came to university having had limited opportunities to invest "self" in their writing.

The understanding above is nicely summed up by Hope's (Chapter 8) observation when she, in highlighting the difference between secondary school and university writing, observes that in university she has found out that she has to "express my views unlike in secondary school (I) just had to write what was already there" (see 8.3.1). In similar vein, Felipe also expresses optimism that he will be doing "good" here (in university) as the writing he is being asked to do now gives him the opportunity to "put something of myself in it". This is, Felipe observes, contrary to secondary school writing which required him to write what the teacher expected him to in his essays.

The explanation of the writing encounters which these participants have had prior to entering university index the writing perspectives prevalent in Malawian secondary schools. These encounters indicate that the approaches to writing which secondary schools in Malawi are using are hardly heuristic and discovery oriented (cf., Ritchie, 1998) and as such hardly provide opportunities to these students to invest something of their self in it. In this regard, it is erroneous to expect that such a system will then make these novices come to university fully equipped to handle the literacy practices of higher education as seems to be the case in Malawi (see Chapter 2). Even though they are able to bring along to university some "portable resources" (Blommaert, 2005) which they deploy to good effect, the writing approaches they are used to are hardly sufficient to prepare them for the argumentative writing of the academy. This is so as the writing they are used to doing in secondary school is merely expressive writing; more personal than academic (cf., Matsuda and Jeffrey, 2012; Angelil-Carter, 2014). It is such expressivist writing perspectives which these novices internalise and bring to university. They thus internalise the view that writing is done to conform to institutional norms. This further indexes the point that "the chief function of writing in (these) schools is seldom heuristic and is usually evaluative, to test … conformity to institutional rules" (Ritchie, 1998, p. 134). As they encounter the "rules" and

"regulations" of writing in the academy, these novices see themselves as powerless in relation to institutional voices. This in turn see most of them view themselves as mere ventriloquators of other people's voices, other people's positions. This is an important step towards our understanding of the "inner/outer" dimension to the identity work they are doing as they write. I will keep returning to this understanding throughout this discussion.

From the foregoing, as they find themselves in this threshold, it is not surprising that these novices have problems with this transitioning. This largely comes about as there is a huge gap between the level and amount of writing they have done so far and what is now expected from them (cf., Braxley, 2005). This is something Braxley (2005, p. 21) also observes of graduate students in their first year. He observes that:

> One reason they found their first experience of writing in graduate school so difficult was that they generally had little or no experience writing academic English before coming to graduate school. Most of the writing they had done in college English classes in their own countries had been informal and expressive.

This is a significant observation in two main ways. To begin with, it echoes Matsuda and Jeffrey's (2012) and Angelil-Carter's (2014) above in stating that the writing that mostly is brought along is "personal and expressive" as opposed to academic. Furthermore, the point that this transitioning is challenging for graduate students indicates the magnitude of the challenge for novice ESL undergraduates in Malawi. For the Malawian novice, that habitus is complicated further by their exposure to Literatures in English as a discipline of study through which they developed views of "good" writing.

9.2.2 Literatures in English

Apart from positions of powerlessness, largely fostered by the nature of writing they are used to, the role of English Literature in understanding writing also figures prominently in the novice's narratives. In reflecting on what they consider to be "good" writing, novices use Literature or creative/story writing generally as the yardstick for determining "good" writing and or writers. Thus, creative writing seems to be an important determiner for evaluating and understanding the nature of quality writing for these novices. For instance, statements like "I consider Chinua Achebe to be a good writer" (Kai) as well as Felipe's observation that "good" writing should have a touch of ambiguity are common statements. In similar vein, Hope recalls that her sister is a "good" writer as she has the ability to write stories that sound believable; as though they

actually happened. Perhaps more profoundly, this alluding to creative writing as the basis for determining "good" writing is put across by Felipe. Felipe feels that he is a poor writer because his writing lacks "ambiguity"; the quality to mean different things to different readers. From the perspective of reader response theory, all texts are indeed bound to mean different things to different people (cf., Hirvela, 2004). However, the claim that a text has to be ambiguous in order to be highly regarded might be seen as a characteristic of Literature.

As highlighted within the analytical cases themselves, such observations should not be surprising. Apart from exposure to personal and expressive writing, these novices have also been exposed to Literatures in English in their secondary school days. This is the reason why most of them come to university with a literary appreciation habitus. This has important ramifications on their efforts to write for academic purposes. This is so considering that Literature, among other things, encourages a directness and simplicity at odds with the academic style as academic writing favours the projection of certain identities and not others (Hyland, 2009). The identities favoured by academic writing are thus markedly different from those favoured and encouraged by Literature. For instance, creative writing approaches can thrive without "authority" and "authorising truth statements". This however cannot be said of academic writing. Their bringing such understanding then indicates that repeated encounters with certain discourses and discourse practices does indeed create a habitus within people one which is an important part of the identity brought along to new discoursing moments (Baynham, 2015).

With literary appreciation habitus as well as a personal and expressive view of writing brought along, upon coming to university novices encounter a new way of expressing knowledge one they have never engaged in before. They encounter a "new culture". Such encounters lead to a re-examination of how they feel about themselves as people, generally, and as academic writers, in particular. Such re-examination often leads to feelings of loss. Expressing feelings of loss when novices encounter a new culture is not a new observation in academic writing research (cf., Lea, 1994; Lea and Street, 1998, 2000; Ivanič, 1998). These feelings impact the way novices view and evaluate themselves as writers. Thus, these encounters and the feelings they foster impact their autobiographical self (Ivanič, 1998). How do the novices I interacted with describe themselves in this threshold?

9.2.3 The becoming self: 'I am improving'

As they make this transition to university and find themselves in this liminal phase of their lives, when questioned novice writers make important evaluations of themselves as writers. Such evaluation later enables us to understand how their view of self changes over time. At this stage, the striking feature of their evaluation of themselves as writers strongly indicates that most choose to describe themselves in transitive terms. This emanates from a contrast between the ways they perceive themselves in the present vis-à-vis how they used to perceive themselves as writers in the past. Their transitive perception of self is therefore a product of a dialogic interplay between their own view of self in the there-and-then and a view of that self in the here-and-now.

Novice participants generally came to university feeling confident about their writing abilities. Such positive feelings about self as a writer largely originate from the positive responses about their writing which they got from their teachers in secondary school. Such positive responses led many to indicate that they felt that they *used to be good writers* (see also Lea, 1994 on this). Central to this understanding and evaluation of self is an interaction they had had with a significant other. In other words, novice participants felt that they were good writers in secondary school judging by their teacher's responses to their written work. This implies that what had happened in a social space made them view themselves internally in a certain way; as a competent writer. One can then further argue that in looking at self as a competent writer, these novice participants in turn behaved and acted as such. In making this observation, such claims add to our understanding of identity as indeed brought about in the discoursing moment and as a construct that has an "outer" as well as "inner" dimension to it (cf., Jaffe, 2009). Thus, observations that novice participants feel that they used to be good writers based on how their teachers had assessed their writing suggests that indeed identity has a personal as well as social identification dimension to it (cf., Bartholomae, 1986). In other words, this further highlights that all acts of identity indeed reveal both people's personal identity as well as their search for some social roles (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 2006, p. 14); that the self is both a unique human being and at the same time a dialogic phenomenon (Viatanova, 2005). All this in turn highlights that an identity is mediated via a synthesis of an internal self definition and a definition of self by others particularly significant others (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 2006; Hyland, 2012a). However, encountering a new culture potentially changes that evaluation as well as that view of self.

From perceiving themselves as competent writers, itself a discursive position from times past, these novices' view of self seems to change in this new community. After encountering academic Discourses for about a month (after which I started interacting with them), participants seem to feel less confident about and at times even to disregard the identity brought along as a competent writer. Such discarding and/or loss of confidence in an identity brought along are crystallised by the statement: "I *was* a good writer, (but) *I am improving now*" (see Kai, Khumbo, and Felipe's stories). A further reflection of the state of loss which they seem to be in is captured by Hope's (chapter 8) refusal to evaluate herself as an academic writer claiming instead that it is only her lecturers who could do that. Such perceptions of self in transitive terms can be explained from two main perspectives in the identity discourse both of which indicate that identity is not fixed but evolving depending on context.

To begin with, these views indicate that in this liminal phase, these novices have lost an identity, as a competent writer, but have not yet attained a new one, as a proficient writer in the new context (cf., Martin, 2009). This brings to mind the understanding that effective writing is always good for *something* and achieves *situated* purposes (Coe, 2002, p. 201, his emphasis). In not being familiar with the "purposes" as well as the modes of expressing themselves in a new culture, novice writers feel lost. Such feelings of loss emanating from not knowing how to express oneself in a new context makes them in turn lose confidence in self as a competent writer, an identity position which they had discursively brought along. Furthermore, with such feelings of loss these novices then resort to perceiving self in transitive terms (*as improving*). This demonstrates how identity forms and changes over time and in turn indicates that identity is a dynamic process of identification rather than a static, unitary entity (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). Thus identity is not a state of being but more a process of identification (cf., Kramsch, 2015) and that, from an Ubuntu perspective (see Chapter 1), this identification is always on going as it is predicated on an "other". This being the case, participant shifting sense of self here can be taken to allude to the conflict between who they feel to be, on one hand, and who and what they can be or identify with, on the other. Such "inner/outer" conflict brings to mind the point that these novices are not only trying out new and different modes of analysis and identification but they are also in so doing constructing and perceiving themselves as becoming something. They thus allude to their "becoming self" (Clark and Ivanič, 1997) a self that is not fully a member of a community but is striving to belong to or identify with a new community. In other

words, such perception of self in processual terms as a "becoming self" can be taken to indicate that these novices are aware that they are still an "it"; "not yet a person".

This background understanding to the novice participant lives in Malawi can be summed up in three points. To begin with, these novice writers come to university with a literary appreciation habitus which influences their understanding of "good" writing. Secondly, they bring with them an understanding of writing as expressive and personal and as something that is done in order to conform to institutional norms. Conformity to institutional norms in their writing is something they found out applies to university writing as well as they later learnt that their writing has to observe "rules" and "regulations". However, their view of writing as personal and expressive stems from a lack of opportunities in their secondary school for writing that requires them to invest self. This implies that the challenges they faced to write in university are not down to them personally but rather to the manner in which they have been socialised into writing practices at school. Such a sharp contrast in the two writing contexts as they make this transition sees these novices change the way they perceive themselves as writers. This change sees them evoke the "processual view of identity" (Burges and Ivanič, 2010). They see themselves in transitive terms. This evokes the liminality of their state. Such liminality has a profound impact on the nature of first year academic writing as I argue later below.

This introductory part of this discussion further highlights the point that writing is a form of identity work as it has pointed to an important intersection between how one feels about self and how one projects that self in discourse and vice versa. With this introductory understanding in mind, the next part discusses novice practices relating to voice, their rationale for doing so, as well as how this positions them. This will then culminate into a discussion on how they perceive self as they are severally positioned in this identity work.

9.3 Taking up a voice

In this thesis, voice has been used to refer to a community product (cf., Hyland, 2002b, 2005c, 2012b); a particular way of saying something that will make a text to be easily recognisable as belonging to one field or another and as such make it to be heard (Hyland, 2013). Being a community product, voice enables writers, novice and expert alike, to "take a ride on the authority of others" (Elbow, 1991, p. 148) with a view to authorising truth statements (Baynham, 1999). In this regard, in appropriating the

discourse of others, writers take on the voice of an authority (Bartholomae, 1986). This is particularly important for novices considering that they do not have an authority of their own but are rather, in taking this ride on the back of others, writing their way into authority (Sommers, 2008). This means that a novice text without the authoritative voice lacks authority. Since integrating multiple voices into their text is something new to them, it becomes a major challenge as the data in this study shows. One such challenge is that these novices struggle to attribute this voice properly and mark it off as separate to what they have to say. This often leads to "minor linguistic infelicities" (Groom, 2000, p. 16) which in turn positions these writers as novices engaging in an interim literacy practice (Paxton, 2006, 2007). Part of this struggle comes about as they are expected to attribute to sources before they get to understand how and why they have to do this.

9.3.1 Initial attempts

Of the four novices, Kai, Felipe, and Khumbo manage to properly integrate other voices from the community into their writing and clearly mark them off as being separate from what they have had to say. Hope on the other hand struggles to do this. Despite her failure to do this like her colleagues, Hope nevertheless claims that her essay has been made up of "other voices" as she claims that she visited several sites on the internet for information. Such disparity in treating other voices in their essays indicates that while Kai, Khumbo and Felipe managed to "attribute" other voices through manifest intertextuality, Hope on the other hand attributes everything she said in her essay to herself (see Groom, 2000).

In failing to mark her voice as separate from and built around the voice of the academy, she puts herself in a precarious position one which sees her claim authority over all statements inscribed. Hope's failure to clearly attribute the voice of the discipline suggests that, unlike her colleagues who have somehow become competent in handling voice through attribution, she approaches this task the way she did her secondary school texts; as a personal and expressive text. This observation is an important precursor to our understanding of novice academic writing, especially at first year level, as a blend or hybrid of portable resources brought along with the new knowledge and competencies as they have been acquired at any point in the writing trajectory. Falling back on familiar knowledge and understanding to make sense of the literacy demands of a new context is not uncommon (cf., Angelil-Carter, 2014).

From an identification and identity perspective, Hope's case indicates that the ability to integrate other voices with one's own ideas is an important critical feature of academic discourse which oftentimes limits novice entry and full participation in the academic community (Elbow, 1991; Flowerdew, 2001). This is so as in attributing everything to herself, something which was acceptable in secondary school, Hope can be said to have lost the opportunity to be heard as this both positions her as ignorant of "how things ought to be done" and makes her writing lack authoritativeness. In attributing everything to herself, Hope fails to create the other; a foil against which she could have her voice heard (Leki, 2007). This is the case as citations are *explicit* manifestations of the other (Fløttum, 2005). In failing to explicitly bring about the other, she fails to performatively bring about their existence thereby missing out on the opportunity to use them as a background against which she could sound her own voice (Recchio, 1998). Thus, her writing lacks the "authorising truth statements". Such an instance implies that novice writers have to be taught that the only way they can have their individual voice heard is through a careful management of the other, the voice of authority and power (cf., Clark and Ivanič, 1997).

