

Identity work in the academic writing classroom: where gender meets social class
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Abstract

This article examines how male undergraduate students from linguistic minorities and non traditional university backgrounds perform gender (Butler 1990), viewed from the perspective of identity, on an academic writing programme and discusses what this tells us about the significance of gender for the teaching of academic writing in the contemporary academy. I focus on how gender is performed in talk about academic discourse and reveal the attraction of laddish identities for the men in the study. In so doing, I aim to deepen understanding in English for Academic Purposes of the importance of the social world for the social relations of the writing classroom and contribute to research that has considered identity in relation to the written outputs of students and scholars outside classroom settings (Hyland 2012; Ivanič 1998; Lillis 2001). To gain a more nuanced understanding of gender, an intersectional approach (Block and Corona 2016) is adopted, in which gender is viewed in intersection with social class. I argue that the gender-class nexus is of key significance for the teaching of academic writing in that it reveals how the social world orients language learners to language learning and sheds light on how students, as agentive beings, negotiate their positioning in discourses of deficit. I demonstrate how understanding of these issues can be developed through fine grained analysis of spoken interaction in the classroom and contend that language-as-resource approaches to linguistic diversity offer a productive way forward for EAP and, more widely, for teaching in contexts of linguistic diversity in higher education.

Key words

Academic writing; gender; identity; social class; higher education; EAP

Introduction¹

In class today, we discussed the departmental requirement for students to read broadsheet newspapers. The discussion got heated. The students described themselves as “a generation on the move” who didn’t like to read texts aimed at “the elderly” – the identity they ascribed to readers of *The Guardian* and *The Times*. Several expressed the opinion that tabloid newspapers and lifestyle magazines represented “who they were”. This left me wondering how these

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papers and magazines represented “who they were” and why they were resistant to reading more serious stuff (Diary entry).

At the start of today’s session, a male student told me “I want you to know I write poetry. Please do not tell the others”. What a shame he doesn’t want me to tell the class. Why didn’t he want his peers to know? (Diary entry).

When I walked into class today, a male student was wielding a chair above his head in a dispute with another man. I had to get into school ma’am mode to break up whatever was going on and to attempt to create an environment where we could get on with work. I feel like I’m having to police this group far too much. Why is this happening in a university? (Diary entry).

These diary extracts arose from my experiences as an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tutor teaching academic writing to first-year undergraduate students entering higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) through widening participation (WP) routes and of conducting research in the site of the academic writing classroom. WP has been taken up in many countries to rectify social imbalances in the domestic student population. In the UK, it has focused on increasing numbers of working class, ethnic minority, mature and female university entrants.

In this article, I illustrate how examining interaction in the academic writing classroom can shed light on the significance of gender for academic writing. I draw on Norton’s (2013) and Block’s (2007) contention that the social world of the language learner is strongly implicated in language learning. This informs my view of gender as part of a language learner’s social world. As we will see, the social world came into play in the classroom and oriented the students to academic writing in particular ways. It informed the students’ view of academic discourse as ‘posh’ and ‘other’ to themselves. The social world contributed to their ideas that they would be viewed as ‘posh’ if they used ‘long words’, ‘long sentences’, ‘proper’ English, or were seen reading books and broadsheet newspapers, and coloured views of their everyday linguistic practices as ‘slang’. These views point to Snell’s (2013) work on commonly held assumptions about dialects as discrete entities that are approached as deficit or difference. Deficit approaches are hierarchical in that standardized language varieties are accorded prestige and associated with educated, professional elite groups while vernacular varieties are marginalized and viewed as deficient. Difference approaches provide a counter narrative of equality in that dialects are viewed as appropriate for communication in particular domains of use. However, both approaches have contributed to the idea that in the classroom, students should use ‘one dialect only’ and ‘one dialect at a time’, i.e. the prestige variety, similar to the idea of ‘one language only’ and ‘one language at a time’ (Li & Wu 2009) in the language classroom. As Snell argues, and as this article seeks to illustrate, the notion of rigid boundaries between dialects and languages is problematic and is likely to be counterproductive when it comes to the education of bi/multilingual and/ or bi-dialectal

users of English. As I illustrate in this paper, the construction of a ‘posh-slang’ binary was indicative of the disjuncture between the students’ life worlds and the academy and the ‘out-of-place’ (Bauman 2004: 12) feelings that academic discourse inspired. These feelings were exacerbated by institutional gate-keeping practices in which many students arrived on the programme as a result of a mandatory diagnostic test rather than through self or tutor referral. These practices contributed to perceptions of the programme as language remediation rather than language development.

As discussed elsewhere (Preece 2016), feeling out-of-place is a key factor in identity work. When we feel out of place, we attend to our identity by comparing ourselves with others and displaying allegiances. Identity work often arises in educational contexts as students go about forming and maintaining social relationships. Focusing on social relations in the academic writing classroom reveals how gender comes into play as a dimension of identity and how gender identities orient students to academic writing. In this article, I focus on male students, the attraction of laddish identities in the academy and how these oriented men to academic writing. To gain a more nuanced understanding of gender identities, I take an intersectional approach (Block & Corona 2016), in this case viewing gender in intersection with social class. Class is clearly relevant to EAP given the focus in EAP on prestige varieties of language and the literacy practices of groups with high social status. I argue that a better understanding of the relationship between gender and class can be gained in EAP through fine-grained analysis of spoken interaction in teaching and learning settings and that this analysis lays the foundation for pedagogic practices aiming to orient students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to academic writing in the contemporary academy.

