The Uses of Writing in Microbusinesses

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I, Susan Marion Grief confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed

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Abstract

This study is concerned with the uses of writing in traditional microbusinesses that serve the local community. A review of the literature on workplace literacy suggests that few studies have focussed on businesses of this type. This study seeks to address this gap and contribute to a better understanding of everyday writing in this context.

The study is located within the tradition of Literacy Studies and views literacy as a social practice. It also draws on frameworks for the analysis of texts that are compatible with this view. Case studies were undertaken of four microbusinesses, located in a small market town. While these reveal that many writing practices were unique to the individual business they also illustrate how businesses of this type experience similar opportunities and challenges and, in terms of writing, have tended to respond to these in similar ways. This made it possible to identify elements of writing practices that were common across the cases and to explore the ways in which these were reflected in the texts that were produced.

Closely embedded in the routines of the workplace activity and shaped by the imperatives of the business, the texts were brief, hurriedly written, often directly onto proformas, and dependent on shared understandings. However, following the trajectories of key texts demonstrated the significant roles these texts played in the running of the businesses, illustrating what it means for a workplace to be ‘textually mediated’ and confirming participants’ assertions that writing was important to the running of the business.

The study shows that microbusinesses were less exposed to pressures for change than larger organisations, described in the literature, and this was reflected in their uses of writing. They were however, not immune to wider influences and writing in specific areas of their work was closely controlled by external agencies.

Impact Statement

The very small, independent business, engaged in a traditional trade within the local community, is a common feature in most localities in the UK. However, a review of literature, undertaken for this research, suggests that few studies of workplace literacy have focused on businesses of this kind. This is significant, not only because one third of the UK workforce works in businesses of this size but because, as this study illustrates, the experience of writing for those working in the microbusinesses is very different to that in workplaces better represented in the literature: that is, larger workplaces that are increasingly subject to changes as a result of globalisation. This study addresses this gap and seeks to contribute to a better understanding of everyday writing in this context.

Working within the tradition of Literacy Studies which views writing as situated social practice, case studies were undertaken of the uses of writing in a florist's shop, a hairdressing salon, a small local garage and the work of a self-employed builder. These illustrate how, in response to the imperatives of the business and the practicalities of the day to day activity, writing was kept to a minimum and relied heavily on the use of workplace forms or proformas. Writing of this kind is very familiar but often invisible. It has received little attention from academic research.

The case studies reveal many unique writing practices but also make it possible to identify elements of practices there were common across the cases. Theoretical frameworks for the analysis of practices and texts were used to explore these and the factors that shaped them. This analysis drew out the features of written discourse most commonly found in these microbusinesses, making it possible to compare and contrast this with discourses in other domains such as education. In this way the study has the potential to stimulate interest in workplace writing of this kind and thus make it more visible in academic research.

The study could have impact on the field of adult literacy and, in particular, on teacher training in this area. The four case studies provide accessible descriptions of real life workplaces that could extend practitioners' understanding of writing in such contexts and stimulate discussion on the implications for teaching. The cross-case analysis offers practitioners and policy makers insights into the ways in which writing in such contexts can differ from writing in the world of education, demonstrating the need to take this into account in planning curricula.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1. Introduction

This thesis is concerned with writing in very small, traditional businesses: both the ways in which it is used and the texts that are produced. In this first chapter I set out the origins of the study, the motivations that lay behind it and the reasons for the choice of methodology. I briefly discuss the conceptual framework within which I have chosen to work and introduce the research questions that guided the study. I also consider the potential contribution of the study to the literature on workplace literacy. Finally, I outline the structure of the thesis.

2. The background to the study

This study had its origins in two quite different experiences, one in my working life and the other at home. Between 2003 and 2007, after nearly 30 years as a practitioner and adviser in the field of Adult Literacy, I was involved in a series of research projects on writing, the aim of which was to identify effective practice in the teaching of writing to adults (Grief and Chatterton, 2007; Grief, Meyer and Burgess, 2007; Kelly, Soundramayagam and Grief, 2004). However, while I was working on these projects, I found myself becoming increasingly curious about the writing that the students undertook in their everyday lives outside their classes. As part of the main study (Grief, Meyer and Burgess, 2007), brief interviews were undertaken with a sample of the students, from the classes studied, to provide contextual information for what was essentially a quantitative study. Several students reported writing regularly outside the class but a number told us they wrote very little or spoke dismissively about the writing tasks they undertook:

> ... only quick writing, informal, to get the meaning across, short sentences. I don't need to write at work.
>
> Quote from interview (Grief, Meyer and Burgess, 2007, p. 26)

While some students were motivated to improve their writing for work, others, as in the quotation above, either had no need to write at work or felt quite comfortable with the writing their work required. A student I interviewed told me he had no trouble with the writing he did as a garage mechanic. He had come to the class to learn a different kind of writing, the type of writing he associated with education and which he felt he had not adequately mastered at school. This story was echoed in those of other students and terms such as 'proper writing' and 'real writing' (ibid) were used to distinguish the writing students did in their classes from that they did outside them. These comments caught my attention at a time when government policy was placing increasing emphasis on the economic benefits of improving the literacy and numeracy skills of the workforce (Leitch, 2006). I was interested to know more about the writing students did at work and at home and how this differed from their writing in class.

At about the same time, at home, the installation of a kitchen and the conversion of a garage involved frequent contact with a range of local tradesmen and, in the light of my observations above, I found myself taking a particular interest in the writing these workmen did or, in some cases, did not do, as part of their work. It was as a result of these two quite separate experiences that the notion of studying writing in local small businesses came about.

My interest in writing pre-dated my involvement in the research studies. As an adult literacy practitioner, I had noted that students were more likely to report finding writing difficult than reading, an observation that was also made in the review of practice undertaken by Kelly et al (2004). I was also concerned that, aside from the technical matters of spelling and punctuation, there was less support available to teachers regarding the teaching of writing. Howard (2012, p. 1) notes that writing has consistently received considerably less attention than the teaching of reading, in terms of policy and of research.

In my early years as a literacy teacher, emphasis was placed on learner centred approaches to teaching. Students were encouraged to write about their lives and experiences and students' writing was published both locally and nationally for other students to read (Hamilton and Hillier, 2006; Mace, 1995). However, from the late 1980's, government policy became increasingly concerned with skills for work and with the standardised assessment of skills. Creating objective tests of writing that are easy to administer is inherently difficult and, when National Tests in Adult Literacy were introduced, as part of the 'Skills for Life' initiative in 2001, these relied on multiple choice questions and one word responses and included no free writing. This led to a concern for the status of writing within adult literacy classes (Howard, 2012). Kelly et al wrote:

> Given the importance of the tests in relation to national and local targets there is a real danger that the need to get learners through the tests will lead to the teaching of writing being neglected.
>
> (Kelly, Soundramayagam and Grief, 2004, p. 59)

While there were concerns about the teaching of writing within ‘Skills for Life’, more widely, there was recognition of the growing importance of writing. New technologies of communication were having a significant impact on our uses of literacy, sometimes reducing the need to write but, at the same time, introducing new requirements and new motivations to create written texts. Brandt (2015) writes of the ‘Rise of Writing’. She believes that the digital revolution has diverted our attention from ‘... a more radical – if quieter – transformation, namely, the turn to writing as a mass daily experience’ (ibid p 3). This she attributes to the emergence of the ‘knowledge or information economy’ in which written texts, providing ‘knowledge, ideas, data, information, news’, are the chief products as well as the chief means of production.

I believed, from personal experience and my experience as a teacher that the two aspects of literacy, reading and writing, can be experienced very differently. Both Brandt (2015) and Howard (2012) stress the different histories of reading and writing, and the way these colour our thinking about writing today. I hoped that by concentrating specifically on writing I could explore this aspect of literacy in greater depth and achieve a better understanding of a type of everyday writing that would be familiar to many adult students.

3. The choice of methodology

My interest in writing originated from my role as an educator and my motivation was to inform practitioners' understanding of their students' writing. However, I felt it was necessary to step aside from this role and to take a different viewpoint. I decided not to approach the study from the perspective of adult literacy students, nor to view writing in terms of the national framework of standards, curricula and assessment, in use at the time. Instead, I chose to undertake a qualitative study and to use a case study approach which would allow me to explore writing in depth, in real life situations. This approach would enable me to start from the perspective of the people working in the micro-businesses, placing them in the role of the expert rather than framing interactions in terms of 'training needs.' In this way I was able to avoid the deficit discourse that pervaded government policy on adult literacy and numeracy and could too easily creep into conversations with students and teachers. I later read Barton and Hamilton's introduction to the reprint of their classic study, 'Local Literacies', and was interested to find the following comment:

> We felt there was great value in a study that started from the everyday and then moved to education, rather than approaching the everyday with questions framed solely by educational needs.
>
> (Barton and Hamilton, 2012)

4. The conceptual framework

Through membership of RaPAL[1], I had become familiar with the work of the 'New Literacy Studies', now more commonly referred to simply as 'Literacy Studies' (LS). This approach viewed literacy as a social practice, rather than as an autonomous set of skills, and embraced the concept of multiple literacies situated within different social, cultural and historical contexts. It provided a strong critique of the 'Skills for Life'[2] initiative which was based on the understanding of literacy as a set of context-free, transferable skills. LS presented a perspective on adult literacy that aligned more closely with my own and for this reason I chose to locate my study within this tradition.

In their introduction to the 'Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies', Rowsell and Pahl (2015) describe LS as:

> ... burgeoning, messy and, most important, unfinished and contingent on the shifting tide of everyday practice and ways of knowing. (Rowsell and Pahl, 2015, p. 5)

They highlight:

> ... the evolution of perspectives, the creation of new frameworks and approaches to literacy, and the merging of related fields with literacy (ibid p5)

In chapters two and four I describe how, as I cycled between the collection and analysis of data and exploration of the literature, in this growing and complex field, I identified new concepts and approaches that had the

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[1] Research and Practice in Adult Literacy

[2] Skills for Life was the title given to government initiative, launched in 2001, and designed to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of adults. It was a response to the poor ranking of Britain in the International Adult Literacy Survey (Organisation for Economic Cooperationand Development and Human Resources Development Canada, 1997).

potential to shed light on what I had found. As a result of this process, my own thinking evolved and the focus of the study changed in subtle ways.

Due in part to my specific focus on writing, my study involved greater emphasis on the linguistic and discoursal features of texts than was the case in many LS studies and this is reflected in my literature review. As I began to examine texts in the case studies I became increasingly aware of their multimodal character and the need to acknowledge this in my analysis. I also came to recognise the significance of their material qualities and to see how viewing them as semiotic artefacts could offer new perspectives on the ways in which texts are used. For these reasons I found it necessary to pay careful attention to my use of terminology and, where appropriate, use the term ‘texts’ rather than ‘writing’.

5. The research questions

In line with Robson’s concept of ‘flexible design’ (Robson, 2002), my research questions developed as the study progressed. In drafting the questions, I took account of the need for these to set the boundaries of my case studies (Stake, 1995). My core question is broad, reflecting my desire to provide a holistic picture of the ways in which writing was used in the four businesses. It defines the scope of the study by limiting this to writing used ‘within the day to day activity of the businesses’ thus excluding writing for personal reasons or occasional uses of writing undertaken by the owners. The question also defines my area of interest as ‘local, traditional microbusinesses’. I use the definition of a microbusiness used within the

European Union, as a business which employs fewer than 10 persons. I have added the terms 'local' and 'traditional' to denote businesses that serve a local community and engage in a traditional trade, distinguishing these from enterprises which have developed more recently, taking advantage of the flexibility, in terms of time and location, made possible by new technology; a type of business with which the term 'microbusiness' is sometimes equated. [3] The question also makes clear that, ultimately, I have an interest in writing in microbusinesses in general rather than an intrinsic interest in the uses of writing in these particular four businesses.

Text box 1.1 Research questions for this study

Research questions

Core question:

How is writing used within the day to day activity of local, traditional micro-businesses?

Subsidiary questions:

1. In what ways do writing practices and texts support the day to day running of traditional micro-businesses?
2. How are writing practices, and the nature of the texts used, shaped by the context of the business and its activity?
3. How are the writing practices, and the nature of the texts used, shaped by factors external to the business?

The first subsidiary question focuses on the roles writing plays within the businesses. It signals my concern both with writing 'practices', that is, 'What people do with writing' (Papen, 2005), and with 'written texts'. In chapter two I discuss questions relating to the uses of the term 'practice' and my decision

[3] I expand on my definition of traditional microbusinesses in Chapter 4 where I discuss my selection of cases.

to write about practices *and* texts rather than 'textual practices'. The second and third subsidiary questions focus on the contexts for writing and the ways in which these shape the nature of both the writing practices and texts. Context is a central concept in NLS and is dealt with at length in chapter two. Sub-question two is concerned with the immediate context of the business; social, physical, historical and cultural; and its activity. Sub-question three is concerned with the impact of the wider context and in addressing this question, I draw on my review of the literature on literacy in the workplace.

6. The rationale for the study

Following the publication of 'Local Literacies' (Barton and Hamilton, 1998), many studies of literacy in specific, local settings were undertaken and, while the value of these has been widely acknowledged, some have drawn attention to their limitations (Brandt and Clinton, 2002; Collins and Blot, 2003; Reder and Davila, 2005); a debate I discuss further in chapter two. In line with the rapid pace of social and technological change and the evolution of LS, as described by Rowsell and Pahl (2015) above, the research agenda has moved on. Uses of writing online, the impact of globalisation on writing at work and the consequences of 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2007), in the face of increasing mobility of both people and ideas, provide just a few examples of the focus of more recent research. Against this background it feels necessary to justify the choice to pursue a study of very local literacies in a traditional setting.

I would argue that the study has value for two reasons. Firstly, my review of studies of workplace literacy indicates that the great majority have been undertaken in large or medium sized organisations and only a very small number deal with workplaces with any similarity to the type with which I chose to work[4]. This represents a gap in the literature on workplace literacy and, given the number of micro-businesses in the UK and its role in the national economy, a gap that could usefully be filled. A House of Commons briefing paper (Rhodes, 2017) provides the following information on micro-businesses:

> Micro-businesses have 0-9 employees. There were 5.4 million microbusinesses in the UK in 2016, accounting for 96% of all businesses. Although the vast majority of businesses in the UK employ fewer than 10 people, this sort of business only accounts for 33% of employment and 22% of turnover. (Rhodes, 2017, p. 5)

Secondly, I was aware that the writing I would encounter, in the traditional micro-businesses I chose to work with, was likely to be very brief and use preformatted texts; writing of a kind that is often characterised, in a general way, as ‘routine’, ‘repetitive’ and characterised by ‘form filling’ (Barton, 2009). Writing of this type has received little attention from researchers of writing (ibid). It is, at the same time, both very familiar and invisible. Its familiarity, its brevity and the degree to which it is perceived as constrained may make it an unlikely subject for analysis but it is one I believed could repay closer attention.

[4] I restricted my literature reviews to literature in English.

7. The research setting

The setting for this study is Eastmarket, a small, English market town, with a population of about 5,000, located some distance from larger urban areas and major transport networks. It has an attractive centre which boasts a number of historic buildings, interesting streets and a range of small shops and cafes which draw some visitors to the town but tourism has remained relatively low key. The centre offers a range of services but has changed over the years as the supermarket moved to the edge of town and charity shops, fast food outlets and gift shops have replaced many of the independent food shops. A number of well established businesses have built up a loyal customer base but others struggle and some premises in the centre change hands with significant regularity while others stand empty.

The population is relatively stable and employment levels are good, although the percentage of part-time workers is high. Figures from the geodemographic segmentation service, 'Mosaic'[5], indicate a high percentage households in the 'Rural reality' category which is described as 'Householders living in inexpensive homes in village communities.'
One large employer, located close to the town centre, employed up to 700 people at the time the fieldwork was undertaken and a small number of other businesses, none employing more than 20 people, are based in the town. In addition a range of skilled tradesmen, many based at home, serve the town and surrounding area. The four businesses, selected for the case studies, were: a florist's shop, a small hair salon, an independent garage and a self employed builder who worked from home.

[5] https://www.segmentationportal.com/?hostRegion=UK

I am aware that in the period since I completed my fieldwork there will have been changes within the four businesses of which I may not be aware. I have therefore chosen to write about them in the past tense. All four were still in business at the end of 2017 but one closed in May 2018.

8. The structure of the thesis

In chapter two I review the literature on literacy and on writing, focusing my attention on concepts and approaches that I believed had potential relevance to my study. The first part of the chapter is concerned with Literacy Studies: its key concepts and the issues that have arisen in relation to these, developments in thinking and links made with other social theories. The following sections focus on approaches to writing that take texts rather than practices as their starting point and provide a framework for my description and analysis of texts. A final section looks briefly at the impact of digital technologies on writing.

Chapter three provides a review of research in workplace literacy. As already noted, the majority of studies in this field are concerned with much larger organisations than the four businesses I studied. They provide a valuable overview of the changing world of work which represents the wider context for my study and, importantly, a basis for comparison which helps to identify the distinguishing features of microbusinesses and the experiences of writing of those working in them. In an attempt to learn more about microbusinesses, the chapter also includes reference to literature on microbusinesses written from the perspective of other disciplines, such as business management and training.

Chapter four sets out the choices I made in relation to the research design, the use of case studies and my approaches to data collection and analysis. The research questions are discussed in greater detail. It addresses questions relating to the validity and reliability of the study and considers its limitations. It also addresses ethical considerations.

Each of the chapters, five to eight, takes the form of a case study of one of the four businesses: the florist's shop, the hairdressing salon, the garage and the builder. Each addresses a similar range of topics, providing scope for comparison, but each also has its own emphasis, reflecting the particular characteristics of the individual enterprise and the ways in which writing was used. Following these, chapter nine presents a cross–case analysis. In this I draw together themes that emerged from the case studies and, using the theoretical frameworks, discussed in chapters two and three, I seek for patterns and relationships that illuminate the ways in which writing is used in these businesses. To conclude this chapter, I return to the research questions and summarise what I have learned in relation to these. I also attempt to identify the elements of practice and features of texts that are common across the cases and, by bringing these together, to set out the characteristics of much of the writing used in the four businesses.

In the final chapter I review what I have done to help me provide answers to my research questions and achieve the aims of the project. I then review the theoretical materials I chose to use, considering how these were used and appraising their value to the study. I also discuss the limitations of the project, the opportunities it could open for further research in this context and the contribution that this study could make in the fields of both research and practice.

Chapter Two

Literature Review Part One: The Theoretical Framework

1. Introduction and overview

In the literature on writing there is wide agreement on two things, the significance of writing in our lives today (Barton and Hamilton, 2005; Brandt, 2015; Hyland, 2002; Smith, 1990, p. xiv) and its ‘complex and multifaceted nature’ (Candlin and Hyland, 1999; Clark and Ivanic, 1997; Hyland, 2002). Work on writing has been the focus of researchers and writers from many different disciplines: linguistics, psychology, rhetoric, literary criticism, education, history, anthropology, and has been motivated by a broad range of interests. It is beyond the scope of this review to do justice to the breadth and complexity of this work, a task that has occupied full length books (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Hyland, 2002). Rather, in this chapter, I focus on those fields of study on which I draw to provide a theoretical framework for the description and analysis of my data and attempt, only briefly, to locate these within the wider picture.

For a long time, the study of writing tended to focus on the analysis of the end product of writing, the written texts, but, in the middle of the last century, work in the field of cognitive psychology shifted attention to the writer. This cognitive approach (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Flower and Hayes, 1981; Hayes, 2000) was concerned with the process of writing and placed emphasis on the individual writer and the communication of personal meanings. It had a major impact on the theory and practice of the teaching of writing. In the later part of the twentieth century however, Gee (2000) identifies what he refers to as a ‘social turn’, away from the study of individual behaviour and concern for the individual mind, ‘towards a focus on social and cultural interaction’ (ibid p180). This ‘social turn’ occurred across a wide range of disciplines including psychology, sociology and linguistics and extended to the study of writing. Writing began to be viewed as a social act and attention paid to the social and cultural context within which writing is undertaken.

In relation to literacy more broadly, an approach emerged that became known as the ‘New Literacy Studies’ (NLS) (Gee 1990). This focused on reading and writing as social practices and drew on ethnographic methods. I locate my study within this tradition but, in line with more recent practice, I refer to it simply as Literacy Studies (LS). LS provided a starting point; informing my epistemological stance, my choice of methodology, the design of my fieldwork and the basis for my initial analysis. Once I started collecting and analysing my data I found myself returning to the literature with new questions and discovered that others had already grappled with many of these and had contributed insights and approaches that were of value in my analysis. Taking my lead from others working within LS, I also extended my reading, exploring other theories, consistent with LS that had relevance to my analysis. This review serves to reflect my own journey as I engaged more deeply with the literature and with the analysis of my own data.

In section 2, I introduce Literacy Studies and the key concepts of this paradigm. I then look at some of the ways in which thinking within LS has developed, focusing on approaches and concepts that have the potential to throw light on my own data. I look in particular at approaches that trace the lives of texts across time and space and the value of looking at the role of time in literacy practices. This section provides a framework for my analysis of writing practices.

In section 3, I engage with questions regarding the way in which we understand context in relation to literacy events and practices and how we theorise the link between local and distant literacies. In doing this I look to wider social theories that can offer a new perspective or provide a useful heuristic.

In the light of my interest in the detailed features of texts, in section 4, I consider the relationship between writing practices and texts and the ways in which this has been dealt with in LS. I then identify approaches to the analysis of texts, consistent with LS, which have the potential to provide a language of description and tools for the analysis of my data. I consider the work of Halliday (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014; Halliday, 1994) and the approaches to Discourse Analysis which have developed from this, looking in particular at the concept of genre. I then consider work in the area of Multimodality. Finally, in section 5, I look briefly at the impact of new technologies of communication on the uses and nature of writing.

2. Writing as a social practice

2.1 Literacy studies

Literacy studies (LS) drew energy from its opposition to the concept of the ‘Great Divide’ between oral and literate cultures (Goody and Watt, 1963; Olson and Torrance, 1991; Ong, 1982) and the conceptualisation of literacy as a neutral set of skills that could be transferred across cultures, independent of context. Street (1995) argued that we cannot speak of literacy in the singular. Instead, he claimed, we should recognise multiple literacies, each embedded in a specific social and cultural context. He used the term ‘autonomous’ to refer to the view of literacy as a transferable skill, independent of context, and the term ‘ideological’ to refer to the view of literacies as culturally situated social practices. It is this ‘ideological’ understanding of literacies that informs the current study.

Baynham and Prinsloo (2009, p. 1) make a useful distinction between three generations of Literacy studies. The first, they suggest, was represented by a number of seminal studies undertaken in the 1980s (Heath, 1983; Scribner and Cole, 1981; Street, 1984). These studies introduced key concepts that were taken up in later work; ‘multiple literacies’ (Street, 1984), ‘literacy events’ (Heath, 1983) and ‘literacy practices’ (Scribner and Cole, 1981). All moved the study of literacy ‘ … away from idealised generalisation about the nature of Language and Literacy and towards a more concrete understanding of literacy in ‘real’ social contexts’ (Street, 1995, p.3), based on ethnographic approaches. All too, included the study of local uses of literacy that were learned informally, outside official educational institutions, and which Barton and Hamilton (1998) later referred to as ‘vernacular’ literacies.

These studies paved the way for a second generation of studies, best exemplified by Barton and Hamilton’s book ‘Local Literacies’ (1998), a major ethnographic study of the ways in which literacy was used in local communities in one English town. In this the authors set out six propositions about the nature of literacy that shaped their study, building on the work of the first generation of studies (Text box 2.1). These propositions informed my approach to this study and I return to them at various points in this review and in later chapters.

Text box 2.1 Literacy as social practice

Literacy as social practice

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others.
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
- Literacy is historically situated.
- Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

(Barton and Hamilton, 1998, p. 7)

As Kell comments:

> Together, this set of concepts has formed an elegant and parsimonious theoretical framework for the study of literacy, with high explanatory power, valid in explorations of literacy across different time periods (for example, Baynham, 2008), across different languages and in multilingual contexts (for example, Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000), as well as with reference to numeracy (for example, Street et al., 2005). (Kell, 2011, p. 607)

Much however has changed since 1998. In the context of increasing globalisation and rapid technological change, a third generation of literacy studies had to respond to major shifts in focus:

> … from the local to the translocal, from print based literacies to electronic and multimedia literacies and from the verbal to the multimodal. (Baynham and Prinsloo, 2009, p. 2).

More recent literature in the field of LS suggests it is necessary to add yet another ‘generation’, one which is exploring how literacy studies can embrace new perspectives on space and time (Mills and Comber, 2015; Rowsell and Pahl, 2015, pp. 7-9) and address the concerns of a world characterised by mobility and ‘superdiversity’ (Blommaert, 2010). In the face of new challenges it has proved necessary to revisit some of the established concepts and to turn to other socio-cultural theories to extend the explanatory power of the NLS.

2.2 Literacy studies, linguistic ethnography and sociolinguistics

LS is now recognised as part of the broader and more recent grouping of linguistic ethnography (LE). Creese (2008) describes LE as '.. a theoretical and methodological development’, aligning itself to a view of language in social context, which brings together the ‘reflexive sensitivity’ of ethnography and the established analytical frameworks provided by linguistics.

For Tusting, it is characterised by a belief that

> … language and the social world mutually shape one another, and that the mechanisms and dynamics of these processes can be understood through close analysis of language use and meaning-making in everyday activity. (Tusting, 2013, p. 2)

These statements align with my own objective to focus on both writing practices and the characteristics of the written texts, and the mutual shaping of the two.

The emergence of LE reflects an increasing engagement between previously separate strands of research. One example is the sharing of ideas between LS and the French ‘l’anthropologie de l’écrit’ which, despite clear overlaps in methodology and thinking, had previously developed quite independently. A collection of papers from both traditions, ‘The Anthropology of Writing’ (Barton and Papen, 2010), includes studies of the workplace which have considerable relevance to my own case studies and are discussed in chapter three.

The field of sociolinguistics, more widely, has tended to emphasise the primacy of spoken language and to associate writing with the standardisation of language but, in recent years, this position has been challenged. Both Lillis and McKinney (2013) and Blommaert (2014) have made the case for a fresh look at writing, underlining its significance, particularly in the context of new digital communication technologies. Maybin (2013) writes of working towards a ‘complete sociolinguistics’, a term she attributes to Blommaert, which would bring together and build on the linguistically orientated work on spoken language and more ethnographically orientated work on literacy which until recently have developed separately.

2.3 Literacy events and literacy practices

In this section I consider the key concepts of ‘literacy event’ and ‘literacy practice’, I discuss work which has helped me to clarify and develop my understanding of the two concepts and has introduced me to new approaches which have potential for the analysis of my own data.

The term ‘literacy event’ was first used by Heath(1983) who defined this as ‘... any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants’ interactions and their interpretative processes.’ (Heath, 1983, p.93). This provides a unit of analysis that is grounded in the observation of everyday activity: a discipline that, as Kell observes, ‘... ensures that the researcher cannot be making normative, a priori claims about literacy and its consequences’ (Kell, 2011, p. 607).

The concept of ‘literacy practices’, on the other hand, enables us to *analyse*, rather than simply to *describe* ‘… what is happening in social contexts around the meaning and uses of literacy’ (Street, 2000). This concept, Street argues, ‘... is pitched at a higher level of abstraction’. It refers both to observable behaviour and to the ‘the social and cultural conceptualisations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing’ (Street, 1995, p.2) or, as Barton and Hamilton (1998, p.6) put it, to ‘people’s awareness of literacy, how they talk about and make sense of it’. Tusting, Ivanic and Wilson (2000) see the concept of literacy practices as providing a link between ethnographic detail and theory while for Barton and Hamilton it offers ‘.... a powerful way of conceptualising the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help to shape.’ (Barton and Hamilton, 1998, p.6).

These two concepts are central to LS and guided my thinking as I undertook fieldwork and analysed my data. They are, however, not unproblematic. With reference to literacy events, Baynham and Prinsloo (2009) point to the notion of the literacy event as discrete, ‘... something that can be easily detached from its context for analytical purposes’, and suggest there is a danger that much ‘incidental’ literacy activity could slip through the net of ‘eventness’. This concern is taken up by Kell who describes what she refers to as, ‘a small scale traffic of texts’:

> ... the small-scale to-ing and fro-ing of written text-artefacts in trajectories that cumulatively assemble the structures and processes of people’s daily lives (Kell, 2013, p. 2).

She questions whether ‘small everyday texts like lists, reports, and on-line chats’ can be captured by the concept of literacy events (Kell, 2011), a question to which I return later in this section.

With regard to ‘literacy practices’, Maybin, in an email cited by Street (2000, p. 23), highlights an ambiguity:

> (The term ‘practices’) … seems to cover rather different stuff within one term, so some aspects of it seem to be amenable to empirical investigation (what people do, and recurring patterns within this), while ideological aspects etc. are at a more abstract conceptual level and have to be inferred from observation and interview data.