Hope's case here exemplifies one way in which novices handle intertextuality in their writing. As earlier indicated, the other three novices managed to bring about the "other" though manifest intertextuality. How then do those novices who managed to explicitly manifest the other rationalise the need to do so?

9.3.2 Rationale for intertextuality

Key to the rationale for intertextual practices presented below is the novice writer's desire to be seen in a certain way; to come across as a certain type of person (Ivanič, 1994). As I explain below, in reflecting on their first essays, novice/participants largely indicated that they took up the voice of the other in their writing because of how they felt, on one hand, and how they wanted to be perceived by the marker of their essays, on the other. In explicating this, it becomes evident that the identity and identification work these novices are doing as they write has an "inner" (self-perception) as well as an "outer" (perception and definition of self by others) dimension to it (cf., Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 2006; Jaffe, 2009; Hyland 2012a). To begin with, novices stated that they took on the voice of the academy as they felt inadequate. Such feelings, the participants claim, fostered the drive to make an impression on the community's gate keeper, the lecturer, who was to mark their work.

9.3.2.1 Seeking safety and assurance

Following interaction with both academic members of staff as well as fellow novices at different levels of the academy, novice writers came to understand that they will have to do "referencing" (Khumbo, Chapter 6) as part of academic writing. Such understanding led them to intertextual practices. However, this they largely do from a position of powerlessness. Novice writers observe that they incorporated other voices into their essays as "I wasn't sure that I could come up with an essay simply using my understanding of the topic" (Kai). In such vein, they use voicing strategies to place themselves "on the safe side" (Khumbo) a safety that comes about as voice "puts weight on my points" (Felipe). The view that voice "puts weight on one's points" has also been noted elsewhere (cf., Baynham, 1999; Casanave and Vendrick, 2008; Angelil-Carter, 2014). However, the position from which the novices arrive at this attempt at "authorising truth statements" is that of powerlessness.

For instance, Felipe states that he brought in other voices into his essay as their absence could have led to him being accused of plagiarism. This implies that to him the appearance or presence of voices of authority makes his essay safe from such accusations. Thus it can be said that Felipe takes up voice to fend off possible accusations of plagiarism perhaps out of a feeling that his views alone are bound to be treated with suspicion (see Angelil-Carter, 2014). It can therefore be said that to Felipe populating his essay with other voices is a game he plays to look the part. His rationale suggests that he engages in a fundamental practice in academic writing to be seen in a certain way. Khumbo on the other hand observed that she referenced so that the lecturer concerned can then "verify" the authenticity of the claims made. This is a valid reason for intertextuality (Pecorari, 2010; Angelil-Carter, 2014). However, she was motivated to do this so that she puts herself on "the safe side". This she did after she was gently persuaded by the centripetal force of the academy working through her colleagues into attributing even her own statements to the voice of authority (see Chapter 7). She therefore relinquished her speaking position and attributed it to other voices on the understanding that this is how she will find assurance and safety by pretending to be someone else. Kai, on the other hand, pointed out that he took up voice as he felt that he could not write the essay using his own understanding of the topic. Such feelings of inadequacy on his part came about after he had realised that the academy has a bias for textual knowledge and a cynicism for personal experiences.

One common denominator stemming from these different reasons for taking up voices seems to be that novices feel powerless in facing the academy. Marshalling other voices seems to be a way for them to "play safe" (Read, Francis, and Robson, 2001). The way they feel on the inside about themselves in relation to the academy impacts the textual choices which they in turn make. They then take up other voices as a conductor marshalling the voice of an orchestra to help him sing his tune (Boughey, 2002) realising that on their own they cannot be heard. This they do not as the expert academic writer will do (to show awareness of the disciplinary debates and situating their point in what has gone before) but rather as someone who is feeling powerless and seeks to write his/her way into authority (Sommers, 2008). Such attempts at writing their way into authority by being seen to be a certain type of person further suggests that through such intertextual practices, these novices are doing identity work. This is the case as in doing so they then, inadvertently or otherwise, end up being seen as aligning to the academy's practices of authorising truth statements. This is the heart of the identity work they are consciously or unconsciously performing in and around the pages of their writing (cf., Starfield, 2004).

Apart from seeking safety and assurance that they belong, novice participants also take up voices in order to make an impression on their reader/assessor.

9.3.2.2 Making an impression

As they feel inadequate and perhaps also feel that they have nothing of their own to say, these novices take up the disciplinary voices in order to make an impression; to be seen as a certain type of person (Ivanič, 1994). Feelings of inadequacy as the grounds for engaging intertextual practice are best summed up by Coman (whose narrative is not presented in this thesis). He observed that he incorporated other voices as he felt that "what the lecturer wants is not something from me but from someone else so that is why I did not want to put myself in". This, he observes, was arrived at after the lecturer responsible for the task had "demanded" that they include references. Such "demands" seem to have been interpreted by these novice writers to mean that they have to edit out their personalities or self from their writing in favour of a voice the lecturer wants to hear. This voice, they seem to understand, is not theirs *per se* but someone else's; a voice which the lecturer can relate to and/or respect (see Khumbo, chapter 6).

Against such a background of mistrust for self, novice writers bring along other voices so that they make an impression as a credible person. In other words, apart from seeking

safety and assurance, novices also use this community generated product with a view to positioning themselves as a credible person; as someone who aligns with the discipline. For instance, even though she failed to explicitly bring about the other, Hope (Chapter 8) felt that she read around the subject area in order to come across as "someone who has good thinking abilities"; as someone "mature" (Joshua – narrative not included). Others, like Kai, were of the view that they did this so that they get good marks. Kai realised this after observing that the academy has a "textual bias" (Lillis, 2001); a mistrust for personal experience in favour of textual data. He observed that he had realised that he will not get good marks if he just uses his personal knowledge on the subject matter as the lecturer would dismiss this as hearsay. Such views have also been reported elsewhere (cf., Angelil-Carter, 2014). In this regard, his writing from sources can be taken to be his attempt at "writing his way *into* expertise" (Sommers, 2018, p. 157, emphasis in original); as a way of him "adequating" to the discipline (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004) or as a way of aligning himself to disciplinary practices. This is the case as underneath such understanding, as Khumbo (Chapter 6) asserts, is the need to bring about credibility to one's writing. This is something which is achieved, Khumbo observes, as in using other voices, she evokes an authoritative voice which even the lecturer acknowledges and respects. Thus to her "the lecturers trust those books … those books were written by people who are well informed on this subject matter".

From the foregoing, it can be seen that novice writers take up voice because they want to get good grades largely by coming across as someone who does what everybody in the academy does namely "ride on the back of the authoritative other" (Elbow,1991). These novice writers do this as a way of re-inventing themselves as an insider; as a way of aligning with disciplinary and institutional practice of being an academic writer. However, this is something they manage to do with varying degrees of success as most seem to struggle with citation practices. In view of this, it can be said that novice attempts to be seen as an insider only manage to position them as people on the margins of a community; as not yet fully a member but someone who is exploring ways of identifying with a community by, among other things, minimising difference and highlighting similarity with community members. In this vein, it seems that these novices have realised that academic writing, in general, and intertextuality, in particular, is an impressions game which they are ready to play.

In a nutshell, it is important that we perceive that their being and how it is enacted is constructed in discourse. In perceiving and describing themselves in transitive terms

earlier, these novices had evoked the processual view of identity. However, as they talk about their writing they seem to be subtly positioning themselves as being on the margins of a community by playing to the rules. Next we turn to examining how their taking up of voices in another task four months later changed both the way these novices perceived themselves as well as how this perception was enacted in their writing. In this exploration we will begin to see how the changes which take place in the texts of these novices are commensurate to the changes that are taking place inside them and vice versa. Furthermore, we will see that each writing context constitutes a unique "episode" (Harré and Langenhove, 1999).

9.4 Continuing with voice

The point that these novice writers are experimenting with their identities comes to the fore in the manner in which they handled other voices in a second essay they wrote about four months later. The dynamic identity work they are doing in this task sees two novices change their approach to dealing with voice. Their change, on one hand, as well as one novice's unchanging approach to voicing reveal the dynamic nature of what is happening in these writing "episodes". An analysis of these episodes indicates that some novices are engaging in an on-going dialogue with institutional norms and conventions while others seem to simply rely on secondary school ways of handling academic discourse as they write.

9.4.1 Where is the 'other'?

An interesting feature of the second essays is the conspicuous lack of manifest intertextuality especially in the essays of those who had managed to do so in the first essay most notably Felipe and Khumbo. Hope on the other hand continues to demonstrate a lack of awareness of how "attribution" in academic writing is done. So, what accounts for the lack of an "antecedent voice of authority" (Groom, 2000) in the writing of the two novices who had managed to evoke this in their first essay?

Despite claiming that his essay had been influenced by and incorporates elements from other modules he had been studying like Law and Organisational Behaviour for instance, Felipe's second essay does not bear any traces of manifest intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992). This is in stark contrast to what he had done in the first essay where he had appropriated and attributed other voices in a more lucid manner. The same applies to Khumbo. In her first essay, Khumbo managed to evoke the voice of the academy as a way of aligning herself to scholarly practices; as a way of identifying with

what the lecturer also does. Interestingly, in the second essay, just like Felipe, Khumbo's essay does not manifestly mark off authoritative voices. However, unlike Felipe, Khumbo admits that this is indeed the case as she did not consult any text in the drafting of her essay. What made these two novices not to summon other voices to help with the tune they were singing this time around? (Boughey, 2002).

These novices disregarded other voices following how they had interpreted the task. Since the essay required her to write a critical assessment of the themes of jealousy and racism in Shakespeare's Othello, Khumbo construed this to mean that she had to use her own understanding of these themes. She did this because the assignment was given by an EAP lecturer. To her EAP assignments are a "mere training" ground in some aspects of academic writing. Despite being of this view, EAP tasks at the Polytechnic are given for credit as their mark contributes to the overall mark one gets at the end of the day. For Khumbo however, this assignment was nothing but an opportunity to "practice citing a play in an essay". With this understanding in mind, Khumbo fails to craft a strong discoursal self in this essay as the "lack of an antecedent voice of authority" in the essay meant that all points in it are attributed to her (Groom, 2000). This in turn positions her in this essay as a novice who has failed to develop her voice around what those who have accumulated cultural capital say. This is so as the most authoritative position in academic writing is to ride the authoritative other as elaborated above. From an Ubuntu perspective, it can be said that in academic writing one exists because of the "otherness" of those with power. This is something Khumbo does not exploit in this task. In the long run this also affects the way she positions herself as an author especially from an intersubjective or a dialogic perspective as I elucidate below (see Tang, 2009). This notwithstanding, Khumbo's experience here, as does Felipe's later below, indicates that the way one construes determines how they construct (Hirvela, 2004). In construing this task to be a mere opportunity to practice citing a play and not something beyond that, Khumbo in turn constructs a weak discoursal self. This indicates that novice writing is influenced by a plethora of factors which transcend the writing moment itself. One such factor exemplified here is how the writer construes a task. The same applies to Felipe albeit from a different perspective to Khumbo's.

Felipe's response to the lecturer's advice "not to look beyond the self" in responding to a Communication Studies essay yields interesting results. He in turn construes this to mean that there is no need to engage in manifest intertextuality as the lecturer had indicated that he should not go beyond personal situations. His situation differs from

Khumbo's in one key aspect. Khumbo's construal of the task was something that emanated from inside her; from her perception of the module in which the task was situated. Felipe's construal of the task, on the other hand, was influenced more by an "outside" factor in the shape of the lecturer responsible. His situation therefore indicates how social structure can and does impact the contents as well as approach to academic writing tasks; that more often than not student essays contain elements which are not decided by the individual student but by the education system (see Giroux, 1986; Lillis, 2001, 2007, 2013; Dudley-Evans, 2002). Thus, Felipe's situation shows that he left out the antecedent voice of authority as he was following what the lecturer had said (i.e. not to look beyond his personal situation). This situation makes us to appreciate that the "process of accommodation to reader's expectations is central to the discoursal construction of identity" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 157). In accommodating to the demands and/or expectations of the reader/assessor Felipe writes an essay devoid of authority; a voiceless composition which lacks authorising truth statements (cf., Baynham, 1999; Angelil-Carter, 2014). This should not be surprising considering that most of the times "what student writers really try to do is to accommodate to the perceived expectations of individual reader-assessors" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 244). Such understanding further highlights that the academy is indeed a "contact zone" (Pratt, 2008); a space characterised by an asymmetrical power relationship between novice and experienced "other", the lecturer.

Khumbo and Felipe's situations indicate that the novice writer's approach to writing tasks is also influenced by how they, either in isolation or in interaction with others, interpret the task itself. This construal is born out of a number of factors including accommodating reader demands as well as internal dialoguing with the task as Felipe and Khumbo respectively demonstrate. While Khumbo's influence came from her internal dialogue over the nature of the module she was writing in, Felipe's influence comes from an external dialogue with a significant other. The construal in both cases however led to essays which are monologues; essays which are tantamount to the sound of one hand clapping (Thompson and Thetela, 1995) as they fail to create a foil for the other to exist (Leki, 2007). From a dialogic view of authority in academic writing (Tang, 2009), one which sees an authoritative persona as dependent on the otherness of the authoritative other, the lack of an antecedent voice in these essays can be said to be an attempt to become without the other. This is the case as other voices "engender a

tilting point between self and other" by allowing us to perceive "self" and "other" as dialectically conjoined (Hunma and Sibomana, 2014).

In this vein, we can then say that each writing situation constitutes a unique "episode"; a sequence of happenings which are defined by participants and in so doing shape what participants say and do (Harré and Langenhove, 1999, p. 5). It seems plausible then to say that in defining the happenings around the second writing task as a training opportunity as well as a "look within oneself", Khumbo and Felipe respectively shaped what they could do and say in this "episode". Each act of writing is indeed an "episode of interaction" (Nystrand, 1989). Such understanding points to the complexity of what novice writers are having to grapple with each time they write. This complexity which brings to the fore the social interaction which is going on before the actual composition starts seriously calls into question the suitability of a study skills perspective to academic literacy development and writing in particular currently holding sway at the Malawi Polytechnic at the moment (See Chapter 2).