Gender and social class in EAP

Gender and social class have received some attention in the interrelated fields of EAP, ESOL and Academic Literacies with researchers arguing for the need for more sustained attention to how these dimensions intersect and how they impact on the teaching and learning of EAP and academic writing (e.g. Chun, 2009; Kubota 2003; Lin 1999). In line with applied linguistics more generally gender in EAP research tends to be viewed as either synonymous with biological sex (i.e. male or female) or as socially constructed (see Introduction this issue) (see Appleby 2009; Belcher 2009; Hyland 2012). I take the view of gender as a social construct, as an important marker of identity and as intrinsically linked to other dimensions of identity, such as sexuality, ethnicity and social class. This multidimensional view of gender calls for an intersectional approach, in which consideration is given to how gender shapes/ is shaped by other identity inscriptions. Intersectionality, as Block and Corona (2016: 508) argue, allows us to point to ‘the complexity of identity in the increasingly varied and variable circumstances of the times in which we live’.

The significance of social class in EAP has received less attention. Block's call (2014) for applied linguistics to focus on social class in order to make 'sense of the social realities of twenty-first-century societies' (p. 2) seems particularly pertinent for EAP, given its concern for learning, teaching, scholarship and research that aims to address the linguistic (and cultural) needs of students from diverse backgrounds in UK universities. Definitions of 'social class' tend to foreground material conditions particularly in relation to economic, cultural and social capital (see Savage et al 2015). Economic capital refers to material wealth and income and is traditionally associated with occupation. In the UK, the university sector, along with other institutions, routinely uses the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) of jobs to assign socioeconomic status to students. Applied to language learning, economic capital relates to the amount of disposable income individuals can devote to language learning resources (e.g. books and tutors), activities (e.g. classes) and visits to places where the target language is used. Cultural capital is associated with tastes, interests and activities and the acquisition of related knowledge, expertise and skills. With reference to language learning, this includes acquisition of family and community language(s) and literacy practices along with formal learning of standard language(s) and academic literacy practices. Social capital refers to social networks and friendships and the social connections that these create for getting things done. Applied to language learning, social capital relates to how contacts facilitate (or not) gaining access to expert users of the target language.

Social class alongside gender has received some attention in research into academic literacy practices in higher education (e.g. Ivanič 1998; Lillis 2001; Preece 2009, 2010a, 2014) indicating that students from non-traditional backgrounds appear more likely than their traditional counterparts to perceive academic discourse as highbrow, to represent it as 'Other' to themselves, and to experience learning and using it as disturbing their identities. For example, in her study of prestige essayist literacy practices with female working-class undergraduates, Lillis (2001) found that her participants frequently portrayed their linguistic repertoires in terms of deficit and experienced using academic discourse as 'putting on airs and graces' (p. 95) that distanced them from their family and friends. Similarly, Ivanič (1997) discovered that some of the mature undergraduate participants in her study of writing and identity, half of whom identified as working-class, found it difficult to maintain the balancing act in their academic writing between a scholarly identity, perceived to be 'impersonal' and '[dismissive of] personal experience' (p. 304) and strongly held social identities, particularly activist identities rooted in personal experience of disadvantage and/ or discrimination.

Both gender and social class are grounded in material realities as well as being enacted, or 'performed' in ongoing interactions around learning. Butler (1990), drawing on Austin's (1962) speech act theory, put forward a view of gender as materialised through 'performative acts' that '[constitute] the identity it is purported to be' (p. 33). These acts involve drawing on language (e.g. dialect, speech styles, accent) and other resources (e.g.

clothing, hair style, gesture, bodily adornments) to stylise the body in gendered ways. Butler argued that the repetitive nature of these acts created the impression of gender as an essence despite gender being a culturally and socially constituted performance. An important point to draw from Butler is that gender and social class need to be culturally 'intelligible'. They are not a matter of individual choice but regulated in interactions with others and by how far we are able or willing to deviate from cultural norms about what doing being a '(working-class) man' or '(working-class) woman' entails. That such norms are culturally powerful is illustrated in findings discussed elsewhere (Preece 2010a) of students taking an academic writing class in biosciences. In classroom proceedings, they constructed scientists as white and male, dressed in lab coats, conducting experiments and concerned with the rational. Their narratives suggested that while being inducted into the ontology and epistemology of their discipline, their imagined scientist was still that of a white man. They could not imagine 'people like [them]' (Bowl 2003), i.e. working-class and ethnic minority women and men, as scientists as a matter of course. What this reveals is that those who occupy the margins of the academy imagine the identities of those with status in their field as gendered, classed and raced and as particular kinds of language users.

In the following section, I discuss the specific ways in which gender and social class are enacted in a UK based academic writing programme.

Methodology

The study took place on an academic writing programme and involved 93 first-year undergraduate students (45 women and 48 men), divided into four classes, which I shared with a colleague. The students were classified by the institution as working class based on the UK National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) (Office for National Statistics 2010) and came from linguistic minority communities that resided in areas of London scoring highly on the English Indices of Deprivation (Dept for Communities and Local Government 2015), which measures aspects such as employment, housing, health, education and access to services. Most were born in the UK; some were 1.5 generation (arriving at a young age); a few were first generation migrants. Given their social and educational backgrounds, they had little insider knowledge of what university studies entailed.