This issue is addressed by Tusting, Ivanic and Wilson (2000, p. 213) who spell out two ways in which the term has been used. In the first it can simply refer to the ‘... specific ethnographic detail of situated literacy events’ that represent those aspects of literacy ‘... that go beyond the text itself’. Used in this way, it contrasts with, and thus complements, the term ‘texts’ (ibid). On the other hand, the term ‘practices’ can also be used to refer to:

> … culturally recognizable patterns of behaviour, which can be generalised from the observation of specifics. The term practice, in this sense, often includes ‘textual practices’, the culturally recognisable patterns for constructing texts. (Tusting, Ivanic and Wilson, 2000, p. 213).

This distinction is helpful but it serves to highlight a lack of consensus regarding both the level of abstraction at which the concept is used and the place of texts in relation to practices, a point of relevance to this study to which I return in section 4 below.

Attempts have been made to refine analysis by identifying the ‘elements’ of literacy events and practices (Hamilton, 2000; Ivanic, 2009; Street and Lefstein, 2007). Ivanic (2009) argues that it is ‘... integral to Literacy Studies to ask the fundamental ethnographic wh-questions:’

> Who is doing what? with whom? to/for whom? where? when? how? why? and under what conditions? (Ivanic, 2009, p. 114)

She suggests that the term ‘literacy practice’ ‘.... is ‘doing too much work’ and that LS might benefit, ‘.... by redefining the concept of ‘literacy practice’ at a ‘greater degree of delicacy than has been common in the past’ (ibid, p. 119). She proposes that the term is reserved for ‘... small scale “micro practices” - the way in which one or a subset of the constituent elements of a practice is played out.’ (ibid, p. 100).

Looking at the constituent elements of practices could, Barton (2001, p. 97) suggests, help in the identification of elements that are common across contexts and domains. Putting this to the test, Ivanic, Barton and colleagues (2009), in a major study of literacy and learning in Further Education, attempted to identify micro practices, within students’ vernacular uses of literacy, which might help to support their learning in the classroom. They suggest that there is a ‘finite’ set of elements of a literacy event or practice, ‘... each of which can be configured and combined in an infinite variety of ways' (ibid). They developed a matrix to provide a basis for discussion of the use of students' vernacular practices (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Aspects of a literacy event or practice (Ivanic *et al*, 2009, p. 50)

	What?	*Why?*	*Who?*
	Aspects of a literacy event or practice		
	content	purposes	audiences
Under what conditions?	languages, genres, styles and designs	flexibility and constraints	roles, identities and values
How?	modes and technologies	actions and processes	participation

While the identification of 'micro-practices' as constituents of broader practices tends to complicate, rather than resolve, the issue of how the term 'literacy practice' is to be used, the model above offers a useful framework within which to interrogate the fine detail of data and potentially to identify common elements across contexts.

Street (2000) acknowledged that the phrase 'literacy practices' had become 'naturalised', recognising that it is often taken for granted and that authors do not always explicitly address what it means to them. He calls on researchers of literacy to make explicit what they mean by 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices' and how they are using these concepts in their work, a call echoed by Ivanic (2009, p. 101) and one to which I respond in the conclusion to this chapter.

Tusting (2000) draws attention to the potential of including time as a feature of literacy practices and highlights the work of Barbara Adam on understandings of time in social theory. Adam (1990) challenges a 'narrow conception of time' that takes time as natural: 'an absolute, linear measure' which exists out there and against which 'human' or 'social' time can be compared. She argues that the concept of clock time is in fact a human construct and emphasises the complexity of different aspects of time that is not amenable to dualities or simple categorisation. In a later paper, Adam (2000) suggests three ways in which time can be addressed in research: through the framing of questions relating to what she refers to as, the 'socially constructed' and supposedly neutral time of clocks and calendars; through the recognition of the mutual interdependence of time and space and through an appreciation of the multi-dimensionality of time. I incorporate all three within the analysis of my data.

In relation to the last of the three approaches, Adam sets out the basic structure of this multi-dimensionality; see table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 The multi-dimensionality of time (Adam, 2000, p. 136)

4 T's	PPF	Rhythm	
Time frame	past	duration	beginnings
Temporality	present	sequence	ends
Tempo	future	repetition	pauses
Timing		instantaneity	transitions
		Simultaneity	

2.4 Tracing the trajectories of texts

In a quotation used above, in relation to literacy events, Kell (2013, p. 2) makes reference to '... written text-artefacts in trajectories that cumulatively assemble the structures and processes of people's daily lives'. The term 'trajectories' is one she borrows from Silverstein and Urban (1996), to capture the repeated re-contextualisation of texts and meanings. She proposes the need to shift, '... from the study of single instance data (as captured in the concept of literacy events) to meaning making as it flows or is re-contextualised across time in sequences of events' (Kell, 2013, p. 10). This notion of text trajectories had particular relevance to patterns I had identified in my own data, in relation to the use of texts. Lillis and McKinney (2013, p. 429) echo Kell in arguing the need to move away from analysis of writing at single moments of production. They highlight the 'repeated entextualisation and re-entextualisation’ of writing and the involvement of different people in ‘cycles of production-looking-reading’, calling for approaches that capture the ‘dynamic processes’ of writing.

A number of studies have traced the lives of texts. Blommaert (2008; 2010), working at a transnational scale and concerned about ‘North South’ inequalities, has studied what happens when texts are projected beyond the context of their entextualisation and describes how texts can lose function as they are judged by the standards of wider and more dominant literacies. Using the concept of ‘scales’, to which reference will be made in section 3, he envisages space as stratified and hierarchical and employs metaphors of verticality in discussion of such movements of texts.

Kell (2013) too is concerned with questions of inequality but is cautious about making an equation between distance and power and argues strongly that any claims of verticality in relation to scale should be ‘... derived from the analysis of empirical data’ (ibid p. 9) She illustrates her point with examples from her own research in a South African development project, describing local movements of texts that did not necessarily entail jumps in scale or loss of function, referring to these as ‘horizontal trajectories’. However, drawing on her work on workplace literacy, Kell (2011) also provides an example of the instantaneous recontextualisation of an electronic, incident report form, between a local work site and the company’s head office. This involved a clear jump in scale and potential loss of function due to the negative evaluation of the manner in which the form was completed. Comparing this trajectory with those she traced in the development project, she makes the distinction between ‘scripted’ trajectories, as in the case of standardised procedures for submission of a workplace form, and 'emergent' trajectories which take a less predictable course, as in the case of a disabled woman, Noma, and her attempt to draw the attention of the authorities to problems with her house.

Also in the workplace, the concept of a 'text trajectory' is used by Woydack and Rampton (2015) in their analysis of the scripts used by agents in a call centre, and Pontille (2010) followed the work of a laboratory technician who was tasked with bringing together patient data for a new database. Both these studies are discussed further in chapter three. Meanwhile, in the context of academic literacy, Lillis and Curry (2010) have explored the notion of 'text histories' in the context of non-anglophone scholars seeking to publish academic texts in English. Their methodology involves the collection of:

> ... as much information as possible about the history of a text, including the drafts produced, the different people involved – including authors, reviewers, translators, editors and academic colleagues – the chronology of involvement and the nature of their impact on the text and its trajectory. (Lillis and Curry, 2010, p. 4)

These somewhat disparate studies all share a concern with the recontextualisation of texts and meanings across space, time and participant groups and the ways in which these texts or meanings are received, evaluated, changed and translated. There is, as yet, no common terminology and although several authors argue that the concept of 'literacy event' needs to be reviewed (Burnett, 2015; Kell, 2011; Maybin, 2013) no coherent position has emerged. Lillis and Curry (2010) propose the 'text history' as a key unit of analysis. Kell (2013), while proposing 'trajectories' as an alternative to ‘literacy practices’, continues to use the term ‘events’, referring to ‘chains’ of events (2011, p. 613), ‘sequences’ of events (2013, p. 10) and ‘event spaces’ (2013, p. 10). She prefers to work with the concept of event as ‘very small’ (2011, p. 613). She also notes that meanings may be translated into modes other than language (2011, p. 613) and, for this reason, prefers to use the term ‘meaning trajectory’ rather than ’text trajectory’.

3. Understandings of context

3.1 From containers to networks

The concept of ‘context’ is central to an understanding of literacies as ‘local’ and ‘situated’ and to my enquiry. Here I consider work that has helped to extend my understanding of context, in relation to both the immediate local context and the broader global context.

Gee (2000) suggests that emphasis on literacy events and practices as ‘situated’ has tended to lead to a ‘static’ notion of context while Kell (2013) states that she felt constrained by the framing of ‘language in place’ inherent in the concepts of literacy events and practices. Others have used the metaphor of a ‘container’ to critique an understanding of events as ‘bounded’, involving participants within the same timeframe and physical space (Ivanic, 2006, p. 2; Russell, 2005). This overly static understanding of context has been replaced by more complex and fluid notions. In particular, as part of a ‘transdiciplinary, spatial turn’ (Soja, 2004, p. ix) which draws on thinking in social geography, literacy research has paid much greater attention to questions of space. Wilson (2000) describes how, within a prison, there may be several competing ‘spaces’ within which different literacies, with differing degrees of legitimacy, are practised. Here the term ‘spaces’ is used metaphorically to refer, not to physical sites, but to social and mental spaces: a perspective taken up by contributors to ‘Travel Notes from the New Literacy Studies’ (Pahl and Rowsell, 2006). They draw on the work of Sheehy and Leander (2004), who offer a critique of the concept of situation as ‘material place’, contending that:

> Space is not static – as in metaphorical images of borders, centers and margins, it is dynamically relational. (Sheehy and Leander, 2004, p. 1)

Sheehy and Leander (ibid) claim that the studies in their book, ‘complicate’ context in literacy research and bring context to the fore as an ‘on-going process’ rather than as a background to situated practices. Ivanic explains:

> The ‘texture’ of an event changes moment by moment as the elements which constitute it co-emerge: identities, relationships, actions, semiotic resources, the significance and use of space and time, all of which have historical trajectories, are networked to others, and are culturally shaped. (2006, p. 2)

Ivanic suggests that it could be more useful ‘... to think of the participants in activities as being engaged in a constant process of contextualising, rather than to try to think of “context” as a separately describable entity.’

We have already noted Adam’s call to recognise ‘the mutual interdependence of time and space’ and Burnett (2015) brings these together in the concept of ‘timespaces’. She emphasises the dynamic fluidity of context in her proposal that we look not at ‘events’ but at ‘encounters’ through which:

> ... different timespaces, all of which are fluid and hybrid, coalesce and disperse. This in turn can help us examine how feelings, materialities, activities and purposes from different time-spaces may merge or disrupt one another as we make meaning. This lens highlights how institutional, economic, social and cultural factors come together with the personal and emotional. (Burnett, 2015, p. 520)

While such descriptions alert us to the infinite complexity of any social encounter they provide a daunting challenge in terms of analysis of empirical data.

Writing about contexts for learning and teaching, Edwards notes that:

> … relational framings find expression in theories of learning that emphasize activity and draw upon concepts of communities and networks rather than those of context. (Edwards, 2009, p. 3)

Two theories in particular have been used by researchers working within LS, activity theory and actor network theory. Activity theory (AT) has served as a valuable heuristic for a number of writers (Ivanic, 2006; Kell, 2006; Nikolaidou, 2011; Scribner, 1997; Tusting, 2010). Below, I outline the features of AT and consider what this has to offer my analysis. I then briefly introduce actor network theory (ANT), noting how this has been used in LS but explaining why I have chosen not to draw on this theory in the current study.

3.2 Activity theory

Nardi claims that:

> Activity theory, ... proposes a very specific notion of context: the activity itself is the context. (Nardi, 1996, p. 38)

Russell (2005) summarises activity theory as:

> ….. a development of Vygotsky's theories of tool mediation and zone of proximal development. Activity theory tries to make sense of the messy networks of human interactions by looking at people and their tools as they engage in particular activities. Activity theory calls these

> networks and theorizes context in terms of activity systems (Leont'ev 1981; Cole and Engeström 1993). (Russell, 2005, p. 4)

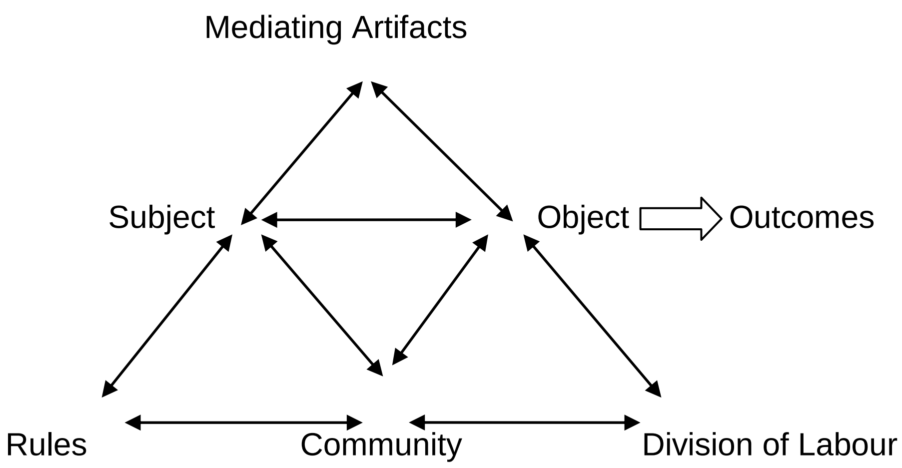
In AT, written texts are recognised as tools, alongside other artefacts, which 'mediate' the activity. Figure 2.1 represents Engeström's extended model of an activity system. This is a refinement of what he refers to as the 'classical triadic model' which comprised of subject, object and mediating tools and which, in this model, forms the uppermost section of the larger triangle. This represents 'short lived, goal directed actions' of individuals or groups while the larger triangle, represents a more durable, 'historically evolving', collective activity system against which these short term actions need to be interpreted. Engeström is concerned with activity, not just at the level of the individuals, but at the level of the communities of which they are part.

Engeström (2001) identifies the prime unit of analysis as:

> ... a collective, artefact-mediated and object-oriented activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems'.
>
> (Engeström, 2001, p. 136)

His five principles for AT (ibid p. 136-7) include: the 'multi-voicedness' of activity systems, resulting from the differing positions and histories of individuals within the system; the 'historicity' of activity systems which take shape and change over long periods of time; the central role of 'contradictions' within an activity system which can create disturbances but can also result in innovation and change and, finally, 'the possibility of expansive transformations in activity'. The latter recognises that systems can change to embrace a ‘radically wider horizon of possibilities’, an idea that has been of value in studies on learning.

Figure 2.1 A complex model of an activity system (Engeström, Miettinen and Punamäki, 1999)



What is referred to as the ‘third generation’ of activity theory is concerned with interactions between multiple activity systems, allowing us to conceptualise a number of different activity systems at play within the same space and individuals operating within a number of different systems. This perspective has proved of value in workplace studies, (Nikolaidou, 2011; Tusting, 2010), discussed in chapter 3. It offers a lens through which to examine the complexity of context where differing networks, with differing goals and differing rules, overlap. I concur with Nikolaidou (ibid) who argues:

> Embedding AT ...... in the study of literacy results in a more accurate contextualisation of literacy events and in a more valid interpretation of the meaning of literacy practices. (Nikolaidou, 2011, p. 4)

In the context of the current study I do not attempt to draw on the full scope of AT but the notion that the activity of the workplace provides the context for writing resonates with my experiences within the four micro-businesses. It provides a means of conceptualising the broader contexts within which the writing I am studying takes place, not as static but as dynamic systems of activity. It also serves to highlight the role of texts in 'mediating' activity, a notion commonly used in LS in references to 'a textually mediated world' (Smith, 1990) and to textual mediation in the workplace (Farrell, 2000; Farrell, 2001). Russell (2009) suggests that 'Writing is arguably the most powerful mediational means for organisations and institutions.' AT has been used widely by US scholars within the tradition of 'The New Rhetoric' which is discussed, in relation to genre, in section 4.

3.3 Actor network theory (ANT)

Although I do not draw on ANT directly, references to the theory occur frequently in the debate on the theorisation of the local and the distant/global in relation to literacy: a discussion that has relevance to my concern with external influences on writing in local micro-businesses and is considered in the following section.

ANT is based on the work of Latour (1987) and Law (1994) who aimed to bring a social perspective to the study of scientific writing. In ANT, social life is conceptualised in terms of constantly changing networks, comprising of people, objects and representations. Central to the theory is the concept of 'translation', a process by which 'complex entities' are brought together, '... into a single object or idea that can be mobilised and circulated, like a branded commodity or a taken-for-granted fact' (Clarke, 2002, p. 114). Latour (1987) uses the term 'stable mobiles'. One of the distinctive features of ANT is that all 'actors' in a network are treated at the same level, thus inanimate objects, such as written texts, can be seen as exercising agency in activities, independent of human agents. ANT has been used in the analysis of social and institutional processes, policies and projects relating to literacy education (Clarke, 2002; Hamilton, 2001; Hamilton, 2012). However, the theory is less suited to the current study in which the focus is predominantly on the micro aspects of social life and on functional texts, designed to carry information rather than ideas.

3.4 The local and the global

LS has come under criticism for its emphasis on the local and its failure to theorise the connection between the local and the global in relation to literacy (Brandt and Clinton, 2002; Collins and Blot, 2003; Reder and Davila, 2005). Addressing this, Brandt and Clinton, in their seminal paper, 'Limits of the Local' (2002), argued that by placing emphasis on the 'ethnographically visible' context and the agency of human beings, LS had lost sight of the importance of writing as technology; its legibility and durability which allows it to stay intact over time and distance and to have influence beyond the interactions of immediate literacy events. They draw attention to the fact that literacy '… regularly arrives from other places – infiltrating, disjointing and displacing local life' (ibid p343). Drawing on ANT, they claim that the recognition of objects as agents in social interactions and Latour's insistence that everything is local makes it possible to repair the break in social theories between the micro and the macro, the local and the global (ibid). While accepting much of what they say about the need for debate on the theorisation of the local and the global, Street disagrees with their use of the term ‘autonomous’ in describing how literacy can be understood as ‘technology’ as well as a practice. Street argues:

> The result of local global encounters around literacy is always a new hybrid rather than a single essentialized version of either. It is these hybrid literacy practices that NLS focuses upon rather than either romanticizing the local or conceding the dominant privileging of the supposed “global. (Street, 2003, p. 2827)

The concept of ‘scale’, touched on in section 2, has been explored across a range of disciplines. This concept, it is suggested, could help to provide the link between the micro and the macro and, by extension, that between the local and the global (Blommaert, 2007; Collins, Slembrouck and Baynham, 2009). In a paper that addresses this question, Kell (2013) uses as her starting point the metaphor of ‘Ariadne’s thread’:

> ... used by Latour (1987) to illustrate what he calls: “... networks of practices and instruments, of documents and translations” .... *“that would allow us to pass with continuity from the local to the global”* (Kell’s emphasis). (Kell, 2013, p. 2)

Kell queries whether such a movement would be possible given the ‘vertical jumps’ and ‘scale shifts’ that are implied and argues that such claims should be derived from the analysis of empirical data. Work on scales, Kell argues, is ‘thinly empirical’ and does not address *how* ‘... communication occurs across time and space - the actual mechanics of it and the methodologies available to study it.’ (2013, p. 2). Emphasising the importance of ethnographic evidence, she uses her work on tracing ‘meaning trajectories’ to illustrate her point. This approach, she suggests, highlights the importance of ‘a fine-grained analysis of space and time differentiations’ (ibid). Kell places emphasis on people ‘making things happen’ through projecting meaning through space and time, emphasising the agency of humans rather than that of non-human text-artefacts. In a footnote (ibid) she links her stance with her use of AT rather than ANT, noting that ‘There is room for further exploration around the question of the agency of objects in text trajectories and the interaction between AT and ANT.’

With regard to my interest in the external influences that impact on writing in micro-businesses, while I remain ambivalent regarding Brandt and Clinton’s theorising of the local and the distant, I believed Brandt’s (2001) notion of ‘sponsors of literacy’ could have relevance. Brandt described ‘sponsors’ as:

> …. those agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who teach, model, support, recruit, extort, deny or suppress literacy and gain advantage by it in some way. (Brandt 1998 cited in Brandt, 2001)

This concept can, Brandt and Clinton maintain, help us to understand:

> …. how literate practices can be shaped out of the struggle of competing interests and agents, how multiple interests can be satisfied during a single performance of reading or writing, how literate practices can relate to immediate social relationships while still answering to distant demands. (Brandt and Clinton, 2002, pp., p.350-351)

This is an ambitious claim but the concept has the potential to illuminate the complex relations that can lie behind seemingly simple literacy tasks at work, the forces that are responsible for the introduction of change and the ways in which literacy can be instrumental in the exercise of power from afar.

Lemke (2009) argues that the ‘flat’ interpretation of network models cannot account for regularities at higher scale levels. He introduces the concept of multiple timescales and the interdependence between these, arguing that; ‘Every process, action, social practice or activity occurs on some timescale’ (2009, p. 275). Using the classroom as his example, he lists the timescales to which we are generally attuned, utterances, lessons, the school day and the school year, but also, timescales which, in normal circumstances, we perceive as the stable backdrop to our activity: at one extreme, the briefest chemical synthesis and neural firings in the brain, and at the other, incomprehensible timescales of planetary and universal change. He explains how each scale of organisation:

> .... is an integration of faster, more local processes (i.e. activities, practices, doings, happenings) into longer-timescale, more global or extended networks. …. and it is the circulation through the network of semiotic artefacts (i.e. books, buildings, bodies) that enables co-ordination between processes on radically different timescales.’ (Lemke, 2009, p. 275)

We could usefully substitute the word ‘business’ for the word ‘classroom’ in the following quotation.

> A classroom, and indeed every human community, is an individual at its own scale of organisation. It has a unique historical trajectory, a unique development through time. But like every such individual on every scale, it is also in some respects typical of its kind. That typicality reflects its participation in still larger-scale, longer-term, more slowly changing processes that shape not only its development but also that of others of its type. (Lemke, 2009, p. 278)

Burgess (2007, p. 42) believes that Lemke’s conceptualisation of timescales: ‘.... avoids the limitations of simple binary distinctions’, not only between the micro and the macro but, by extension, between the local and the global.

She also claims it '... recognises the paradox that social events and practices are simultaneously local and global and that humans are simultaneously creative and constrained'. This perspective is helpful in respect of my concern, voiced earlier, regarding the differing degrees of abstraction used in discussing practices and is one I explore further in later chapters.

The exploration of the literature relating to LS in the preceding sections has opened up new perspectives and introduced me to new concepts and methodologies, highlighted significant questions and challenged me to be more precise in my use of terms. It has also encouraged me to look at social theories beyond LS in building a theoretical framework for my analysis. In the following section I turn my attention to work that takes texts as its starting point.

4. The analysis of texts

4.1 Introduction

This project differs from most LS studies in that it focuses specifically on writing and my concern is to throw light on both writing practices and on the nature of the texts produced. The ambiguity around the role of texts in relation to literacy practices in LS (Tusting, Ivanic and Wilson, 2000, p. 213) has given rise to claims that texts are being 'sidestepped' (Maybin, 2013, p. 548) or 'blackboxed' (Kell, 2009, p. 79). Barton and Hamilton, in their study, 'Local Literacies', admit that, in their analysis of the data, literacy practices are central and that texts have taken 'a subsidiary place', but emphasise that this was intended to redress the balance of so much previous work. They note the:

> …. potential richness of data that is generated by.... moving between analysis of texts and practices in a cyclical way to develop an understanding of contemporary literacies. (Barton and Hamilton, 1998, p. 257)

This cycling between the analysis of texts and practices recognises the value of a more holistic approach to writing (Baynham, 1995; Candlin and Hyland, 1999; Clark and Ivanic, 1997; Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Clark and Ivanic (ibid) maintain that the different aspects of writing cannot be understood in isolation, arguing that the linguistic features of a written text are ‘inextricable’ from the processes by which the text is created and interpreted, and that these processes, are in turn, ‘inextricable’ from the wider ‘local, institutional and socio-historical’ context in which the participants are situated. Candlin and Hyland (ibid) argue for the bringing together of research on writing as text, as a process and as social practice. The concern of these writers is, first and foremost, to present a case against the study of texts in isolation from the context of their use, one I fully support. I am concerned however to shift the emphasis and explore the case that a study of practices can gain from closer attention to texts. Barton (2001) suggests that a possible ‘direction’ for literacy research is to: ‘....link in a motivated way research which starts with the analysis of texts with research that sets out from the analysis of practices’. The challenge, he suggests, is to ‘... link these in a way which shows the mutual influences of the texts and the practices.’ (2001, p. 98). This study will provide a tentative step in this direction.

Drawing together ideas from a range of articles on ‘The Sociolinguistics of Writing’, Maybin (2013) argues for an understanding of writing as an ‘ideological semiotic object’. This, she claims, ‘....directs examination both towards the minutiae of the writing itself and also towards the ways in which semiotic value is inscribed, through ideological social practice.’ Conceived in this way, it is impossible to address texts in isolation and ‘... semiotic processes are shown to flow in both directions between practices and texts.’

I was aware that the writing I would encounter could be described as ‘mundane’ (Tusting and Papen, 2008), ‘ordinary’ (Lillis, 2013; Mavers, 2011; Sinor, 2002) ‘everyday’ (Brandt, 2015), or ‘routine’ (Barton and Tusting, 2005) and easy to overlook or dismiss. Lillis (2013, p. 76) notes how writing of this type can become ‘invisible’ and that ‘empirical and theoretical tools are needed in order to make the nature and consequences of (such) writing visible.’ Although many LS studies have been undertaken in contexts in which writing of this kind is common the emphasis tends to be on writing practices in relation to social and political issues. Few studies have looked in detail at texts of this kind. My task was to identify frameworks and a vocabulary, consistent with the basic tenets of LS, which would enable me to describe and analyse texts of this type.

Hyland (2002) describes two broad approaches to studies of written texts. The first is concerned with the structure of writing and the systems of rules that govern these, exemplified by traditional grammar and, in more recent times, by the generative grammar of Noam Chomsky (1965). From this perspective, texts are seen as autonomous, something that can be analysed and described independently of real life purposes and contexts. The second approach had its origin in the work of Halliday. In his ‘Systemic Functional Linguistics’ (SFL) (Halliday, 1994) grammar is viewed as ‘…a resource for communication rather than rules for the ordering of forms’ (Hyland, 2002, p. 15). This second approach offers a perspective on texts that is consistent with LS and with the holistic view discussed above.

Halliday’s work has provided a starting point for the development of a range of approaches to the analysis of language. Thinking on discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) owes much to SFL; likewise work on genre and multimodality. Each of these takes a ‘social’ view of language (Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016) and each has the potential to offer insights into the texts I encountered. In this section, I consider Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (ibid). I then discuss discourse analysis and, arising from this, the concept of genre. Finally, I address multimodality (Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016; Jewitt and Kress, 2003; Kress, 2010; van-Leeuwen, 2005).

4.2 Systemic functional grammar

The first of three reasons that Halliday offers for describing his grammar as ‘functional’ is that it is: ‘…designed to account for how the language is *used*.’ He argues that, ‘In any piece of discourse analysis there are two possible levels of achievement to aim at.’ At the lower level, linguistic analysis is used to contribute to the **understanding** of the text by showing how and why the text means what it does. At the higher level, however, it achieves, ‘… a contribution to the **evaluation**[6] of the text for its own purposes’ and requires

[6] Halliday’s emphasis.

not only an interpretation of the text itself but also of its context and of the systematic relationship between the context and the text (Halliday, 1994, p. xv).

Halliday is concerned with the making of meaning. Explaining his choice of the term ‘grammar’ rather than ‘syntax’, he points out that ‘syntax’ suggests a movement in one direction, as a system of forms; from words, to sentences, to meaning, whereas, in a functional grammar, the direction is reversed.

> A language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realised. The question is not, “what do these forms mean?” but “how are these meanings expressed? (Halliday, 1994, p. xiv)

Halliday identifies two kinds of meaning, the ‘ideational’ or reflective and the ‘interpersonal’ or active. Put simply, ‘Every message is both about something and addressing someone’ (Halliday, 1994, p. xiii). A third, metafunctional component of language, on which the ideational and interpersonal components depend, the ‘textual’ component, relates to the construction and cohesion of text. In a ‘systemic’ grammar, language is viewed as ‘a network of systems or interrelated sets of options for making meaning’ (Halliday, 1994, p. 15). This notion of choice, on the part of the speaker or writer, is central to the analysis of texts in this study.

Systemic functional grammar is complex and it is beyond the scope of this study to provide an exhaustive analysis of texts or to engage critically with Halliday’s work. His approach does, however, provide valuable insights into the ways in which meanings are constructed and writers’ purposes achieved and provides tools of analysis for the linguistic features of written texts. In particular, in an appendix to his 1994 version of ‘An Introduction To Functional Grammar’, his recognition of ‘little texts’ which, he states, ‘... the context of situation determines have to be short’ (Halliday, 1994, p. 392), provides a valuable perspective on the abbreviated texts that are characteristic of the workplace.

4.3 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis (DA) is concerned with language at a level of analysis higher than the clause or the sentence and, given the brevity of many of the texts I encountered, its use could be viewed as a challenge. However if, as Johnstone (2017, p. 7) suggests, the basic question a discourse analyst asks is ‘Why is this stretch of discourse the way it is? Why is it no other way?’ I believe DA has considerable relevance to my enquiry.