Considering how both Felipe and Khumbo had managed to marshal disciplinary voices and attribute them properly in the first essays such a lapse in the second essay indicates that:

> When students do not do a task to the expected standards and expectations it is not necessarily out of lack of ability or the knowledge but it is often times down to them having construed the task differently from what was actually intended (Carson, 1993, p. 94).

In defining this writing episode as being different to the first one, Khumbo and Felipe produced essays which are expressive and personal. By taking this approach, they fall into the same category as Hope whose essays continue to be "monologic"; devoid of the voice of the other. These scenarios can be summed up by noting that:

> Student misunderstanding of academic tasks sometimes see them only respond in an expressive way to a task which expected and/or required them to use source materials either due to a misunderstanding of the requirements and expectations on their part or because they are not yet ready to make a leap into more academic uses of prose (Spack, 1993, p. 192).

Here, Spack (1993) sums up the scenario of these three novices as Felipe and Khumbo can be said to have misunderstood the requirements of the task while Hope seems not yet ready to "make a leap into more academic uses of prose". Nevertheless, Khumbo and Felipe's situation here could also be taken to be indicative of the gap in understanding the academic writing tasks between students and lecturers which has been reported elsewhere in academic writing research (cf., Lea, 2005). This is the case

as it is not clear as to what the lecturer meant when he told Felipe not to look far in responding to this task. Such ambiguous advice could have contributed to the nature of his response. On the other hand, the motivation behind a lack of a clear voice in Hope's essay differs markedly from the scenario presented above.

Just like with the first essay, Hope continues to disregard building what she wants to say on the other. Her essays continue to come across as "the sound of one hand clapping" (Thompson and Thetela, 1995). The lack of progression in understanding how things ought to be done could be traced to her self-confession as a "lazy person". It could be said that it is this laziness which has seen her continue to write essays the secondary school way. This is in contrast to Khumbo, for instance, who in her quest to understand academic writing went as far as sourcing materials from another university. Her inquisitive attitude is something she brought to university as even in her secondary school days she had recalled "visiting the library to read books and the newspaper". In this regard, it could be said that Hope does not "invest" time and effort to cultivate a scholarly identity (cf., Peirce, 1995); an identity which is rooted in scholarship (Bartholomae, 1986). Unlike her colleagues Khumbo and Felipe who arrived at a position via internal dialogue or dialogue with a significant other respectively, Hope deals unproblematically with the writing situation by simply making recourse to the writing approach she is familiar with. Her approach indicates that her progression might have stalled as "it is through *continued* dialogic and revisionary process that students continue to *grow* as critically aware writers, readers, and learners" (Welch, 1998, p. 223, my emphasis). Her critical awareness therefore, unlike that of Khumbo who is investing time and effort to dialogue with various texts to understand her learning trajectory, could be said to hinge on her level of dialogic engagement, or lack thereof, with other texts. This perhaps stems from her laziness.

The seemingly simple situation above highlighting how these novices handled a "voicing strategy" (Baynham, 1999) indicate that:

> Each student comes to our class with a unique history, with different assumptions about writing, and different needs. So, we should expect that each writing workshop will compose a "polyphony" of disparate elements which each student will appropriate and reshape in different configurations (Ritchie, 1998, p. 145).

Thus, in our writing classrooms we have a multiplicity of trajectories reflecting various assumptions about and perceptions of self within academic writing. We have as many different trajectories to contend with as there are students in any one session. This has

important implications for pedagogy as I outline in the next chapter. In the meantime, this also indicates that we cannot make generalised statements about student failure to write to expected standards as academic writing is a messy, social undertaking. As three out of four novices did not take up voice for one reason or another in their second essay, the same cannot be said about Kai who continues to bring about a scholarly identity in his second essay by building on the other.

9.4.2 An exceptional case: Kai

Unlike three of his colleagues cited above, Kai, just like with his first essay, continues to demonstrate an awareness of and an ability to bring in the voice of literary criticism into his essay and attribute to it properly. To this end, he constructs a strong discoursal self as well a strong sense of self as a literary critic (self as author) as he ably and confidently positions himself as "someone in education" (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). Unlike Khumbo and Felipe above, Kai construes the task differently. It is interesting to note that he and Khumbo had done the same assignment. This brings the issue of construal as well as the uniqueness of each writing episode sharply into focus. As pointed out above, Khumbo construed the task to be an opportunity to practice citing a play in an essay. Kai, on the other hand, treats the task as another academic writing task which requires him to assume the role of an academic writer if he is to cultivate an acceptable scholarly identity. This is said to be the case as just as "the writing of research is related to the complex process of developing a research identity" (Thesen, 2014), the writing of an academic essay is also related to the complex process of developing an academic writer identity. This is the essence of the "saying/doing/being" interface (Gee, 1996) cited earlier. Furthermore, this indicates that the internal dialogue which interlocutors engage in influences the external dialogue which they will have with texts as well as the authoritative other. Such dialoguing forms an important part of these "episodes" (Harré and Langenhove, 1999).

In this sense, it could be said that the major difference between Khumbo and Kai's approach to the same task is how they perceived self as they approached the task. Kai seems to have positioned himself to himself as an academic writer who should performatively construct that identity in his writing as well. Khumbo on the other hand, seems to have positioned herself to herself as a novice; someone who had been given an opportunity to "practice". This difference in the perception of self as a writer meant that Kai searched for and incorporated the voice of literary criticism on the play he was writing about. Khumbo on the other hand, perceiving herself as a novice engaging in a

"practice" activity, saw no need to do this. Such a difference could also be attributed further to the biographical differences between the two. Khumbo, a young lady in her twenties, came to university straight from secondary school. In his late thirties, on the other hand, Kai came to university as a "mature" student. It could then be argued that the tensions which Kai experienced were markedly different from those of his peers.

As young people experiencing tertiary education for the first time, Hope contended with the ignorance born out of her "laziness" to invest time and effort to understand her new environment and reinvent self. Felipe, perhaps feeling subservient to the social structure was manipulated by the centripetal forces of the academy while Khumbo was influenced by her erroneous construal of the task at hand. As a "mature" student however Kai might have been going through tensions pertaining to his "assertiveness" (Sancho-Guinda and Hyland, 2012). In this vein, it is evident that the biographical make up of novices, which is a feature of how they have interacted with textual data before coming to university, influences how they perceive self in relation to the task at hand. This further highlights that each task is indeed a unique episode that is influenced by unique factors which impact perception of self and how that perception is going to be performatively enacted in written discourse. This is something that a "skills perspective" to academic writing, with its roots in an autonomous view of literacy, cannot adequately address (see Chapter 10 below).

The exploration of how these novice writers handled other voices across these two tasks indicate two important points. Firstly, it is evident that the writing they are doing is tied to how they perceive themselves as well as how they want to represent that self in their writing. This points to the writing they are doing as indeed a social semiotic practice with identity implications (Clark and Ivanič, 1997). Furthermore, this reflection on these writing practices indicates that this social semiotic practice is messy and unpredictable. Since each writing context is a unique "episode" as it is made up of a unique set of occurences whose definition determines what is said and done, we therefore need to be careful in determining the criteria for certifying novice academic writing. This is the case as some factors that determine how well novice writers do in any single writing episode lie in how they relate with an authoritative other who is not forthcoming with information on the exact demands of the tasks (see below). As they are not yet fully aware of some writing conventions, some novices resort to expressive and personal writing which they are familiar with. Others, like Felipe and Khumbo for instance, end up producing voiceless compositions not because they do not know how

to marshal other voices but because they have misinterpreted the task. This is why I feel that there is need to recertify novice academic writing as a unique discourse in its own right. This I highlight later below. From the foregoing, it is evident that one important implication for pedagogy which this reflection engenders is the need for writing courses, at the Polytechnic and beyond, to raise student awareness that writing is identity work (cf., Tang and John, 1999; Starfield, 2004). This I will expand in some greater detail in the next chapter. Next let us examine how these novices assert themselves as individuals who have something of their own to say. In other words, having explored how these novices relate with an antecedent voice of authority, the next section moves on to examine how they construct their "scholarly I" (Baynham, 1999); self as author (Ivanič, 1998).

9.5 Engagement

As has already been argued elsewhere in this thesis, academic writing is not just about evoking the voice of the academy. Rather credible academic writing is a dialogic process in which the writer takes a position vis-à-vis that voice and brings into play the authorial voice, the scholarly 'I' (Baynham, 1999). Thus, academic writers are also expected to position self as author (Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). The process of doing this is what I have called, following Kärkkäinen (2006, 2007), "engagement". The reader might want to recall therefore that the term "engagement" is being used here as an umbrella term for all projection of subjectivities in writing. In this sense, this section highlights the engagement strategies which novices deploy further highlighting their rationale and background motivations for doing so. As I do this, I will also highlight that the process of engagement breeds a multiplicity of I positions (see Tang and John, 1999).

9.5.1 Metadiscourse

One "portable resource" (Blommaert, 2005) which these novices brought along to university is metadiscourse. Even those novices who seemed to struggle with integrating other voices have no problem employing metadiscoursal elements in their writing. For instance, statements like "in this essay the author shall zero in on …" are common metadiscoursal constructions in the introduction of their essays (see Kai, Chapter 5 for instance). This is one clear way in which these novices engaged with the discourse they were constructing as it represents how they constructed themselves as actively involved in the construction of discourse. Such an assertion indicates that these

novices are already aware of the need to explicitly organise discourse (Hyland, 1998, 2004a, 2005a) an organisation which implicitly signals their awareness of the "other" for whose benefit they do this. What does this tell us then? How are they already comfortable with metadiscoursal constructions?

Novice academic writers report that this is something which they brought along from secondary school. This implies that these novice writers came to university with an understanding of the "interactive" features of writing which they then exploit to good effect. Such awareness and deployment of these interactive features of writing further indicate that they seem to understand that academic writing is a "stage managed form of interaction" (Thompson, 2001). Such stage management, the novices seem to be aware as well, involves interacting with the reader who they identify to be the lecturer who is to mark their essays. In this regard, it could then be said that these novices are subtly aware that academic writing involves a certain form of social interaction (Hyland, 2005a, 2009). Such awareness in turn motivates them to project something of themselves in their writing a projection which is directed at the reader. This is the case as, by their own admission, these novices indicated that they used such metadiscoursal elements "to let the reader know what to expect in the essay or what the essay is all about" (Felipe, Chapter 7). In so doing, the novice writers position themselves as the "architect of the essay" (Tang and John, 1999) an important yet subtle way in which writers evoke their subjectivity.

In organising their discourse for the benefit of the reader in this way these novices also simultaneously construct themselves as the person who writes, organises, structures and outlines the material in the essay. This means that even though they do not explicitly identify themselves using personal pronoun 'I' for example, in doing this the novice writers are present in their texts as architects of their writing (Tang and John, 1999). In this regard, it can be said that these novices came to university already aware of the need to approach academic writing as a "stage-managed interaction". This awareness sees them successfully negotiate a position for themselves as the "essay's architect". From a pedagogy perspective, this implies that efforts to help developing academic writers in Malawi might benefit from further exploring and understanding that these novices seem already conversant with the social interaction aspect of academic writing an aspect which sees them responsibly negotiate an important 'I position'; I as architect of the essay.

From the foregoing, I as architect of the essay seems to be an easy position for these novices to construct and/or occupy as it is something they had been taught in secondary school before they came to university. However, this is not the only means through which these novices constructed an element of the self in their writing. Apart from metadiscourse, another common engagement strategy in the writing of these novices is epistemic modality.

9.5.2 Epistemic modality

One way in which novice writers asserted their subjectivity is through epistemic modality (cf., Biber and Finegan, 1999). From time to time, novices demonstrated an ability to "hedge" (Hyland, 1994) some of their assertions. In doing this, it could be said that novices aligned themselves to academic writers as they engaged in something which they also do namely not fully committing to some asserted claims. For instance, Felipe uses the term "mostly" to good effect (see Chapter 7) as the instances he was referring to "do not apply to every situation". Such statements can also be seen in the essays of the other novice writers as well. All novices who employed such constructions in their essays seem to agree that they used such statements to signify that they do not always apply. Such ability to make statements with caution and distancing self from the authenticity of the claims made not only positions these novices as having something of their own to say but also enables them to identify with the way of doing things in academia. Such epistemicity therefore is not only an evaluative aspect but also one that aligns these novices with the academy's ways of doing things (cf., Groom, 2000). However, a reflection of how Hope engages with modality in one of her essays indexes something more dynamic at play in the novice's attempts to identify with the discourse of the discipline.

Her rationale for the use of a modal construction in her essay indicates the dynamic process of becoming which these novices are engaged in. She rationalises the use of a modal construction in her essay as "reflecting what the source (she had used) said". She thus used a modal construction in her essay by mimicking the source. She however did this without overtly attributing the mimicked sections to the original text. While her counterparts had indicated that they had used modality as a way of "hedging" their claims towards perhaps saving face, Hope suggests that she just spoke through the voice of others as though it were her own. This is a fundamental step towards our

understanding of what or who she is becoming in relation to the significant other she chose to speak through.

Pecorari (2010, p.5) contends that imitating and mimicking a new discourse one is trying to learn is almost inevitable for novices who "try to flex their muscles by imitating the voice of authority and power". This is something which even more experienced writers do as they seek to identify with the community of publishers; those who have accumulated cultural capital in order to have their work published (cf., Casanave and Vendrick, 2008). In this regard, it can be said that Hope does not do something out of the ordinary here. Rather, what she does here indicates that:

> In order to become a member of a community, to take on its discourse, it is necessary to try it out in some new way, and it is extremely hard to draw the lines between plagiarism, imitation, and acquisition of a new discourse (Ivanič, 1998, p. 190).