The students arrived from schools and colleges where bi- and multilingual learners were the norm. As Eversley et al's (2010) study of linguistic diversity in London schools illustrates, in addition to English, around 350 languages are in use in the London school population. The participants reflected this diversity. Most were English-dominant bi- and multilinguals, using English in conjunction with languages of ancestral heritage. They were also bi-dialectal users of English, using standard British English, learned at school,

and the local vernacular, ‘Multicultural London English’ (MLE) (Cheshire et al. 2011), also referred to as ‘London English’ (Harris 2006), acquired in the local community. Linguistic features of MLE, such as the question tag ‘innit?’, were regularly used in the classroom and referred to as ‘slang’. In contrast, academic discourse was referred to as ‘posh’ and ‘proper English’. As we will see, the ‘posh-slang’ binary mediated the participants’ experiences of academic discourse and social relations in the academy.

The research design was ethnographically oriented (Blommaert and Jie 2010), in that it was longitudinal (the duration of the study was 2 years); it was conducted in a natural setting for the participants (the academic writing classroom); the primary data consisted of naturally occurring data (classroom proceedings) and the focus was on gaining insight into the emic perspectives of the participants, particularly their experiences as language users and learners. The first year of the study included a diary kept by the researcher of classroom proceeding, audio-recorded spoken interaction in the classroom, an open-ended questionnaire and information from official records. The second year (after the participants finished the programme) included two rounds of interviews on matters that the researcher deemed to be of importance arising from the classroom data. The interviews were conducted with key informants, who were selected on the basis of low, medium or high volubility in the classroom with the aim of gaining insight into the experiences of a range of participants on the programme, not just those who were the most visible in the classroom proceedings. The audio-recorded data were transcribed following the conventions of conversation analysis to facilitate a fine-grained analysis of the content and manner of the spoken interaction (see Preece 2009a for fuller account). In what follows, data extracts are presented to see how social relations are attended to when working-class men talk about language and academic discourse, how gender identities are inflected with social class and ethnicity and attuned to ‘laddishness’ and what this can tell us about orientation to academic writing.

Data

Language practices

Extracts 1 and 2 illustrate the disjuncture between the students’ everyday language practices and those of the academy. The extracts come from group work in which the students were discussing their linguistic profiles and their ideas about academic language. Extract 1 involves Toddⁱ, a Black British man (aged 18) born in the UK, and Marina, a Russian woman (aged 19), who had been in the UK for two years.

Extract 1: ‘broken down English’

M=Marina, T=Toddⁱⁱ

1. T: I'm/ I'm British obviously so I only use the/ um (1) talking English/
 2. but 'cos my family's JaMAican/ we have another form of language/
 3. which is called Patois/ it's basically broken down English/ so when I'm
 4. at home/ okay this is the language I use/ some people may find it
 5. Difficult to understand/ some people may Pick up on certain words
 6. that we use/ but that's/ that's the/ the:: language I use at home
 7. M: so it differs from English actually?
 8. T: yes/ it's different from English but there's certain words/ um within
 9. that language that/ you MAY be able to pick up on/ you MAY understand
- Omitted lines
17. T: for me personally I only speak like/ my language/ which is Patois/
 18. when I'm at home/ or when I'm with certain/ certain friends like/ as I
 19. said not everybody understands it/ 'cos I've grown up with it around
 20. my family/ and sometimes it's Easier for me to speak in that language
 21. than it is in English/ [so
 22. M: [so you find it easier to speak
 23. T: yeah/ because I mean/ I've grown up/ I've grown up obviously learning
 24. English and obviously learning that language/ 'cos my family's
 25. JaMAican/ sometimes I find it's easier for me to just speak to 'em/ in
 26. the language that ((xxx)) stuff/ I mean yeah/ when I'm at home obviously/
 27. more time you'll hear me speaking Patois rather than English/ and when
 28. I'm with my friends/ certain ones/ you'll hear me speaking Patois/ I mean
 29. it's just that sometimes it's a better way for us to interrelate/ an.' it's a
 30. better way for me to communicate with my granddad and my uncles

Todd starts by signalling a British identity (line 1), the use of 'obviously' suggesting that this is strongly held. His linking of British ethnicity to 'so I only use ... English' is indicative of normative views of British people as monolingual English speakers. However, the rephrasing and pause (line 1) suggest that Todd, as a bilingual, is struggling with this norm. In what follows, Todd refers to his ancestral heritage of Jamaica (line 2) to introduce Patois, which refers to varieties of Jamaican Creole spoken in the UK (see Holmes 2013). Todd represents Patois as 'broken down English' (line 3) and repeats several times that this language is used 'at home' (lines 4, 6, 18, 26). Marina's clarification question (line 7) enables Todd to differentiate Patois from English, but as he does not qualify his earlier negative representation, the impression of Jamaican Creole as an impoverished variety of English stands. Todd clearly associates Patois with his family and as a language in which he can express himself with ease (lines 23-6), indicating high expertise. He also displays affiliation to Jamaican Creole by referring to it as 'my language' (line 17) and by valuing it as a language for maintaining social relationships (line 29). The overt reference to gender (line 30) in the final utterance in this section illustrates the importance of his language inheritance as a resource for enacting gendered relations with senior male family members.

Similar issues emerge in extract 2 involving three British Asian men: Lalit (aged 19), Darvesh (aged 20) and Salman (aged 25). This extract follows a section of talk in which the participants had established their identities as a 'group of lads' (see Preece 2009b).

Extract 2: 'slang language an' that/ innit?'