Linking back to the work of Halliday, Lemke (2012) explains DA as:

> ... about construing patterns of various kinds, at some intermediate levels between what Halliday called the ‘system’ - what is possible - and the ‘instance’ - what actually happened this time - in order to say something about what is typical. And not just what is typical in general, but what is typical for whom, when, and why.
> (Lemke, 2012, p. 81)

DA takes texts as its starting point but is concerned, not just with the potential language offers to create meanings but, as noted in reference to Halliday’s work, with language ‘in use’ (Gee, 2013), or, ‘what people do with language’ (Johnstone, 2017). Approaches to DA vary in the degree to which they stay close to the texts or work ‘outwards towards the social functions of the texts’ (Lillis, 2013, p. 57) and draw on social theory. Those who take the latter approach, such as Fairclough (2003), bring together close linguistic analysis at a micro level with social analysis. Discourse analysis is used by both language specialists and by researchers from other disciplines wishing to better understand particular settings or social issues.

The term ‘discourse’ can also be used in the plural, as a count noun. Used in this way it refers to ‘... particular ways of representing part of the world’ (Fairclough, 2003) or ‘patterns of belief and habitual action’ (Johnstone, 2017, p. 3). Gee distinguishes between ‘discourse’ with a small ‘d’ which he uses to denote language in use or an extended stretch of language, and ‘Discourse’ with a capital ‘D’. This Gee defines as:

> ... a socially accepted association among ways of using language, and other symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting, as well as using various tools, technologies or props that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’, to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role’, or to signal that one is fitting a social niche in a distinctively recognisable fashion. (Gee, 2008, p. 161)

Understood in this way, ‘Discourse’ is concerned with questions of identity and recognition and aligns with what Fairclough refers to as ’styles’ (2003, p. 26).

Gee (2013) stresses that there are ‘no set steps’ for the analysis of discourse but he offers what he calls a ‘toolkit’ (Gee, 2011) on how to do Discourse Analysis. Likewise Fairclough (2003) provides researchers wishing to use discourse analysis in social research with a set of questions to ask of the text and Johnstone (2017) what she refers to as a ‘heuristic’ for analysis. The relevance of such guidance to the writing I encountered in the four businesses is explored in the case studies and the cross case analysis.

4.4 Genre

Discourse, Fairclough suggests, '... figures in three main ways in social practice': as genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing) and styles (ways of being) (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26). Looking at 'genres', we find, as with discourse analysis more broadly, that studies fall within different traditions. While some place emphasis on the formal characteristics of genres and the classification of texts, others focus on genres as 'ways of acting' (ibid) with language. Here I restrict my attention to the latter and in particular to the US tradition of the 'New Rhetoric'. This has been strongly influenced by the work of Miller (1984) who defined genre as 'social action'. Genres, it is argued, enable us to recognise particular social actions and to take the appropriate actions in response, making it possible '... to act with others ... in more or less, but never entirely predictable ways, individually, collectively and institutionally' (Russell, 2009, p. 43).

Russell describes how genres emerge:

> Put simply, a genre is the ongoing use of certain material tools, (marks in the case of written genres) in certain ways, that worked once and might work again, a typified, tool mediated response to conditions recognised by participants as recurring. (Russell, 2009, p. 43)

This echoes Cope and Kalantzis (1993a, p. 67) when they write of genres evolving '... as *pragmatic* schemes for making certain types of meaning and to achieve distinctive goals, in specific settings, by particular linguistic means'.

Genres tend to be self-reproducing (Orlikowski and Yates, 1994) and provide, what Schryer (1994) refers to as, 'stability for now'. Also, by providing consistency in response to recurring situations they help to reduce the 'work' that writing can entail (Spinuzzi, 2010).

Fairclough (2003, p. 216) refers to 'genre chains', describing these as '.... genres which are regularly linked together, involving systematic transformations from genre to genre' and citing as examples, official documents, and reports in the press. Writers from the New Rhetoric have also considered the links between genres. Bazerman (2004) uses the term 'genre set' for '... the collection of types of texts someone in a particular role is likely to produce' and the notion of 'genre repertoire' has been used to refer to, a 'set of genres that are routinely enacted by the members of a community' (Orlikowski and Yates, 1994). In relation to my introduction of Activity Theory (AT) in section 3, it is interesting to note how the New Rhetoric has brought together the concept of genre and the concept of the 'activity system', using AT as a heuristic for describing 'textual circulation networks' and their contribution to the work of organisations (Russell, 2009, p. 42). Bazerman (1994) writes of 'genre systems', sets of interrelated genres that interact with each other within activity systems to 'realise social motives', 'focusing attention and co-ordinating action' (Russell, 2005, p. 9).

Spinuzzi (2010) draws on a distinction between 'regulated' and 'regularised' resources, introduced by Schryer and Spoel (2005):

> Regulated resources refer to knowledge, skills, and language behaviours that are recognized and required by a field or profession. Regularized resources, on the other hand, refer to strategies that emerge from practice situations and are more tacit (Schryer and Spoel, 2005, p. 250).

Spinuzzi (2010) sees these as two ends of a continuum and observes how unofficial, ‘regularised’ genres can come to be adopted as official, ‘regulated’ genres. Spinuzzi (2012) also draws attention to a distinction between ‘automated’ genres, undertaken by a computer, and those that require human judgement and rely on the writer to exercise discretion. He notes that while the distinction between ‘regularised’ and ‘regulated’ genres focuses on ‘authorial discretion’, or ‘voice’, that between ‘automated genres’ and those that require writers to exercise discretion focuses on ‘operational discretion’ or ‘choice. These distinctions have potential relevance to questions relating to writers’ agency in the analysis of workplace texts.

Russell (2005, p. 4) highlights the ways in which the tradition of the New Rhetoric shares a range of theoretical and methodological orientations with LS. In relation to genre, however, Kell (2011) notes that the term is little used in LS. The reason for this might lie in the overlap between the concept of genre, as understood by the New Rhetoric, and that of ‘literacy practice’. Lillis (2013, pp. 70-71) notes a tendency for genre analysis, in all traditions, to veer towards the study of the text and states a preference for the term practice. I could, like Lillis (ibid) have chosen simply to use the concept of practice. I have, however, opted to use both terms and to explore what light the notion of genre can shed on the uses of writing in my four cases. As with the concept of practices, ‘genres’ are identified at different levels of abstraction, some very broad, others locally situated.

4.5 Multimodality

As I began to collect examples of workplace texts I became aware of the degree to which meaning was conveyed with non verbal means and the need to acknowledge this in my analysis. In response, I explored literature on multimodality (Hodge and Kress, 1988; Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016; Jewitt and Kress, 2003; Kress, 2010; Kress and van-Leeuwen, 2006). Halliday's work on SFL has been extended to meaning making, beyond language, to embrace a wide range of different modes: visual, linguistic, gestural and oral. As Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran (2016, p. 3) stress, '… multimodality marks a departure from the traditional opposition of 'verbal' and 'non-verbal' communication', as is made clear in the three premises of multimodality they present:

1. Meaning is made with different semiotic resources, each offering distinct potentialities and limitations.
2. Meaning making involves the production of multimodal wholes.
3. If we want to study meaning, we need to attend to all semiotic resources being used to make a complete whole.
(Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016, p. 3)

This work challenges the long held status of language, for if, as Kress (2010) argues, we accept that meanings made by modes other than language are 'full' meanings, distinct from other modes, then we have no choice but to see language in a new light, '... no longer as central and dominant, fully capable of expressing all meanings, but as one means among others for making meaning, each of them specific.' (2010, p. 79).

The field of multimodality is complex. Kress (Kress, 2010) cautions that anyone working on multimodality needs to make explicit the theoretical frame they are using and, making the same point, Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran (2016) propose that researchers whose study is not primarily multimodal, should simply speak of 'adopting multimodal concepts'. I follow this advice and make use of concepts such as 'mode', 'affordance', 'semiotic resources' and 'semiotic work'. However, being more specific, I found the perspective on meaning making, within the social semiotic theory of multimodality (SSTM), as set out by Kress (2010), of interest for its emphasis on writers' agency. The principle of *'design'* is central to SSTM. This describes the 'semiotic work' that is undertaken by individuals in the process of 'signmaking', using the 'resources' that are available to them in particular social and cultural contexts and the 'affordances' that these offer for meaning making, in order to realise their 'interests'. Kress (2010, p. 6) contrasts the concept of 'design' with that of 'competence' which, he claims, 'anchors communication in *convention* as social regulation'[7]. Looking at writing from this perspective enables us to move beyond questions of correctness and focus on understanding the work writers undertake to achieve their purposes, in the design and production of the text.

Mavers (2007; 2011) uses SSTM to highlight the creativity of young children, both in writing and drawings, in what she describes as, 'unremarkable texts' (2011). She stresses the 'agency' involved in the semiotic work of design and illustrates how, by looking at children's writing and pictures as semiotic work, it is possible to focus on their '… initiative, inventiveness, imagination, ingenuity'. It is however, also important to recognise the factors that can constrain creativity. Mavers (2007, p. 7) calls on Hymes's term, 'repertoire' to

[7] Writer's emphasis.

describe how the resources for writing for any one individual will be ‘bounded’ by their particular history and experience, in different social contexts. Tusting and Papen (2008) focus on creativity in very different settings: the production of a newsletter for a parish community in England and the development of community based tourism in Namibia. They adopt the term ‘ubiquitous creativity’, used by Banaji and Burn (2007) and, drawing on Kress’s understanding of ‘semiotic work’, discussed above, argue that creativity can be seen as an integral part of everyday text creation. They stress that an ethnographic approach, which focuses on how people produce and use texts, in particular contexts, can complement text-based approaches in understanding this creativity.

The material nature of texts has been discussed in relation to the trajectories of texts but, as an aspect of the process of meaning making, it is often overlooked (Pahl and Escott, 2015). Where this has been addressed it is usually in connection with young children’s writing, as in Ormerod and Ivanic’s study (2000) of the physical characteristics of children’s project work. Mavers, in a study of one child’s email exchange (Mavers, 2007), asks, ‘… what is writing?’ and argues that, in addition to the use of lexical and syntactic choices for making meaning, writing includes graphic aspects that do not often figure in linguistic accounts. These include the substances and tools used, the nature of the surface on which marks are made, features of lettering such as case, the use of punctuation, and the way graphic components are set out spatially in relation to each other. Mavers concludes that writing is ‘.... a mode of representation/communication consisting of resources beyond those recognised in linguistic analysis alone’ (ibid p.157).

Lemke (1998, p. 87), in an article about scientific writing, argues that language, as a ‘typologically oriented semiotic resource’, is ideally suited for the ‘making of categorical distinctions’ but not for formulating degree, quantity, gradation and other aspects of meaning that he refers to as ‘topologicial’. He illustrates how, when scientists communicate they do not rely on ‘linear verbal text’ alone but integrate this with, ‘... mathematical expressions, graphs, tables, diagrams, maps, drawings, photographs ...’ (ibid p. 88). These different representations of a concept, he maintains, are in no way redundant, rather, each carries its own meaning and use of two or more modalities is necessary for ‘canonical interpretation.’ He concludes that ‘It is in the nature of scientific concepts that they are semiotically multimodal’. Lemke surmises that this may also be true of other systems of semiotic practices but does not elaborate on this and in a later publication (Lemke, 2004) credits science with pioneering the ‘complex hybrids and fusions of visual and verbal meaning resources’ that he notes in magazines and websites, contrasting these with the, ‘pure verbal text of traditional literacy’.

5. Digital technologies

A review of the literature on writing cannot be complete without addressing the subject of digital technologies. The impact of the rapid growth of digital technologies has inevitably become a major focus for research on writing (Mills *et al*, 2018). This is a fast changing field in which research has had to adapt to the rapid change both in technology and in the ways in which the technology is used in everyday life ’ (Lankshear and Knobel, 2011, p. xi). An example is provided by Burnett (2015) who points out that whereas in early research into digital environments, online activities were positioned as 'separate' from those offline, this '... no longer seems to make sense in terms of how we live our lives.' She observes that 'We operate increasingly across hybrid offline/online spaces' (ibid p521).

Differing opinions have been expressed with regard to the status of writing in the digital age with some writers emphasising a turn to the visual (Domingo, Jewitt and Kress, 2015; Kress, 2000; Kress and van-Leeuwen, 2006) while others highlight the central part writing plays in activities such as email, texting and social media (Barton and Lee, 2012; Merchant, 2007). There is however agreement that writing online differs from writing offline. Merchant (2007) lists ten 'shifts' in writing that provide a useful point of reference for the analysis of writing undertaken using digital technology (Text box2.3).

Text box 2.2 Shifts in emphasis in writing using digital technology (Merchant, 2007, p. 122)

1. A move from the fixed to the fluid: the text is no longer contained between the covers or by the limits of the page.
2. Texts become interwoven in more complex ways through the use of hyperlinks.
3. Texts can easily be revised, updated, added to and appended.
4. Genres borrow freely, hybridize and mutate.
5. Texts can become collaborative and multivocal with replies, links, posted comments and borrowing – the roles of readers and writers overlap.
6. Reading and writing paths are often non-linear.
7. Texts become more densely multimodal (as multimedia allows for a rich interplay of modes).
8. The communicative space is shared and location diminishes in significance as the local fuses with the global.
9. The impression of co-presence and synchronous engagement increases.
10. Boundaries begin to blur (work/leisure; public/private; serious/frivolous)

Twenty years ago, when email use was increasing sharply there were attempts to pin down the nature of this form of written communication (Baron, 1998; Lan, 2000). The consensus appeared to be that email is a creole or a 'hybrid', enjoying features of both writing and speech (Baron, 2001). Email was also seen as 'evolving and dynamic' (Lan, 2000, p. 29). This medium was found to be more informal than writing, to reduce the constraints that can be present in face to face communication and to encourage personal disclosure (Baron, 2001). More recent studies have focused on social media, blogs and online games.

From the perspective of multimodal social semiotics, Domingo et al (2015) studied blogs and conclude that writing and image are taking on new functions and new relationships, that the previous dominance of writing is being reduced as image takes centre stage and that screens are displacing the medium of the printed page. They argue that it is increasingly difficult to consider writing in isolation from multimodal ensembles and that, in the production of these, design is a primary concern and different modes are chosen according to the affordances they offer.
Domingo et al. (ibid) also point out that the change from linear text to the modular design of multimodal texts has brought changes in the notions of authorship and reading. While in a linear text it is the role of the author to ensure the 'coherence' of the text and determine 'the reading path' through use of grammatical devices and the sequencing of paragraphs and chapters, on the modular page this work is left to the 'interest' of the reader. 'Visitors' are provided with '... navigational resources to choose their own reading path' (2015, p. 258).

Writing online is subject to the 'pre-designed' constraints of the software (Domingo, Jewitt and Kress, 2015). Software design can also shape the way in which we produce texts. Adami and Kress (2010) suggest that the use of menus, leads to a conception of semiotic (inter-) activity as a matter of ‘navigation, and ‘selection’ among options.’ They also suggest that the design of devices, such as smart phones, can shape our behaviour as writers, prioritising, for example, navigation and access to existing images and texts over access to the keyboard and the production of text. They conclude:

> ... content generation’ and ‘text creation’ is now more likely to be done by a means of representation-as-selection, ‘framing’ and copying of semiotic material available via, e.g., the internet. (Adami and Kress, 2010, p. 187)

Although such observations may appear to lie outside the focus of my study, questions relating to framing and creativity and to the production or selection of written texts are very pertinent to the later discussion of the use of proformas, both on and offline, in the day to day work of small businesses.

6. Conclusion

I have chosen to locate my study in the tradition of Literacy Studies, recognising writing as a social and cultural practice rather than an autonomous set of skills. I have identified the two key concepts of LS, ‘literacy events’ and ‘literacy practices’ which shaped my thinking as I planned the project and began my analysis but I have also highlighted critiques of these concepts that identify ambiguities and limitations. These have encouraged me to examine my own position. Here I respond to Street’s call (Street, 2000) to make explicit how I choose to use the terms. In relation to ‘literacy events’, I accept that it is not always possible to observe events directly and that they may, as Kell (2011) suggests, be fleeting, an integral part of larger flows of activity. However, if we are to study the trajectories or histories of texts, we need to be able to freeze the frame at key points and examine the detail of who is doing what with writing, when, where, how and why. Only through attention to ‘literacy events’ in this way can we ensure that our analysis is grounded in ethnographic detail. When I write about ‘literacy practices’ I use the term to refer to ‘culturally recognizable patterns of behaviour’ (Tusting, Ivanic and Wilson, 2000, p. 213), thus placing ‘practices’ at a higher level of abstraction and distinguishing these from observable ethnographic details. I also take the term to include ‘textual practices’. However, I have two concerns. Firstly, I heed Kell’s observation that this understanding includes texts as ‘... already at the level of ..... generalisations’ (Kell, 2011, p. 608). Also, noting Ivanic’s reference to ‘... the actual observable actions *and texts*[8] in a specific event’ (2006, p. 3), I argue that, just as the identification of practices draws on the observation and analysis of specific literacy events, discussion of texts, as part of writing practices, must be grounded in the study of individual texts. Secondly, I am uncertain whether the scope of the term ‘textual practices’ can include all the aspects of texts I wish to explore. I therefore find it helpful, in some instances, to write about practices *and* texts.

In many respects my study has much in common with what Baynham and Prinsloo (2009) refer to as the second generation of NLS studies, focusing as it does on local, vernacular uses of writing. It does, however, also benefit

[8] My emphasis

from insights arising from more recent work. I have discussed studies that have sought to extend and refine analysis and propose new approaches and new concepts. Two in particular have shaped my own analysis. The first is the recognition of the value of a nuanced, fine-grained analysis of events and practices which offers a means, both to capture the unique characteristics of writing practices within a particular business and to explore where elements of these are common across the businesses. The second is the use of an approach which traces texts beyond one single instance of use, to study the ways in which these are recontexualised in different locations, at different times and involve different networks of participation. This has the potential to shed light on the dynamic characteristics of writing, how it is used, changed, added to, transformed and can become subject to re-evaluation.

The 'situated' nature of literacy is an important tenet of LS (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000) and, for this reason, context, and how we understand this, is a central concern in LS research. I have reviewed ways in which thinking regarding context has developed and how, moving away from overly static notions, LS has looked to wider social theories to provide more flexible, dynamic and relational models. One of these, Activity Theory (AT) can, I believe, provide a helpful heuristic for purposes of my study, offering a lens that allows me to view the context of the writing in terms of the broader activity, taking place within a collective and object-oriented enterprise. It also places the focus on texts as 'tools' or 'artefacts' and the ways in which these 'mediate' between the subject and the goal of an activity, a focus that is central to my own research questions. This model is complemented by the more detailed analysis, discussed above, which can help to reveal *how* texts are used are used in this way.

I make the case for the close examination of texts, as part of this detailed analysis, and to undertake this I needed to identify approaches to analysis that were compatible with LS and could complement my analysis of practices. Halliday's work on Systemic Functional Grammar, with its emphasis on meaning making and language in use, meets this criterion, as do approaches to texts that have built on Halliday's work in the fields of discourse analysis, genre and multimodality. I believed these had the potential to shed light on the writing encountered in my case studies and complement what I learned through my exploration of writing practices.

In this review I have presented aspects of my journey as I engaged with the literature while at the same time reflecting on questions arising from my fieldwork. My aim was to identify theory that had the potential to illuminate both the uses and the nature of the writing I encountered. Taking up Barton's challenge (2001) I have sought out approaches to analysis that start from the perspective of practices and approaches that start from texts and, in each case, I have explained how I believed it could contribute to my analysis and complement or extend other approaches.

Chapter 3

Literature Review Part Two: Writing in the workplace

1. Introduction

In this chapter I examine literature that specifically addresses literacy and, in particular, writing in the workplace. In doing so, I attempt to locate my own study in relation to this field of work and identify the contribution it might make. My exploration of this literature makes it clear that the workplaces I have studied are very different in size and structure to those featured in the majority of studies of workplace literacy. This review therefore provides a wider context against which to view micro-businesses. I introduce the broad themes identified in this literature but focus in more depth on studies which offer useful insights, provoke questions or use approaches that I believe have relevance to my analysis. However, in many cases, these studies serve primarily as examples with which to compare and contrast my own cases and, in doing so, to highlight the distinctive characteristics of micro-businesses and the uses they make of writing.

In the first part of the chapter I examine a recurring theme of workplace studies over the last twenty years, notably that workplaces are changing and that this is leading to new and increased demands for literacy on the part of workers. I consider the range of factors to which this change is attributed, the roles played by textual practices in these and the impact they have on local workplaces and local workers. In section 3, I review literature that is concerned with a closely related question, literacy education and literacy learning in the workplace. In section 4, I introduce studies in which the focus is particularly on texts used in the workplace. Finally, in section 5, I explore a range of sources, from other fields of study, that provide insights into the particular challenges and opportunities micro-businesses encounter.

2. Change in the workplace

Changes in the volume, nature and complexity of the literacy demands on workers are attributed to a range of closely interconnected developments: an increasingly globalised market place, the rise of the 'Knowledge Economy', the adoption of a new culture of management and the rapid spread of new forms of communication, afforded by new digital technologies. Studies in the field of LS have sought to look beyond the rhetoric that tends to surround these phenomena and to understand what they mean in practice for front-line workers, in local situations, and the writing they undertake. They focus particularly on questions of empowerment, agency, identity and control: questions that, although not my central interest, still have relevance to my case studies.

In chapter one I make reference to Deborah Brandt's book (2015, p. 607), 'The rise of writing' and her claim that writing '... is overtaking reading as the skill of critical consequence' (ibid p. 161). She believes that the digital revolution has detracted attention from 'a more radical but quieter revolution': the 'turn' to writing as a mass daily experience. She attributes this to the rise of the knowledge economy in which texts are both the 'chief means of production and chief output of production' (ibid p.3). The increasing demand for 'knowledge workers' is often cited in regard to the need for improved literacy skills in the workforce (DfEE, 2001, p. 8) and Brandt highlights the significant role workplaces play in literacy learning in cases where writing is central to productivity. However, by her own admission, her data (based on 90 interviews with people in paid and unpaid work in the mid-west of USA) is weighted towards those who do a lot of writing at work and she warns that workplaces can also be ‘formidable’ sites for the production of literacy inequalities due to the ‘... stratified patterns of access, investment and reward that accompany the role of writing in society’ (Brandt, 2015, pp. 164-5). This is a warning I should consider in relation to the employees in my case studies.

While Brandt focuses on the knowledge economy, others address change from the perspective of globalisation. Farrell (2001) draws on a study of a small Australian textile company, undertaking work for a large US client company and notes how small companies increasingly find themselves connected to ‘centralised external agencies’. Referring to these connections as the ‘ligatures of globalisation’, she notes that these are ‘... generally mediated through textual practices at work’. Large companies seek to achieve standardisation, across remote local sites, through use of texts such as manuals and standardised work procedures (Belfiore, Defoe and Folinsbee, 2004; Farrell, 2000) while remote, regulatory organisations require written evidence of compliance with externally imposed standards (Farrell, 2001; Farrell, 2009; Joly, 2010). It is significant that very small businesses are not necessarily exempt. Jones (2000) analysed the way in which Welsh cattle farmers became ‘incorporated’ into the agricultural bureaucracy of the European Union through the requirement to complete an animal movement form while Joly (2010) describes how a French cattle farmer had to adjust his record keeping practices to meet the conditions for European funding.

Such examples, Farrell suggests, represent the ‘micro-processes’ of globalisation in practice (2001, p. 60). Like Kell (2013), Farrell places emphasis on the need for detailed ethnographic evidence for an understanding global links. She encourages us to see economic globalisation as a ‘social’ achievement, ‘accomplished through social relationships’; as something ‘... that happens moment by moment in a range of local and remote sites.’ As an example, she makes reference to observing ‘... two Australian weavers collaborate to complete a written Quality Audit that will be assessed by employees of a Quality Standards Organisation located in Brussels’ (Farrell, 2001, p. 60). It is important to note that such processes rely almost exclusively on the use of digital communication (Farrell, 2009) presenting new challenges for some workers and businesses (Joly, 2010).

Brandt and Clinton wrote of literacy from other places ‘... infiltrating, disjointing and displacing local life’ (Brandt and Clinton, 2002, p.343) but both Farrell (2009) and Joly (2010) claim that imposed writing practices, rather than replacing existing local practices, exist side by side with these and are ‘... in constant conversation’ (Farrell, 2009, p. 188). Joly (2010) notes that compliance with new procedures could be ‘selective’ and Farrell (2009, p. 188) that externally imposed practices were used and interpreted ‘... in specific local ways’. These findings lend support to Street’s concept of ‘hybrid practices’ (Street, 2002), discussed in chapter two.

For workers, becoming part of a global network can involve, not only the adoption of new literacy practices, but adaption to a new workplace culture. The 'new work order' (Gee, Hull and Lankshear, 1996; Holland, Frank and Cooke, 1998) is based on a philosophy of management, characterised by a move from traditional hierarchical structures, in which workers were managed and trained, to new roles for employees as independent, flexible, self-motivated members of learning organisations. Small teams with responsibility for whole processes tend to replace 'Fordist' production line work and knowledge and decision making are distributed throughout the organisation rather being the preserve of a centralised management. The uptake of this approach is driven by an increasingly competitive market in which survival requires companies to capture niche markets for high quality, customised goods and have the flexibility to respond fast to changing customer demands (Spinuzzi, 2010). The restructuring of workplaces along these lines requires workers to assume new identities at work (Farrell, 2001; Scholtz and Prinsloo, 2001) and to engage with new ways of talking about work (Iedema and Scheeres, 2003).

The introduction of the 'new work order' has been viewed positively as leading to a greater sense of workers' empowerment and opportunity to improve their literacy skills (Hart-Landsberg and Reder, 1995). Others have been highly critical (Gee, Hull and Lankshear, 1996), highlighting the tensions and paradoxes that become apparent when theory is translated into practice. Farrell (2001, p. 57) notes that while, on the one hand, employees are required to be 'autonomous, problem-solving entrepreneurs', on the other, global companies strive to control operations through 'specified and regulated work practices that effectively circumscribe their activities and decisions'. Gee, Hull and Lankshear (1996) point out that the so called 'enchanted workplace' can only be a reality for a few and that large sections of the population, in developed and under-developed parts of the world, particularly those with lower skills, will be excluded. Even within a single workplace the experience of employees can differ (Scholtz and Prinsloo, 2001). While some take on roles that are 'literacy rich' and require commitment to new ways of working, others continue to do very little writing and experience increased surveillance without a sense of empowerment. How the position of employees in traditional microbusinesses compares with those who are part of global institutions is a question to be addressed in the case studies.

Central to understanding the emphasis on literacy in the 'new', globalised workplace are the processes of 'continuous improvement' and 'total quality management' (TQM) (Holland, Frank and Cooke, 1998).The former requires intensive record keeping, much of which depends on the writing practices of front-line workers. The latter relies on writing, to specify, but also to provide evidence of compliance with, standard operating procedures (Belfiore, Defoe and Folinsbee, 2004). Belfiore describes a food processing company driven by government regulation and customer requirements to move rapidly, from a traditional manufacturing operation, based on an oral culture, to '... a print driven and certified quality system.' She notes the different meanings attached to writing tasks at different levels of the organisation, with managers recognising their importance in relation to survival in an international market, while front line workers viewed them as additional to their main work and supervisors were squeezed between the two. Conflicting messages from management, regarding priorities in relation to writing up records and keeping the production line moving, added to what Belfiore describes as a, '… tangle of meanings' on the plant floor.

This ambivalence, regarding the uses of writing to evidence adherence to quality standards, stands in contrast with workers 'making literacy work for them' (Belfiore, Defoe and Folinsbee, 2004). Belfiore and colleagues found examples of workers designing and using their own notebooks to aid their work, a practice reported in workplaces elsewhere (Campinos-Dubernet and Marquette 1999.90 cited by Joly(2010)). Such 'unofficial' documents, they note, had no place in schemes such as ISO and sometimes had to be kept secretly to avoid charges of 'non-conformance'.

Jackson (2000) calls on Darville's distinction between 'writing up' and 'writing down', pointing out that, while workers' own notes are an example of 'writing down' information and constitute writing over which they have control, much of the writing workers are now required to do is part of an 'organisational literacy' in which what counts is how matters are 'written up' or entered into the organisational process.

> … the job of writing-up the work process in a form that makes it accountable, certifiable and marketable is increasingly inseparable from the job of producing the product itself. As supervisors everywhere tell their reluctant workers, writing-up nothing makes it look like you've done nothing. On the contrary, ... 'writing up' is increasingly the form of the work that counts (Jackson, 2000, p. 13).

For front line workers, new writing practices can represent not greater empowerment but new instruments for control.

'Writing up' work has also become increasingly important in publicly funded organisations, in areas such as social care and education, as they are required to engage in 'accountability literacies'. Central bodies require written texts as auditable evidence that work is being carried out to the correct standards, money is being spent efficiently and progress achieved (Tusting, 2012). Studies in the care sector have found that the texts used for audit are increasingly the responsibility of front-line workers (Wyse and Casarotto, 2004), that these texts are highly regulated (Waterhouse and Virgona, 2004) and can shape, not only what workers feel able to write (Nikolaidou and Karlsson, 2012), but the ways in which they come to view their clients.