In this regard, I agree with Pecorari (2010) and Angelil-Carter (2014) in observing that such instances as Hope's unattributed use of the other's expression need not be simplistically dismissed as a moral issue but rather need to be perceived as an academic literacy issue. While it is common practice to treat such instances as "plagiarism" and admonish the novice writer for it, we "need to understand that many instances of 'plagiarism' in academic writing are not instances of intentional 'dishonesty', 'theft', or 'immorality' but problems of academic literacy" (Angelil-Carter, 2014, p. 61). It is possible therefore that Hope, and other novice writers like her, find themselves in such an awkward position because they are dealing with "an institutional practice of mystery" (Lillis, 2001); they are yet to internalise the codes of engagement in a new context (Read, Francis and Robson, 2001). Alternatively, this could be something novices do simply because they want to be seen as aligning to the way things are done in the academy or just to be seen at all. This could be the case as these novices are often required to produce scholarly writing within a short period of their arriving on our campuses (Braxley, 2005). This poses a massive challenge for them, one which is compounded further by the nature of the socio-academic networks on which they rely for information (see below). From an identity perspective therefore a number of issues can be teased out from such instances as this.

In imitating and mimicking the original text, Hope can be said to be "becoming" in the Bakhtinian sense as this presents her as selectively appropriating the discourse of others to make it her own. However, the manner in which she engages this process of

"becoming" seems to fall short of the manner in which established academic members do it. Thus, her attempt to do this shows gaps in understanding how attribution is handled in academia. Such attempts to transpose texts across contexts without showing a full understanding of how this is supposed to be done positions her as a novice; as someone "unfamiliar with the ideas and methods of a particular discipline or subject matter" (Sommers, 2008, p. 158). This positioning comes about as her attempts at attribution are fraught with "linguistic infelicities" (Groom, 2000).

Such unfamiliarity should not be surprising as these novices are for the first time being exposed to the ways of thinking and doing things in the academy and are at the same time expected to demonstrate mastery of those ways in their writing. This is a daunting task for them. As such, their mimicking and/or imitating established members could be a way of them not only identifying and aligning themselves with them but their own way of becoming who they can be in the academy as well. Imitation is their first step towards engaging in dialogue with the established other albeit in a manner that transgresses the academy. In this vein, I would rather look at this practice as indicative of "transgressive intertextuality" (Pecorari, 2010) and not plagiarism *per se*. I am saying this as I believe that 'plagiarism' "is much more a problem of academic literacy than academic dishonesty, although the latter does of course take place" (Angelil-Carter, 2014, p. 114). Thus, Hope's case here could be taken to exemplify that novices are not intent on cheating as such. Rather they just want to belong to a community and become what they can be in that community using the "available possibilities of selfhood" (Ivanič, 1998). However, the manner in which they attempt to do this positions them as novices as it indicates their transgressing "acceptable" intertextual practices of academia.

Apart from metadiscourse and epistemic modality, novice writers seem reluctant to personalise their writing. Such reluctance sees most novices not responding to the voices of authority and power which they marshal or evoke. In other words, most novices fail to intetrsubjecrtively engage the voice of authority and power as detailed below.

9.5.3 Intersubjectivity

Even though most novices managed to organise manifest intertextuality, especially in their first essays as highlighted elsewhere in this discussion, most of them do not

intersubjectively engage the voice of authority. Perceived from Du Bois' (2007) perspective, it could be said that most novices struggle to take a stance; to build on what has gone before to assert what they have to say. This is said to be the case as intersubjectivity is achieved when one reacts to the subjectivity of another (cf., Du Bois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009); that is, intersubjectivity is double-voiced. While Felipe, Khumbo, and Kai demonstrate some competence in handling manifest intertextuality in their first essays, their inability to react to the subjectivity they speak through mean that they fail to mark their stance intersubjectively; they fail to engage intersubjectively with voice. For Hope, on the other hand, her failure to evoke voice at all via manifest intertextuality, means that she did not provide herself an opportunity to take an intersubjective stance to what she was putting across (Leki, 2007). Thus her inability to bring in the voice of the other into her essays made her essays a monologue or the sound of one hand clapping (Thompson and Thetela, 1995). From an Ubuntu perspective it could be said that such an approach seems to suggest that she attempted to create a self without the other. This is not possible (see Chapter 1). Such observation highlights the point that being, in general, and intersubjectivity, in particular, is born out of a dialogic interplay between subjectivities as Du Bois (2007) rightly puts it. This is the essence of becoming even from an Ubuntu as well as a dialogic perspective and its pointing out here is a precursor to our understanding of some of the struggles novice academic writers face (see 9.6).

Groom's (2000) analysis of the dynamic nature of manifest intertextuality sheds more light on the struggles such novice writers have with intersubjectivity. He contends that manifest intertextuality largely accomplishes three things namely to identify with, evaluate, and position an author in relation to the other. In other words, in evoking a certain voice, novice writers, just like every writer, align themselves to or identify with that voice which they choose to speak through (see Chapter 3). However, it is their manner of evaluation of that voice which positions writers differently. In not evaluating this voice, these novices speak through the voice of the academy as though it provided ready-made positions which they have to adopt wholesale. In other words, they treat voice as "authoritative" (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). This should not be surprising considering the background they have had with textual authority as well as their experiences with writing from secondary school (see above).

The reader might recall that these students come to university having had little, if any, opportunity to project their self in their writing (see 9.2.1 above). They come to

university having done either personal/expressive writing or writing which merely reproduces what is already there. Such a background is likely to affect their projection of self in their academic writing as this indicates. In other words, they come to university not used to staking a personal claim in what they are writing. Such reverence for secondary discourses might also be indicative of something more profound in the lives of these novices.

In exploring the issue of critical thinking, Atkinson (1997) contends that perceptions of self expression or self representation in one's discourse are steeped in one's cultural outlook. Thus, to him culture influences one's ability to take up critical positions in discourse. This has also been reported in South Africa where non-native academic writers come to university with a reverence for secondary discourses. Such reverence has an important effect on their ability to intersubjectively respond to a perceived authoritative other. As most African communities are regarded as "high context cultures" in which the communal or social supersedes the individual and personal (see Chapter 1), it is possible that Atkinson's (1997) point here is important. This is so considering that

> In non-western group oriented cultures, respecting the group and its inheritance is socialised into children from an early age, and critical stances are difficult for students from these cultures (Angelil-Carter, 2014, p. 40).

This is something I can attest to from my experiences growing up in Malawi. I have indeed observed that most narratives and the wisdom passed on through such narratives tend to inculcate and/or emphasise reverence for secondary discourses. This makes it difficult for the less powerful to challenge or contradict such collective wisdom. From a positioning perspective, it can be said that such discourses only provide opportunities for a "first order positioning" (Harré and Langenhove, 1992; Langehove and Harré, 1999). This is the case as most African discourses that I am familiar with do not encourage questioning the first order discourse or what is handed down by authoritative others. It is such questioning, according to Harré and Langenhove (1999) which brings about a "second order positioning"; something which opens up the space for dialogue and personal input in the discoursing moment. In this regard, such discourses then become "authoritative" by demanding unconditional allegiance to them (Bakhtin, 1981). It could be surmised therefore that, apart from their literacy encounters forming an important backdrop to their inability to assert self, the cultural background of these novices could also be a factor here. Thus, it seems that perceptions of self as powerless

in the face of an authoritative discourse is something these novices bring from years of enculturation into their wider communities and is something they will have to unlearn if they are to performatively construct an authoritative scholarly identity. This is so as such a "rubber-gloved" approach (Hyland, 1994) to discourse positions them as not having something of their own to say. Thus their not reacting to the voice positions them as mere "animators" (Goffman, 1981) of other people's positions.

While this is the case, Kai however manages to bring about a certain level of intersubjectivity in his second essay (see Chapter 5). Such intersubjectivity is epitomised by the following statement which I reproduce below.

> However, **most critics of Othello choose to blame** his insecurities on his advanced age while others elect some other reasons, but most importantly **I base my critic on** his indisputable fact that he is a black man from a humble origin.

As this instance indicates, Kai uses the voices of the critics as the foundation on which he expresses his point. In engaging such intersubjectivity via dialoguing with these "critics", he responds to their subjectivity with his own. He therefore takes a stance on the subject matter (cf., Du Bois, 2007). By doing this, he crafts a very strong "I position" one which positions him as making a contribution to knowledge; as an opinion holder or an originator (Tang and John, 1999).

According to Tang and John's (1999) typology of the identities behind the first person pronoun in academic writing, "opinion holder" and "originator" are two most powerful I positions a writer can create and occupy. "Originator" is a position a writer creates to "share a view, an opinion, or an attitude with regard to known facts or information". "Opinion holder" on the other hand is a position a writer takes to make knowledge claims in the essay (Tang and John, 1999, p. 29). In the instance above, Kai it seems does both. In presenting what the critics say and building on this to say what he thinks, Kai expresses an opinion based on known information thereby negotiating a position as opinion holder. In similar vein, in claiming that "I base my critic on …", he positions himself as an originator; someone who conceives a unique position in the discussion by presenting his critique.

This exploration of the engagement practices of these novices indicates that they seem reluctant to engage with discourse at a level that will craft for them powerful I positions. This could be attributed to the writing they are used to doing prior to university or even

to the cultural outlook they have internalised from childhood. Either way, the multivariate engagement practices indicate that these novices position themselves differently. Such variety reiterates the point that on our campuses we have multiple trajectories towards becoming someone in a new context (cf., Ritchie, 1998). Perceived alongside the voicing strategies discussed earlier, it seems evident that each writing "episode" constitutes an "act of identity" in which people reveal both their personal identity and a search for social positions (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 2006); in which the autobiographical self or the "self1" manifests in a multiplicity of personas (Harré and Langenhove, 1999). During this act, novices seem to struggle to mediate between being themselves and appearing to be a certain type of person; they seem to struggle to create a synthesis between self and other (see Hyland, 2012a). All this suggests that the academic writing problem which novices in Malawi face is an identity problem as these novices struggle to take up authoritative positions in their writing as well as take up strong "I positions". However, their struggles to do this in this liminal phase cannot be attributed to something "in" them.

Since their narratives index what is happening in the wider context of situation in which they wrote their essays, it can be said that the institution in which they are writing is also partly responsible for keeping these novices on the margins of the academy. In this vein, the next section highlights the challenges which novice academic writers in Malawi face. These challenges emanate from the "context of situation" in which they write their essays. As such, it is evident from these challenges that the "problematic" state in which they find themselves has its roots in the wider institutional context in which they operate.

9.6 Challenges with academic writing

It almost seems inevitable that novice academic writers making the transition to higher education will struggle with a new form of writing they have not encountered before as well as the identity positions such forms of writing will expect them to take up (e.g. Ivanič, 1998; Tang and John, 1999; Preece, 2009; Angelil-Carter, 2014). In this regard, novices often struggle to understand the norms of academic discourses (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988). Such struggles are often times attributed to a lack of proper preparation at the secondary school level (cf., Hyland, 2009). This is largely the view of the academic writing problem in Malawi as presented in Chapter 2.

However, in analysing this problem from dialogic, Ubuntu and positioning perspectives, this study suggests that the challenges novice academic writers face in Malawi are to a large extent relational problems. This should not be too surprising considering that being or selfhood thrives on interconnectedness (Chapter 1). With this understanding in mind, the challenges which novice academic writers face in Malawi have been largely perceived as problems of dialogue. In this vein, the challenges with academic writing have been grouped into two broad categories both of which centre around dialoguing with the "other". In the next section I discuss challenges which novices have with the wider institutional community and its elements, (i.e. bringing the *writer* into the text). I will do this on the understanding that the earlier challenges with creating "the Other" or a "foil" against which to assert self within the text itself (Leki, 2007) as highlighted in 9.3 through 9.5 above stem from dialogic challenges with the wider institutional culture. Thus, challenges with creating a *reader* in the text (Thompson, 2001) as well as taking up authoritative positions in their writing as discussed earlier originate from novice struggles to relate with various institutional aspects.

9.6.1 Dialogue with the 'other'

As detailed in Chapter 1, the very basis of being or selfhood is "dialogic". In other words, consciousness is based on "otherness" as the "self" cannot be and is not a self-sufficient construct but rather one that is dialogic; a relation (Holquist, 2002). One can only exist in relation to the other. This means that one becomes anything at all, including an academic writer, by entering into a "dynamic tension between the past and the present (a tension that) gives shape to one's individual voice" (Hall, Vitanova, and Marchenkova, 2005, p. 3). This is something I have elaborated in discussing "intersubjectivity" above. The statement above implies that one comes into being via a dynamic engagement with other voices, other beings. In this broader sense therefore, one cannot exist in isolation but rather it is in actively engaging with others, in whatever form they may be, that one becomes. It is against this understanding that the challenges with novice academic writing in Malawi are to a larger extent seen as "dialogic" problems; they are, in other words, relational problems.

9.6.1.1   Relating with institutional norms

The novices I interacted with reported facing challenges in understanding the norms and conventions of a new culture. As pointed out in Chapter 3, higher education constitutes a unique culture with its own norms and conventions. In other words, higher education

has its own unique ways of thinking and using language to express that thinking (Hyland, 2009). Unsurprisingly therefore novices point out that there is a gap in understanding academic writing between what they are used to in secondary school and what they are being asked to do in university. As already highlighted elsewhere in this discussion, all novices in this study point out that there are differences between the writing they are used to doing and that which they are being asked to do now. This difference is made more problematic by the manner in which content lecturers handle writing tasks.

Novices complain about the quality of dialogue surrounding institutional norms of academic writing, in general, and writing tasks, in particular. For some, like Khumbo for instance, it is not even clear what "academic writing" means. For others like Kai this superficial dialogue results from most lecturers' erroneous assumption about the literacy levels of their students as they think that they have already been taught academic writing elsewhere. This seems to be a common assumption by many academics as Johns (1997) observes that most are of the view that academic literacy work has to take place elsewhere; that students have to be prepared for academic literacy work outside the content classrooms. Thus content lecturers expect to be presented with students who can handle all academic literacy demands across the campus. Such approach to inducting novices into the academic discourses especially writing result into two main challenges.