L=Lalit, S=Salman, D=Darvesh

1. L: when you're with your friends/ you use like slang language an' that/ innit?
2. S: you're not so formal/ would you?
3. L: no no/ (.) people like/ (.) for one thing we wouldn't really be [recording
4. S: [I don't think
5. we'd be talking like this if we/ we were with our mates
6. L: yeah yeah=
7. D: =we'd be more informal
8. S: yeah/ (.) we're- we're not really bothered/ too bothered about making
9. mistakes either
10. L: yeah=
11. D: =that's it/ (.) I mean when you're chatting to your friends/ (.) e- even if you
12. do get er (.) mistakes/ your friends will correct you
13. S: Yeah
14. L: they would- wouldn't even be too bothered <laughs>
15. D: exactly/ (.) it's just a normal conversation with your friends/ innit?
16. S: you're more relaxed=
17. L: =yeah
18. S: when you're more relaxed/ you tend to make more mistakes/
19. D: [yeah
20. L: [yeah (2) I don't know actually/ (.) when you're relaxed you just carry on/
21. when you're nervous an' that/ that's when we start like stuttering an' all
22. that/ you're just like "uh uh uh" <imitates stuttering>
23. S: yeah that's true/ that's true
24. L: cos I think with my friends an' that/ I'd be like/ I'd talk more to them/
25. innit? (.) an' like friends family an' that/ so I'd use MORE informal
26. language an' stuff like that/ right/ most of it I can't say now cos we're being
27. recorded an' that/ innit?
28. D: yeah that's it/ I mean=
29. L: =it's ONLY when you're speaking like/ say if you're speaking to the
30. FA:mily like/ like with my brother/ I'd be swearing an' that/
31. yeah/ but with my mum an' dad obviously I wouldn't innit/ ['cos they'd
32. S: [yeah that's true
33. L: like be talking aBOVE you an' with your teachers you'll be like (.) yeah
34. "can you PASS me THIS PLEASE?" <stylised hyper polite voice> an' [that
35. S: [yeah

36. D: [yeah
37. ((coming)) like (.) extra ((polite))

Lalit starts by making reference to ‘slang’ (i.e. MLE) as the in-group variety used with friends. As up to this point, ‘friends’ has referred to the ‘group of lads’ with whom Lalit and Darvesh socialise, it appears reasonable to conclude that ‘friends’ continues to refer to the ‘lads’. MLE is accorded informality while academic discourse is portrayed as ‘formal’ (line 2). In the following turns (lines 3-7), the participants reinforce this informal-formal binary. The topic is developed by the introduction of ‘mistakes’ (lines 8-9) and Salman’s claim that ‘mistakes’ are not an issue in peer interactions. The reference to ‘mistakes’ speaks to the differences in lexis, grammar and phonology between MLE and standard British English along with the widespread perception of vernacular English as deficient (Reaser & Adger 2010). It implies that conforming to the norms of academic discourse required the participants to monitor their use of English. This impression is reinforced by Salman’s claim to feel more ‘relaxed’ when interacting with peers (line 16), suggesting that switching into standard English was uncomfortable. Lalit goes on to portray relaxation as facilitating interaction and nervousness as a constraint (lines 20-22). Lalit’s performance of stuttering at this juncture suggests inhibition when it comes to expressing ideas using academic language and points to how using academic discourse creates out of place feelings. This impression is reinforced in what follows where they claim to speak more with friends (line 23), to self-censure their utterances when with lecturers (lines 26-7) and to use taboo language with male siblings (line 30). This latter claim refers back to earlier interaction on banter and points to the ways in which banter acts as a resource for enacting laddishness. In the closing turns, Lalit refers to the power differential between him (and his peers) and authority figures such as parents and lecturers with his claim that these people ‘[talk] above you’ (line 33). He concludes by stylising his accent to illustrate his attempts at conforming to an accent (line 34) that he deems will enable him to ‘pass’ as a legitimate student in the institution.

Literacy practices

Extract 3 illustrates the disjuncture between the type of reading material with which the men in the study felt comfortable and what the academy expected them to read. This extract comes from an interview with Geet (aged 19), a British Asian man who arrived in the UK as a child refugee from Kenya. We are discussing his reading habits and why he likes reading *The Sun*.

Extract 3: ‘he is reading that same paper’

1. I think the reason [I read *The Sun*]ⁱⁱⁱ is because I have seen people around
2. me, they all read the same paper. So I think that is the reason, I have been

3. influenced as well. So I think he is reading that same paper, so I will read
4. the same paper as well. So I think that is the reason I read *The Sun* (Geet, interview 1).

This extract illustrates how Geet's taste for tabloid newspapers arose from his socialisation into the literacy practices of the working-class community in which his family was located on arrival in the UK. Geet informs us that he found himself in a world populated by *Sun* readers (lines 1-2). He then develops this idea by making an overt reference to gender, in which *Sun* readers are portrayed as male and as a group to which he wished to belong (line 3).

Extract 4 illustrates the lack of taste for the types of bookish literacy practices associated with academic writing. This extract comes from a group consisting of Geet (see extract 3) and three British Asians from Urdu and Punjabi-speaking communities: Tahir (male, aged 20), Randeep (male, aged 20) and Vritti (female, aged 19). While Tahir, Randeep and Vritti are English-dominant, it is debatable whether this is the case for Geet, who remained silent for much of the time.