In the field of education, Tusting (2012; 2010) studied the impact of increased 'paperwork' on the working lives of staff in an Adult Education college and an Early Years Centre. Her detailed analysis of a nursery teacher, attempting to write up an 'observation' of a child while responsible for a group of children, illustrates the pressures audit culture can place on front line workers. This study also provides an example of the use of Activity Theory as a means to conceptualise the many different activities present within the classroom and the different goals to which these are directed. In addition, Tusting draws on Lemke's concept of timescales to discuss the way in which the writing of the observation integrates the immediate activities of a busy nursery classroom with the broader systems of the Early Years Centre, government policies and the inspection regime as well as the teacher's own personal goals. Activity Theory is also used by Nikolaidou (2011) to analyse an employee's uses of literacy as he both carried out his usual duties and undertook a workplace qualification.

Within the college, Tusting examines the individual learning plans (ILPs) that teachers of Skills for Life were required to use with their students. She describes how teachers struggled to reconcile their beliefs, regarding what constituted ‘good teaching’, and compliance with the accountability frameworks of the Skills for Life initiative which the ILPs represented.

3. Teaching and learning literacy in the workplace

Changes in the volume and nature of workplace literacy as a result of globalisation, the Knowledge Economy and the New Work Order, have given rise to a discourse of crisis. Drawing on a widespread belief that the standard of workers’ literacy is declining at a time when demands for literacy are increasing, the consequent ‘skills deficit’ is perceived as a threat to economic productivity and competitiveness in an increasingly globalised marketplace. This persistent discourse has shaped government policies on vocational and workplace education in the US (Gowen, 1992; Hull, 1993), Canada (Folinsbee, 2001), Australia (Castleton, Ovens and Ralston, 1999) and the UK (Wolf and Evans, 2011) Against this background, literacy education and training are seen to have a key role in the drive for greater flexibility, productivity, efficiency and profitability.

> We must increase … people’s earning potential and the country’s wealth and productivity, by giving them the literacy and numeracy skills they need to participate in a global knowledge-based economy. (DfEE, 2001, p. 11)

LS studies have been concerned to ‘complicate’ (Hull, 1997) and counter this discourse and the perceived tendency for workers to be made scapegoats for poor economic performance. In designing my study I made a deliberate choice to avoid any assumption of deficit, seeking to understand the uses of writing from the perspective of the participants.

Studies that have investigated workplace literacy from the perspective of the workers have found examples of workers, identified as in need of literacy training, whose work required very little literacy or who coped quite adequately with the literacy demands it presented (Gowen, 1992; Kelly, 1993; Wolf and Evans, 2011). Likewise, problems framed by management in terms of workers’ literacy skills were found to have more to do with the attitudes and behaviours of supervisors and managers (Gowen, 1992; Hull, 1997). There was also a tendency for managers to present their ambition for workers to adopt new ways of thinking and new work identities in the guise of literacy training (Black, 2004, p.14; Farrell, 2001; Gowen, 1992). In the UK, Wolf and Evans (2011) report on a five year longitudinal study of workplace literacy programmes, involving 500 learners and 53 workplaces. They conclude:

> Policy makers’ adoption of a ‘deficiency model’ fails to take account of individuals’ capacity to make do with their existing skills and competencies and tailor them to the actual demands of the workplace; and ignores evidence that employers do not, in fact, report skills gaps as a major problem. (Wolf and Evans, 2011, p. 161).

We have seen above that workers in the ‘new workplace’ need to take on not just new writing tasks but a more varied range of skills, attitudes, knowledge and identities (Scholtz and Prinsloo, 2001). Hull, in a study undertaken in

Silicon Valley, proposes a broader understanding of a 'literate employee'. She uses a 'work event', a mistake in the labelling process that undermined the traceability of circuit boards, to illustrate how what may look like a simple literacy problem is in fact the outcome of a more complex range of factors. These included pressure on the workers to achieve both quantity and quality of work and management's mistrust of the frontline workers and consequent policies and practices that limited the task of reading instructions to one person per team, thus denying workers the knowledge that would enable them to understand their importance. Drawing on this incident, Hull attempts to define what it means to be a 'literate employee'. Her definition includes; 'Global knowledge of the industry (in this case, understanding the importance of traceability)', 'Cultural knowledge of the particular workplace (such as knowing when it is permissible to follow verbal versus written instructions)', 'Organisational knowledge', 'Technical knowledge' and 'Linguistic and cultural knowledge' (ibid). This broader definition of workplace literacy provides a valuable model against which the knowledge on which participants, in my own study, draw can be examined.

Belfiore et al (2004) also argue for a more 'complex' understanding of workplace literacy. Motivated by the desire to inform their practice as workplace educators, they conclude that their previous practice of 'skills profiling', commonly used in workplace literacy training, takes reading and writing and:

> ..... removes them from the complexity and the reality of work life - it pulls out a thread and makes it easy to look at. And in pulling out that thread for any one individual or any job, we lose the "weave," the ways other jobs, other functions, and other people and systems act on

> and with the one we are studying. So in this study, we are trying to understand the picture without pulling it apart.
> (Belfiore, Defoe and Folinsbee, 2004, p. 227)

This metaphor eloquently supports Ivanic's argument (2006) for an understanding of context that can embrace its complex and dynamic nature (see two section 3.1) and echoes Burnett (2015) when she writes of how '... threads of different time-spaces may interweave as we make meaning.'

Government funded workplace literacy programmes have, more often than not, been based on the view of literacy as an autonomous and transferable skill but Searle (2002) questions the value of teaching generic skills. In her study of the front offices of motels and eco–tourism sites in Australia, Searle stresses the importance, to the workers, of '… a repertoire of skills and prior experiences gained within the particular workplace' (ibid p. 27). Brandt (2015) describes how people tend to learn to write among others who write:

> People learn from peers who undertake similar kinds of tasks or produce similar sorts of text and often serve as audiences or editors for each other. (Brandt, 2015, p. 162)

Here it is helpful to make reference to the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) on 'situated learning'. They argue that 'learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice' (ibid p. 31) and propose the concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation'. This, they describe as a way to speak about 'newcomers and old timers' and the ways in which newcomers move towards mastery of the knowledge and skills required for full participation in a 'community of practice' (ibid p.29). Wenger, in a later book on 'communities of practice' (1998), introduces a vignette of the day in a life of a member of a claims processing department, based on his ethnographic study of a health insurance company, and uses this as an example and as a basis for the discussion of his theory. Barton and Tusting (2005) in the introduction to ‘Beyond Communities of Practice’, argue that ‘framings provided by theories of language, literacy, discourse and power are central to understandings of the dynamics of communities of practice’ and the contributions to the book both critique and develop Wenger’s theory. In respect of learning how to write within microbusinesses, Barton and Hamilton (2005), in the first chapter, note that the notion of communities of practice works well in ‘well defined, task oriented organisations such as individual workplaces’.

4. Studies that focus on the nature and uses of workplace texts

In this section I review studies that focus on the roles texts play in the workplace. Texts, Smith (1990) argues, can objectify knowledge, organisation and decision making processes and can become properties of a formal organisation, independent of any individual. She observed that systems of management are increasingly textual systems and, ‘Investigation of textual practices makes visible many phases of the organisational and discursive processes that are otherwise inaccessible’ (Smith 1990:217). An example of such an investigation is provided by a study undertaken by Winsor (2000) who observed laboratory technicians using job orders, written by engineers, in an agricultural engineering company. She noted how these texts provided a bridge between two distinct groups of employees and were used to co-ordinate their work, but also how the use of the job orders concealed the work done by the technicians, subsuming this into the work of the engineers. She claims ‘Writing is an important means of creating and maintaining a social system’s order’ (Winsor 2000:180). Texts, she concludes, do ‘political work’. In a situation where some forms of work are valued more highly than others, the access people have to text production can be important to their participation in shaping their world.

Karlsson’s study of workers, from blue collar occupations, supports this final point. Looking at the relationship between literacy and self-determination at work, she concluded that:

> Access to several different literacy roles is often the key to necessary flexibility and successful problem solving. The “right” to both read and write genre texts further adds to a general understanding and control of the literacy practices in the workplace. This multifaceted relation to literacy, where reading and writing allow the individual worker to be a planner, an independent problem solver, and a conveyor of experience as well as a certifier and controller of his or her own work might represent the knowledge-based economy viewed from its best perspective. (Karlsson, 2009, p. 75)

This conclusion has potential relevance to microbusinesses in which, of necessity, some workers take on a range of roles in relation to literacy.

Spinuzzi (2010) also focused on genres, noting how these often function to regulate recurrent activities, providing ‘consistent frames and consistent responses to recurrent situations’ but can also provide ‘ways to improvise, to address new issues and contingencies.’ Spinuzzi (2010) was concerned to understand how specialists in a search marketing company, dealing with a highly competitive, highly contingent and rapidly changing market, were able to write 10-12 customised, 20-page reports in the first ten business days of each month. His findings indicate that to achieve this work rate the specialists deployed a large assemblage of genres. He also noted how rapidly innovative responses to new situations became part of the reports and thus formed a repository that others could draw on. In this way, what had been a loosely 'regularised' innovation turned into a 'regulated' genre, 'The problem solving had been worked out.' This observation could help to explain how, albeit at a much slower pace, the genre documents and the shared conventions of writing observed in small businesses may have evolved.

Another study of a twenty first century workplace, a multilingual call centre, by Woydack and Rampton (2015), is of interest for the approach it takes. As noted in chapter two, this study traces the 'trajectory' of a calling script through a 'chain of events': from its 'entextualisation' by management, in negotiation with their client, through its 'recontextualisation' as it is handed on, first to the team leaders and then to the agents who use the script. The authors characterise the 'evolution of the text', as the team leaders and agents interpret and adapt it for themselves, as 'a sustained, well-recognised and collective process of re-crafting' (ibid p.22), describing the agents' sense of ownership of the script and their pride in refashioning this to suit their own style and their understanding of the customers concerns. They conclude;

> … the linguistic ethnography of text trajectories points to complex processes of agentive engagement that conflicts with the stereotype of scripts as impersonal and dehumanising instruments of control. (Woydack and Rampton, 2015, p. 22)

This study highlights the value of studying text-trajectories. It also serves as a reminder that while an ethnographic approach can highlight constraints it can also draw attention to otherwise unrecognised agency and creativity as Tusting and Papen (2008) also discovered (chapter two, section 4.5).

Unrecognised aspects of literacy work are the focus of a study by Pontille (2010). Writing in the tradition of ‘L’anthropologie d’ecrit’, he uses an ethnographic approach to uncover the true character and significance of a writing task. He followed the day to day work of a laboratory technician as she first organised various forms of data and then brought these together for each patient on an intermediate form before entering the data onto an updated biomedical database. Pontille emphasises the complexity of this job and the responsibility the technician took as she pieced together data which was frequently inadequate or illegible and interpreted and evaluated this, transforming it into reliable scientific and medical data, compliant with current data-protection legislation. He contrasts this with the way in which her work was viewed by her colleagues and academic researchers as simply ‘data transfer’. Pontille, like Woydack and Rampton, uses a flow diagram to present, what he refers to as, ‘a chain of transformations’ in regard to the texts, a practice I adopted in my own case studies.

Joly (2010), writing in the same tradition, is concerned with the impact of accountability literacies on French farmers. She approaches this from the perspective of ‘native writings’, the large number of ‘ordinary’ writing practices that take place on farms and continue to be used alongside writing practices that are externally imposed. This approach enables her to identify potential tensions between the ‘... practical and administrative rationalities which intermingle on a daily basis' (Joly, 2010, p. 92). Joly found a simple distinction between documents produced by a third party and those produced within the farm was unworkable as externally produced documents were frequently adapted to serve internal needs. She therefore chooses to distinguish between documents that are stored and used for reflection, planning and evaluation and those that are ephemeral, used to support ongoing activities, echoing Kell's distinction between 'representational' and 'enactive' texts (2011, p. 607). She looks at the cognitive possibilities that texts offer, describing how the farmer's diary afforded him a 'synoptic overview', making it possible for him to manage a 'dynamic environment' (ibid p. 96). She also describes how his diary and calendar enabled him to reflect on temporal relations between events while lists of different kinds helped to organise information and plan future action. Joly describes the content, format and style of the written texts she analysed as well as their uses and her account comes closest, not only to describing the types of writing that I encountered in my case studies but also to the form of analysis I wished to undertake.

Both Pontille and Joly acknowledge the significance of the materiality of written texts and the physical location of texts. Pontille describes how the technician initially deals with the written texts as objects to be sorted and classified and how the shelves and boxes she used to do this constituted a visual memory (2010, p. 54). Joly notes the way a list, written on the side of a cupboard next to the milking parlour, provides a simple way for the farmer to check the status of individual cows in relation to mastitis before milking.

Both writers also refer to the use of standardised formats and the affordances and constraints offered by the spatial features of forms, tables and lists: types of texts that figure strongly in the current study. I encountered little detailed analysis of preformatted texts in the literature on workplace literacy. Barton and Hamilton (2005) refer to 'form filling' as part of 'routine' workplace writing but note that that the reading and writing practices, around these '... have not been extensively studied.' The studies of Individual Learning Plans (Tusting, 2009; Varey and Tusting, 2012) to which reference was made earlier, are concerned primarily with the way these position teachers and students and the clash of ideologies they highlight. Fawns and Ivanic (2001) studied the form filling practices of students, while completing a claim for help with health costs and considered the errors they made and the conflicts they encountered. They emphasise the imbalance of power bureaucratic forms can represent and the sense of disempowerment they can engender in those required to complete them, however good their writing skills.

The effectiveness of proformas has been studied in relation to health care. Their introduction has been credited with improvements in the volume and completeness of data transferred compared with the use of continuous prose (Buckley *et al*, 1999; Ferran, Metcalfe and O'Doherty, 2008; Mathers *et al*, 2001) and it is also suggested that access to, and interpretation of, important data could be quicker (Wyatt and Wright, 1998). In addition, the design and layout of proformas has been found to impact significantly on the quality of information recorded (Hawley *et al*, 2006).

Quoting Fraenkel (2001), Joly (2010, p. 95) states that the function of workplace texts is to '... get things done, make things known and evidence things ... with the most economical linguistic and semiotic means.' This necessity for economy of time and effort is also recognised by Davies and Birbili (2000, p. 444) who concede that 'instrumental' communications at work, particularly internal communications, are often best achieved, '… by fairly rapid thinking through of what you want to say, and then simply saying it.' Small texts however can require considerable care. In a study of a common but overlooked genre, that of labels, Serwe and Saint-Georges (2014) describe how, when labelling her products, a Thai shopkeeper in Germany, took care to address the expectations of her multi-ethnic and multilingual clientele, demonstrating her competence in navigating '... an array of social discourses.'

Joly (2010, p. 95) notes how work documents are a '... grey literature which generally holds little attraction for researchers (Pene 1995)'. It is possible that this is not unconnected to a point raised by Brandt (2009). Discussing the question of authorship and copyright in regard to workplace writing she observes how copyright law 'classifies writing according to its perceived social worth.' She states:

> ... workaday writing has negligible worth in itself, not only because its creators are interchangeable .... but also because its value is used up in the course of a particular communication. Once a piece of writing does its immediate job...... it has no residual value to worry about or protect. It is considered utterly instrumental. (Brandt, 2009, p. 178)

Brandt also notes the assumption that such texts have no 'aesthetic or emotional dimensions', an assumption that she questions, citing individuals she interviewed who gained pleasure from the writing they undertook at work and brought a ‘poetic-aesthetic’ dimension to this.

5. The nature of microbusinesses

In order to learn more about microbusinesses, I widened my search to include studies of business management, development and training. These highlight the diversity of microbusinesses but also the distinctive features of businesses of this size and the need for policy to take these into account (Devins *et al*, 2005; Martin, 2014; NIACE, 2012; Phillipson *et al*, 2002). The structure of micro businesses tends to be very simple but, as Devins and colleagues (2001) note, they are at the same time ‘complex social organisations’. Ironically, their most distinctive feature, the pivotal role played by the manager or owner in the culture of the business (Devins *et al*, 2002; Phillipson *et al*, 2002), is also a factor in their heterogeneity. Addressing employee relations in micro businesses, Matlay (1999) comments that in this type of business, industrial relations ‘...can be as varied as the characteristics, personalities and preferences exhibited by the respondents.’

A further distinctive characteristic of micro-businesses is their preference for less formal management practices in comparison with larger enterprises (Devins *et al*, 2002; Matlay, 1999). They have been found to be wary of publicly funded agencies and schemes, preferring to rely on local networks and trusted contacts for support (Devins *et al*, 2002; NIACE, 2012). In a survey of micro-businesses, conducted by the British Chamber of Commerce, just over 50% recruited staff solely through networking, recommendations and word-of-mouth. Likewise, in relation to workplace training, Dawe and Nguyen (2007) report:

> Small businesses learn ‘through doing’, with the focus on current or real issues in the workplace, and through social networks—learning from other business people. (Dawe and Nguyen, 2007, p.7)

However diverse they may be, micro-businesses experience similar constraints ‘...due to their limited staff capacity, tight margins and relatively small turnovers’ (NIACE, 2012, p. 11) and these are a factor in their low take up of workplace training opportunities. In such small businesses, ‘resources – whether time or money – are always ‘exceptionally precious.’ (ibid). These constraints mean that microbusinesses are more open to risk than larger enterprises. Childs (1997) underlines their vulnerability in the face of decisions by large scale businesses that act as suppliers, purchasers of products and competitors while a report by NIACE (2012) points out that ‘Losing a single member of staff or a single regular customer can impact a micro-business very badly.’ For these reasons, owners of micro businesses tend, understandably, to be risk averse and reactive rather than proactive in relation to change (Childs, 1997).

Martin (2014), a business journalist, argues for the use of the term ‘micro business’ to be limited to businesses with no more than 4 employees, rather than fewer than 10 as in the European definition. He characterises the role of owner-managers in businesses of this size.

> Typically, the owner-manager is responsible for carrying out the full range of managerial duties and complying with many of the same

> government policies and regulations that large companies must comply with, while simultaneously managing a small team of people and often undertaking part of the actual work output of the business. (Martin, 2014)

Phillipson et al (2002) also suggest that 'Firms with 1 or 2 employees are likely to face significantly different constraints, challenges and issues compared to those with 8 or 9.' For the purposes of this study, this debate is relevant, only in as far as it serves to highlight the size of a business as a factor to bear in mind in the analysis of data.

6. Conclusion

The most significant outcome of this review is the absence of more than a handful of studies that address literacy in very small businesses. While many focus on the literacy practices of front line, blue collar workers, few come close to describing the types of workplaces I explore in my case studies. The review also suggests that few studies have paid detailed attention to the form as well as the function of the brief, everyday texts that form the greater part of the everyday writing in these workplaces. LS studies tend to focus on writing practices and to be concerned with issues of power, inequality and identity in rapidly changing workplaces. These findings demonstrate a gap in the literature and one which I hope my study will begin to fill.

The studies, reviewed in the first section, offer insights into the modern workplace and the interwoven currents of change that have impacted on this over the last three decades, thus providing a broad context for the four case studies. They highlight the significant roles texts play in the implementation of change and the centrality of texts in the day to day processes of globalisation, illustrating the relevance of the debate on the theorisation of the local and the global, in relation to literacy, discussed in chapter two. The changes discussed in these studies can be seen to bring opportunities for literacy development and greater empowerment but a number of authors also highlight the inequality that can accompany them. The benefits of the ‘knowledge economy’ and the ‘new work order’ are not available to everyone and for workers in businesses where writing is not a product of labour, these opportunities are often not available. For many, change chiefly means increased monitoring and control.

These studies raise questions in relation to traditional micro-businesses. To what extent are these businesses linked to external agencies and what effect does this have on the day to day work of the businesses and the writing undertaken? How does the management and culture of these businesses compare with those embracing new workplace cultures? To what degree is writing used for purposes of monitoring and accountability and what balance of agency and control do participants experience, particularly in relation to writing?

Studies relating to workplace literacy training and literacy learning provide insights into the ways in which managers and employees view the literacy demands of their work and cast doubt on the efficacy of literacy training to increase productivity. Formal training is contrasted with informal learning at work. These studies, too, raise questions in relation to micro-businesses. How do employees learn the very particular practices of individual workplaces? Are managers or employees aware of problems with writing that hinder the work of the business and how do the participants in the case studies measure up in terms of Hull's definition of a 'literate employee'?

Although, as noted above, few studies address texts of the types used in my case studies, a number do look in detail at the uses of particular texts in the workplace. The concept of genre has relevance where work activities follow regular patterns; standardised approaches can save both time and effort, thus conserving the limited resources available to micro-businesses (Davies and Birbili, 2000; NIACE, 2012). In the analysis of textual practices in my case studies, Spinuzzi's (2010) use of the distinction between 'regularised' and 'regulated' genres has potential value. Likewise, Karlsson's conclusion that workers who are expected to read and write a range of genres achieve a '… general understanding and control of the literacy practices in the workplace' (Karlsson, 2009). Genre documents in the workplace very frequently take the form of preformatted texts, a feature that both Joly (2010) and Pontille (2010) address, but is one that has tended to be glossed over in other studies. It is a topic that warrants closer attention from the perspective of LS. The tracing of the trajectories of texts also has potential, providing a new perspective and promises of new insights into both the form and function of texts in the workplace.

It could be argued that a study of very small traditional businesses in a small town in rural East Anglia is anachronistic in a time of increasing globalisation, super diversity and unprecedented connectivity. There is however a case to made for this focus. The number of micro-businesses and their importance to the UK economy has already been set out in chapter one. In this chapter I include studies from the perspective of business management, development and training which argue that micro businesses are distinctive in their structure, social relationships and the management styles of their owners and sufficiently different from ‘small and medium sized businesses’ to warrant separate policies and approaches in relation to support and development. If this is the case, it is reasonable to expect that the ways in which writing is used and the roles writing plays within these businesses will also be distinctive. This conclusion together with the significance of micro-businesses to the economy and the gaps in the literature, identified above, provide me with a strong justification for my study.

Chapter 4

Methodology

1. Introduction

In this chapter I return to my aims for the study and my research questions, as set out in chapter one. I discuss the methodology I chose that would enable me to fulfil those aims and address the questions I had posed. Papen (2005, p. 16) reminds her readers that '… theory, topic and method are interrelated' and, in describing the choices I made in relation to research methods, I use frequent references back to my review of the literature in chapters two and three. First, I explain the reasons for my choice of research design and my use of case studies. I then revisit my research questions. Next, I describe the methods I used to collect the data and my strategy for analysis; I consider the measures taken to ensure that the outcomes of the study were both valid and reliable and reflect on the strengths and limitations of my methodology. Finally, I address how I dealt with the ethical issues the study presented.

2. Research design

The decision to locate my study within the tradition of Literacy Studies (LS) made it necessary to select a research design that was compatible with the ontological position this paradigm represents. I have noted, in chapter two, that literacy can be viewed in different ways. On the one hand it can be understood as an autonomous (Street, 1995) set of transferable skills, something that an individual can acquire and 'possess' (Hamilton, 2012, p. 11). From this viewpoint, writing lends itself to testing and assessment and the correlation of such measures with specific variables. On the other hand, from the standpoint of LS, literacy is understood as part of social practice and, as Hamilton (2012, p. 11) points out, from this perspective, literacy is:

> ... a relational and positional concept not an individual possession. ... (LS) maintains that the activities and meanings and values of reading and writing are contingent and situated, shifting according to context, purpose and social relations.

Research that starts from this position requires a qualitative research design that enables us to explore the ways in which literacy is used, within the complexities of everyday life, and that allows us to '... take into account multiple overlapping factors' (Papen, 2005, p. 61). Such a design will, generally, although not exclusively, make use of qualitative research methods. Robson (2002) chooses to use the term 'flexible' for designs of this type, contrasting this with 'fixed' designs which are based on theory and use quantitative methods.

LS has roots in anthropology (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984) and many researchers, in this tradition, favour ethnographic methods. Barton and Hamilton (1998, pp. 57-8) cite four aspects of an ethnographic approach:

1. Ethnography studies real-life situations.
2. Ethnography takes a holistic approach
3. Ethnography uses a variety of research methods
4. Ethnography is interpretive and aims to represent the viewpoints of the participants.

I have not attempted to undertake an ethnographic study. Such a study requires immersion in a context over a period of time and it became clear that extended observation within any one business would not be a possibility for reasons to which I refer later in this chapter. A collective case study of a small number of businesses, however, presented a valuable alternative. This required me to be more focussed, using my research questions to define more closely what I planned to investigate but, as I discuss in section three below, I was still able to aspire to the four principles listed above.

3. Using a case study approach

Using case studies suited my research aims in a number of ways. Yin defines a case study as:

> '... a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon *within its real life context* ....' (Yin, 2014) (My emphasis)

Such a strategy provided opportunity to investigate, very directly, the ways in which writing was used in real everyday workplace situations. Focusing on a single case or a small number of cases also facilitates an in-depth investigation. Stake writes:

> In qualitative case study, we seek greater understanding of the case. We want to appreciate the uniqueness and complexity of its embeddedness and interaction within its contexts. (Stake, 1995, p. 16)

To get behind the familiarity of the texts I encountered and achieve a better 'understanding' of this type of writing and how it is used, I needed to focus on the particular and get to know it well (Stake, 1995). I wanted to explore the 'richness' and 'complexity' of the data that a case study can make possible (Ivanic and Weldon, 1999). My aim was also to learn about the writing practices involved in the work of micro-businesses from the perspective of the participants, an approach that Candappa (2017) notes has become a premise of case study research.

Yin (2003) states that a case study can be useful if you believe that contextual conditions may be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study. Central to my thesis and the focus of my research questions was a desire to understand how the writing I encountered in the four businesses was shaped by their particular contexts: social, cultural, historical and physical. In chapter two I noted how our understanding of context has become increasingly complex and dynamic (Ivanic, 2006), a point well illustrated in the quotation from Hamilton above. While a quantitative approach would require the identification of a limited range of variables, case studies, can include '... as many variables as possible' (Merriam, 1988, p. 13) and facilitate the exploration of the interrelationships between these (Stake, 1995), thus providing the opportunity to explore this complexity and provide a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973).

A defining feature of case studies is the use of multiple sources of evidence. This permitted me to bring together my own observation of writing events, participants' perspectives on the writing they undertook and observations from the analysis of texts, providing the opportunity to create a 'holistic' description of writing in the four businesses (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991; Snow and Anderson, 1991, p. 152). Stake (1995) refers to a case as 'an integrated system' that is 'purposive', has 'a boundary' and 'working parts' while Feagin et al (1991) stress the value of case studies in allowing the researcher to explore social complexes of actors, actions and motives. These observations bring to mind the concept of 'activity system' which is discussed in chapter two and provides a useful means of conceptualising the context for writing that the small business represents.

Case studies have been criticised for their context dependency and compared unfavourably with studies that aim to offer context independent knowledge. Flyvbjerg (2006) however argues that studies of this type are essential to learning and that 'Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity.' Criticism of case study research also focuses on the question of generalisation, suggesting it is not possible to generalise from a single case or a small number of cases. Proponents of case study method, however, have argued that while case studies do not attempt to generalise to populations they can be used to 'expand and generalise theories' (Yin, 2014, p. 21). Yin highlights the distinction between 'analytic' and 'statistical' generalisation and argues:

> Analytic generalisation may be based on either, (a) corroborating, modifying, rejecting, or otherwise advancing theoretical concepts ... or (b) new concepts that arose upon the completion of your case study. (Yin, 2014, p. 41)

In either case, Yin points out, the generalisation drawn will be at a higher conceptual level than that of the specific case. Mitchell claimed:

> A good case study enables the analyst to establish theoretically valid connections between events and phenomena which were previously ineluctable. From this point of view, the search for the 'typical' case for analytical exposition is likely to be less fruitful than the search for a telling case in which the particular circumstances surrounding the

> case serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent. (Mitchell, 1987, p. 239)

It was my hope that by using the lenses of LS and compatible approaches to the analysis of texts my study could extend the understanding of writing in workplaces of a particular kind and possibly lead to new insights.

A final reason for using a case study approach relates to the value of the case study in relation to learning. I have already noted Flyvbjerg's (2006) argument regarding the importance of context dependent knowledge in learning. Other writers also stress the potential value of case studies. Merriam claims that case studies can illuminate '... the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study':

> They can bring about discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known. (Merriam, 1988)

Meanwhile, Stake (1995, p. 42) suggests that a case study can stimulate further reflection, 'optimising readers' opportunity to learn.' In chapter one I refer to my hope that the study would prove of value to practitioners of adult literacy and using case studies could facilitate this.

4. Research questions

A fundamental characteristic of case studies is their bounded nature (Stake, 1995, p. 2). The boundaries of case studies are set by the research questions. As I explain below, my research questions were refined as work on the project progressed. My core question (see text box below) defines the specific type of businesses I am concerned with, a question discussed

Text box 4.1 Research questions

Research questions for this study
Core question:
How is writing used within the day to day activity of local, traditional micro-businesses?
Sub questions:
1. In what ways do writing practices support the day to day running of traditional micro-businesses?
2. How are writing practices, and the nature of the texts used, shaped by the context of the business and its activity?
3. How are the writing practices, and the nature of the texts used, shaped by factors external to the business?

further in the following section. It also makes clear that the focus of the study is the ways in which writing is used in businesses of this type. Other aspects of the businesses, while of relevance, represent the context for this. The question narrows this further by reference to writing used ‘in the day to day activity' of the businesses. Participants’ wider uses of writing, writing required only intermittently by the owners and the writing required in the setting up of a business were initially considered as part of the study but later excluded on the grounds that it would not be manageable to address these, across four cases, and they would be better addressed in separate studies.