To begin with, lecturers' assumptions that novice writers have already been taught academic writing in secondary school, as Kai highlights, create a gap in understanding as lecturers then see no need to engage these novices in a dialogue over how this can be addressed. This in turn makes novice transition to be an attempt to "cross without a bridge" (Kai, Chapter 5). This is so as the lecturers then make unwarranted assumptions about their students often feeling that "you have already been taught about academic writing" (Khumbo, Chapter 6). Interesting to note is that such views present academic writing as a "unitary mass" which is universally understood. Such views disregard the point that academic writing means so many different things to different people (Spack, 1993). Following this erroneous assumption, the faculty at the Polytechnic then leave the task of inducting students into the norms of academic writing conventions to "others". This is often then a task which is done either by the Library staff during the first year induction week or by the in-sessional EAP courses offered by the Language and Communication department. This leads to a second problem. In such sessions, academic literacy, in general, and academic writing, in particular, is presented as a

universal construct. Thus, students are taught the general aspects of academic writing like paragraphing and citation as if these are universally applicable and therefore sufficient to prepare them for all writing exigencies across the university (see Chapter 2). Such narrow skills perspective leaves some students like Khumbo exasperated and asking: "what is academic writing anyway?"

From the foregoing it is evident that the induction to institutional norms surrounding academic writing is addressed in a very superficial manner at the institution. Perhaps stemming from the assumption that these norms are self-explanatory and therefore not in need of elaboration, practitioners at the Malawi Polytechnic go on to hand down assignments without much elaboration. This poses yet another challenge for novices.

9.6.1.2   Relating with lecturers

In conceptualizing student/lecturer interactions we, more often than not, have taken it for granted that:

> The learner and the more experienced other share a harmonious relationship devoted to advancing the learner's development. That … the social relationship between learner and more experienced other who guides learning, whether students' peers or their university teachers, has tacitly assumed to be positive (Leki, 2007, p. 274).

Such a notion seems to be built on a view of the academy as a neutral space. However, in conceiving of the academy as a "contact zone" (Pratt, 2008) as set out in chapter 3, this study is built on the understanding that the academy is a site of power disparities between learner/novice and lecturer. In this vein, it is important that we interrogate the nature as well as quality of the "socioacademic relations" (Leki, 2007) that develop between novice and lecturers with a view to understanding how this affects the quality of teaching and learning; with a view to understanding how this affects the confidence novices muster in their interaction with texts.

The novices I interacted with point to the understanding that indeed, as Leki (2007) suspects above, the relationships they had had with the experienced other were not entirely harmonious. The theme of more experienced others refusing to engage novices in inducting them into the workings of the academy has been a common issue with these novices. This led Kai to observe that "no lecturer or continuing students come close to help how they do things at the university" further recalling that "I had to learn a lot of new things the hard way". In recollecting the challenges with his own writing task, Felipe also points to the lack of dialogue with the lecturer involved as being a central

problem in approaching his task. The same is also reported by Khumbo as well as Hope about their respective assignments. Two points stand out as significant in these observations.

To begin with, not all these participants did the same task. Thus, these constant observations are made about different writing episodes. Secondly, this lack of dialogic engagement with the lecturer came about after the students had attempted to establish contact with the lecturers responsible. This means that it was the experienced other who saw no need to provide opportunities for dialogue with their apprentices. In this regard, it can then be surmised that in refusing to engage the novices dialogically over the demands of the writing tasks these experienced others resorted to "monologic addressivity" (Lillis, 2001) as a way of explicating tasks. This approach to writing tasks leads to two other problems. First of all, this approach makes it difficult for novices to learn and understand essayist literacy conventions (Lillis, 2001). Furthermore, this approach makes:

> Student-writers to spend inordinate amounts of time attempting to sort out the nature of their tutors' expectations, which could be more usefully spent on other activities (as a result) they may achieve unnecessarily low marks (Lillis, 2001, p. 76).

Felipe's delay in working on his assignment as he waited for the lecturer to initiate some sort of dialogue indeed shows how precious time is lost in trying to figure out tutor's expectations. Added to this observation, such monologic addressivity pushes the novice writers in Malawi into "socioacademic networks" (Leki, 2007) which are not entirely useful. This poses another problem which I will reflect on later (see 9.6.1.3 below).

Monologic addressivity surrounding academic writing tasks in Malawi could be explained from two possible perspectives. On one hand, it is possible that the lecturers consider academic discourse as amenable only to a "first order positioning"; as "authoritative discourse" which the students have to engage with unquestionably. Thus it is possible that the lecturers in Malawi consider themselves to be custodians of an authoritative discourse which just has to be taken the way it is. This is a cultural outlook impacting discoursing as Atkinson (1997) and Angelil-Carter (2014) suggest earlier. On the other hand, Malawian practitioners could be making the same mistake their counterparts make elsewhere in being seduced by the "conduit model of communication" or "the discourse of transparency" (Lillis, 2001; Lillis and Turner, 2001). Such views assume that "the essay is an unproblematic form and that

conventions surrounding student writing are common sense … not in need of explanation" (Lillis, 2001, p. 78). Unfortunately, this is one of the leading causes of the mismatch in understanding writing demands in various contexts (e.g. Lea, 2005), including the Malawian context.

Due to such inharmonious relationship which these novices have with the experienced other, they resort to interacting with each other in an attempt to make sense of the writing demands they are confronted with. Such a continued search for the other buttresses the point that no one can become anything in isolation. However, such a recourse to fellow novices for inspiration is a double edged sword as it can be both a vital resource as well as a problem at the same time.

9.6.1.3   Relating with fellow novices

With a very vague and superficial induction into the workings of the university behind them as well as an experienced other unwilling to guide them into the practices of higher learning, novices turn to fellow novices to help their becoming academic writers. Turning to fellow first year students in this manner is, as Kai observes, "like two blind men leading each other". Novices in Malawi turn to each other to create "socioacademic networks" (Leki, 2007) for survival and existence. These networks are those relationships that students develop with peers and teachers through their academic interactions in shared classes (Leki, 2007, p. 262). In the research context in Malawi however, such networks refer to relationships developed only with peers as "teachers", due to reasons suggested above, seem reluctant to engage in dialogic addressivity surrounding writing tasks.

At various points in their interaction with me the novices in this study point to having to work with their peers to understand one aspect of their writing or another. This implies that they resort to socioacademic relations or networks which they form with their peers to help make sense of writing tasks and the norms pertaining to these tasks. This is an important observation one which turns our understanding of the CoP model on its head as do Fuller and Unwin's (2004) observation earlier (see Chapter 3).

One popular tenet of the situated learning model (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is that induction into a new community takes place in interaction with the experienced other. However, the point that in Malawi novice to novice interaction seems to be a viable alternative suggests that expert/novice interaction is not the only way to inducting new comers into the workings of a community (Fuller and Unwin, 2004). In other words, it

is possible, this study's findings suggest, that inducting a novice to the workings of a community is a much more dynamic undertaking which can also take place at the hands of a fellow novice. Nevertheless, this can be an unproductive way of induction as such a path is bound to be misleading at times. For instance, in turning to fellow novices for advice, Khumbo ended up referencing even her claims and assertions just to be seen to align with what her "fellow blind men" had advised her. This is a very good example of how dialoguing with fellow novices, even though it may seem to present an alternative to the more traditional novice/expert interaction, might not always be a fruitful way to go. This notwithstanding, the novices in Malawi seem to have no choice but to form such risky "socioacademic networks" in order to become who they can be in this new context. All these relational problems which these novices encounter in the context of situation as they write adversely affects how authoritative they come across in their writing. In other words, these relational problems negatively impact the novice's attempts to create an authoritative persona in their writing as has been highlighted above (see 9.2 and 9.3).

9.7 So, what are they 'doing/becoming'?

It is common knowledge that from a Bakhtinian perspective, selfhood or becoming happens in an atmosphere of struggle. This is not different in the Malawian context. Novice academic writers, as detailed above, are struggling with understanding academic writing norms and conventions, with engaging their lecturers in a meaningful dialogue around their writing demands, with fellow novices' often inauthentic knowledge and understanding of the academy, as well as with how they are to attribute to and then engage the voice of authority within their writing in order to perform an authoritative academic writer persona. Within such dialogic tensions, they end up "doing" three main things. I will highlight that in the course of such dialectic, novices in Malawi are appropriating the discourses of academia. As they appropriate and dialogue with these discourses, novices create a unique discourse. It is this unique discourse which hails their becoming self; a self in transition.

9.7.1 Being appropriated by an authoritative discourse

In the course of this study, it has been evident that these novices have been on a trajectory to becoming something they were not before. This is evidenced by, among other things, their selectively speaking through the modal constructions of others, as Hope does. Furthermore, this is also evidenced by the manner in which they talk about

academic writing demands as though these were part of their repertoire. In doing this, they position themselves more as insiders to the academy; an insider position they largely take up by accommodating to the demands of a social structure.

Initially, the reader might recall that Kai, Khumbo, as well as Felipe reflexively positioned themselves as "improving" (see above). As improving, they then indicated how confused they were with academic writing conventions of higher education, a confusion which Kai referred to as "crossing without a bridge". However, towards the end of their interaction with me, they spoke about these demands as though they were normative. For instance, Kai observed that using personal pronoun 'I' "is not allowed *in academic writing*" because "*in academic writing* indeed personalising work is not recommended". In similar vein, in explaining a structuring aspect in his second essay, Kai observes that "*in academic writing* structure and style is (sic) very important". By presenting aspects of academic writing which hitherto were "confusing" as now normative indicates that something dynamic is taking place with him. In similar vein, in explaining the use of personal pronoun 'I' in the second essay, Khumbo observes that she now has no problem using it "because I have seen a lot of people do that". That is, contrary to the view she brought from secondary school and one which was perpetuated by her lecturers in higher education, Khumbo seems to be taking up a different view. Even Hope's perception of self vis-à-vis academic writing seem to be evolving. She observes that her academic writing has "changed drastically" (see 8.5.7) further highlighting that "*as an academic writer* my skills have improved enormously". As someone who earlier refused to self-regulate her own trajectory as a writer, referring to herself as "an academic writer" here indicates that something dynamic is at play.

These instances indicate that these novices are becoming something. That is they are beginning to perceive themselves differently from the way they used to earlier. Kai and Hope for instance are beginning to perceive themselves as academic writers as they, contrary to their earlier positions, talk about academic writing and its conventions as though they were normative. Khumbo, on the other hand, is having to discard some of the things she has been told about certain aspects of academic writing based on the "investment" she keeps making to find out "what is academic writing anyway?" Her saying that she now finds no problem in using personal pronoun I in her own writing as she has seen other people do it in the texts she has read indicates that she is beginning to align with other more powerful discursive sites of authority. This is the case as she is of the view that her using texts via manifest intertextuality puts her on the safe side as in so

doing she aligns with powerful authorities which even the lecturer respects. In this regard, in disregarding what the lecturer says and in opting to use what the more authoritative others whom the lecturers respect say instead, she seems to even be challenging the lecturer's authority. In a nutshell however, these instances indicate that these novices are changing perceptions of self as academic writers as they begin to perceive themselves more and more as insiders to this community. However, the manner in which this is happening is not devoid of a power play; this dynamic transformation seems to be taking place in a coercive atmosphere.

In abandoning a critical stance to the norms and traditions of the academy as manifested in their initial perceptions, novices have lost something. They have lost a critical edge to their interaction with academic discourse opting in the process to "accommodate" to the demands of the academy. In finding themselves in this "contact zone", these novices are coerced by the academy's centripetal force to behave in a certain way. This is reminiscent of the view that we make our lives but not in conditions of our own making (Bazerman, 2013) as these novices' becoming is not entirely in their hands. While I have alluded to "accommodation" as the default position taken by most novices, this realisation here reiterates the point that "by the end of the first year, most students have decided that it is easier to forgo their positions in favour of mimicking the dominant discourse" (Bangeni and Kapp, 2006, p. 68). This to me epitomises the ambivalent position these novices find themselves in. Thus on one hand, they are increasingly showing their awareness to use the "possibilities of selfhood" or the "identitized positions" which the academy offers. However, in doing this, they are being "appropriated" by the discourse of the academy losing their individuality in the process. It is perhaps after they have appropriated this new discourse that they can then go on to assert themselves more forcefully (Hamilton and Pitt, 2009). If this is the case, then such appropriation marks the beginning of who they can be in this new context.

Their use of master narratives of the academy as though they were normative strongly suggests that they are becoming a "social-individual"; the individual in society and society in the individual (Scott, 1999). They are thus being taken over by a dominant discourse as they seem to gradually reduce themselves to a ventriloquator of the institution's norms and values. In other words, the dying down of the tensions they felt between what they wanted to do and what the institution was asking them to do strongly suggests that these novices are being appropriated by an authoritative discourse. They indeed have lost an identity but they are yet to gain a new one. This has serious

ramifications even on the sort of discourse they produce as well as on what they have become.

9.7.2 Becoming self

Contrary to Bartholomae's (1986) view which set the tone for Chapter 3 that novices have to "mimic us so that they become like us", this study suggests otherwise. In highlighting that an individual's unique literacy history comprising of the repeated encounters they have had with literacy practices feeds a unique habitus brought along to the university and its literacy practices (cf., Baynham, 2015) a habitus which impacts one's writing as well as a projection of self in that writing (cf., Ivanič, 1998; Starfield, 2002, 2004; Burgess and Ivanič, 2010), we cannot say that in mimicking us they are becoming like us. Rather, the surfeit of literacy trajectories which these novices bring along and allow to enter into dialogue with the academy's norms mean that there are a multiplicity of selves on our campuses each of which is becoming who they can be in this new context. The situation is complicated further when we realise that each one of these multiple selves or each discursively constructed "self1" is capable of manifesting as a multiplicity of "I positions" (Harré and Langenhove, 1999). This means that:

> We must resist reductive assumptions of our student's development as writers. Each student comes to our class with a unique history, with different assumptions about writing, and different needs. So we should expect that each writing workshop will compose a different "polyphony" of disparate elements which each student will appropriate and reshape in different configurations (Ritchie, 1998, p. 145).