Extract 4: 'it's keeping one of my tables stable'

V=Vritti, T=Tahir, R=Randeep, G=Geet

- 1 V: do you see yourself as a reader and writer of academic texts?
- 2 T: I think you should ask that one to yourself
- 3 V: okay fine/ I enjoy reading/ I always HAVE enjoyed reading (.) okay
- 4 R: what do you like reading?
- 5 V: I don't know [I mean *Lord of the Rings*
- 6 R: *Sugar* <laughs>
- 7 T: ((xx))=
- 8 V: =you know my my brother/ he got about half way through it=
- 9 T: =((xx)) it's keeping one of my tables stable [<laughs>
- 10 R: [<laughs>

In line 1 Vritti attempts to get group members to focus on the task at hand. Tahir thwarts her efforts by nominating her, as the lone woman, to answer the question (line 2). Her use of 'okay' to enclose the positive declaration about reading along with the raised volume of 'have' (line 3) appear defensive and may signal her awareness of the unpopularity of bookish practices with these young men. This impression is strengthened by Randeep's innocuous-sounding question (line 4). Her slightly hesitant response, in which she names a classic text, facilitates Randeep's joke, casting Vritti as a reader of *Sugar*^{iv}, a magazine for teen girls (line 6). This positions her as a girl concerned with the inconsequential

rather than an intelligent young woman with a declared interest in literature that he deems to be highbrow. Ignoring Randeep, Vritti attempts to get the group back on task by referring to her brother sharing her reading habits (line 8). The overt reference to a male family member appears to be an attempt to persuade the men of the desirability of reading books. Ignoring this reference, Tahir carries on with the banter, in which he makes a joke about using the book in question to prop up a table (line 9). The joke, and the playful sounding 'tables stable' prompts more laughter from Randeep and Tahir. This style of interaction continues for several more turns before the topic is finally closed down.

Besides making light of academic reading and writing, the men avoided talking openly in the classroom about the difficulties that they were experiencing with academic discourse. This is illustrated in extract 5, in which Lalit, Darvesh and Salman are comparing academic writing with the type of informal written texts that they send to friends.

Extract 5: 'they're on your mentality'

L=Lalit, S=Salman, Darvesh

1. D: there's a totally different type of um (.) writing that you have to do/ when
2. you're writing up (.) um assignments/ compared to/
3. L: yeah/ exactly/
4. D: writing out informal letters to your friends/ or emails or whatever (.) you're
5. not bothered about [spellin:gs/ or about grammar:/ an' so on (.)
6. L: [that's it
7. D: jus' writing it/
8. L: yeah/
9. D: you're very COMfortable/ when you're writing letters innit? (.) you're not
10. pressured [(.) under pressure like (.) that's it/
11. L: [yeah/ (.) you write like (.) messages as well like=
12. D: =whatever you're thinking (.) whatever you just write it straight out/ innit?
13. L: yeah/
14. D: an' (.) the spelling mistakes you did (.) the short hand y'know/ what I mean/
15. they don't bother you for the simple reason (.) doesn't matter to you=
16. L: =your friend's probably made the same mistakes [ANYway (.)
17. D: [exactly
18. L: they're on your (.) they're on your mentality (.) yeah=
19. D: =cos when you're/ when you're writing essays (.) it's like you: (.) you have
20. to do [(.) you have to DRAFTS man/ you have to do DRAFTS=
21. S: [%drafts%
22. L: =yeah/
23. D: and then you fucking read over what you wrote
24. ALL: [<hilarious laughter for 8 seconds>

This extract illustrates how Lalit, Darvesh and Salman hint at difficulties but avoid talking about them openly. Darvesh's assertion that they do not have to worry about spelling and grammar when writing for friends (lines 4-5) harks back to extract 2 and is suggestive of the difficulties that they are experiencing with academic discourse. In what follows, they hint at these difficulties. By constructing writing for their friends as 'comfortable' (line 9), unpressured (line 10) and not requiring too much thought or effort (line 12), they infer that academic writing is causing them discomfort and pressure and that they are finding the effort required onerous. Lalit and Darvesh return to the characteristics of written communication among their friends. Their portrayal of these as a matter of shared 'mentality' (line 18) infers shared knowledge of the linguistic practices of the 'group of lads' and points to these as markers of group solidarity. The interaction shifts to jocularly over what is entailed in successful academic writing. Darvesh cracks a joke about the practice of drafting and revising essays (lines 19-23), in which he signals his ambivalence to these practices and invites his peers to have a laugh. The joke is signalled through the raised volume of 'drafts' (line 20), by addressing his peers as 'man' (line 20) and by the use of taboo language to trash practices that are commonly associated with a scholarly identity (line 23). These signals are interpreted as a cue for group merriment, enacted in 8 seconds of boisterous laughter. The joke-telling, laughter and taboo language act to lighten the proceedings and close down the discussion of academic writing.

Extract 6 is indicative of the reception that men received from other male students when disclosing difficulties with academic discourse. The tone of the interaction contrasts with the light-hearted character of the group interaction in extracts 4 and 5. This extract comes from a group of three men: Osmaan (aged 25), a British Asian and one of the few mature students on the academic writing programme, Sanjay (aged 19), a British Asian and Mustafa (aged 20), a British Iranian. Osmaan is responding to a question posed by Mustafa about how he is getting on with academic reading and writing.