My sub questions refine how the study will be undertaken. As discussed in chapter two, the term writing can be understood and studied in many ways. Question 1 clarifies that I will be attending to ‘writing practices’ and that my concern will be to identify the roles these play in the running of the business and ‘in what ways’, or ‘how’, writing fulfils these roles. Questions two and three make reference to both practices and texts reflecting a choice of terms that I have explained in chapter two, section 6. Here I choose to make clear that my interest in writing includes the forms that writing takes; its linguistic, discoursal and material characteristics. By separating these questions I seek to clarify my understanding of context, indicating that this includes not only the immediate context of the business itself but also the wider social, cultural, economic context in which the business operates.

5. The selection of the case studies

Stake (2005) distinguishes between three types of case study: ‘intrinsic’, ‘instrumental’ and ‘collective’. Using these categories, my studies are ‘instrumental’. My concern is not, first and foremost, the uses and forms of writing in one specific business but to gain an understanding of how writing is used in businesses of a particular kind. Together the four form a ‘collective’ case study. Yin (2014) argues that in collective case studies the selection of the cases needs to be based on replication logic as opposed to sampling logic. Swain describes replication logic as:

> ... analogous to the logic underlying multiple experiments. Using replication logic, cases are selected on the basis of similarity (literal replication), predicting similar results, or of contrast drawing on theory (theoretical replication), anticipating difference in findings or aspects of findings. (Swain, 2017, p. 230)

My cases were, in the first instance, selected on the basis of similarity. I set the following criteria for their selection.

The businesses should:

1. be independent businesses, not franchises
2. be located in the Eastmarket ward
3. have fewer than 10 employees
4. not require employees to hold qualifications higher than NVQ level three
5. be one in which writing was not a product of the business
6. serve local customers

The third criterion reflects the way the term microbusiness is used by the European Union. It is used as a category of business by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), although the term ‘microbusiness’ is not used, and has been adopted in parliamentary reports (Rhodes, 2017). I chose to look at businesses of this size for a number of reasons:

1. Businesses of this type have been shown to differ in many respects from larger businesses, particularly in their structure and management, and encounter issues that are related to their size as discussed in chapter three section 5.
2. ONS figures for 2010 showed that 88.7% of businesses in Great Britain matched this definition. https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2092957698/subreports/gor_idbr_time_series/report.aspx?
3. At the time of selection, businesses of this size had a particular significance. Jobs were being lost in the public sector as a result of the economic recession and the government was looking to the private sector to provide employment.
4. As the literature review indicates, very few studies of literacy in the workplace have focused on businesses of this size.

The category of microbusinesses includes a wide range of enterprises from high-tech online businesses to local, part-time dog walkers. The fourth and fifth criteria were intended to restrict the selection of cases to businesses in which writing served to support the work activity rather than those that were writing intensive and where written texts constitute a product: for example consultancies, solicitors and web designers. Writing in workplaces of this type was likely to have greater relevance to the teaching of adult literacy, the education sector in which I hoped my study would be of value. The last criterion was added to exclude businesses which worked chiefly or wholly on-line. Two businesses in my scoping study were of this type but I made the decision not to include these on the grounds that the nature of their activity and their uses of writing were very different to those in other businesses and would be better as part of a separate study.

Prior to the selection of the four cases, I undertook a scoping study of 15 micro-businesses in Eastmarket. These met most but not all of the criteria. The selection of the 15 was based on local employment statistics and a local directory as well as personal knowledge of the town. I attempted to include a range of businesses that were roughly representative of the microbusinesses within the town at the time, restricting these to businesses that were located in the Eastmarket ward. (A list of these businesses and the number of employees is included as appendix 1.) A semi-structured interview was undertaken with the owner of each of the businesses. Most were undertaken face to face but four were undertaken by phone. This exercise provided a valuable introduction to businesses of this type, providing new insights but also raising a number of questions. It proved valuable in informing the design of fieldwork tools for the main study.

Some owners were asked whether they would be happy for the business to be the subject of a more intensive study. A number were not, some citing the nature of the work environment and others pressures in terms of workload. Some were not asked because, for varying reasons, they were not suitable. Of seven possible sites I initially chose five to be the subject of the case studies. These included: a manufacturer of fencing, a hairdressing salon, a builder, a florist’s shop and a small independent garage. Of these, one, the fencing manufacturer, subsequently dropped out leaving me with four cases in total. This selection was, to a large degree, opportunistic and pragmatic. I chose businesses that I felt would be comfortable giving me access to their premises, employees and texts. At a time of economic uncertainty I also chose businesses that I judged would be unlikely to disappear before the study was completed. The four represented traditional, well established local businesses, all delivering services rather than manufacturing goods and all dealing with customers face to face rather than online. They differed, however, in the number and the gender of the people involved. Table 4.1 provides some basic information on the four businesses.

Although my cases were, in the first instance, selected on the basis of similarity, they were in many respects quite diverse. Covering four quite different trades ensured that their work activity would differ significantly. I expected therefore that their uses of writing would be shaped by the nature of their work and that differences between them might be illuminating.

Table 4.1 Essential information on the four businesses

Business	Services	Size	Gender balance	Time established
Garage	Repairs, MOT testing, car sales, retail: sweets and newspapers, spare parts	Hands on owner + 8 employees	Male owner + 5 men and 3 women (part-time)	100 + years ago
Florist	Arrangements made to order and delivered. Retail: flowers, cards, flower arranging accessories. Eflorist.	Hands on owner (part-time) + 4 employees	All female. All part-time to differing degrees.	16 years ago
Hairdressing Salon	Hair cutting and styling, hair colouring and perms. Sale of a small range of hair products	Hands on owner + 2 employees	Male owner 2 female stylists (part-time)	16 years ago
Builder	Wide range of building services from extensions to minor works	Owner worked by himself with support from wife	Male owner and wife (part-time)	10 years ago

Also, the arguments made by Martin (2014) for restricting the term microbusiness to very small businesses of no more than four employees alerted me to the possibility that, even within the category of microbusinesses, size could be a factor in the uses of writing across the four cases and particularly in the case of the builder who worked alone. Differences in gender balance provided a further possible focus for comparison. Despite these differences, I was keen to discover whether there were features in common.

6. Data collection

As noted above, a ‘defining feature of case studies’ (Candappa, 2017, p. 181) is the use of multiple sources of evidence. This enables the researcher to gain evidence from a range of perspectives which can contribute to an in-depth understanding of the case. I chose to use interviews, direct observation, the analysis of texts and the use of logs for the participants to complete.

6.1 Interviews

I chose to use ‘semi-structured’ interviews (Robson, 2002, p. 270). This enabled me to use a standard list of topics but also gave me flexibility to adapt my questions in terms of sequence and wording, as appropriate to the interviewee or the situation. Using Powney and Watts’ (1987) distinction between ‘respondent interviews’ and ‘informant interviews’, these were ‘respondent’. I remained in control but my aim was, as far as possible, to place the interviewee in the position of the expert. I began the interviews with a small number of relatively closed questions to elicit personal information such as ‘How long have you worked here?’ These were used to obtain background information but also to put the interviewee at ease. They were followed by broader ‘Grand Tour’ questions (Spradley, 1979) such as, ‘Can you tell me what writing your job involves?’. I used these to encourage the interviewees to shape their own responses, providing their own perspectives on the writing they undertook rather than ones shaped by the interview guide. However, my interview guides (appendices 2.1-3) did include a range of probing questions and prompts to use, as necessary, if responses to the broader question were not forthcoming or were particularly brief. Some participants struggled with the vocabulary needed to discuss different aspects of writing and when asking ‘What do you think is most important thing to get right when you are writing at work?’ I felt it necessary to provide a list of options as a prompt. With hindsight I believe this may have made it more difficult to answer the question in some cases and have influenced the responses.

I included one or two more structured questions. In the interviews for the scoping study I used a five point Likert-type scale question, asking each manager to choose one response to the question, ‘How would you respond if someone asked how important writing is for your business?’ In my more in-depth interviews with owners and employees in the four case studies I asked all interviewees to choose from five possible responses relating to their judgement on the amount of time they spent on writing at work. My guides also included notes to myself relating to matters such as an introduction to the research, the consent form and permission to use the tape recorder.

Interview guides (see appendices 2.1-3) were prepared for the following;

- an initial interview with each owner as part of my scoping exercise
- a more in-depth interview with the owner (For the four case studies)
- an interview with each employee (For the four case studies).

Interviews with owners for the scoping study lasted between 15 and 30 minutes and were undertaken in the workplace. Notes of these were recorded on the interview guide as the interview took place and checked as soon as possible afterwards to ensure as full a record as possible.

For the case studies, I interviewed the owners again, at greater length and undertook an interview with each of the employees, with the exception of one of the two part-time assistants in the garage who declined to be interviewed.

One employee in the florist's shop, who was uneasy about being interviewed, took part in a joint interview with a colleague. All interviews were undertaken in the workplace, usually in a room or space made available to provide some privacy and enable me to make a recording. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and one hour. They were all recorded and transcribed by the researcher, with the exception of two where detailed notes were taken and written up as soon as possible after the interview[9]. A transcription of a sample interview is included in appendix 5.

Parts of some of these interviews took the form of what Ivanic referred to as 'talk around texts' (Ivanic and Weldon, 1999; Lillis, 2009). These focused on a specific text, allowing the participant to talk it through and explain the reasons for the way it had been written. These not only enabled me to gain a more detailed understanding of the ways in which particular texts were used and why they had been written in a certain way but also to obtain the participant's perspective on the texts.

In addition I undertook follow-up interviews with the owners and with certain employees. Some of these were arranged in advance and recorded; others were more impromptu, undertaken when the opportunity arose while I was on the premises. In these cases, notes were made, at the time or as soon as possible after the event. These further informal interviews enabled me to follow up queries that arose as a result of observation or earlier interviews and clarify details where necessary.

[9] In one case the recorder failed. In the second the environment was very noisy.

6.2. Observation

Observation was used in three of the cases. My focus was firstly on ‘writing events’, occasions when a participant was engaged in activity that involved writing, however brief, and occasions when previously written texts were consulted or used in other ways. I also made notes on the work practices and on the premises and, in particular, examples of writing found around the workplace. I was not a participant in the activity but neither was I purely an observer.

Field notes were recorded during the observation, wherever possible, or as soon as possible afterwards. These were ‘informal’ as opposed to ‘formal’[10] (Robson, 2002) and used a narrative approach rather than coded schedules. Because of the nature of the premises in which I was observing and the need to stand or move around I used a small notebook to record the notes. These were typed up as soon after the observation as possible and at this time observations were separated from records of conversations with participants, initial thoughts on analysis or memos to self.

Observation was difficult due to the nature of the premises which, in the case of the florist’s shop and the hairdressing salon, were small and consisted of interconnecting rooms. I had to take care not to get in the way of either customers or workers and there were, inevitably, long periods when no writing was taking place. I undertook three periods of observation at the florist’s shop, totalling about 7 hours in all. These were undertaken at

[10] According to Robson (2002) ‘informal’ approaches to observation are less structured, allowing the researcher ‘considerable freedom in what information is gathered and how it is recorded.’ In comparison ‘formal’ approaches are closely structured and the researcher has only to attend to ‘pre-specified aspects’ of a phenomenon.

different times of the day and when different members of staff were at work. In the hairdresser's salon it was not possible to find a place to sit or stand without being in the way or making clients feel uncomfortable. I therefore used my own appointments to observe activity. I had fourteen appointments between my first interview in May 2012 and December 2013, each taking one hour. I made notes following four of these but kept research memos relating to specific observations noted during others. I spent parts of two days in the garage workshop.

I did not attempt to observe the builder. It would have been difficult and possibly dangerous to have attempted to shadow him during the day. His work was undertaken in other people's properties or in his van. There would also have been very long periods when he did no writing at all. I was, however, familiar with the nature of his work having employed him to do work in my own house and garden and this experience provided a useful background against which his lively narratives of writing events could be set. Much of his writing was undertaken in the evenings at home. I interviewed him and his wife twice at their house and so was able to gain an understanding of the context for this.

6.3. Texts

The texts from which I drew data were not documents of the type more usually used in case study research, as for example the documentary records used in the classic case study 'Middletown' (Lynd and Lynd, 1937). These were everyday texts the participants had written in the course of their recent work. They included texts I was shown in the course of the interviews or observed being used. I asked permission to photograph a sample of texts for more detailed analysis. In particular, I tried to obtain copies of texts that had been discussed with the participants as part of my interviews.

6.4. Logs

In order to obtain evidence of how much working time was taken by writing and check this against the participant's perceptions, obtained by use of the Lickert-type scale question, discussed earlier, I attempted to use logs of writing activity. I customised these to the particular workplace, using the writing tasks identified in interviews, and asked the participants to record the frequency with which they undertook these over the period of one week. I produced logs for the florist's shop, the hairdressing salon and the builder. Although agreeing to complete these, in each case, multiple requests were made before the completed logs were provided and it was clear that these had not, in all cases, been completed regularly or accurately. I therefore decided not to use a log with the garage. Instead, I attempted to create a record of the writing activity in the workshop and office during one day.

6.5. Personal experience

As a resident of Eastmarket for nearly 30 years, I came to the fieldwork with some familiarity of the four businesses, from the perspective of a customer. I continued to be a customer during the period over which the fieldwork was undertaken and, during this time, drew on specific experiences as a customer in my case studies.

7. Data analysis

7.1 A strategy for analysis

Yin (2014) advises that researchers using case studies develop a 'strategy' for analysis. From those he proposes, Candappa (2017, p. 183) selects three as particularly helpful:

- Relying on theoretical propositions
- Developing a case description
- Examining rival explanations

I chose to develop case descriptions. I started by building up a description for each business. While not claiming that these cases are 'revelatory' (Yin, 2014, p. 52) little has been written about writing in businesses of the kind I studied and I believed descriptions could prove enlightening. Yin suggests that it is helpful to have a 'framework for description' in mind prior to the development of the research instruments (2014) and my interview guides (See appendices 2.1-3) reflect the framework that I envisaged at that stage. Candappa (2017, p. 184) notes that a descriptive approach can help to identify themes and links for further analysis and in my case studies, the framework for description evolved as the process of data collection progressed. This reflects what Robson refers to as a 'flexible design' (2002, p. 81). Robson suggests that in flexible designs there should be '... a repeated revisiting of *all* of the aspects as the research takes place' and that '... the detailed framework of the design should emerge during the study.'

Analysis, as Glaser and Strauss (1967), cited in Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 26), suggest, begins at an early stage and, as I cycled between the collection and ordering of data and the theory, I did, as Stake (1995) suggests, begin to discover new '... regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions' (ibid). I was careful not to draw immediate conclusions but new thoughts were captured on research memos, filed on computer, and informed further data collection and analysis. I began to explore the potential contribution of new theoretical approaches to an understanding of the writing I encountered and there were subtle shifts in the focus of the study. Stake (1995, p. 22) cites Parlett and Hamilton who refer to a process of 'progressive focusing'. He also writes of the need for 'patient reflection' and openness to other views. My research questions and consequently the boundaries of the study gradually became more clearly defined.

7.2. Managing the data

The process of ordering the data involved the transcription of all interviews, the coding and thematic analysis of all data and the analysis of texts. I transcribed all parts of every recorded interview. In doing so I made no changes to the participants' grammar. I used a simple range of conventions to capture significant, non-linguistic and contextual features of the exchanges (see appendix 4.1). In analysing the interviews and selecting extracts to include in the text, I had the benefit of access to the recordings. However, in order to provide the reader with a better feel for the nature of the exchanges, I have used a slightly wider range of symbols, based on the Jefferson transcription system (Jefferson, 2004) (see appendix 4.2) in presenting extracts in the text and in the sample interview (see appendix 5).

To ‘reduce’ (Robson, 2002, pp. 476-7) the data, to make it manageable, and to ensure that the data was used fairly this was coded using Nvivo and subjected to thematic analysis. The codes were of three kinds:

i. codes that arose directly from the reading of the data, including terms used by the participants. This represents an inductive approach to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

ii. codes that arose as a result of reflection during the processes of undertaking fieldwork, transcribing interviews, writing up observations and reading through texts.

iii. sensitising codes (or foreshadowed ideas) that arose from prior reading of the literature, for example the concepts of writing events and practices, the notion of genre and the influence of external agents on writing.

The coding was a recursive process as codes were revised, new codes added and others amalgamated. This coding was part of the process of cycling between the data and the literature, as discussed above. A list of codes, drawn up at an early stage of the analysis is included in appendix 6.

In order to draw out and test emerging patterns in the data I made use of different methods of presentation such as mind maps, matrices and flow diagrams. The value of ‘playing’ (Yin 2009) with data in this way is stressed by Miles and Huberman (1984) who also note the value of diagrams in terms of making narrative data more manageable and accessible. Some diagrams have been refined and included within the case studies, in particular the flow diagrams used to draw out the trajectories of texts.

It is important not to neglect the role of writing in the analysis of data. The value of writing as an aid to thinking is noted by Clark and Ivanic (1997, p. 113) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggest that writing is a vital way of thinking about our data. I wrote up first drafts of descriptions of the individual businesses. This process helped me to identify themes more clearly; it threw up further questions, uncovered gaps and inconsistencies and suggested new connections. From this exercise I drew out the significant themes, both descriptive and theoretical, from each study and then compared and contrasted these. A list of the themes identified as a result of these different processes is included as appendix 7.

7.3. Analysis of texts

In my analysis of writing events and practices I drew on the work of Ivanic et al (2009), using their model for the analysis of the 'elements' of literacy events and practices (see Table 2.1) as a basis for my investigation.

In relation to texts, in chapter two I introduce approaches to the analysis of texts which I believed had the potential to enhance our understanding of the texts I collected for the four case studies. These texts were chiefly written on proformas. They were brief, often quite simple in construction and usually hurriedly written. I was interested to know how relevant the approaches to analysis might prove in relation to such texts and what light they might shed on the nature of the writing undertaken.

In discussion of grammatical features, I drew on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014; Halliday, 1994) and, in looking at the texts as a whole, my analysis was informed by work on discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2011; Johnstone, 2017). Arising from this, the concept of genre proved helpful and I also drew on work on genre undertaken in the tradition of the New Rhetoric (Bazerman, 2004; Russell, 2009; Russell, 2005; Spinuzzi, 2010; Spinuzzi, 2012).

Working on the texts, I became aware of the multimodal character of these and the fact that writing was just one of several modes used to make meaning in many cases. I did not attempt a full multimodal analysis but, in relation to texts, explored the affordances that different modes brought to meaning making. I also drew on concepts used in the study of multimodality in my analysis. In doing this I called on work by Kress (2010), Jewitt (2003) and Mavers (2007; 2011) among others. This approach also drew my attention to the importance of the materiality of texts: the materials they were made of, how they were used and moved, where they were placed (Kell, 2011) and the ways in which they provide material evidence of their use (Ormerod and Ivanic, 2000).

8. Validity and reliability

8.1. Threats to validity

Lincoln and Guba (Cited in Robson, 2002, p. 172) indentify three broad threats to validity in flexible design research studies:

- reactivity: the way in which the researcher’s presence can interfere with the behaviour of people in the setting being studied
- respondent bias: respondents withholding information or trying to provide the information they think the researcher wants to hear
- researcher bias: the assumptions and preconceptions that the researcher brings to the research

A number of strategies can be used to reduce these threats (Lincoln and Guba, cited in Robson, 2002, p. 172-4; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014) and the applicability of these to the current study is discussed below.

8.2. Prolonged involvement

Familiarity with the researcher can encourage trust and help to reduce reactivity and respondent bias. For reasons discussed above, it was not viable to spend long periods of time on the premises but a number of factors helped to compensate for this. I was already known as a local resident and a customer of each of the businesses, I spoke on a number of occasions with the owner of each business to establish trust and I kept interviews informal, placing emphasis on learning about the ways writing was used in the business from the interviewees. However, for some people writing is a sensitive subject and it was possible some participants may have felt uneasy, fearing that I would be making a judgement on their writing, and that this could have influenced their responses. To mitigate this possibility I drew on my experience of interviewing adult literacy learners to put participants at ease and ensure they were not made to feel uncomfortable.

8.3. Triangulation

All three threats to validity can be reduced through triangulation. I have already noted the opportunity case studies provide to use multiple sources of evidence. Yin (2014) states that greatest advantage this presents is the 'development of converging lines of enquiry' which can 'corroborate the same finding.' In relation to this 'triangulation' of data, Yin (ibid) distinguishes between facts or events supported by different sources of data, (convergence) and multiple sources of data that address different facts (non-convergence) (Yin, 2014, p. 121). He argues that the collection of 'convergent evidence helps to strengthen the 'construct validity' of the case study (ibid).

Flick (2004) notes that triangulation is no longer seen primarily as a validation strategy. In a later publication he suggests:

> It can be used to describe and formalize the relation between qualitative and quantitative research ... and as a strategy for promoting the quality of qualitative research ... But it can also be an approach to do qualitative research in an appropriate way.
> (Flick, 2009, p. 444)

He discusses four different forms of triangulation originally identified by Denzin. Below I take these in turn, making reference to my own data and analysis.

- *Triangulation of methods* can be 'within methods' or 'between methods'. In terms of the former, my own study uses questions of differing kinds within interviews and interviews of different kinds: both more formal, scheduled interviews and short conversations related to specific activities, on the job.

- In terms of triangulation ‘between methods’, I do not compare quantitative with qualitative methods but do combine data from ‘reactive procedures’ such as interviews, in which the researcher is a part, and ‘non-reactive procedures’ such as the analysis of documents (Marotzki, 1995).
- *Triangulation of theories.* This can serve to provide multiple perspectives on an issue. However, Flick (2004) warns of the need to take care when combining different methods and theories pointing out the need to be aware that ‘different methods will have developed against different theoretical backgrounds and the need to be alert to ‘incompatible epistemological assumptions’ that different methods may carry with them. (Flick, 2004, p. 181). In this study I draw on approaches to the study of writing that start from practices and on approaches that start from the study of texts (Barton, 2001). However, I have ensured that the frameworks I have chosen share a common epistemology.
- *Triangulation of investigators* was not available for this study. I did, however, take advantage of opportunities to share parts of my data and my interpretations with peers, on a number of occasions. This provided a check on my interpretation and afforded new insights (Robson, 2002).

8.4 Other strategies

Other strategies to reduce the threats to validity include checking interpretations with respondents. I did not share written accounts with the participants but, where possible, I used my visits to the workplaces to check my interpretations of previously collected data through conversations and by observation. I checked some questions with the builder and with Maureen at the garage over the phone and with the hairdresser in the course of my appointments. Another strategy involves the deliberate search for negative cases. I did not attempt this but it is worth noting that there were features of the uses of writing that were common across three cases but absent in a fourth. The most significant example was the absence of the need for the builder to share information with others when he was working alone which, in turn, was linked with the fact that his was the only business that did not make extensive use of proformas. This alerted me to a more complex pattern of factors than I might otherwise have considered when undertaking my cross case analysis.

8.5 The Role of the Researcher

Stake (1995, pp. 40-42) underlines the responsibility the researcher holds for ‘interpretation’ in qualitative research.

> Standard qualitative designs call for the persons most responsible for interpretations to be in the field making observations, exercising subjective judgement, analysing and synthesising, all the while realising their own consciousness.

The researcher inevitably brings to the research her own experience, presuppositions, feelings and beliefs. To counter researcher bias, I attempted to adopt a reflexive approach, aiming to identify and acknowledge potential areas of bias and to ‘bracket’ these personal responses in undertaking the data collection and analysis (Lincoln and Guba, cited in Robson, 2002, p. 172-173).

8.6 Reliability

Unlike a quantitative study, the reliability of a qualitative study cannot be evaluated by its repeatability. However, the ‘trustworthiness’ (Robson, 2002, p. 168) of a study can be enhanced by the transparency of the data collection methods and approaches to analysis employed. I have endeavoured to maintain a clear audit trail for my data and in writing up my study have made explicit how my conclusions have been reached. I have also endeavoured to ensure that all claims I make are supported by the presentation of relevant evidence.

I attempted to strengthen the reliability of the research through the construction of interview guides for both owners and employees. These were not used slavishly but served to keep the interview on track and ensure all significant questions were included on each occasion. They also provided reminders to myself, as interviewer, regarding the need to check the interviewee’s understanding of the focus of the research, the process and what the interview would cover. I have been continually mindful of the limitations of the study and have ensured that I have made these explicit.

9. The limitations of the project

Here I need to include limitations of two kinds, those common to all studies of this type and those that are particular to this project. As a study guided by the principles of ethnography the aim is to understand behaviour within a natural setting but it is important to recognise that no data can be completely pure. Alasuutari observes:

> The ethnographic gaze will inevitably contribute to the production of the objects it sets out to describe and analyse in the first place. (Alasuutari, 1998, p. 68)

Apparently naturally occurring data such as workplace paperwork will have been subject to selection by those providing access and by the researcher herself. Likewise, data obtained by observation will have been influenced by the selective attention of the observer. Most forms of data, for example, interviews or logs of activity, are researcher provoked and will therefore have been influenced by the researcher’s management of the process and the response of the participants. Interviews constitute a specific type of social interaction and as such will be shaped by the many factors at work in any social situation, physical, personal, social, cultural and political.

In studies of this kind, the researcher is the research instrument and it is important to be constantly reflective: aware as far as it is possible to be, of personal characteristics, prejudices and expectations that can colour the data. The possible effect of matters such as differences in gender, age, dress, accent and education, between researcher and researched, need to be taken into account. In my own case I needed to keep in mind that the role of the researcher was different to that of the teacher. When interviewing potential adult literacy students I had strived to put the interviewee at their ease, to gain their trust and encourage them to talk about their reasons for wanting to join a course. In many ways this experience helped me to establish a comfortable relationship with participants and draw out responses to my questions but I was conscious that I needed to manage a strong instinct to avoid anything I felt might lead to awkwardness, to confirm responses and fill silences too quickly, rather than pursue my questions.

Specific to this study, it is necessary to note that the time spent observing activity in the businesses was not as long as would normally be appropriate for a study of this kind. I have already noted issues of space, disruption of the activity and safety. To these I could add issues of privacy for the customer. The garage workshop presented different challenges. Firstly there were very long periods when no writing took place at all. Secondly, although the space was large it was not possible to observe individual mechanics without moving around which involved negotiating moving cars, hydraulic lifts and cables. This made it difficult to witness writing events unobtrusively and I sensed some unease with my presence on the part of the mechanics.

Because, as I have discussed above, the focus of the research evolved as the study progressed, the original research tools did not fully match the changed emphasis. One example was the increased attention I gave to texts and recognition of the value of text based interviews. I was fortunate to record a number of valuable conversations about specific texts but the study would have benefitted had such interviews constituted a specific aspect of the data collection process.

10. Ethical considerations

Careful consideration was given to the ethics of the research process to ensure that the project adhered to the guidance provided by the British Educational Research Association (2011). These guidelines set out the responsibilities of the researcher in respect of the participants, the sponsors of research, the community of educational researchers and education professionals, policy makers and the general public.

With respect to the participants, I was concerned to ensure that everyone involved in the project gave their 'voluntary informed consent' (ibid). I spoke initially to the owner to explain the nature of the research project and ask if they would be happy to be interviewed. I explained that they were free to withdraw at any time or to tell me if they preferred not to answer any particular question. The owner was asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview taking place. At the end of the initial interview I asked the owner if he/she would be happy for his/her business to be part of the study. I explained that I would like to interview each member of staff and spend time on the premises observing the everyday activity and have access to examples of workplace texts.

In the businesses selected for the main case studies, it was important that the individual members of staff also gave their informed voluntary consent. I therefore explained the nature of the project and the rights of the participants to each member of staff and asked them to sign a consent form (appendix 3) prior to undertaking an interview. Information about the research and the rights of participants was also provided together with the consent form and a copy left with each participant.

I was also concerned that no participant would be harmed in any way as a result of the research. As noted earlier, my experience as a teacher of adult literacy made me particularly aware that, for some adults, writing could be a sensitive topic. The focus of my study meant that my questions tended to place the interviewee in the position of the expert, explaining to me how writing was used in their own work and to avoid issues of adequacy or the need for educational support. If I sensed unease on the part of an interviewee I refrained from further probing and steered the conversation to a different and more neutral topic. When a participant clearly wanted to speak about a problem with writing I listened and acknowledged what was said rather than returning directly to the interview schedule.

I took care to protect the privacy of the participants and respect their rights to confidentiality and anonymity. In all reports and presentations I changed the name of the business and of the town and used pseudonyms for all participants. When using photographs of texts I redacted personal information such as names of customers, addresses or telephone numbers. The requirements of the Data Protection Act 2011 were observed. I personally assured all participants that I would treat their data as confidential. All the data kept on computer has been password protected and none has been shared with any other person or agency. Paper records such as consent forms have been securely stored. From May 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has replaced the Data Protection Act and I am aware of my obligations under this; in particular, the principle that data should not be kept for longer than necessary.