With each writing situation constituting a unique "episode" as highlighted above, novice writers have to constantly reinvent who they can be in response to the task at hand. It is not surprising therefore that during the first year, arguably the most important part of liminality (Thesen, 1997), novice marks will fluctuate (Hunma and Sibomana, 2014) as novices struggle to switch across different episodes to do an identity work whose norms are shrouded in mystery (Ivanič and Simpson, 1992; Lillis, 1997, 2001). Such a switching across different episodes leads to an internal conflict between who they used to be, on one hand, and who they are becoming in a new context; between who they used to be and their becoming self (Clark and Ivanič, 1997).

From the foregoing, it is evident that novice writer struggles with academic writing are, more often than not, struggles with identification. Thus, novice writers struggle to identify and align with how things are done in the academy in coming across as a certain type of person whose thinking is rooted in scholarship. These novices in Malawi

face the problem their counterparts face elsewhere who "struggle to don the magic of the academic cloak without becoming invisible" (Cooper, 2014, p. 245). All this creating of a unique self which does not look anything like "us" happens because even the discourse which they are producing and in which they come about is a unique discourse as well.

9.7.3 A unique discourse

First of all, we need to understand that, true to Khumbo's questioning, academic writing means different things to different people (Spack, 1993); that what we call academic writing is not a single unitary mass of discourse *per se*. Rather, there are obvious differences between the academic writing these novices do and that which appears in books and journals for instance. One obvious point is that novice writing is a "school-sponsored genre" (Leki, 2007). These genres are inventions of people who never write them as students are asked to produce school genres they have never seen and their lecturers hardly write themselves (Leki, 2007, p. 243). Thus it is highly questionable that neither writing about the use of mathematics in business nor examining themes in Othello forms an important part of the lecturer's life at the research site. This is the first thing that makes these discourses unique.

A second unique feature of these discourses has to do with their position in the liminal phase as well as the sort of responses which they solicit from novices. In this vein, I agree with Paxton (2006, 2007) in observing that at a foundational level, where writers are gaining access to entirely new discourses and genres, all literacy practices and usages could be considered "interim". Some features of these interim genres have already been explored in the writing of these novices chief among which is how they closely mimic the voice of authority. Such mimicking borders on plagiarism as Hope's case highlights earlier. This mimicking as well as incoherent control of other voices comes about as novices try to blend portable resources brought along with the academic writing conventions as they have understood them at any point in their trajectory. This to me is another important feature of these interim literacy practices one which feeds a unique discourse requiring a unique social cognition. This is so realising that texts are different because they do different things (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993). Novice texts "do" unique things as well.

While the texts which appear in journals and books are meant to advance knowledge and debates around subject areas a debate which pushes the frontiers of disciplinarity

further, novice texts are largely assessment genres; assessment texts. These discourses are only read by the lecturer/assessor for whom they are written. It is not surprising therefore to note that novices' attempts to be seen as a certain type of person or to make an impression on the lecturer in Malawi are largely geared towards obtaining good marks (see Kai, Felipe, and Hope). This means that the life span of such texts is extremely short as once they are read by the lecturer/assessor they lose their life. With these differences in mind between more established genres and these novice genres, I am of the view that what novices produce is a unique form of discourse. This I would rather call an *inter-academic discourse* to among other things, highlight its hybridity as well as its interim nature. Just like with the notion of "interlanguage" in second language acquisition (cf., Ellis, 2008), a unique form of the target language which language learners produce on their way to mastering a new language, novice academic writers are also producing a unique hybrid discourse on their way to mimicking and eventually mastering academic discourse. It is thus through this *inter-academic* discourse that their being is forged. In producing a unique discourse using a blend of generic conventions novices in Malawi perform their "becoming self" (Clark and Ivanič, 1997). This is so considering that selfhood is performatively crafted in discourse. In this vein, it would be erroneous for us to treat their discourse as "wrong". Rather we ought to treat this discourse as developmental and unique and as such in need of specific guidelines to understand and assess. Thus we need to desist the tendencies to approach and assess these "school sponsored genres" through the lens of the journal articles we are so fond of reading and/or writing. In other words, we should not limit our understanding of academic writing by only sticking to the "careful statements" of professional academic writers (Spack, 1993) as this would mean that we continue with a narrow view of academic writing as one mass. On the contrary we need to start appreciating that the hybridity of these *inter-academic discourses* novices produce as they transition to higher education warrants careful attention for they also constitute an important part of academic writing even though they do not yet reflect the established thinking and ways of organising that thinking which we have come to identify as academic Discourse.

Chapter 10 : Conclusion

10.1 What does it all imply?

In adopting a social/ideological perspective to the study of academic writing (Leki, 2007) in a transition phase of novices in a Malawian university, this study has demonstrated that academic writing is a much more messy undertaking than we in Malawi first thought. The study has demonstrated that, contrary to the "autonomous" views of literacy currently holding sway in Malawi as reported in Chapter 2, academic writing is an "ideological" undertaking. Here, I am using the term "ideological" in its original Russian sense not to mean anything political as such but rather to refer to the more general idea of the "social" (Vitanova, 2010; Sullivan, 2012). From a performative/positioning perspective therefore, a perspective at the centre of which is a relational ethic, novice writing as well as the narratives of the novices in this study demonstrate that at the end of the day they are becoming something; they are becoming a "social-individual" (Scott, 1999). This is demonstrated by their constant use of the normative rules and regulations guiding academic writing, the academy's "master narratives" or its "hegemonic tales", as though they were "one with them". Furthermore, such demonstration of their "ideological" becoming has shown that there is quite a lot at play when novices sit down to write for us.

One point that has come out so strongly in this study is the understanding that academic writing in the threshold is a hybrid of discourses as the novice writers' various facets of life enter into a dialogic interplay with each new writing "episode" they encounter. It is therefore largely their deconstruction of as well as response to each of these "episodes" which in turn determines how they come across in their writing. This places academic writing in the social domain as something that one does with and in response to others. This has important ramifications for pedagogy as I highlight in 10.3 below. Such a dialogic interplay comes about as each writing episode is affected by the writer's past which impacts how they would want to be seen in the present with an eye on future consequences of that action. Thus, novice academic writers in Malawi are having to look to the portable resources brought along in order to come across as a certain type of person in the here-and-now. All this they are doing to make an impression on the lecturer with a view to getting good marks. It can therefore be said that in so doing, they are, through such broad discoursing practices, constructing a certain sense of who they

can be. Indeed, selfhood, in general, and studenthood, in particular is crafted in discourse (Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003).

The hybridity of these discourses places the literacy practices these novices are engaged in and through which they become as "interim literacy practices" (Paxton, 2006, 2007); a hybrid of the home/school practices with those of academia as they have been understood at any point in their trajectory. In largely deploying "portable resources brought along" (cf., Blommaert, 2005; Baynham, 2015), novice discourse is riddled with "traces of prior discourses and discourse strategies" which is itself, according to Paxton (2006, 2007), a distinctive feature of interim discourses. Such hybridity in turn implies that, within these interim literacy practices, novices are producing a unique discourse, one which is unlike any we are familiar with (see 10.2 below).

Such hybrid discourses which are produced in a context where the power play between novice and experienced other often limits opportunities for dialogue, means that such interim literacy practices are performed in a context where these practices largely remain unknown by most novices. This is the case as with such limited opportunities to dialogue with the experienced other, novices more often than not turn to fellow novices for advice and inspiration. Such perpetual seeking of the other to elucidate the tasks as they have been set buttresses the point that one can only exist in relation to another. In view of this, novice writers in Malawi, as demonstrated by the focal participants whose narratives have been presented in this thesis, often struggle to relate. They struggle to relate with institutional norms as well as the custodians of those norms. They also struggle to relate with source texts, a struggle which in turn sees them struggle to performatively construct an authoritative persona in their texts. In a nutshell, it has been evident throughout these narratives that novice failings to effectively engage in academic writing in the university could to some extent be seen as a "failure of community" (Mann, 2005) and not the individual *per se*. In highlighting the point that academic writing is a situated literate practice through which an individual identity is performatively played out, this study has shown that the academy in Malawi has to shoulder some of the blame for novice failings.

In placing academic writing and writers in space and time, the social view of writing which this study adopted has enabled us to take the focus away from the individual, who in Malawi has largely been pathologised, to the social context in which the individual operates (cf., Lillis, 2001). Through indexicality therefore we have been able to examine how institutional habitus affects what happens at the composing moment.

This has been one key feature of this study. Novice responses, especially during the first phase of this study, highlight several misgivings they have with various aspects of the institution itself. These range from the institution's "gate keepers", the lecturers', failure to understand the entry level competency of the novices, to their refusal to engage them in meaningful dialogue over assignments set, all the way to a delayed induction of the terrain they will have to engage with through delays in making available the module's course outlines to the novices. When one looks at all these shortcomings against the understanding that the UNIMA, out of "pedagogic convenience" (Bhatia, 2002), adopts a skill based view of literacy (see Chapter 2), then one indeed begins to understand that the academic writing problem in Malawi might be an institutional problem. In this regard, this study brings to the fore the need to examine and interrogate the "homo academicus" (Bourdieu, 1994) and his environment as hitherto, hiding behind a power façade, they have been immune from scrutiny in establishing their potential role in academic writing failings of novices in the country. I highlight the need to take such a scrutiny in some greater detail later below (see 10.4). This is the case as hitherto there has been a dearth of studies which examine the institutional role in the failings of novice academic writers in Malawi.

I therefore hope that this exploration of the academic writing problem in Malawi, through the eyes and "mouth" of the subaltern themselves, and its indexing a possible institutional role in this, will spark an honest debate into the workings of the university not just in Malawi but in other similar context as well. I hope that this study will lead to, among other things, an exploration of how universities are helping novices manage the transition from home and school literacies to their engagement with and participation in the interim literacies of the threshold. These are the unique discourses through which they are hailed. In other words, I hope that this study's beginning to question the role of entire institutions in such literacy problems will open the space for a critical examination of how "epistemological access" is being granted to the novices; to how they are being granted access to participate in the literate practices of the disciplines they want to belong to and identify with. This, as Freire (1970) warns, is not for the faint hearted but is something that should be done if we are to get to the bottom of the writing problem in Malawi. This is the case as the symbolic triumphalism which often characterises issues of widening access to higher education around world, including in Malawi's higher education, I am sure will be found to be wanting once we start to examine the institutional role in perpetually confining the novice to an outsider; a

perpetual "it" not yet fully a "person" in academia. This is tantamount to symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1977b) and needs to be corrected.

In further reflecting on the institutional role in the development of the academic writer persona of these novices in Malawi, one point worth highlighting is the manner in which academic writing is being managed. Using the faculty of Commerce as a point of departure, as a microcosm of the wider institution, it is interesting to note that the setting of assignments is entirely in the hands of individual lecturers. In this faculty there are no guidelines on how course work should be administered and feedback provided to students. This realisation had a direct impact on the conducting of this study.

The faculty of Commerce was chosen as the focal point of this study due to its multidisciplinary composition. This I anticipated would then make available multiple opportunities for novices to write; multiple opportunities to create a multiplicity of "I positions" or multiple selves (see Chapter 4). Such a scenario I felt would make this study's tracing of the enactment as well as rationalisation of such multiple "identities" richer. This turned out not to be the case. Most lecturers during the time I researched into this faculty did not administer essay assignments at all. This is a significant observation. This made me to realise that sometimes we might indeed overstate the case for writing in some contexts Leki, 2007). While essay writing practices are indeed central in the lives of many in academia (cf., Hyland, 2002a, 2013), it seems other forms of writing (e.g. letters, memos, examinations, group reflections) are equally important in other contexts like the Malawi Polytechnic's faculty of Commerce for instance. In other words, it seems that essay writing is not the only means of communicating and assessing disciplinary knowledge in a faculty of Commerce. This is an observation which feeds one of the key research directions on this institution's practices going forward (see 10.4 below).

10.2 Study's contribution

In focusing on the literate practices of novice academic writers making the transition to higher education in an ESL context, this study has made a number of contributions to the field of academic writing research. One such contribution has to do with the nature of this writing itself.

10.2.1 Novice academic writing

Realising that academic writing means so many different things to different people (Spack, 1993), there has always been the danger in academic writing research and pedagogy that we run the risk of developing a narrow view of academic writing. Such narrow views have mostly been predicated on us relying on the writing of the experienced other as our basis for understanding academic writing. This has meant that most practices, like undergraduate novice writing practices for instance, tend to not receive any attention at all perhaps on the understanding that they are not "academic" enough. In focusing on the writing practices of the threshold ESL context, a context which is not part of the "centre" but the "peripheral", this study has in a way heeded the call to pay close attention to undergraduate writing which has generally received less attention from applied linguists (Hewings, 2004). An examination of this important subject from a perspective which has received little if any attention thus far has led to an important contribution which this study has made.

As academic writing practices of the disciplines reflect the discipline's conceptualisation of academic discourse or ways of thinking and doing things so typical of those disciplines, this study highlights that academic writing practices in the threshold suggest that something unique happens in this phase. Novices are yet to be acquainted with the academic discourses. Their level of acquaintance implies that in this liminal phase they are being hailed by something unique. The multiple discourses which they produce are a hybrid of the home/school generic conventions, on one hand, and how those conventions have dialogued with the norms of a new context as the individual writer has allowed them to, on the other. This feeds "inter-academic discourse". Perceiving these discourses in this way then implies that something needs to be done if we are to expand our understanding of academic writing which these discourses are also a part of. Such an expansion also has implications for pedagogy as I highlight later below (see 10.3 below). In the meantime, it suffices to say that novice academic writing in the liminal phase is a unique form of academic writing which I have called "inter-academic discourse" due to its hybridity.

10.2.2 Academic writing as social semiosis

Starfield (2004) observes that while traditionally academic writing has been perceived as impersonal, recently there has been a growing shift away from this perception. Such a shift has seen many adopt a view of academic writing as social semiosis with identity

implications; a view of writing as an act of identity (cf., Ivanič, 1994, 1998; Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič and Camps, 2001). In this tradition, attention has been paid to how writers, through the linguistic and discursive choices which they make as they write, position themselves in their writing. Such perspectives have been developed on the view that academic writing is not impersonal but rather social semiosis; that the possibilities for selfhood from which writers draw are communal. This makes academic writing a relational endeavour. This study therefore adds to this growing understanding that academic writing is indeed social semiosis at the heart of which is an identity work which writers knowingly or unknowingly perform.