Extract 6: 'All the usual shit'

O=Osmaan, S=Sanjay, M=Mustafa

- 1 O: er:: I don't know/ I'd say that I don't (.) I sometimes have difficulty (.)
2 reading and understanding/ I have to write sometimes/ I have to break it
3 down/ read it again [(.) then I understand it
4 S: [yeah? <laughs, scornful tone>
5 O: simple man (.) there's no no shyness about it (1) y'know what I mean?
<stylised Cockney>
6 just to to make sure that I understand it fully/ I need to break it down
7 sometimes/ and then=
8 S: =okay
9 O: some academic texts can be really like (.) high in (.) grammar/ and
10 everything so/

- 11 S: that's why we're doing this course/
12 O: exactly/ hopefully by the end of this course that will be gone/
13 M: erm (2) I think first year's okay/ but (.) we we'll have to wait and see
14 second year/ (2)
15 S: I think me/ I don't/ I don't need to do this class anyway yeah/ I don't know
16 why I'm in it/
17 O: yeah? (2) some mistake or something went wrong innit?
18 S: something went wrong/ <laughs> reading wise I think I understand all the texts/
19 my English is quite good I'd say (1) I can read (.) all the papers/ and all the
20 usual shit (3) erm (2) work's okay/
21 M: it's just this (shit)
22 S: yeah=
23 M: = <laughs>
24 S: er: ((that's what I thought)) that's it (4) <tape turned off>

Osmaan starts by admitting to difficulties with academic discourse and explains his attempts to overcome these by chunking and re-reading (lines 1-3). The false start and reformulation suggests the problematic nature of the disclosure. Sanjay's 1-word 'yeah?' followed by laughter (line 4) not only sounds scornful and lacking in sympathy, but also ignores the opportunity to discuss a potentially useful strategy. In what follows, Osmaan appears to be repairing his position. He addresses Sanjay and Mustafa as 'man', a familiar address term, (line 5) and the statement 'there's no shyness about it', which serves to challenge norms operating about disclosure. As this generates no response, Osmaan goes on to adopt a stylised Cockney accent and restates his strategy for coping with complex academic discourse. At this point, Sanjay appears persuaded. Osmaan and Sanjay construct a narrative on the nature of academic discourse and the role of the academic writing programme in getting to grips with academic writing and 'fixing' their problems (lines 8-12). The characterisation of academic discourse as highbrow (line 9) is suggestive of how academic writing indexes class for these participants. However, this state of affairs is short-lived as Mustafa's statement that the 'first year's OK' (line 13) gives the impression that he has no problems with academic writing and returns the group's attention to the norms for disclosure. Sanjay changes tack with a defiant statement in which he resists his placement on the programme (lines 15-16). He goes on to resist his institutional positioning by claiming that he has no difficulties with academic discourse. His characterisation of academic texts as 'shit' (line 20) degrades the value of the scholarly enterprise, suggesting that academic writing is of little value and a chore. Mustafa concurs and Sanjay has the final word on this matter (line 24). Osmaan is silenced and the group misses the opportunity to discuss a potentially useful strategy.

Discussion

What do these data tell us about the performance of gender and its significance in the teaching of academic writing? In extract 1 the linking of Jamaican Creole with male elders speaks to the intersection of gender with social class and ethnicity. The senior members of Todd's family arrived in the UK as part of the post-war migration from the

Caribbean in response to the British government's invitation to assist with the labour shortages of the time. Patois, likely to be London Jamaican, enabled Todd to maintain relationships with his family, particularly male elders. Patois was also an important in-group code with men from similar social and ethnic backgrounds and had important symbolic functions enabling the enactment of Black British masculinities and shows of solidarity with Caribbean heritage. Despite its covert prestige, Todd reproduces dominant discourses on Patois as 'broken down English', thus revealing the language prejudice associated with creoles. This may reflect his experience of attitudes to Patois in his schooling for as Holmes (2013) informs us, it is not uncommon for Black British schoolchildren to be reprimanded for using Patois. Her example of a schoolteacher who characterised Patois as 'sloppy, ugly speech' and told its users to use "proper English" (p. 414) is telling.

Similar issues arise in extract 2, in which the interaction revolves around comparing the vernacular language practices of 'a group of lads' with the prestige code used in the academy. For these young men, MLE was an important marker of their gendered, classed and ethnic identities enabling them to display solidarity with male peers from similar social backgrounds and enact a culturally hybrid Britishness (Cheshire et al. 2011; Harris 2006). Similarly to Todd, these young men felt obliged to keep MLE apart from academic code, at least in the classroom setting. Lalit's attempt at RP illustrates the students' awareness of the accents associated with educated people and as Rampton (2006) argues, points to social class, in that RP is frequently associated with being both educated and middle class. This goes some way to explaining the language prejudice experienced by university students whose linguistic repertoires encompass vernacular English and/or Patois as well as standardised English varieties. It also raises questions about accent and the possibility of encountering language prejudice in universities for students who are not habitual users of modified forms of RP.

In extract 3, Geet's taste for tabloid newspapers speaks to his desire to perform a masculinity that is culturally recognisable to the men in the working-class community in which he lives. Pursehouse's (2007) research demonstrates how *Sun* readers are typically ascribed a youthful working-class masculinity and the importance of tabloid newspapers as signifiers of working-class culture. This may partially explain the participants' affiliation to the tabloid press in the academy. As the opening diary extract illustrates, the participants, and in particular the men, adopted positions as tabloid readers whenever the requirement for them to read broadsheet newspapers was raised in class.