With regard to the community of educational researchers, I have attempted, at all times, to undertake the research in a way that will protect the integrity and reputation of academic research.

Chapter 5

The Florist's Shop

1. Introduction

The first case study is a well established florist's shop, located on the more upmarket of the town's main shopping streets. The shop sold cut flowers and potted plants, cards and scented candles, as well as vases, pots and other equipment for flower arranging. The business also made up and delivered flower arrangements, including orders received via Eflorist, and organised flowers for funerals and weddings. At the time of the fieldwork it was run by the owner, herself an experienced florist, with the help of a full time florist, two part-time shop assistants and a delivery driver.

In presenting this case study, I first provide a description of the business and attempt to convey something of its individual character. This includes the physical setting, the participants, their activities, the artefacts they used and the division of labour, particularly in relation to writing. Following this, I focus on one central aspect of the work of the business which involves writing, the taking of orders. I approach this in three ways, starting by examining a specific writing event that involved the writing of an order form. I then trace the journey of the order form, through space and time, as it is used in different ways and by different people. Finally, I examine completed order forms, identifying the resources on which the members of staff drew in completing these and the ways in which their writing was shaped by, and shaped, the context of the work activity. The order form was an example of a proforma[11] and, as part of my analysis, I begin to explore the affordances and constraints these present in the context of a busy workplace. This first case study introduces a number of themes to which I return to in the following three case studies.

2 Background

2.1 The premises

The florist's shop presented a colourful frontage with a canopy and bright paint on the old woodwork. Outdoor plants were displayed on the pavement and buckets of cut flowers spilled out of a wide doorway. Inside the décor was rustic rather than smart; colourful, hand-painted pictures decorated some of the walls and doors and old, wooden flower boxes had been used to create display shelves. In addition to the colour and scent from the flowers, a perfumed candle often added to the overall sensory experience. Beyond the counter, the shop widened and here potted plants were displayed and message cards set out for customers to choose from. An open doorway led to a further space where vases, pots and other equipment for flower arranging were on display. Along one wall, not visible from the doorway, were shelves housing a computer, a printer, a message book and files.

From the customer's viewpoint, writing had a low profile. A poster, provided by the online flower delivery service, Eflorist, advertised gifts of chocolates and wine to accompany flowers, on the counter a small notice invited

[11] I use this term as a noun to refer to a standard, pre-prepared text, to be completed when required.

customers to book a personal consultation about wedding flowers and handwritten labels provided prices for flowers, memorial ornaments and candles. The members of staff wore shirts or fleeces of the same colour that carried the shop's logo and badges bearing their first names. An order pad and pens were kept to one end of the counter by the telephone. A list of telephone numbers, a sheet with illustrations of different floral arrangements and wedding photos from previous customers were pinned to the wall above the shelves.

Behind the shop was a jumble of rooms and outbuildings, typical of the old commercial buildings of the town centre. To the left, a small corridor led to a room referred to as 'the office'. All the day-to-day paperwork was dealt with in the shop so this room rarely functioned as an office but was used for private meetings and consultations and, when flowers were needed for big occasions, such as weddings, the floor was covered with vases of cut flowers. A whiteboard on the wall had a list of duties for the 'Saturday girl' written on one side and reminders of things to follow up on the other. A door at the back led through to a smaller room that opened onto the back yard. This was where the bouquets and arrangements were placed once made up and ready to be delivered or collected. It was a bare whitewashed room with shelves on two sides and a pin board covering much of the facing wall. This board was divided vertically creating a space for each day of the week and the order forms for the completed orders were pinned to this in the appropriate order for the delivery driver.

To the right of the shop, a door led to a small workroom containing a large work table that took up almost half of the space, a sink, a kettle, a washing machine, wall cupboards and shelves. This room was sometimes referred to as Rosemary's room and was where bouquets and arrangements were made up. Another whiteboard in this room was used for reminders, some ongoing, such as a note about bins, and others more temporary, relating to flowers for specific dates. A door led directly from this room to the back yard so the room also acted as a corridor. Outbuildings, directly behind the shop, housed a cold store for plants, storage for containers and trays and a covered space where larger arrangements were prepared.

2.2 The owner

The owner, Linda, was a qualified and experienced florist. She had set up the business 16 years before I began my fieldwork. Linda was not in the shop all the time but came in on most days and kept a close eye on things. She described her main role as 'overseeing' the staff but when she was present she got involved in the work of the shop, serving customers and checking Eflorist, as well as dealing with emails and ordering stock. She also took over the role of florist when Rosemary was not available. It was an all women team. Linda referred to the staff as 'the girls' and described her relationship with them as 'relaxed'. The staff told me how Linda liked them to keep the shop looking tidy and the flowers fresh and I sensed that her presence was felt even when she wasn't actually in the shop. Linda told me:

> They <u>know</u> what my expectations are. They <u>know</u> how I like things to look in the shop. and um (.) they tend to all get on with their own roles (..) very well.

What was expected of the staff in terms of procedures, standards and conventions was tacit. They had developed in the business over time and were learned informally, on the job, either through guidance from Linda or by learning from colleagues. There was little evidence of writing being used for the purposes of management except for a note on the whiteboard in the workroom about dust bins and a note stuck on a shelf about not putting dusters in the washing machine.

Linda's preference was for getting things done orally but she acknowledged that in certain circumstances writing was best:

> >Oh I would always prefer to talk to somebody< (.) I would only write to them if I had, umm (...). If I felt it was the best way of communication I would write. If, for instance, umm, I had a problem with one of the members of staff >which I have done in the past, none of which are here now,< and I've felt that it's not been easy to communicate with her, I would put points down in a letter.

Linda shared a 'thank you' card from a bride and groom with me and commented on the importance of handwritten thank-you notes. She told me that she still sends handwritten notelets to friends and handwritten letters to a close relative because she felt these were more 'personal' than email.

2.3 The staff and the division of labour

When I started my fieldwork, Linda employed a full time florist, Rosemary, and three part-time members of staff, Jo, Marie and Kathy. Table 5.1 sets out the regular writing tasks undertaken in the shop and indicates who undertook these as a regular part of their job and who undertook these only occasionally. There was an acknowledged division of labour in the shop but the fact that Jo, Marie and Kathy were part time and Linda was only in the shop for part of each day meant that a significant degree of flexibility was required, made more necessary by the unpredictable work load. All the members of staff contributed, at some time, to shop front duties including answering the telephone and therefore, to differing degrees, became involved in the range of everyday writing tasks.

Linda undertook the most varied range of writing tasks and used the widest ‘genre set’ (Bazerman 2004 p 318). In addition to involvement in the day to day writing of orders, lists and labels, she undertook most of the wedding consultations and wrote most of the wedding order forms. She used email at work for ordering supplies and communicating with wedding customers. She also kept the accounts and dealt with publicity.

Table 5.1 Writing tasks and the division of labour in relation to writing

Writing tasks	Linda (Owner)	Jo	Rosemary (Florist)	Marie	Kathy (delivery driver)
Order forms					
Message cards					
Price labels					
Lists					
Whiteboards					
Messages					
Delivery cards					
Invoices					
Wedding orders					
Notices					
Orders for suppliers					
emails					
Publicity					
Accounts					

Main part of work   Occasional part of work

In my interviews with the staff, all were asked to choose from a series of statements to describe how much of their working time was spent on writing (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Staff estimates of working time taken up by writing

Staff member	I do hardly any writing at work	Writing is a small but regular part of my job	Writing takes one quarter of my working time	Writing takes one half of my working time	Writing takes more than one half of my working time
Owner					
Rosemary					
Jo					
Marie					
Kathy					

Linda indicated some surprise at her own choice.

> Well writing takes up a quarter of my working time. (.) Yes, it does really. Yeah.

This estimate may in fact be a cautious one but, given Linda's irregular hours and the fact that she does some writing at home, it was difficult to assess its accuracy. Rosemary, the florist, made up most of the more complex arrangements and bouquets. She identified herself, first and foremost, as a florist and felt that writing was only a 'small' part of her work. She took orders when necessary, particularly in the afternoons, if Marie was not in the shop. In addition, Rosemary sometimes did wedding consultations which entailed more detailed notes and she was responsible for the ordering of stock while Linda was abroad. She also made occasional notes and lists.

Jo came in four mornings a week and was described by the owner as ‘the main girl in the shop’ and ‘good with customers’. Jo’s accounts indicated that she saw writing as a significant aspect of her job.

> I’m at the front of the shop all the time. so I’m either serving customers in the shop or I’m answering the telephone. so either way you’re doing a lot of writing. [*OK*] (..) and obviously pricing. The pricing has to be done (.) you know on a regular basis again you’re writing to do that because you’re pricing each individual bucket.= so I mean that’s done at least(.) three, four times a week >and the more stock you have the more pricing you have to do. the more writing you have to do so.<

While she was in the shop Jo usually answered the phone. She took most of the orders and wrote out the message cards that accompanied the flowers. In addition, Jo wrote out the invoices for regular customers each month, writing these by hand, using a pad of invoice forms. She also took messages and made lists of flowers or other items that needed to be ordered from suppliers. Jo estimated that writing occupied ‘more than half of her working time’. My observations in the front of the shop suggested that this might be an overestimate. Although many of the jobs Jo undertook required an element of writing the actual time this took was usually relatively brief. During one 90 minute period I observed Jo take 2 orders on the phone, write 2 message cards, make 2 brief notes and label one vase. It is possible that at busy times, when orders were coming in very regularly, that Jo’s estimate was more accurate.

Jo had another reason for identifying writing as a significant part of her work:

> Jo In fact I get (.) Linda gets me to write quite a lot of the things because my writing’s quite (..) nice. (..) Yeah.
>
> Kathy You have got nice writing.

> Jo   Yeah I do. If (we've) got signs to put up out the front she tends to get me to do them you know. …….. Yeah so I get asked to do writing. so that's quite nice really. *[Res.So almost like design]* Yeah. Yes yes. (.) and I enjoy it as well so.

Jo wrote entirely in upper case, a habit she said she developed at secondary school, and her writing was confident with an attractive flourish. I observed Jo consulting with Linda regarding the use of tie on labels, of the type used for luggage, for some seasonal baskets. This appreciation of the value of the aesthetic characteristics of writing and their role in projecting an image of a business was also evident in interviews undertaken for my scoping study.

Marie had worked in the shop part-time for about 3 years and was gradually taking over the full range of the work, including helping Rosemary with the floristry. For Marie, taking orders had a particular significance. She was not a native speaker of English and was still mastering the language so was keenly aware of the importance of getting things right and demonstrating that she could manage this task. Like Rosemary, Marie played down the amount of time she spent writing:

> Oh it's not too much. I think it is small. It's not like I am spending ten minutes to write.

The driver, Kathy, came in everyday to do the deliveries and collect flowers from local suppliers:

> Yeah I'm deliveries. *[Driving]* So I only write when I have to leave a message for >someone where I've left their bouquet< (laughing). I don't really, I do occasionally do an order. But yeah writing is very (.) little in my job.

The completion of a card to inform the recipient where she had left the flowers, if they were not at home, was the only writing specific to her role. There was also a ‘Saturday girl’ who was being trained to take orders among other duties but I did not have the opportunity to meet her.

Within the small premises it was easy to exchange information and sort out queries orally and when Linda was not in the shop she was frequently in touch by phone. However, due to the complex pattern of staff hours, things that otherwise could be dealt with orally sometimes needed to be written down. A notebook by the telephone in the shop was used to record all messages for Linda, whiteboards in the office and the workroom were used for reminders and labels on buckets of flowers at the back of the shop identified flowers to be reserved for specific orders. Orders for stock from local suppliers were usually placed by phone.

2.4 The use of IT

The pen and paper system for local orders had been used since Linda had started the business. It sat alongside the electronic system used for Eflorist. This had been introduced in 2009 to replace a telephone based system and made it essential to have a computer in the shop. While the main use for this was for Eflorist orders, I observed Jo and Kathy use it to search for a delivery address and Jo told me:

> … I use it obviously to (.) Google information about certain (.) plants if we don’t know it. information the customer might want to know that we don’t already know. Mmm (.) and <also for different styles of bouquets and things like that >we use it sometimes for that type of thing. So. yeah it is used quite a lot.

As with writing more generally, there was an informal division of labour in relation to IT. Marie told me that Jo was mainly on the computer but this appeared to be chiefly in relation to Eflorist orders and the queries discussed above. When I asked about a new word-processed notice on the counter Jo told me Linda had done this and that she didn't use the computer for typing.

Linda had embraced internet banking and the potential of the internet for publicity. The shop had a well designed website, a Facebook page and a Twitter account. She communicated by email with wedding customers who preferred this to phone calls due either to being at work or to distance and cost. Orders to the Netherlands were sent by email although Linda told me that she usually followed them up with a phone call to be sure the order had been received. Aside from this cautious note, I encountered none of the ambivalence regarding IT that I met in other businesses in the town.

3. Taking an order at the florist's shop

I introduce my analysis of the role of writing in the taking of orders with reference to the description of a specific 'literacy event' drawn from my own experience as a customer. Jones (2000), in her study of Welsh cattle farmers, describes the role of a 'mediator' whose job was to help the farmers to 'access'[12] the bureaucratic system of MAFF[13] using the 'Animal Movement form'. She identifies three discourse practices undertaken by the mediator. He first 'articulated' the categories of data the form required, he

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[12] Jones notes that this is a term taken from Giddens 1990 p83.
[13] MAFF: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

then ‘negotiated’ the facts that the individual farmer needed to provide and, finally, he ‘inscribed’ these facts on the form. The member of the team who

Text box 5.1 Placing an order

The experience of the researcher as a customer

I called into the shop two days before Mother’s Day to order a bouquet for my mother. The bouquet was to be from my brother as well as myself and we had agreed to spend in the region of £25. I remembered that my mother had been somewhat disappointed by a pale bouquet she had received and had expressed a preference for more colourful flowers. I also knew that she usually displayed flowers in her front room and that the chairs had patterned covers which included a number of colours, but predominantly pinks.

The florist had her order pad ready on the counter. She asked me how much I wanted to spend and whether I wanted the bouquet to include roses, explaining the cost of these. I had experience of roses wilting rather quickly so asked how long I could expect the roses to last and was given advice on how to prevent them from drooping. The florist suggested I looked at the ready-made bouquets in the shop to get ideas and in doing so I decided that the sugary pink of the flowers in these would not suit my mother’s colour scheme.

I attempted to describe my need for a pink with a more orange tone and, to ascertain what I meant, the florist pointed out various flowers, including some alstroemerias of the right shade. My mother had chosen alstroemerias for herself in the past so we agreed the bouquet would contain these and the florist would use other flowers that complemented them to create a colourful display. The florist wrote very little. To my memory, in addition to my name and contact number, she wrote, H/T (for hand tied) £25, the name of the particular alstroemerias I had chosen and the word, ‘bright’. She also wrote ‘To collect’

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served me could be seen as ‘mediating’ between my wishes as a customer and the practical requirements of the business. She helped *me* to ‘articulate’ *my* wishes. She then ‘negotiated’ the translation of these in terms of specific colours and flowers and, finally, ‘inscribed’ the necessary facts onto the order form. Writing played a very small part in this interaction but it was nonetheless central to it. In the ‘act’ of inscription my rather vague request was ‘translated’ (Kress 2010 p 124), not into bureaucratic data, but into ‘an order', something concrete that the shop could provide and which represented a unit of work for the business.

Kell (2011), in her discussion of 'meaning trajectories', speaks of meanings becoming 'fixed' and 'less negotiable' at certain stages and, once the order was written, I was aware of having committed to particular choices of flowers, colours and cost. The writing of the order also represented a commitment on the part of the business. Davies and Birbili note:

> The issue of accuracy in many aspects of everyday writing is, of course, crucial. At whatever level a worker is writing, he or she must deal with a particularly key aspect of writing: the fact that writing, far more than speech, tends to constitute a *commitment* - to the veracity of recorded facts, the implications of an argument, the good faith of an offer - for which the author is subsequently accountable. (Davies and Birbili, 2000, pp. 435-6)

For the business, the written order represented a commitment to deliver the floral arrangement, agreed with the customer, to the correct person at the correct place and at the correct time and responsibility for the accuracy of the information lay with the writer.

In interviews, the members of the team shared their thoughts on the writing of order forms. When I asked Jo whether she did much writing she responded:

> J. Oh a <u>lot</u>. because obviously when you take orders on the telephone. which I do a lot of. you've got obviously, everything's got to be written down then.
>
> *Res. You write it down straight away?*
>
> J. Straightaway as you take the order from the um customer. Obviously then you've got to er (.) write out the card messages and

> then you write the envelopes to put on the orders, so (.) yeah >there's a lot of writing involved every day.<
>
> *Res. Where do you do that writing?*
>
> J. In well in shop when you answer the telephone on your order pads.
>
> *Res. (..) You've got a special, what, a block or pad?* [Yeah]
>
> J. Yeah a proper pad with all the relevant details on, you know, the customer details, the recipients, and then the delivery cost, and the amount the bouquet is going to be, and obviously colours, and a separate bit at the bottom actually says card message so you fill that in. Then obviously you've got all the payment details that you have to take. So you're taking people's card details and contact number and that type of thing.

In response to my first question, Jo focuses on the amount of writing to be done, but she also emphasises the need to capture all the relevant information. By writing this down, the writer is taking advantage of the affordances of writing as a material, and therefore, a more permanent record of details it would be difficult to commit to memory.

While Jo stressed the need to get 'everything' down, 'all' the details, Rosemary drew attention to the need to get the details correct:

> You need to actually get your spelling correct because obviously names of people are important. Um and getting the details down correct. Grammar not so much, because we write a lot in shorthand. .... So yes, to me getting the details correct is a bit more important than the grammar side. Spelling is definitely (.) very important.

Discussing the writing of order forms, Linda commented:

> It's very important to get it right <u>and</u> to be able to <u>read</u> what people have written down. That's <u>extremely</u> important you know.

Order forms were not written in ideal conditions, they were completed directly, as Jo describes, while speaking with the customer on the phone or face to face, standing at the counter in a busy shop. The writer, however, not only had to ensure that all the information needed to complete the order was recorded accurately but that any important names were spelt correctly and that what was written was legible and meaningful to others as well as herself. Later in this chapter (section 5) I look in detail at the texts themselves and explore how the staff managed these demands.

4. The journey of the order form

In the previous section, the taking of an order was viewed as a discrete writing event. However, as I observed the ways in which the order form was used and spoke with the staff, I became aware of the complicated journey the order form took and how central the role of this piece of paper was to the work of the shop. Linda explained:

> The order sheet does a lot of <u>travelling</u>. It starts off near the till. It then goes into the folder. And from the folder it goes into Rosemary's make up basket. From there it goes back into the shop to be wrapped. Then that piece of paper gets transferred onto the board for Kathy to pick up and then to deliver the order. It's a well travelled piece of paper but it seems to work well.

Text box 5.2 includes extracts from my field notes. These refer to separate literacy events observed at different times, in different locations and include different participants. All involve an order form. To understand the relationships between these events I constructed a flow diagram (See Figure 5.1). The owner's metaphor was apt. The form travelled around the shop as she described, it also went out with the delivery driver and back again into the shop. This journey can be conceived as a ‘chain of literacy events’ (Barton, 2001) in which the order form is the common thread.

Text box 5.2 Field notes relating to events that involve the order form

(i) J. took phone order – funeral. Wrote order form as took message. J. put order in blue plastic file, *(kept on the shelf)* under computer, in section for correct day of week.

(ii) L. checks orders in blue file. *(L. talked to J. regarding flowers needed)* J. uses a notepad (ring bound A5) to write down flowers needed for two particular events next week.

(iii) R. sorts the orders on the counter and takes the order and the card for the sunflowers to the back. I checked this *(with her)* and she explained that it was because the order was for tomorrow so it goes straight into her basket.

(iv) R. *(in workroom)* checking orders in basket ……… Replaced these in order.

(v) R. had completed making up flowers for a funeral. Checking order form and ticking off items *(at workbench)*.

(vi) Discussion, partly overheard earlier, *(between)* J. and R. about order for funeral next Thursday and need for white lilies. Need for these to be open at the right time. *I noted* lilies in back room, with note on vase, ‘for Funeral Thursday’.’

Tracing this journey highlights the extent to which the text is used by different people, at different times and in different locations: how the information it carries is read and acted upon and transferred to other texts, the ways in which it is moved and the significance of where it is located. This use left its mark in a physical way in the form of creases, fingerprints and pinholes. In some cases items were ticked or notes added. By looking at the texts in this way we can recognise what Maybin (2013) refers to as the ‘processual’ and ‘dynamic’ aspects of texts. The diagram (Figure 5.1) not only maps the ways in which the order form is used, it illustrates how the details it records, relate to the production of other texts: the message card, lists of flowers needed, orders for suppliers, labels, notes on the whiteboards and invoices to account customers. It sets out what Bazerman (2004 p318) refers to as a ‘genre system’. Drawing on Activity Theory, Bazerman argues, such a system, is part of the ‘system of activity’ of an organisation and that conceiving it in this way, ‘puts a focus on what people are doing and how texts help people to do it, rather than on texts as ends in themselves’ (ibid p 319). Simple as it is, the order form ‘mediates’ the processes involved in honouring the shop’s commitment to the customer and, where necessary, ensuring payment.

This analysis highlights the significance of the order form. One small handwritten text with no duplicates or back up is used to co-ordinate the range of activity involved in the preparation and delivery of a floral arrangement. In response to a question about this, Linda told me that they had once lost an order which had fallen under the counter. As a consequence they received a complaint that no delivery had been made. This was a rare occurrence but one that highlights how much depends on this simple text.

The term ‘trajectory’ (Kell, 2011; Silverstein and Urban, 1996) is apt in the case of the order form. Like those described by Kell, its trajectory was local, contained within the immediate network of the business; it was also ‘horizontal’. It did not involve the ‘vertical’ ‘scale jumps’ that Blommaert identifies in his study of asylum applications, with the concomitant inequalities of power (Blommaert 2005), nor was there any loss of function of the text along the way. Using Kell’s distinction, the trajectory traced in Figure 5.1 was ‘scripted’ rather than ‘emergent’, following a prescribed path. Unlike those described by Kell, my diagram illustrates a typical trajectory of an order form rather than the trajectory of one specific text.

In chapter two I have noted how Kell (2011 page 610) favoured the term, ‘meaning-making trajectories’, recognising that meaning can be ‘recontextualised’ into modes of communication other than writing. Perceived in this way it would be possible to extend the trajectory to embrace the customer’s wishes, as expressed orally when making the order and likewise the recipient for whom the intended message of thanks, congratulations or sympathy, is carried not only by the card but by the flowers themselves.

Tracing events across time and space in this way, as Kell argues, raises questions in relation to context. She asks:

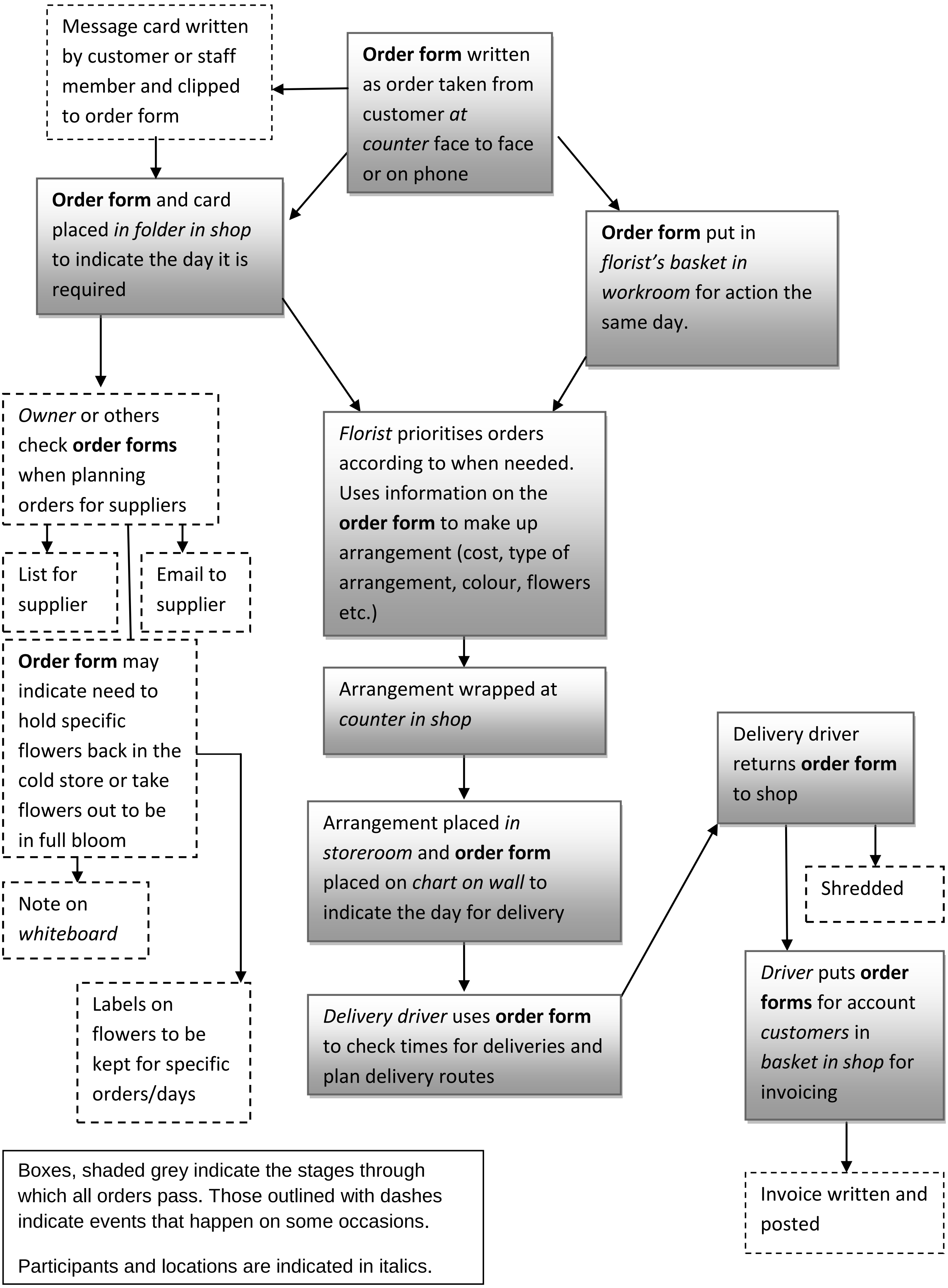
> If I were to make claims about literacy practices on the basis of the events I was observing in these contexts, where would I draw the boundaries of the context? (Kell, 2011, p. 608)

In response to this question, it is useful to consider Jo’s comments while looking at an order form with me.

> Obviously certain things you’ve got er times on. *[right]* You know this is, again this is for Kathy’s (*(delivery driver)*) benefit. That’s why we circle it because obviously to make a point there’s actually a time on it. and with this particular one, because it’s the high school, they’ve got a regular thing with us, we send an invoice up to them. So obviously I don’t have to take any payment details.

Jo demonstrated her awareness of the significance of a particular delivery time and the need to draw this to the delivery driver’s attention. She also

Figure 5.1 Flow diagram to illustrate the role of the florist's order form



highlighted her knowledge of the customers, recognising that the school has an account with the shop. Writing the order form involved more than the accurate and legible recording of information. Jo and other members of the team had an understanding of the whole process involved in producing and delivering ‘an order’ and could anticipate the needs of their colleagues. This stands in contrast to the findings of research in larger organisations, as described, for example, by Hull (1999). In this small and informally run business, Jo and her colleagues demonstrated a ‘global knowledge’ of the business that makes both their work and the writing it involves ‘understandable and meaningful’, a requisite for, what Hull (1999) refers to as, a ‘literate employee’. If we return to the initial writing of the order form, it is clear that the ‘context’ for this involved more than the immediate physical and social context. The context here, I argue, can be understood as the ‘collective activity system’ of the business as a whole (Engeström, 2000).

5. Analysis of completed order forms

5.1 A shared repertoire of resources

In section 5, I address two closely related questions. The first is the question posed at the end of section 3. Given the importance of the order forms to the work of the shop, how do the members of staff manage to record all the essential information accurately and in a way that can be easily understood by their colleagues, while writing quickly, directly onto the form at the same time as talking with the customer and in less than ideal conditions? The second question is one I revisit in the further three case studies and relates to the use of preformatted documents. What affordances do preformatted texts offer and what constraints and in what ways do such documents shape the writing undertaken?

Figures 5.2-4 provide examples of completed order forms. Looking first at the form itself, we can see that, although it has no title, several features make it recognisable as an example of a familiar genre, the order form. However, the form also has features that differ from those, for example, on order forms I was shown in the furniture shop or the fencing company in the course of my scoping study. It includes the box titled, ‘Flowers required’, spaces to record details of the recipient as well as the person who places the order and a section for a ‘message’ to accompany the flowers. These were features Jo was referring to when she spoke of having ‘a *proper* pad with all the relevant details’, recognising this as a florist’s order form.