This study adds to the understanding that indeed writing cannot be separated from identity concerns (Clark and Ivanič, 1997) as at the centre of this social semiosis is a desire to appear to be a certain type of person for the sake of the reader. Such desires, this study has also highlighted, determine how writers choose from the available identitized possibilities of selfhood. This has important implications for pedagogy, chief among which is the need for writing programmes to highlight to students that as they write they are also engaged in the important act of self representation. Such a view is contrary to the one which treats academic writing as an application of skills which, once learnt and mastered in a servicing department, can then be seamlessly applied to all writing situations across the campus. This is an autonomous and deficit view which this study has also critiqued.

10.2.3 Critiquing deficit view of literacy

In chapter 2, I raised a fundamental understanding on which academic writing as a literacy practice is developed in Malawi. That understanding is predicated on the view that there is a single overarching literacy which students have failed to master prior to their coming to university (cf., Hyland, 2009). The thinking then is that the Language/Literacy department, a servicing department, should "fix" such inadequacies in the students to make them ready for the "real" academic work which takes place in the disciplines. This study has shown otherwise. One fundamental point which this study has demonstrated is that literacy, in general, and writing, in particular, is a situated practice which takes place with and in response to an 'other' in particular "episodes" and has identity consequences.

This study has demonstrated that as they write, students in Malawi are not simply drawing on their writing skills of paragraphing and sentence construction important as

these might be. However, they are having to draw on their portable resources, among other things, as well as their deconstruction of the writing "episode" they find themselves in. In a nutshell, this study has shown that the writing of novice writers, as a mirror into the writing practices of the academy in general, are not a reflection of a single overarching literacy but rather a hybrid of various discourse strategies. This implies then that academic writing cannot be entirely taught in the ESL/Language classroom alone as, among other things, such an approach only achieves pedagogic convenience and not pedagogic effectiveness (Bhatia, 2002). This is the case as, built on this understanding, we ought to bear in mind that the genres that are taught in the ESL classrooms are markedly different to those of the discipline our students seek to identify with (Braxley, 2005). This has important pedagogic ramifications as I highlight later below. In other words, writing for academic purposes transcends merely inscribing words on a paper and indicates that we are dealing with a social practice in which "I for myself, I for you, and I for an other" (Bakhtin, 1993) is evoked. Academic writing is a much more messy process than has been conceptualised in Malawi.

10.2.4 Academic writing and Ubuntu

In perceiving and analysing the process of becoming an academic writer from an Ubuntu perspective, this study has extended the manner in which academic writing can be studied and understood. From the observation that Ubuntu and dialogism trend to be closely aligned, this study has demonstrated that it is possible to apply African epistemological frames to academic writing. Even though this application mirrors dialogic perspectives to academic writing (e.g. Baynham, 1999; Tang, 2009) this is nonetheless a unique application.

From Ubuntu's stipulation that one is always becoming, a becoming which takes place with an other, this study has shown that indeed becoming an academic writer shares interesting parallels with the process of becoming a human being socialised to do things according to social norms. In doing this from an Ubuntu perspective, this study has echoed what others (e.g. Lillis, 2001) have shown namely the role of institutional social structure in determining what happens at the local composing level. Ubuntu's emphasis on the social ahead of the individual echoes the understanding that these novices are becoming "socio-individuals". In analysing academic writing from such an ontological view which mirrors who I am, this study has hopefully opened up the space for the application of other ontological perspectives from other parts of the world to academic writing research. In applying epistemological frames from the peripheral to an otherwise

widely researched topic, I hope to have opened up the space for interrogating how we can further strengthen our understanding of such an important social semiotic practice.

10.3 Implications for pedagogy

10.3.1 Dialogue is key

I feel that dialogue needs to be made an important part of the assessment rubrics themselves as well as how lecturers handle these with their students. To begin with, it is important that practitioners in Malawi understand that the norms guiding academic writing are not self-explanatory and therefore not in need of any explanation. We ought to understand that a task like 'The use of mathematics in business" is open to multiple interpretations hence the need for individual lectures to explicitly clarify the parameters of their tasks (cf., Leki, 2007). Thus, it is important that practitioners be sensitised on the need to dialogue with their students to clarify their expectations on these tasks. Secondly, the manner in which assignments are set in University ought to be rethought. Using the assignments I have seen during this study as well as those I have seen in my time as an EAP practitioner there, I have noted that most assignments are set as monologues. For instance, tasks like "discuss the themes of jealousy and racism in Othello" or "the importance of mathematics in business" are common. Such phrasing of tasks however does not point to the need to interact with other voices, synthesise them, and build one's response around them. In other words, the phrasing of these tasks seems to encourage a monologic approach to writing which novices are used to from secondary school. It is not surprising then that most novices end up approaching these tasks in the manner they are used to; as personal and expressive.

Against this background then, I would suggest that academic writing tasks at the institution be set as dialogues. The task rubrics should make is clear that the students are expected to interact with other texts/voices on which they have to build their response. For instance, a task like "discuss the themes of racism and jealousy in Othello" could be dialogically framed by pointing to what other critics have said about these themes before asking the student to present their view. Such dialogic framing will likely encourage novice writers to interact with and integrate other voices in their writing. This, as I have argued throughout this thesis, is an important precursor to performatively crafting a strong discoursal self; a key source of authoritativeness. Such a foundation would be an important step towards teaching these novices to appreciate and understand

the identity work they are doing as they write and how they can "stage-manage" that discourse.

10.3.2 Writing is identity work

Contrary to the "skill based" autonomous view of writing which is still being used to teach academic writing in UNIMA, it is important that academic writing be approached and taught as the social semiosis that it is. In other words, it is important that practitioners in Malawi start treating academic writing as identity work (cf., Ivanič, 1994, 1998; Tang and John, 1999). This needs to start with an acknowledgement that the practices our students are used to as they come to university are markedly different to those we are asking and/or expecting them to do in university. Such acknowledgement should be followed by attempts to "recertify" the interim literacy practices these novices do in this threshold phase of their lives (cf., Spack, 1993). Thus, spearheaded by the Language/Literacy department, efforts need to be made to create room to view these literacy practices as unique to any we are familiar with. This understanding will facilitate an open and honest appraisal of these practices, one which sees them as different to the established academic discourses we encounter in journal articles and books.

From such dialogic and identity perspectives, novice academic writers need to be encouraged to not only marshal other voices in their writing but also to "respond" to these voices as well. Building on dialogic tasks as I suggest above, novices need to be encouraged not to be apprehensive of the authoritative other but rather to engage the authoritative voices of the discipline knowing that this is the only way they can meaningfully craft an "authorial I" (Baynham, 1999); a credible scholarly presence in their writing (Clark and Ivanič, 1997). This needs to start as soon as they come to university realising that such attempts to make novices relate with the authoritative other in this way will take some time. This is so as they will have to unlearn lessons they have learnt both in school and at home to "respect" authoritative discourses as I observe earlier. Even though this might be the case, the UNIMA needs to shift the perception and treatment of literacy, in general, and academic writing, in particular, from an autonomous skills perspective to an ideological semiosis with identity implications. This I hope will open up the space for further understanding of what is going on as our students sit down to write for us.

10.4 Limitations

Due to logistical constraints, I could only spend a semester on the research site. This meant that I had to continue interacting with my participants across time and geographical space as I outline in chapter 4. This means that I could not use ethnography as methodology (Lillis, 2008) to among other things, interview lecturers as well as observe lessons. At the end of the day, I only managed to interview one Mathematics lecturer who was responsible for one of the assignments my participants had done. The other lecturer was not forthcoming to grant me an interview opportunity despite my numerous attempts to get hold of her.

Furthermore, my intention to examine how novices performatively marshal other voices and assert their individuality in their academic writing meant that I had to ignore some forms of writing. Three forms of writing practices were disregarded as they were deemed not fit for purpose. Thus, I did not consider texts written by groups even though these were available from certain participants most notably Hope and Kai. I also did not consider texts which I felt were not "academic" in nature (e.g. letters which participants wrote in semester 2). This was also deliberate as at the centre of this study was examining how novice/participants become an academic writer by "doing" academic writing. The last category of texts I did not consider were examination scripts. This was the case as participants were unwilling to let me examine their examination scripts perhaps as they had a grade as well as evaluative comments on them from the lecturers responsible. I felt that participants did not allow me to see this for fear of losing face.

From the foregoing, it is evident that even though other forms of writing were available they were not deemed appropriate for the research purpose. In hindsight, this has been one limitation of this study as it might have then given the impression that not much writing practices are taking place in the lives of these novices. However, considering the circumstances in which this study was done, I feel that this is something that needs to be done going forward.

10.5 Directions for future research

10.5.1 Ethnography as methodology

In adopting ethnography as method (Lillis, 2008) this study has largely been exploratory. This implies that there is need to conduct another study based on "ethnography as methodology" to get an in-depth understanding of the writing practices

taking place in the faculty of Commerce at the Polytechnic. Such a study needs to move to other faculties as well so that a comprehensive understanding of the hitherto taken-for-granted writing practices at the institution be analysed. Using this study as a starting point, there is need for an ethnographic style study into how students at the institution continue to develop as academic writers. This would grant us further insight into how their academic writer persona evolves over time and how their rationalisation of that persona evolves as well. Such a study would also highlight in greater detail how the community fails these novice writers as they develop into their later years in university (cf., Mann, 2005).

This would be possible as the proposed study needs to examine *all* writing practices across the faculties as well as over the entire duration undergraduates stay in university. In other words, there is need to examine all writing practices at the institution as well as the circumstances surrounding them so that we really understand what is happening when students sit down to write for us. Such a study should not be confined to the written texts which students produce but should rather continue to place the student writers at the heart of these texts by bringing their voices to this process as well. Such a large scale study needs to maintain a dual focus like this one by looking at both the written texts as well as the voice of the writers of those texts. This should be supplemented by other approaches like observing classroom sessions in which these texts are sanctioned to interviewing lecturers responsible for these texts to understand how as well as why they frame their writing tasks the way they do. Such a large scale project of course would take a long time to complete.

10.5.2 Longitudinal perspectives

This study has been conducted over a two-semester period. In so doing, it can be said that this study has been developed as a longitudinal exploration of the threshold writing practices of novices in Malawi. However, as hinted at above, there is need for a more expansive longitudinal study that spans across the four year undergraduate period to trace the development of focal participants' writing trajectory. What I am proposing here is an ethnographic style of study like the one conducted by Leki (2007) to be done at the Polytechnic, UNIMA.

These propositions for longitudinal ethnography as methodology style of research into the writing practices of the UNIMA are being made realising that there is a lot to be yet learnt from other faculties, including the faculty of Commerce, which this study has just

explored. Such an examinations needs to be done with an open mind so that the researchers get a rich understanding of this context unencumbered by what they expect to see and find.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Literacy history interview questions

Introduction

- Tell me about your background (where you were born, when, your family etc.)
- Which schools have you attended in your life?

Literacy encounters

- When growing up, what sort of reading did you do?
- Do you know anyone who is, in your view, a 'good writer'? Could be in your family, among your friends, those you attended school with etc.?
- What do you think made/makes them 'good' writers?
  - ✓ What did/do they do differently from the rest?
  - ✓ How have they influenced your own writing?
- How do you rate your writing abilities (good, okay, poor)?
  - ✓ What makes you say so?
  - ✓ What have others said about your writing abilities?
  - ✓ Who are these 'others'?
- What types/forms of writing have you been doing in your life thus far?
  - ✓ How similar are they?
  - ✓ How different are they?

Academic writing

- What, in your view, is 'academic' about academic writing? What makes it unique or different from other forms of writing?
- How do you generally prepare to write an academic piece? Is this similar to the way you prepare for others forms of writing? If it is different, how so and why?
- How would you rate your academic writing abilities?

Appendix 2: Kai's essay 1

HOW JOB ATTITUDES AFFECT AN ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND HOW THEY INFLUENCE BEHAVIOR

(Robbins, S.P. & Judge T.A, 2013, P.70) defines attitudes as "the evaluative statements either favorable or unfavorable about objects, or events." These attitudes are learned throughout life and are embodied within a socialization process. Attitudes reflect on how individuals feel about something, or someone. This, therefore, make individuals either to like or dislike their jobs, their workmates or their bosses. There are three components of attitudes and these are; cognitive, affective and behavioral and three major job attitudes thus a particular attitude of a person can be based on one component or the other. Myers (as cited in Robbins and Judge, 2013.), Attitude is defined as a predisposition or tendency to respond favorable or unfavorable evaluative reaction towards a certain idea, object, person or a situation.

According to Schermerhorn, J. R, *et al*.... (2002) cognitive component deals with beliefs, opinions, knowledge or information a person possesses. This component makes a person to think if his job is well paying or not. Every employee tends to hold attitudes, these attitudes progress into positive or negative feelings and then are expressed through behaviour which can positively or negatively affect his job and work environment. Robbins, S. P. and Judge, T.A. (2013) further observes that cognitive component is to do with description of or belief, in the way things are. These briefs that a person holds, or opinions he has for and knowledge he has of, have to do with his mental aspects either positive of negative. Cognitive dissonance theory helps us to trace any incompatibility between two or more attitudes or between behaviour and attitudes.

Secondly, affective is the emotional or feeling segment of an attitude (ibid). Mainly this component of an attitude is portrayed through expression of people's deep seated feelings. It can sometimes negatively result into robbing employees' personalities and in a long run negatively affect their productivity. When an employee thinks his job is not well paying or is under employing some human resources, he/she may harbour a hard feeling about his job or management team or resort into intermitted negative statements like: "I hate my job" or "I feel like am wasting my time working with this company", which is very costly to an organization because this employee can compromise his productivity with his feelings by chronic lateness, reducing effort and increased error rate. On the other hand, when employees have positive

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feelings towards the job they develop an emotional stability and consequently improve job performance in an organization. Having looked at cognitive and affective type of components, these are like building blocks to a third component called behavioural.