In extract 4, gender is marked by the men nominating the lone woman in the group to do the work. The practice of getting female students to do the task at hand may have developed during schooling as this was a practice observed by Frosh et al. (2001) in their study of schoolboy masculinities. Two of the men co-construct a light-hearted and playful commentary on the proceedings, in which the woman becomes the butt of jokes and is

ascribed the identity of a 'girl'. The banter serves to downplay the type of literacy practices viewed as highbrow, such as reading books deemed to be literary or academic. This tactic enables the men to avoid a face-threatening discussion of the difficulties that they are encountering with academic discourse. Their banter silences Vritti, the lone woman, and Geet, who lacks confidence in his English-speaking abilities. The interaction also points to how gender intersects with social class. Bennett et al's (2009) study of reading and social class found that particular reading tastes were associated with classed dispositions. Books and bookish reading were strongly associated with professional and middle-classed identities and viewed as the preserve of 'urban, educated and cosmopolitan populations' (p. 110). Displaying liking for books and bookish texts appears to be at odds with enacting laddishness and with maintaining working-class masculinities; this may also explain why young men on the programme did not wish their peers to know that they wrote poetry (see opening diary extract) and wished to appear disinterested in scholarly literature.

Extracts 5 and 6 illustrate how the disclosure of difficulties with academic reading and writing needs careful management in the classroom. In extract 5, Lalit, Darvesh and Salman manage the subject of difficulties tangentially. They present themselves as competent readers and writers of the types of texts that are held in high esteem among their peers, and drop hints about their difficulties with academic discourse. This tactic allows them to reduce the risk of being viewed as incompetent and resonates with studies that have shown that hegemonic masculinity does not countenance displays of vulnerability, weakness or anything that could be construed as stupidity (Coates 2003; Frosh et al. 2001). The interaction also facilitates the performance of laddish masculinity through repeated reference to absent friends, the 'group of lads'. They highlight their similarities with the lads, extenuate their differences with academic tutors and make jokes about academic writing. Since the seminal work of Willis (1977) on working-class laddish masculinities in school, studies of masculinity in educational settings have consistently found that cracking jokes and stimulating laughter among men are highly prized resources for enacting laddish masculinity (Frosh et al. 2001, Jackson 2006). The enactment of laddishness is indexed in the extended period of laughter following Darvesh's joke, which at face value, does not appear to merit 8 seconds of hilarious laughter. The interaction serves to reinforce the gulf between the participants' life worlds and the academy with little by way of how these worlds are similar or how to build bridges between the two.

Osmaan was a lone voice among the men in the study in admitting in class to difficulties. Osmaan's maturity, in age and outlook, appeared an important factor in being prepared to seek help with academic writing. However, his efforts were frustrated and he was obliged to attend to social relations rather than the task at hand. His use of 'man' as a term of address harks back to earlier use of 'man' in the interaction by Sanjay and Mustafa and suggests attention to social relations. Svartvik and Leech (2006: 214) argue that vocatives create a 'familiarizing effect' between speaker and hearer and function to maintain

cordial and friendly relations. The use of 'man' as a form of address also indexed gender. Only male participants used 'man' as a term of address in the classroom data and in all but one instance, 'man' was used to address males. The use of 'man', taboo language, the trashing of academic discourse and resistant statements about placement on the academic writing programme all served as resources for performing a tough working-class laddish masculinity.

These extracts show how the social world of the learner impacts on orientation to academic writing. For students who are English-dominant bilinguals or bi-dialectal English users, this is complicated by institutional practices that frame academic writing as 'fixing' deficiencies in English. The notion of 'fixing' academic writing is informed by language ideologies that view languages as discrete and bounded entities and language teaching as an enterprise in which languages are best kept in isolation from each to avoid L1 'interference'. The practices associated with keeping languages and varieties of the same language apart have been termed 'separate bilingualism' (Creese and Blackledge 2011) and 'separate bi-dialectalism' (Preece 2011). These practices were at odds with the participants' 'flexible bilingualism' (Creese and Blackledge 2011) and 'flexible bi-dialectalism' (Preece 2011), characterized by code-switching and mixing as resources for making meaning. As studies illustrate that flexible bilingualism is commonplace in contexts of linguistic diversity and a key communicative resource (Creese and Blackledge 2011), we need to be aware of the enormous effort and constant self-monitoring by students such as the ones in this study (and many of their bi/multilingual international counterparts) to keep language codes separate as well as the out-of-place feelings that this can engender.

Similar issues arose in relation to reading and writing. The young men had not become habitual users of the types of texts that are required for academic writing. They were struggling to develop a taste for these and displayed ambivalence about bookish materials. Tabloid newspapers were a resource for gender work in that they enabled the men in the study to occupy gendered and classed physical spaces in which, as Geet tells us, other tabloid newspaper readers were visible and he felt at home. This contrasted to their experience in the academy, where few *Sun* readers were in evidence and where they were expected to fashion themselves as broadsheet readers. Similarly to academic language, broadsheet newspapers and academic texts had the potential to disturb their identities. Open displays of affiliation opened these young men to the risk of embarrassment by marking them as uncool, unmanly or snobbish among male peers with similar dispositions to themselves and by offering a scholarly masculinity that ran counter to that of their peers.

At times, the men showed themselves willing to conform to the norms of academic discourse and to accept their ascribed identities as in need of language remediation. However, identity work also involved resisting academic norms by taking up positions in

alternative discourses, particularly those associated with laddishness. Common ways in which laddish masculinities were enacted in the classroom were through being loud and taking on the role of joker. This was particularly the case during group work, which created the opportunity for banter, shouting, loud laughter and generally fooling around. This accords with the findings of recent study of laddishness and laddish behaviour in higher education (Jackson et al. 2015: 305).