Rosemary explained:

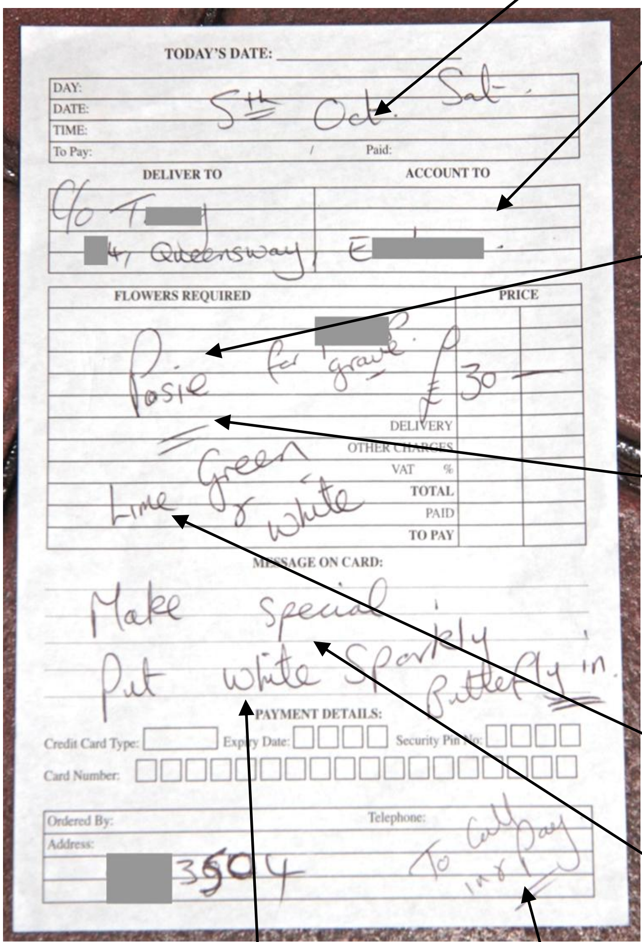
> …… each individual shop has their own way of setting out. (..) >I mean you have your basic order sheet but there’s certain ways of,< (.) people like it done.

She draws attention to the very local textual practices that can exist around order forms and one example was the way in which the team used the different sections of the form. It was a standard form, obtained from a supplier, rather than one devised in-house, and did not fully suit the way things were done in the shop. Pointing out the top line of a completed order, Jo told me:

> >We hardly ever fill in today’s date because we just don’t,< ‘cos you know. This is the delivery date.

This makes sense because it was the delivery date that governed the prioritisation and timing of the work rather than the date the order was taken.

Figure 5.2 Completed order form 1


TODAY'S DATE:

DAY:
DATE: 5th Oct. Sat.
TIME:
To Pay: / Paid:

DELIVER TO | ACCOUNT TO

C/o T[redacted]
[redacted]4, Queensway | E[redacted]

FLOWERS REQUIRED | PRICE

Posie for [redacted] grave. £30 —

DELIVERY
OTHER CHARGES
VAT %
TOTAL
PAID
TO PAY

Lime Green & white

MESSAGE ON CARD:

Make special
Put white Sparkly Butterfly in.

PAYMENT DETAILS:
Credit Card Type: Expiry Date: Security Pin No:
Card Number:

Ordered By: Telephone:
Address:
[redacted]3504 To call in & pay

Sections of the form are not used. Staff usually put the delivery day *and* date here. Writing ignores narrow lines.

Use of name of person whose grave the posy is for suggests they were known to staff.

'Posie' used in a technical sense to indicate a particular style of arrangement: Discourse of floristry.

Underlining here may be intended to draw attention to the term 'posie'. However, its use in two other places on the form suggests it could simply be a flourish – part of the writer's personal style.

Use of a common metaphor for colour: a shared convention.

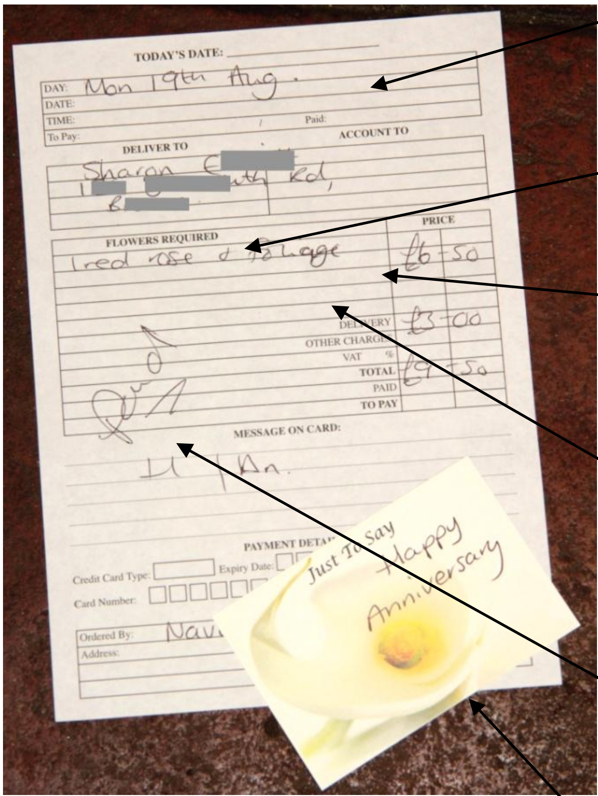
Absence of deixis creates a condensed text. 'Make (the posy) special'.

'Put (a) white sparkly butterfly in

There is no message needed so the space for this is used for additional instructions for florist. These could represent the customer's own words.

Stock phrase frequently used by different writers. This explains lack of information recorded for payment.

Figure 5.3 Completed order form 2



Day *and* date for delivery. Here the writer does use the lines.

Heading provides the textual context. The writer only needs to provide the specific details.

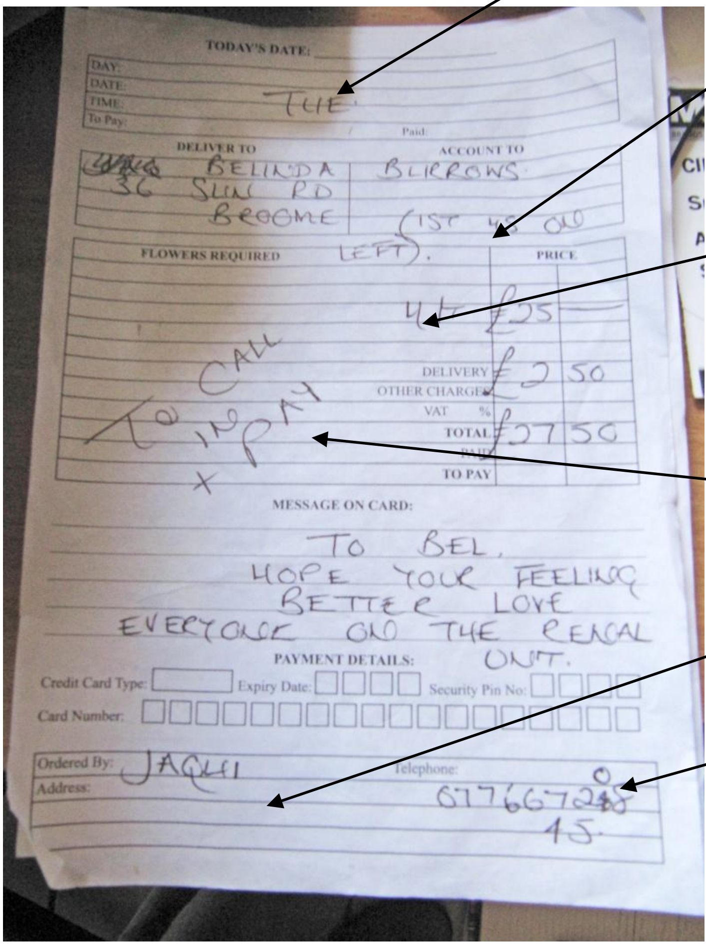
Number, noun and classifier: this fits with the purpose of the writing which is to record factual information to be used by others.

'Foliage': an example of the discourse of floristry. It has been left to the discretion of florist to choose what kind.

Written at angle with underlining to make this stand out.

Abbreviation on form 'translated' to full version and neatly written on the message card for the customer.

Figure 5.4 Completed order form 3



Date left implicit. Could be read as 'This Tuesday'.

Use of 'Account to' section to provide detail for delivery driver.

Abbreviation 'HS' for 'house'

H/T used as the abbreviation for 'Hand Tied Bouquet', a specialist term and part of discourse of floristry. No other detail given so choice of colours and flowers left to the florist.

Stock phrase, as used on form 1, written at angle to stand out.

No address needed for payment.

Correction

Some of the narrow sections at the top of the form were ignored and account information was consistently put at the bottom of the form in the section headed, 'Ordered by'. This freed up the 'Account to' section to provide extra space for the recipient's name and address and any additional information relevant to delivery. By avoiding duplication and the need to fit information into in small spaces, the team saved unnecessary time and effort.

The size of the handwriting, the way the writing cut across the lines, the corrections, the use of abbreviations and the absence of full sentences all reflected the need to write quickly and directly onto the form. I asked Linda how she expected the forms to be completed:

> <u>Grammar </u>and er (.) what I would say correct writing is never taken into account. No, it's just written quickly and however people write.
>
> ... so although we all have different ways of writing, I don't think any of us here have any problems in reading each-other's writing. >Some are better and neater than others< but we know, we use a lot of abbreviations like hand tied bouquets we write down H stroke T and we would all know what that would be. So yes it works quite well.

Rosemary spoke about a shared shorthand:

> ... we do a lot of shorthand so that's, but not the shorthand that typists use if you know what I mean (both laugh) We have our own sort of shorthand that we do.

Jo commented on the use of abbreviations:

> (We) tend to use abbreviations in the card messages because we, (.) <as a sort of team work,> we know together what that means. ...... if you've got a message for example that's 'Thinking of you' you just put the T and an 'of' and the Y, and we know. The same with Happy Birthday you just put an H and a B. That's purely for quickness. When we're on (the phone), >particularly for the customer,< you know, as efficient and quick a service as you can. *[Right and er and]* And obviously when you're really busy like Mothers' Day and Christmas and Valentines that is quite essential, because you need to obviously get through things as quickly as possible.

Like Rosemary, Marie recognised the significance of the audience when she commented: 'Because the customer doesn't need to understand you....'

The need for speed was acknowledged in terms of getting through the work, but also the need to offer an 'efficient' service to the customer. There was recognition that while the message card was written for the recipient of the flowers, the audience for the form was purely internal and therefore different criteria applied in terms of how it was to be written. Rosemary referred to what she called ‘shorthand’. This included the use of abbreviations, as Jo and Linda explain and is evident in the examples above but this was only one aspect of the shorthand they employed.

On two of the forms we see the words, ‘To call in and pay’, written at an angle in an available space. This was used frequently when an order was made by phone and the customer preferred to pay in the shop. It can be seen as an example of what Halliday, in the 1994 version of his Systemic Functional Grammar, refers to as ‘Little texts’: texts, he explains, ‘…which the context of situation determines have to be short’ (Halliday, 1994, p. 392). Halliday believed it was possible to identify ‘general tendencies within texts of this type, based on recognizable principles’ and one of these was the absence of deixis[14], ‘those elements of structure that serve to link them with the here and now’ (ibid). In this example, the agent is left implicit and the deictic tense omitted.

(the customer/he /she) (is going) to call in and pay.

This was not a phrase the team used in speech. It is a ‘stock phrase’, another aspect of the workplace shorthand on which they drew to save time and effort. Other examples found on order forms include:

> ‘all freesia’ (Rosemary), ‘all whites’ (Linda) ‘... all in pink’ (Jo)
> ‘Cards taken to return’ (finite element of verbal group omitted)

[14] Deixis refers to words or phrases that can only be understood from the context of the text or utterance in which they occur.

‘to take Thursday’ (subject and object omitted) (Jo)

Each trade has its own discourse and floristry is no exception. On a wedding order Linda wrote:

Kimsey mini Gerbs and Beer Grass

This illustrates the mix of botanical names, common names and trade names for plants that were used in the shop. The floristry team also used specific terms for arrangements of different kinds, including; ‘hand tie’, ‘posy’, ‘double-ended spray’ and ‘tied sheath’. Colour is important in floristry and the team made frequent use of terms such as ‘wine calla’, ‘ivory voile’, ‘Mint Green’: shared metaphors which allowed them to communicate subtle but important distinctions in shade succinctly. ‘Rustic’ and ‘country flowers’ were other terms, observed on orders, to communicate specific ranges of flowers. These specialist terms and shared metaphors helped them to convey the details of an order accurately and concisely.

5.2 Multimodal devices

Information was not only carried by the written word as the following extracts from my interview with the owner illustrates.

Res. Do you have any (.) guidelines for writing those forms? Umm Marie mentioned using a black pen and a red pen.=

L. = A black pen, yes we usually, all the girls use black pens to write the order out and then if we have to, if there’s two items for example, if umm somebody has ordered a bouquet of flowers and a box of chocolates we would put two items and we would put that in red so that when somebody picks up the bouquet they don’t leave the chocolates are left behind.

> And also the other time that we would use it is if they'd asked for a specific um delivery time. If they say 'Could we have it before 10am?' we would underline the '10 am' in a red pen.

Here we see the use of coloured pens as another resource in the team's repertoire. In addition to colour, figures 5.2-4 provide examples of the use of the non-linguistic aspects of writing such as capital letters and the size, boldness or angle of the writing to direct the attention of the reader. Other graphic features such as the underlining of words and use of arrows were used in the same way. Such multimodal devices, together with the layout of the form, relied on the visual rather than the linguistic mode: they were quick to use and had immediate impact on the reader. Such devices took on particular importance on wedding order forms discussed below (see figure 5.5).

The physical location of the form, at any one time, also carried meaning for the staff. Location of the order form in the blue plastic file indicated it was an order for delivery the next day or later and the precise section of the file indicated on which day. Location in Rosemary's basket indicated it was an order for delivery that day or possibly the next. Location on the board in the back room meant that the arrangement was in the storeroom ready for delivery while the specific section on which it was pinned indicated the day for delivery. Even the position of a form in a pile of other orders was important as Rosemary sorted the forms in terms of priority or Kathy put them in the order of her route. The use of location in this way contributed to the efficiency of the system, avoiding the need for multiple copies of forms.

5.3 The features of the order as a proforma

The resource that probably helped most to reduce the amount of writing the staff were required to do was one that the team took for granted, the order form itself. The following notes, taken from my observation log, were made while observing the florist one afternoon when she was looking after the shop alone.

> Phone call. Heard parts of this. L says can't do something at this short notice. Mentions £35. Reference to height of flowers. Customer mentioned sunflowers. F says she can make a sheath with these with mixed foliage and some other flowers, 'off the lorry'. Reference to making this up tomorrow.

I asked to look at the order form Rosemary had written. In the section of the order form headed 'FLOWERS REQUIRED' the florist had simply written:

> 'Tied sheath'
>
> 'Sunflowers'
>
> 'Mixed foliages'
>
> 'Other flower'

The sections and headings on the form could be seen to perform a 'textual' function (Halliday, 1994, p. xiii), that is, to make the message of the overall text coherent. Writing about tables as a way of presenting information, Lemke (2004) refers to '... an implied grammar and a recoverable textual sentence or paragraph for every table.' Likewise the headings of the sections 'imply' a sentence. The heading, 'Flowers required', could be interpreted as a question: 'What flowers are required?' Alternatively it could be interpreted as the introduction to a list: 'The customer requires the following flowers ...' In either case, nominal phrases comprising of a single noun (‘Sunflowers’) or a noun and classifier, (‘(a) tied sheath’) offer an appropriate response. The sections and headings served to free the writer from the need to compose sentences to make their meaning explicit, saving both time and effort.

Halliday’s discussion of what he calls the ‘information unit’ (1994, p. 295) provides a useful perspective on the nature of the short written entries. Halliday describes information, ‘…. in this technical, grammatical sense’, as ‘… the tension between what is already known or predictable and what is new or unpredictable’ (ibid p. 296). In its idealized form, he argues, the information unit is made up of two functions, the ‘Given’ and the ‘New’[15]. However, the ‘Given’, by its nature, is likely to be something that is already present in the text or the non-verbal context and is therefore optional. In the case of proformas, the ‘Given’ information was supplied by the headings and sub-headings of the various sections and by the wider, non-verbal context of the work setting and the shared expectations and understandings of the writer(s) and readers. The writer, therefore, only needed to supply the ‘New’, unpredictable information, in this case, the details for the arrangement and the flowers.

Linda explained how she took new members of staff through the order form, showing them the format and indicating the information that must be recorded. I observed that, when the order was taken over the phone, the layout of the form tended to shape the conversation. The sections and subdivisions, together with their headings, provided a prompt for the writer, in

[15] Halliday introduces this in the context of a chapter on tone groups in spoken language but acknowledges that in the absence of tone, other methods are required in written texts to distinguish between ‘Given’ and ‘New’.

terms of the information needed and how to present it (Bazerman, 2004). However, conversations do not always follow a linear course, as the researcher’s own experience illustrates (Text box 5.1). The layout of the form then provided a standard framework within which to record the information, in whatever order it was obtained, and thus also freed the writer from the need to worry about sequencing and presentation.

Jo pointed out that certain sections of the form were relevant to particular people in the team:

> ……>obviously the date, [day] yeah day, the name of the person where it’s going to the address where it’s got to be delivered, obviously this is for Kathy’s ((the delivery driver)) information.<

The order form was used by a number of different people in the course of its journey and the use of a standard layout made it easy for each reader to locate and interpret the information relevant to their role (Bazerman, 2004). They could choose their own ‘reading path’ (Domingo, Jewitt and Kress, 2015, p. 258) in relation to their own ‘interest’ (Kress, 2010) as in the case of modular texts used online. Having one standard form supported the efficient sharing of information across the workplace, avoiding the problems that would inevitably arise if individual members of staff were free to use their own more idiosyncratic methods for recording information.

Proformas, like the order form, could be seen to constrain the writer but the form appeared to be accepted as a natural part of the work. It was however, poorly designed and did not fully suit the needs of the team. This gave them the freedom to improvise and a set of shared conventions regarding the use of the form had developed. These were tacit and in no way binding. Using Spinuzzi's (2010; 2012) distinction between 'regulated' and 'regularised' genres, I would place writing of the order form towards the 'regularised' end of the continuum.

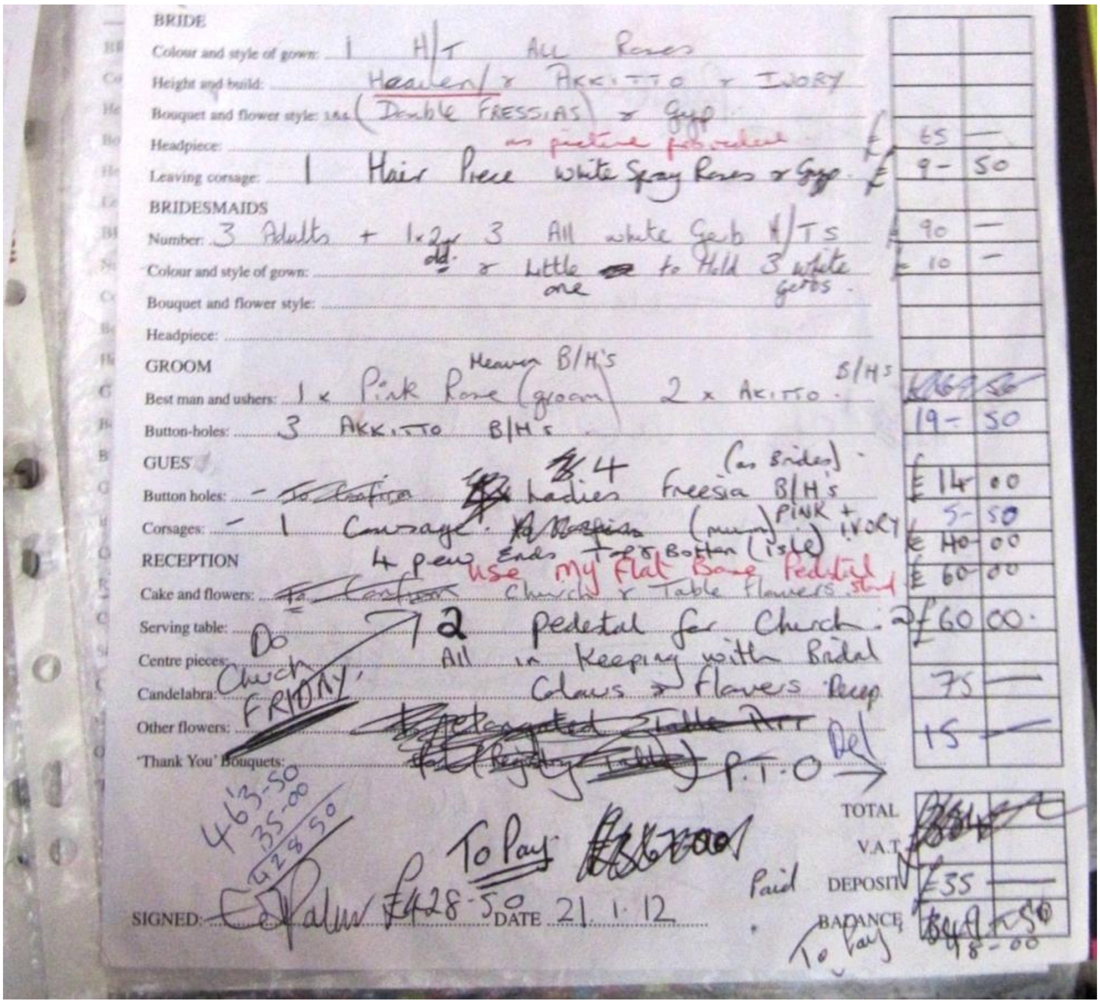
5.4 Eflorist orders

Orders for Eflorist included much the same information as the order form used by the shop but completion was more closely 'regulated' (Spinuzzi, 2012) by use of drop down menus and boxes to be completed. The arrangement requested had to be chosen from the predesigned selection on the website but there was space for 'Product Notes' where personal preferences, such as the colour of the flowers could be indicated. Eflorist orders received by the shop were printed out and treated like local orders. They were placed in the appropriate section of the blue folder and, from there, followed the same trajectory. Invoicing was managed by Eflorist.

6. The wedding order form

A different form was used for weddings. This, again, was purchased from the supplier and, like the general order form, did not suit the way the business worked. It included spaces for detail they did not need to record and omitted spaces for important details, such as the flowers for the church. The layout was also very cramped and, like the general order form, it was used quite loosely. The same repertoire of 'resources' (Kress, 2010) was used: abbreviations, condensed 'little texts', specialist terms, colour and graphic devices. Wedding orders were kept in a separate ring file and the dates were marked on a calendar hanging close to the counter.

Figure 5.5 The wedding order form



BRIDE
Colour and style of gown: 1 H/T All Roses
Height and build: Heaven/ x Akkitto x Ivory
Bouquet and flower style: (Double Fressias) x Gyp
Headpiece: as picture
Leaving corsage: 1 Hair Piece white Spray Roses x Gyp
BRIDESMAIDS
Number: 3 Adults + 1 x 2 yr 3 All white Gerb H/Ts
Colour and style of gown: x Little one to Hold 3 white Gerbs
Bouquet and flower style:
Headpiece:
GROOM
Best man and ushers: 1 x Pink Rose (groom) 2 x Akitto B/H's
Button-holes: 3 Akkitto B/H's
GUESTS
Button holes: 4 Ladies Freesia B/H's (as Brides)
Corsages: 1 Corsage (mum) PINK + IVORY
RECEPTION
Cake and flowers: 4 pew Ends Top & Bottom (isle) use my Flat Base Pedestal Church x Table Flowers
Serving table: Do 2 pedestal for Church
Centre pieces: All in Keeping with Bridal
Candelabra: Church FRIDAY Colours x Flowers Recep
Other flowers:
'Thank You' Bouquets: P.T.O Del

£ 65	—
£ 9 –	50
£ 90	—
£ 10	—
19 –	50
£ 14	00
5 –	50
£ 40	00
£ 60	00
£ 60	00
75	—
15	—

TOTAL
V.A.T.
DEPOSIT £35
BALANCE
To Pay

463-50
35-00
428-50

To Pay
Paid

SIGNED: £428-50 DATE 21.1.12

The planning of wedding flowers could begin more than a year in advance. Following an initial contact, the bride was encouraged to come into the shop to discuss her plans with Linda[16] and this was often the first of a number of conversations. Over the course of these the bride's ideas crystallised, a process that was very evident in both the text (figure 5.5) and Linda's narrative (see below). As the wedding form text was built up and changed

[16] Rosemary sometimes undertakes initial meetings if Linda is not available.

over time it became a ‘multimodal ensemble’ (Kress 2010). Use of coloured pens and graphic devices highlighted important details to be checked or acted upon and supported the cohesion of an increasingly complex and chaotic text as the original proforma became irrelevant. The following is an extract from my interview with the owner of the florist’s shop about the wedding order form in Figure 5.5.

> OK. The thing is that people (.) then bring in, like this particular one. um she wasn’t sure that she was having heaven roses. so we underlined that to be questioned. *[Oh right yes]* ‘As picture provided’. ((reading from form)) she didn’t provide a picture so it had to be questioned when she phoned. and I put that in red afterwards in case I was out of the shop when she phoned up, but these things in red had to be asked of her when she phoned.. [*Right ah ha] Um* ‘Use my flat based pedestal’. ((reading from form)) If I was not able to do the wedding at the church I’ve asked the girls to use my flat based pedestal because the one in the church I’d been to view, wasn’t a flat bedded one, it was a containered one and my containers don’t fit into it so that’s just notes to my staff, telling them what they’ve got to do which is underlined in red. *[Right OK]* >and the crossing out is just where they’ve changed things,< really.

Linda refers to a picture of a bridal bouquet that was attached to the form to illustrate the type of bouquet and the colours the bride had in her mind. A floral arrangement could be represented much more easily with a photograph than with words and pictures were often used to help customers visualise the options available. Swatches of material could also be attached to wedding orders to indicate the exact colour that the flowers needed to complement. I checked with Linda that she just used the one piece of paper.

> It’s really busy .... sometimes the girl says (.) shall we rewrite this? I say don’t rewrite it because, even though I do a lot of weddings, I can pick that up and like now (.) I can relate to this order, like yesterday.

The writing on this form had a lot in common with the notes for oneself I discuss in other case studies in its reliance on Linda's memory and grasp of the particular wedding. It is testimony to the close working relationships in the shop and the extent of their shared knowledge and understanding that the other members of the team could interpret it.

7. The message card

The message card differed from all the other writing undertaken on a day to day basis (see figure 5.3). The card *was* a part of the product or service that the shop provided. Its audience was the recipient of the flowers and writing these required the staff to attend to their writing in a different way. Kathy commented that the card could be an 'advert' for the shop, a theme picked up by Jo:

> The spelling's got to be right really, hasn't it (.) and also you just er, >you don't want to look as if you can't <u>spell.</u>< ((Jo was laughing as she said this)) you know.

The criteria for writing the cards were different. There was a sense of respect for the customer and the recipient:

> Marie. You know people are paying for this flowers and they are not costing one pound and needs to look nice like wrapping.
>
> Jo. It's <u>our</u> business. If we've got a card that's got a lot of wrong spelling on, or a funeral tribute that's got a card on that's not spelt right, that's doesn't that's not right.

The cards could be used to convey important and sometimes very personal messages that could carry a heavy emotional load.

Handwriting is very individual. It is possible to identify at a glance the writing of a family member or friend on an unopened envelope. There is therefore a sense of dislocation when a personal message from someone you know well is conveyed in unfamiliar handwriting and a badly written or poorly spelt message would only serve to increase this.

8. Email

Rosemary explained to me that they asked for email addresses for wedding orders because brides were often at work and unavailable during the day. Linda was at ease with email and told me she had negotiated all the planning for one wedding by email because the bride was abroad. She shared copies of some of her emails with me. These provided a good example of the 'hybrid' nature of writing used for emails (Baron, 2001). Linda combined the features of business letter or memo with an informality and exuberance which reflected her style of talking.

Orders were kept very brief:

> Subject: Wedding Order
>
> Hi Please could I have the following
>
> 20 Calla (blush) Ivory
> 40 Norma Jeane Roses
>
> 10 Stems White Spray Rose
>
> Wrap Beer Grass
> 50 Lilac Freesia
>
> Many Thanks
> [redacted](name)
> N[redacted](shop reference)

The use of ‘Hi’ and the simple phrase ‘Please can I have ...’ reflect the informal style that tends to be used in email while use of the phrase, ‘... the following’ suggests a formal business communication.

The email below, sent to a supplier is more informal.

> Subject: URGENT REQUEST
>
> Hi M[redacted] have you got some cordyline in the red and green with white edge, need some urgently for saturday early.
>
> Please could you give me a call on this.
> Thank You
> [redacted]

The lack of capital letters and the uncorrected ‘typos’ indicate that this was written fast with no attempt at checking and editing. Speed is also suggested by the omission of deixis, as noted on the order forms, in ‘(I) need some urgently’. The inclusion of the definite article in ‘...in *the* red and green with white edge’ indicates an assumption of shared knowledge.

The following extracts from an email regarding an invoice for wedding flowers provides a mix of strongly contrasting styles.

> Subject: RE: wedding invoice
>
> Hi E[redacted]
>
> Thank You for your reply....re Wedding (YES nearly here)!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! and The weather forcast is looking GOOD GOOD GOOD!!!!!
> I have adjusted your Bill with your alterations,

I will have to allow a little extra how-ever for the additional Jugs as they are quite Large. I wil need about £35.00p more hope this is OK.