Behavioural component is an intention to behave in a certain way based on your specific feelings and attitudes. This component tend to answer somebody's or employee's satisfaction or worries and concerns. For instance when a job is high paying, motivating and has social welfare of its employees research has shown to have low rate of job turnover. Having these attitudes and their three components in mind, it helps in understanding their complexity and the potential relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Therefore it is imperative to elaborate that cognitive deals with mental aspects; affective deals with feeling, while behavioural deals with action. It is also worth mentioning that the three components of attitudes are closely intertwined in the sense that one cannot distinctively deal with a single component without mentioning the other. Therefore, this inseparability just shows that each is just a step before the other. Thus affection-behaviour relationship acts as moderating variables as their importance, specificity, accessibility, social pressures, and direct experience. The self-perception theory uses attitudes after the event, to make sense out of an action taken. On organizational behaviour, the people's attitude is especially significant, as job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment largely stem from an individual employee's attitude.

All organizations are made up of people who came together for a common purpose and these people have numerous attitudes, which have an impact on the performance of an organization. According to Madumuse, T. (2015), there are three major job attitudes; job satisfaction, job involvement and job commitment. Robbins, S and Judge, T (2013) adds perceived organizational support, and employee engagement as other job attitudes. Work related attitudes tap positive or negative evaluations that employees hold about aspects of their work environment. Most of the times a person with high level of job satisfaction holds positive feelings about his or her job, while the opposite is true. While individuals may hold numerous job related attitudes, but the following three major job attitudes are of profound effect in the way one performs, acts or perceives his or her job. These are job satisfaction, job involvement and organizational commitment.

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*In continuation, Job satisfaction describes a positive feeling about a job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristics (Mullins, L. 2004). Job satisfaction is a complex concept and it is difficult to measure objectively, because the level of satisfaction is affected by wide range of variables relating to individual, social, cultural, organizational and environmental factors. For example; general manager Randy Zupanski wanted to improve employee morale and he hired a consulting firm to uncover problems in the workplace through a series of seminars. The consultants uncovered interesting concerns that hotel management had focused on team process, encouraging and rewarding team behaviour. However, it left out individual recognition. The managers introduced changes to the hotel's culture by recognizing personal achievements with rewards. The result, was an incredible change in atmosphere. Individual employees felt less stressed and more rewarded, which led to overall performance improvements by everyone. Customer satisfaction improved so much that the *Eau Claire Sheraton* received the Highest Overall Guest Satisfaction award among 230 hotels in North America. This should give an insight to managers and employers to take a proactive role in order to instill employee job satisfaction, and a positive work environment, these have positive effects to achieve efficiency and organizational performance as explored. On the contrary when an employee has negative feelings toward his/her work he cannot perform or interact with his/her fellow workmates effectively hence low coordination in an organization.

✓ On the other hand, (Mullins, L. 2004) Job involvement is the degree to which people identify psychologically with their job and consider their perceived performance level importance to self-worth. Employees with high level of job involvement strongly identify with and really care about the kind of work they do. Another closely related concept that cannot go without being mentioned is psychological empowerment. When managers empower their employees by involving them in decisions, making them feel their work is important and giving them discretion to do their own things. High level of job involvement and psychological empowerment are positively related to organizational citizenship and job performance. Employees' beliefs in the degree to which they influence their work environment, their competence, the meaningfulness of their job and their perceived autonomy. Most employees are motivated when they are allowed to contribute how they can run a day-to-day affairs of the organization, and when their views or ideas are respected or considered for future implementations and further improvements of the

company or organization's policies to enhance productivity and performance. (Judge, T.A. 2013) adds employee engagement to compliment job involvement, this measures an individual's involvement with, satisfaction with, and enthusiasm for, the work he/she does. This has been highly recommended because highly engaged employees have passion for their work and feel a deep connection to their company.

In addition, organizational commitment is how employees identify themselves with a particular organization and its goals (Robbins, S. 2013). Employees who are committed are less likely to engage in work withdrawal even if they are dissatisfied, because they have a sense of organizational loyalty. A positive relationship appears to exist between organizational commitment and job productivity, but it is a modest one. Robbins S. and Judge T (15th ed. 2013), included Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as the degree to which employees believe the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (socio-support). Workers with strong perceived organizational support perceptions have been found more likely to have high levels of organization citizenship behaviours, like low levels of tardiness, and better customer service.

Another important point to consider is, how attitudes influence behaviour in an organization. A well noted Socio-Psychologist, Leon Festinger, observed that attitudes have a great role in employees' behaviour in a work environment. And further used the term cognitive dissonance to describe a state of inconsistency between an individual's attitudes and his or her behaviour (Robbins S. 2013). People tend to apply emotional labor, whereby they express organizationally desire attitudes during interpersonal interaction in a work place. They seek consistency among their attitudes and between their attitudes and their behaviour. Thus individuals seek to reconcile divergent attitudes and align their attitudes and behaviour so that they appear rational and consistent. When there is an inconsistency, the equilibrium between attitudes and behaviour is restored by altering either the attitudes or the behaviour, or by developing a rationalization for the discrepancy.

Furthermore, there are no limits to the attitudes people hold and attitudes are learnt throughout life and are incorporated in our socialization processes. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that Pavlov's *classical conditioning* processes can explain how attitudes are acquired sometimes

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*[(McGuire, 1985). Some attitudes may be central to people and may be highly resistant to change. Other attitudes are peripheral and may change with new information or new experiences.

In conclusion, managers have to assess potential employees' attitudes and determine if their values align with the dominant values of the organization. Considering the evaluations and feelings of the employees, it is important to mention that this can have positive or negative impact on the employees and their working environment. An employee's performance and satisfaction are likely to be higher if his or her values fit well with the organization. Effective managers must be interested in their employees' attitudes, because attitudes give warnings of potential present or future problems and they influence behaviour that can be advantageous or disadvantageous to an organizational overall productivity and performance.

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Appendix 3: Talking points from Kai's essay 1

- *How did you understand/make sense of the task? What do you think was the lecturer looking for? How did you respond to this?*
- There is an interesting blend of "attribution" and "speaking through" the voice of the discipline.

VOICE/INTERTEXRTUALITY

   a. ATTRIBUTION
- (Robbins and Judge (2013) define …)
- (According to Schermerhorn (2002) …)
- (Robbins and Judge (2013) further observe that …)
- (On the other hand Mullins (2004) …)
- (According to Madumuse (2015) …)
- (Robbins and Judge (2013) add that …)

Why did you do this? What are you trying to achieve by this?

   a. CITATION/SPEAKING THROUGH ESTABLISHED DISCOURSE
- Page 1 (Myers as cited in Robbins and Judge, 2013)
- Page 3 (Mullins, 2004)
- Page 4 (Judge, 2013)/(Robbins, 2013)
- Page 5 (McGuire, 1985)
  - i. *Overall, how different are these forms to the ones in (a) above?*
  - ii. *Overall, what's the rationale in using other texts in your essay?*

ENGAGEMENT

   a. HEDGING
- Page 1, paragraph 3 – "Mainly this component …" *Explain the use of 'mainly'.*

   b. METADISCOURSE
- Page 1 paragraph 3 – "Secondly, …"
- Page 2, paragraph 1 – "Having looked at …"
- Page 2, paragraph 2 – "Therefore it is imperative to …"

  Explain these statements (i.e., what role do they serve in the construction of the essay?)

FUZZY INTERTEXTUALITY

- Page 1 paragraph 3: *whose point is this?*
- Page 3 paragraph 1: *is this an example which you coined? Explain. Whose point did you use to conclude this paragraph? Explain.*
- Page 4 paragraph 2: "A possible relationship appears to exist …" *Whose point is this; yours or Robins and Judge's? Explain.*

- *How did you did you distinguish what 'you' had to say from what 'others' have said on the issue at hand? Specific examples?*

- *Looking at how you sound in this essay, is this the way you sound in other texts you are used to writing (e.g. reports)? Explain possible discrepancies.*

ACADEMIC WRITING

Earlier (during the first chat) you had said that academic writing is unique as "it has rules and regulations … policies involved".

- *How did these rules/regulations/policies affect the writing of this essay*?
- *Did you make an attempt to assert yourself in this essay? Explain/How*?
- *What challenges did you encounter in writing this essay? How did you overcome them*?

Appendix 4: Talking points around Kai's 'Othello essay'

1. **Voice/Intertextuality**
- Oxford dictionary defines … (page 1)
- … (Lesley and Jeffrey, 1973) (page 1)
- Robert (1966) has described … (page 1)
- Most critics of Othello chose to blame …. Stephen Reid (1968) argued that … (page 3)

2. **Engagement**

Metadiscourse
- In this essay the author shall … (page 1)
- In addition, … (page 2)
- To sum up … (page 3)

Boosting
- Shakespeare's <u>ingenious</u> tragedy … (page 1)
- … his <u>indisputable fact</u> that … (page 3)

Questioning
- … But why? (page 1)

'Self' mention/Reader mention
- … which *I* believe was intentional (page 2)
- … this leads *us* to explore … (page 2)
- … but most importantly *I* base my critic on … (page 3)
- … *I* strongly believe the implications … (page 3)

  Explain the subsequent addressing of critics.

- … *we* must be aware, before *we* take any course of action (page 3)

3. **'Fuzzy' intertextuality/(Interdiscursivity?)**
- Elizabethan England was … (page 2)
- … he plays Elizabethan notions that … (page 2)

  Explain the source of these sentiments.

- Earlier you had indicated the constraining power academic writing exercises over how you come across in your writing. You had indicated that "this essay (Organisational Behaviour essay in talk around text 1) does not indicate who Joseph is" but is rather indicative of "the preparation that has gone into its writing". *Is that feeling the same with this essay? Do you still feel that way with this essay? Explain. Who's doing the 'talking' in this essay?*
- You seems to have already have the ability and understanding pertaining to how you're to integrate sources into your essay. *How's that the case?*
- *What challenge(s) did you encounter in writing this essay? How did you overcome them?*

Appendix 5: Reflective questions sent to Kai on essay 2

1. To begin with, you describe Othello as 'Shakespeare's **ingenious** tragedy'. What made you describe the play as **ingenious**?
2. At the end of paragraph 1, you say '*In this essay the author shall zero in on how the themes of racism and jealousy contributed to the downfall of Othello'*.
    a) What is the significance of this statement? Why make this announcement of what 'the author' will do?
    b) Since you are the author the statement in question is referring to, why did you not simply say '**I** will zero in on …'?
3. On various occasions on page 1 as well as on page 3, you refer to other texts apart from the play 'Othello' itself. For instance, consider the following occasions:
    a) Oxford dictionary defines jealousy … (page 1 paragraph 1)
    b) The themes of jealousy, racism, and revenge have consistently interested scholars throughout Othello's critical history (Leslie and Jeffrey, 1973) (page 1 paragraph 1)
    c) Robert, H. (1966) has described Othello as … (paragraph 2 page 1)
    d) Stephen Reid (1968) argued that … (paragraph 2 page 3)
    e) Most critics of Othello chose to blame his insecurities on his advanced age (line 1 paragraph 2 page 3)

    Could you explain the rationale behind bringing these other views from other 'scholars' into your essay? In other words, what role do these other views play in your essay? You can address these separately or collectively.

4. Consider the following statement in paragraph 2 on page 1

    *This is a clever artwork of Iago who gradually fed Othello with lies, **but why**?*

    Who is this question directed to? What role does it play in advancing the point you wanted to make here?

5. At the beginning of the first paragraph on page 2,
    a) there is a statement which begins with '*Elizabethan England was for all intents and purposes a homogeneous culture.'* Who is doing the 'talking' here; you or someone else? Thus, is this your statement or a statement which is lifted from somewhere?

    b) In the middle of the same paragraph there is a statement which ends with '*which **I** believe was intentional'*. Furthermore, on page 3 there is this statement: '*… but most importantly, **I** base my critic on …* (paragraph 2 line 1). In the middle of the same paragraph, there is this statement: '*... **I** strongly believe the implications'*. Could you explain how and or why you used **I** to refer to yourself when earlier in the introduction you used '*the author*' to refer to yourself (see question 2a above)? What can you tell me about the use of 'I' to refer to yourself in academic writing?

6. Let me bring your attention to the following statements as well:
    a) *Having said that this leads **us** to explore his (Othello) take of his confidence ...* (paragraph 1 page 2 last line)

b) *This proves the theme of appearance and reality – that nothing is always what it seems to be and **we** must be aware, before **we** take any course of action* (concluding paragraph).

In using such collective pronouns (**us** as well as **we**), who are you addressing? Why?

7. On page 2 there is this statement: *'When Iago said "old black ram" (Othello) is "tupping" (sleeping with) Brabantio's white ewe (Desdemona) he plays Elizabethan notions that black men have an animal-like, hyper sexuality'.* Who is 'talking' here? In other words, is this your statement or a statement which has been lifted from another source into your essay?

8. On page 3 consider the following statement: *'I strongly believe the implications of such a notion are far too strong to ignore and critics must come to terms with most obvious possibility for Othello's downfall, of which, the effect of which …*' (paragraph 2).
    a) In addressing 'the critics' in this manner, do you feel that you also are part of them? In other words, do you consider yourself as a 'critic' as well for you to address them like this?
    b) How does your relating with the critics in this manner differ from the way that you related with managers in the last essay in organizational behavior?
    c) What does this shifting in who you address as suggested by question (b) above tell you about the writing requirements and or demands that are being made on you in university?

9. Going through this essay as well as the last one we talked about seems to strongly suggest that you have already developed the ability and understanding pertaining to how you are to integrate ideas and or views from other source texts into your essay. How have you arrived at this state in your academic writing?

10. Earlier when we were talking about your essay in Organizational Behavior you highlighted, among other things, the constraining power which the academy, in general, and academic writing, in particular wields over you through its imposition of academic rules and regulations. You went on to say that this has had an impact on how you come across in your writing as you indicated that the essay in Organizational behavior "does not indicate who Joseph is but is rather indicative of the preparation that has gone into its writing."
    a) Is this feeling still the same with this essay? Please explain your answer.
    b) In general, who is doing the 'talking' in this essay? Explain your answer

11. What challenge(s) did you encounter in writing this essay?
    a) How did you overcome them?
    b) How did these challenges impact the final copy of the essay?

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