Jackson et al. (ibid.) point that out laddish behaviour at university bears many similarities with the enactment of laddish masculinities at school. It seems likely that the young men in this study were importing gender identities from schooling into higher education and that their experiences at university had, to some extent, reinforced this gender identity rather than encouraging the uptake of a novice scholar or disciplinary identities. For laddishness enabled them to resist their institutional positioning as remedial users of English and novice scholars. At times this was enacted through light-hearted laddishness oriented to popular culture. At others, it involved the performance of tough laddish masculinity, indexed in trashing academic practices, defiant statements and aggressive behaviour (see opening diary extract). These enactments of laddishness prevented sustained participation in the classroom and often disrupted learning for all. This was evident in the extract in which Vritti's utterances were used to construct banter rather than a scholarly discourse about reading. While the banter was good humoured and maintained sociability, it disrupted Vritti and Geet's learning. In Osmaan's case, he was unable to gain the support of his peers who may well have been alienated by their placement on the academic writing programme but lacked the maturity of Osmaan in dealing with the situation and making effective use of the opportunities that the academic writing programme offered them. This resonates with Jackson et al's findings in which women of all ages and mature male students viewed laddish behaviour in teaching-learning spaces in university as a disruption to their studies.

Episodes such as these illustrate the importance of social relations in the academic writing classroom and of how these orient students to the task at hand. These relations may act to constrain learning when social actors are working to marginalize certain group members, are overly focused on sociability rather than the task at hand, or are doing identity work that is misaligned with the scholarly endeavour.

Conclusion

This article has examined gender as a dimension of identity. I have taken an intersectional approach, in this case viewing gender in intersection with social class. It is my contention that gender, when treated as dimension of identity, is of key significance to teaching academic writing in the contemporary academy as cooperative social relationships with students are at the heart of the teaching-learning relationship. When it comes to academic writing, identities are shaped and constructed in tutoring sessions

between students and academic writing specialists (e.g. Ivanič 1998; Lillis 2001), in the dialogue with the self about the imagined audience (e.g. Hyland 2012) and in the ongoing proceedings of the academic writing classroom, in which my work has been located. I have illustrated how fine grained analysis of spoken interaction in the classroom enables us to explore the phenomenon of identity in relation to academic writing in higher education. I examined ways in which social relations in the academy can impact on the learning environment in ways that are not always conducive to the study of academic discourse and the negotiation of a scholarly identity. I have argued that a more nuanced understanding of gender that pays attention to social class enables insights into ways in which gender shapes social relations on academic writing programmes and orients students to academic writing. This knowledge is essential for informing the design and delivery of academic writing provision that will improve the experiences and prospects of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the contemporary academy. I have argued that laddishness could be understood partly as a response to dominant institutional narratives on linguistic diversity that erased the students' multilingual capital and positioned them as in need of English language remediation and partly as a response to the disturbance in identity experienced in needing to become a more expert user of academic discourse. While learning how to write academically lessened the gap with the academic community, it potentially opened up a gap with family members and the 'lads' beyond the walls of the academy, thus provoking feelings of being out-of-place. This disjuncture is difficult to cope with.

Studies such as the one reported here enable us to develop a better understanding of academic writing as identity work. As it is beyond this article to go into detail about pedagogy, I offer two principles here for reflection on EAP curriculum arising from this study and ongoing work. The first involves taking a view of students in EAP contexts as language users as well as learners who bring a wealth of linguistic and cultural diversity into universities. By approaching linguistic diversity in terms of repertoires of resources (see Canagarajah 2017; Snell 2013), we open up possibilities for students to explore and reflect on the languages and linguistic practices in their lives, about how these bear on each other and can be put to use for academic writing. There is an emerging body of work on approaching linguistic diversity as a resource in higher education (e.g. Lazar et al. 2016; Odeniyi 2015; Preece et al. 2016) with bi/ multilingual students from non-traditional backgrounds and more elite groups of international students, which promises a productive way forward. The second involves viewing English in the plural as Englishes, and taking a view of academic English as no one's mother tongue (Bourdieu, Passeron & de Saint Martin 1994 [1965]). This allows for the discussion of English in the contemporary academy as a learned code, rather than a so-called 'native language', in which we are all engaged in developing expertise. It also enables us to consider how to create safe spaces in which students can experiment with academic discourse without fear of failure, explore a range of strategies for learning and using it, and be encouraged to reflect on the pleasures, as well as the tribulations, that derive from academic labour.

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ⁱ All participant names are pseudonyms.

ⁱⁱ Transcription key

/	the end of a chunk of talk
-	incomplete word or utterance
?	question intonation
:	elongation of a vowel sound
“Words in quotation marks”	speaker adopting a different voice, normally the voice of another person
(.)	Pauses of less than one second
(3)	Pauses of 1 second + timed to nearest second

[Start of overlap
[
=	Latching - no audible gap between speakers
((blah blah))	doubt about accuracy of transcription
((xxx))	Indecipherable
<blah blah>	comment by transcriber on proceedings or how an utterance is said
BLAH	Raised volume and/ or emphasis
%blah%	Lowered volume

ⁱⁱⁱ Use of square brackets in interview extracts indicates an insertion or cleaned up segment for clarity and readability.

^{iv}At the time of the research, *Sugar* was the leading British print magazine for teen and young adult women. It focused on popular culture, particularly celebrities, lifestyle, relationships, body image and fashion, including a 'LAD' magazine with posters and gossip about boys.