The Balance owing is £[redacted]

Please could you phone the shop with payment by Debit/Credit Card ASAP.

Many Thanks I am looking forward to seeing you on Friday, enjoy the Build up.

Warmest Regards
[redacted]

In the first paragraph Linda uses exclamation marks and capital letters to convey the excitement she would share if she was speaking. Her character and her voice come through. The text has immediate visual impact. This is very different to the brief factual statements on the order forms. The informality however, sits uneasily with the formal, detached style of ‘The Balance owing ...’ and ‘ ... could you phone the shop with payment’. Linda appreciated the affordance of non-synchronous communication that email offers. She appeared to approach emails, like order forms, as something to be written quickly, to get things done with no need for attention to editing or correcting. Her style echoes her speech in many places but, possibly because she is dealing with business matters such as orders and invoices, formal, impersonal phrases common to these genres, turn up automatically and remain intact alongside the chatty familiarity.

10. Conclusion

In the Florist's shop we find a range of texts used on a day to day basis, all representing common genres. Some, like the labels and lists, were very brief. Others such, as the order forms, required a considerable amount of information. Together these made up a simple, pen and paper system which had stood the test of time and which worked to co-ordinate the everyday work of the shop. Tracing the 'trajectory' of the order form helped to map out this system and underlined the significance of this single piece of paper to the work of the business. It is an approach to analysis that I decided was worth testing in the other three cases.

With the notable exception of the message cards, which required considerable care in terms of writing, and Linda's emails, most of the texts were for internal use and conformed to rather different criteria. The emphasis was on recording '... all the necessary information' and the legibility of this while keeping the time and effort involved to a minimum. While the writing was brief and hurriedly written, it entailed considerable responsibility on the part of the writer. Analysis of completed order forms, in conjunction with the participant's explanations, helps to identify how the team shared a 'repertoire of resources' that enabled them to discharge this responsibility while writing briefly and quickly. The size of the business made this sharing possible. One of most valuable resources was the form itself. As a proforma it offered a number of affordances for the business but perhaps the most significant was its value in reducing the semiotic work required. In this study I have begun to explore how proformas of this type work and how their design can shape the writing undertaken: a theme I explore further in the other three case studies.

A further theme to come out of the case study is the piecemeal introduction of IT. Having a computer in the shop became a necessity for Eflorist and it was used by the staff to access information but had not impacted on the traditional pen and paper system. The use of email for some wedding orders and some orders for supplies recognised the usefulness of non-synchronous communication but this was only exploited in these specific areas of work.

Close attention to the order form has illustrated a complex relationship between writing practices and texts and has highlighted how both were shaped by the context of the business and its activity. The introduction of proformas adds a further layer to this complexity. I have noted how use of proformas, which represented a conventional response to recurrent writing tasks, could shape the structure of interactions in practices such as taking an order. At the same time, I demonstrate how the design of the proforma shaped the writing that was undertaken in significant, if sometimes unintended, ways.

This case study provides a picture of writing in one business. It highlights how, while, at one level, it is possible to identify very familiar writing practices and genres that are common to such businesses, at another, these include many unique features such as the use of the blue folder, Rosemary's basket for orders, the use of two colours on the wedding orders. It enabled me to identify approaches that could usefully be tried again in the other case studies and highlighted a number of interesting themes to which I will return to in the following chapters.

Chapter 6

The Hairdresser

1. Introduction

The hairdressing salon was located in one of the old houses that characterise the main streets of Eastmarket, only a few yards from the centre. It was a small salon comprising of just two rooms on the ground floor and was run by the owner, Peter, with the help of two stylists, Sally and Kate. Peter had run a hairdressing salon in the town for 16 years and had built up a loyal clientele. The salon served both male and female clients and offered hair cutting and a range of hair treatments. The owner worked full time in the salon. The two female stylists had both done their apprenticeship in the salon and were fully qualified. Both worked part-time.

In this case study I focus in particular on two aspects of everyday work in the salon and the associated texts, the making of appointments and the keeping of records of treatments on customers' hair. Both are central to the work of the salon. The making of appointments is of interest for two reasons. Firstly, it provides an opportunity to examine how texts are used in the management of time (Adam, 1990; Adam, 2000; Burgess, 2007; Tusting, 2000) something that is a feature of all four case studies but is of particular importance in the hair salon. Secondly, the main text involved, the appointments book, is an interesting example of a multimodal text in which meaning is made through written language, graphic devices and the use of a matrix. The keeping of customer records, on the other hand, is interesting because it relies heavily on written language and provides an opportunity to look at writing that is closer to written prose than many of the texts used across the four studies.

Following the theme introduced in the case study of the Florist's shop, I consider the life histories of the texts to understand how these are used and the significance of the roles they play within the business.

2. Background

2.1 The premises

On entering the salon, the sparse furnishings and a décor in black and white offered an impression of clean, modern simplicity, a contrast to the exterior of the property. The premises were compact. The front door entered directly into the first room which served as a reception area. This contained a large sofa where customers could sit while waiting and some hooks for coats. A high window sill substituted for a desk. A second room led from this and included three stations, each with a chair, a mirror and shelf, and two sinks with seats for shampooing. A very small workroom beyond this was used for storing and mixing chemicals, making hot drinks and keeping customer records.

Outside there was no sign and only the hairdressers' bottles and towels, arranged on one of the window sills provided a clue to the nature of the business. Written text also had a low profile inside. A notice near the door warned customers to be careful of the high step that led down into the room, a discreet list of prices was presented in a frame on the opposite wall and there was another framed notice informing customers that they may be charged for missed appointments. Hair products with extravagant names, were arranged on shelves above the sofa but there was no overt advertising of products or services. Equipment for writing was also discreet. A pen and pencil were kept next to the appointment book on a high windowsill, alongside the telephone, and a few papers and magazines were neatly stacked on the shelf on the adjacent wall. There was no computer or till.

2.2 The owner and his observations on writing

In contrast to the other owners, interviewed for this study, Peter told me initially, that writing was *not* very important to the running of his business and that the only writing they did was to make appointments and keep record cards. After our interview, however, he commented that they used writing more than he had realised. Peter described himself as dyslexic and told me he went into hairdressing to avoid the need to write. He was open about his problems with reading and writing and, outwardly, dealt with these through humorous self deprecation. Discussing the system he had in place, Peter told me that he had ‘really simplified it’ and regarding the financial side of the business he commented:

> <I am very fortunate>, as in my accountant does <absolutely everything> for me.

At a later point in our interview, he laughingly concluded:

> I don’t do anything ((Peter laughing as he says this)). It’s great.

While it is far from true that Peter didn’t do anything in relation to writing, he did rely heavily on his accountant to take care of the book-keeping, salaries and administrative matters that involved writing. Occasional typing jobs had also been done by the part-time stylists. In contrast to his reticence as a writer, he had confidence in his skill as a hairdresser. He did not advertise the salon and I asked him how, in the view of this and the lack of signage, he managed to maintain the business. He argued that establishing a good relationship with the clients and providing a high quality service was the best way to attract and keep clients.

Peter liked to be different and expressed this in his dress, the way the salon looked and his approach to the business. He made a comparison between his salon and more commercial salons he had worked in where there was pressure to maximise the number of appointments and less time for attention to client's individual needs. He enjoyed his job but was not ambitious to expand the business.

2.3 The part time stylists and their observations on writing

The two female stylists spoke confidently about writing. Neither felt that writing had figured in their decision to become a hairdresser and both were open to the possibility of taking on work that involved more writing although they both expressed a preference for practical work and interacting with customers, over what they perceived as 'office work'. Both used writing for activities outside this job and made frequent use of email and texts. Kate had experience in another job where things had to be written up as 'proof' of activity: '...even things you can easily remember' and she recognised how this differed from the writing in the salon.

Asked to compare the writing they did at work with that they did at school or college they were dismissive of the writing at work.

> *Sally* Well there's obviously <u>less</u> writing at work. (.) Um. (.) I don't know really. (.) It's just <u>less</u> of it. (..) And there's less <u>meaning</u> to it really, cos there's just little notes all the time.

> *Kate* (writing was) more formal at school. Here you write it as you say it. Basically instructions.

Asked what aspects of writing were particularly important in their writing, Kate thought spelling was 'fairly important', adding, '… not that anyone's looking over your shoulder'. As in the florist's shop, the part-timers were not always around to communicate orally with colleagues and Kate commented that they needed 'to communicate fairly well' (in writing). Both thought it was important that others could read what you write and Sally added, 'and for yourself to read as well.'

2.4 Writing tasks and the division of labour in relation to writing

Table 5.1 lists the range of tasks for which writing was used and provides an indication of the division of labour in the salon. Day to day there was little difference in the range of work undertaken by the owner and the stylists and, as this table illustrates, the same was true in terms of the writing. The part-time stylists however did most of the colours and perms, which required record cards, while Peter specialised in cutting hair, which did not and, while this may not have been the main reason for this division of labour, Peter made it clear he was pleased not to have to write up the cards.

Both Sally and Kate thought writing was ‘a small but regular part of their work’ although Kate added that the information written down was important.

Table 6.1 Writing tasks and the division of labour in relation to writing

Texts	Peter	Sally	Kate
Appointments book			
Appointment cards			
Takings sheet			
Treatment cards			
Telephone book for regular customers			
List of stock to order			
Post-its for customers wanting an appointment if there is a cancellation			
Personal notes, aide memoires			
Messages for others			

Main part of work   Occasional part of work

A log of writing undertaken in the salon over the course of a week, though possibly not representing a full record, served to confirm their choice, as did my own observations.

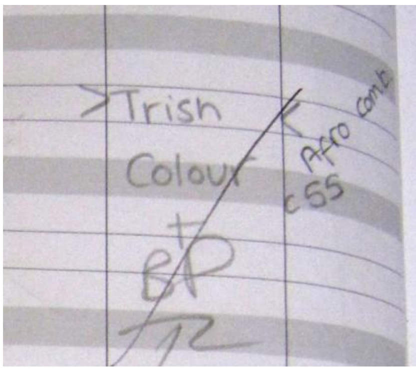
The salon used a small number of proformas and together these supported the ‘systems’ that Peter had set up for the day to day running of the business. These related to the making of appointments, the keeping of records of clients’ treatments and the recording of takings and expenditure and represented the main calls on writing on a daily basis. The first two of these are considered in detail in sections 3 and 4 below. Other texts were more ad hoc. Stock was ordered by phone so lists were temporary aide memoires and, like the occasional written messages left for colleagues, were written on scraps of paper. It is of interest to note that all but one of the texts listed was for internal use. Only the appointment card was written for the client.

The appointments book was central to the making of appointments but it also served as a safe place to record other pieces of information. When I prompted him to think about writing notes for himself, Peter told me:

> Very occasionally, if I've done something um <very> unorthodox to do with a <u>hair-cut</u>, I will write that down on the lady's next appointment.

Kate spoke of recording the angles she had used for cutting a client's hair in the appointments book and, on one of the pages I photographed, she had written 'Afro comb' next to a client's appointment (Figure 6.1). At times the appointments book had been used instead of post-its to record clients who have asked for an early appointment, if a cancellation came up, and on one of my visits it was being used to record takings and petty cash expenditure because they had run out of takings sheets. The example in fig 6.3 included a list of items to be ordered. Telephone numbers were also recorded next to appointments for new clients, not yet in their telephone book.

Figure 6.1 Note in appointments book



The great majority of the texts were shared, available to colleagues to be read and used as needed. Some writing however was more personal. Sally explained:

> I've sort of written down little notes for myself recently, because I'm being back at work, just so I (.) refresh myself on how I'm mixing up the colours and things, Um but that's just because I've only just come back and I just don't want to go blank. (S. laughs).

Personal notes of this kind were described in Belfiore et al (2004) and, in the context of the larger businesses they studied, these were contrasted with the official workplace texts designed to support systems for quality control and accountability. Although Sally's notes were additional to the texts she was required to complete there was no suggestion that these were frowned on or seen to compromise the workplace system as in workplaces described by Jackson (2000).

3. Making an appointment

3.1 Making an appointment; a literacy event

Appointments were often made at the end of a visit to the salon which would typically be 6 weeks ahead, but several appointments could be booked in advance. Appointments could also be made and changed at other times, either face to face or on the telephone, so stylists made appointments for each other's clients as well as their own.

The account in Text box 6.1 was based on notes made immediately after a visit to the salon. It describes a clearly defined literacy event that occurred at a specific place and time. The interaction was very largely spoken and no extensive writing was undertaken but the event was clearly focused around two written texts, the appointment book and the appointment card.

Text box 6.1 Making an appointment

The experience of the researcher as customer Once my cut and style was completed Peter led the way to the reception room where a high window sill serves as a desk. It is here that the appointment book and phone are located together with pen and pencil. As I reached for my chequebook, he reminded me, discreetly, of the price and asked if I wanted to make another appointment. While I wrote out the cheque, at one end of the window sill, he turned to the calendar at the back of the appointment book and counted out weeks to check dates 6 weeks ahead, then turned forward to locate the pages for that week. He scanned the pages and, knowing that I usually make an appointment early in the week and often prefer the first appointment of the day, he pointed out that the first appointment on the Monday morning was taken but that I could come in at 10.45. Having agreed this, he wrote my name against the time in the appointment book in pencil. He then took a card and, this time using a pen, wrote the day, date, month and time on the reverse. Once he had handed me the card we exchanged greetings and I left. July 2014

The making of appointments was a recurring feature of the work of the salon and in my analysis I have drawn on observation of other, similar events and on interviews with the staff to understand the elements, not only of this particular ‘event’, but also of the ‘literacy practice’ of making an appointment in this particular business.

3.2 A focus on time

When I asked Peter what was important in terms of writing in the business, he was very clear that this was ‘making sure the appointments are booked with the right allocated time.’ Tusting (2000) argues that a focus on time, ‘can give insight into the meanings and functions of literacy practices’ and, in the case of the salon, understanding the different aspects of time that need to be considered when making an appointment can help to explain the importance

Peter attached to the process. To explore this I use Adam's (2000, p. 136) analysis of the multidimensionality of time as introduced in the literature review (see table 2.2).

When Peter offered possible dates and times and I considered which suited me best we used the culturally constructed '*time frames'* of months, weeks, hours and minutes of 'calendar and clock time' (Adam, 2000, p. 126). The appointment book supported this, providing a page for each working day, a list of times at 15 minute intervals down the left hand side of each page and a calendar at the back. In selecting possible times, Peter had to take into account the interval he judged right for me to leave between haircuts. This constituted a personal 'cycle' or '*rhythm'.* For some customers, this time frame would be influenced by the particular treatment that had been applied and the length of time this should last but the stylist still needed to take into account his or her experience of caring for the individual client's hair. Here, another of Adam's 'dimensions' of time, *'temporality',* comes into play: that is 'the time in things, events and processes which is unidirectional and irreversible.' In the context of the hairdressing salon: hair grows, colours fade and perms fall out.

Appointments needed to be precise, not only in terms of the start time, but also their *'duration'*. This depended on the treatment required and, in completing a booking, the stylist needed to draw on his or her experience and expertise to get the timing right. In line with Peter's business philosophy, appointment times were generous, ensuring customers were not kept waiting and the stylist was not rushed, but, across the day, time needed to be used efficiently, especially during busy periods. The duration of an appointment and the nature of the treatment had to be recorded accurately in addition to the start time.

The recording of the date and time for the appointment created a material, and therefore durable, record of an agreement which was reached through the ephemeral medium of speech, one that would be available for the stylists to read, check or alter at a later date. As in the case of the florist's order form, the 'act' of inscription 'fixed' my choice. The entry in the appointment book represented a commitment by the salon to reserve this time for me. However, as Adam notes, '*Timing and synchronisation* are integral aspects of interactions' (ibid p136) and the entry was of no use unless I turned up at the time agreed, so the purpose of the appointment card was to help ensure that I remembered my appointment. 'An appointment'[17] was a unit of work for the salon and when a customer failed to turn up this could represent a loss of income.

Finally, in relation to time, I add one further consideration. *Personal and institutional time*, needed to be taken into account in fixing an appointment. Both younger stylists worked part time so the days or times when they were not available to work needed to be clearly marked, as did holidays and days on which the salon was closed. The clients too had personal schedules into which the appointment needed to be fitted.

[17] The term, 'appointment' tends to be reified, in the same way as the term 'order' in the florist's shop, and refers not just to the agreement and recording of the date and time but to the person whose hair is to be styled and to the period of time allocated.

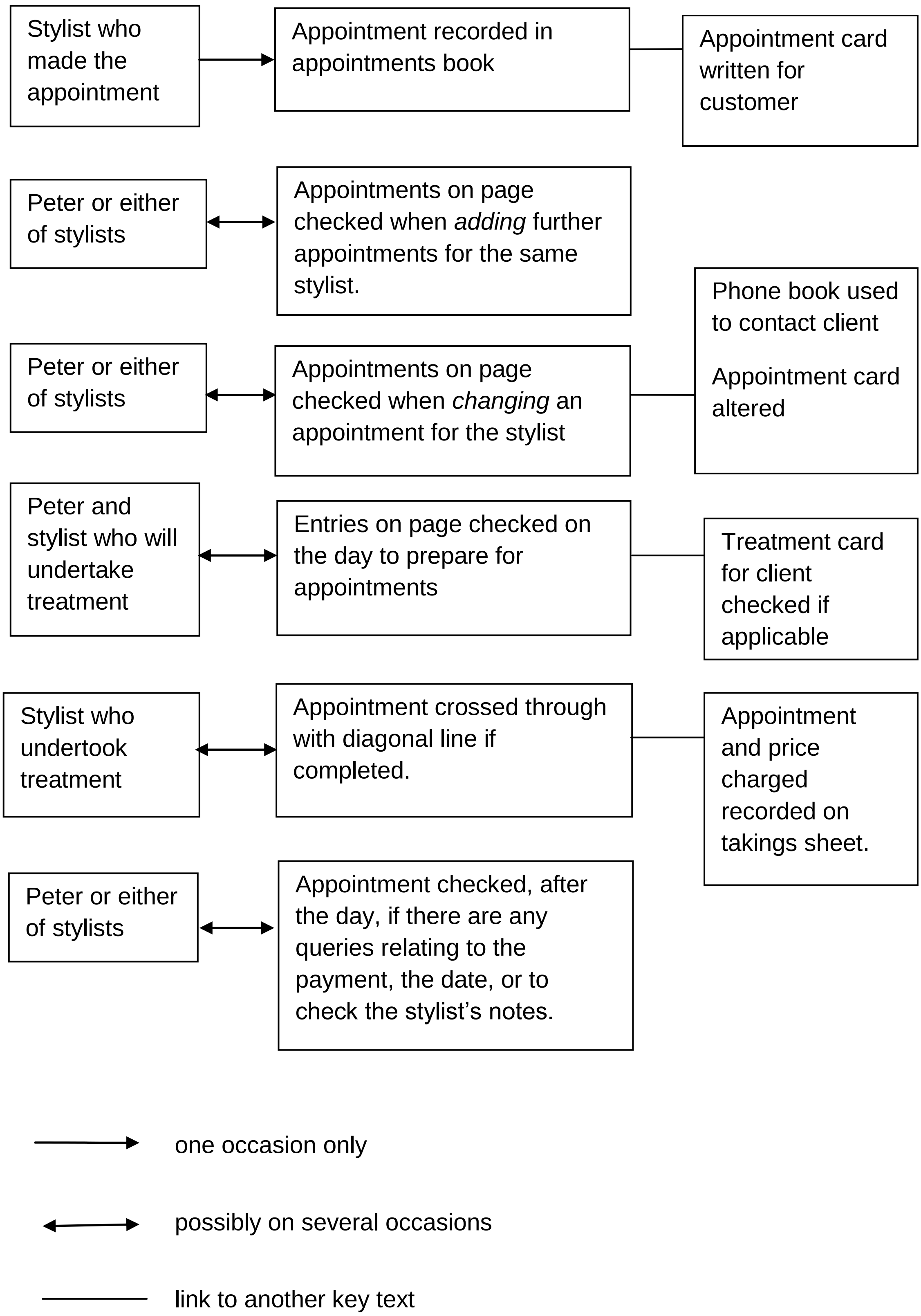
3.3 The creation and uses of the appointments book

The appointment book was a joint effort, with all three stylists contributing to its content as they made or changed appointments for clients. It was built up over a period of months through an accumulation and patterning of texts, each the result of a separate literacy event that required the stylist to read and take account of other entries before adding a new appointment. In its final form, the page for a specific date provided a timetable for that day, ensuring that time was used effectively and efficiently. A mistake could cost time, money and, more importantly, client satisfaction. Focusing carefully on the different dimensions of time helps us to appreciate, not only the importance of recording appointments accurately, but also the knowledge and experience that the stylists call on as they negotiate dates and times with the client.

The appointments book remains in one place, on the window sill, accessible to all the staff. We cannot therefore trace a ‘trajectory’ for the entries, in a spatial sense, as we can for the florist’s order form. However, to fully appreciate the role entries in the Appointments Book played, we need to take account of this collaborative process and follow the ways in which the appointments book was used, by different people, over the course of time. We need to recognise the processual and dynamic nature of these texts (Lillis and McKinney, 2013; Maybin, 2013). Figure 5.2 attempts to illustrate this.

Discussing the importance of writing in the salon, Sally told me:

Figure 6.2 The uses of the entries in the appointment book



> I think it's very important. because if we don't write anything down we'd be totally lost. (I mean) we would be sitting here wondering if we had someone coming in or not >because we hadn't written it down< ((Sally was laughing as she said this)), and what we're doing on them, and all that sort of thing.

The appointments book and the appointment card are, as Sally recognises, central to the work of the salon. Kell writes, with reference to chains of emails used in the organisation of a conference:

> It is through such small-scale traffic of texts that co-ordinated activity crosses contexts, threading its way through lives, places and times, bringing together at moments ensembles of people, texts, objects as events in processes that have more or less irreversibility and durability, and therefore start to shape literally, the structures and processes of people's worlds. (Kell, 2011, p. 607)

In a similar way, the brief entries in the appointments book and on the appointment cards, together, served to coordinate and synchronise the activity of the business and the customer's schedule.

3.4 The appointment book: a multimodal ensemble

Having established the significance of the entries in the Appointments Book and on the Appointment cards I needed to understand, in more detail, how these texts worked, what forms they took and what was required of the writer. This fine-grained analysis required examination of the texts alongside an analysis of the micro practices (Ivanic *et al*, 2009) involved. I asked Sally what she would write down when taking an appointment.

> S. Um. People's names. What they're having. Um Sometimes contact numbers (…)
>
> Res. Um. How do you write that? Do you write that um with abbreviations?

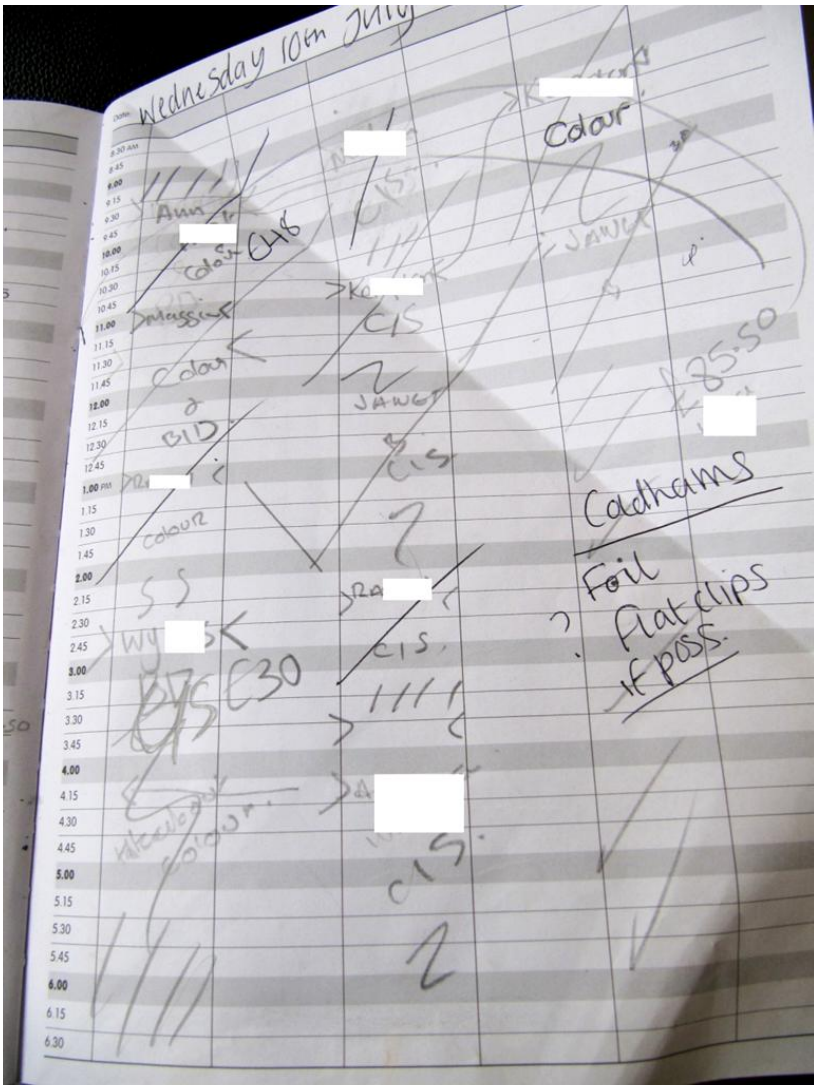
> Yeah. Write the name normally <and then for like a cut and blow dry> we'd write 'C slash S', for like cut and style. Um for a colour we'd write 'colour' and either 'BD' for blow dry or 'C/S' for cut and style

Figure 6.3 illustrates a page of the appointments book for a day's work that has been completed. The immediate impression is that the page contains very little written language. What writing there is takes the form, almost exclusively, of brief nominal groups (Halliday, 1994); the date, the names of clients and the 'treatments' they require, a list of items needed and the name of the supplier. First names were usually used for the clients, reflecting the informal relationships established between stylists and clients and the fact that most clients came regularly to the salon. As Sally described, abbreviations provided a shared 'shorthand' which was used very consistently by all stylists for the recording of treatments. *What* was written on the page was, however, only one part of the story. *Where* it was written was of equal importance. The blank page, or proforma, provided a framework, with shaded lines dividing the day into hourly blocks, in columns across the page. Although they no longer bothered to label them, each stylist had his or her own column. This format provided the basis for the construction of a timetable. What each stylist was doing, and when, was communicated spatially by the positioning of text within this, with arrows around the name of the client to pinpoint the precise start of the appointment. Sally explained how the duration of the appointment was communicated:

> Yeah we would (.) scribble where like how until the next time when we'd have you know someone else booked in.

This ‘scribble’ or wavy line served to block out the lines between appointments, indicating that the times these represented were no longer available for that stylist. It can be distinguished from the series of diagonal lines across a space which indicated time when the stylist was not available and an appointment struck through with a single line which indicated that the appointment has been kept. As bookings were added they created a table that illustrated, in a visual form, the work for the day.

Figure 6.3 A completed page from the appointment book



Kress (2010, p. 28) argues that different modes of communication have different potentials in relation to a specific task and that several modes are always used together in what he terms ‘multimodal ensembles’. In constructing their timetable, the stylists, collectively, made use of the ‘affordances’ of different modes. Much of the semiotic work was achieved through visual means: the placement of text on the page and the use of graphic symbols. These allowed the appointment to be entered quickly, while ensuring accurate information on the timing. To the trained eye, they also provided a quick way to obtain information from the page as Peter demonstrated when making my appointment. Other ad hoc, and therefore more idiosyncratic, graphic devices were used, as, for example, when Peter has indicated, by use of an arrow, from one column to another, that one of his clients would like to speak with Kate about a colour or a client’s appointment was shared between two stylists.

3.5 The material features of the appointments book

Ormerod and Ivanic (2000) demonstrated, using children’s project work, how examination of the material aspects of texts enable us to identify ‘signs of how it came to be as it is and of how it is expected to be handled.’ In Figure 6.3 we can see that all the information relating to appointments was written in pencil and note places where earlier entries have been erased and replaced by new entries. Pencil was used because, as appointments were made well in advance, clients quite often needed to alter these. Crossing out an appointment would make it difficult to preserve the format but pencil could be easily rubbed out, making it possible to retain the visual pattern of the page. The use of pencil also had the effect of making entries written in pen stand out in contrast, an affordance utilised when adding notes such as lists of supplies needed. The crease across the page (Figure 6.3) was there because, once the dates on both sides of a page had passed, the page was folded back diagonally leaving the page for the current day as the first open page in the book. In this way the stylists didn't lose their place while checking forward to make appointments.

3.6 Shared conventions: stability and change

At first glance the pages of the appointment book appear chaotic, however, Sally's use of 'we' in the quotations above reflects the sharing, between all three stylists, of the abbreviations and graphic conventions used and this is borne out by examination of the text (Figure 6.3). I asked Peter about the origins of these shared practices. He told me he thought that they had always used them. They were, as Barton and Hamilton (1998) proposed (see text box 2.1), 'historically situated': a part of the history of the owner and of the salon. Peter explained that when a new member of staff joined the salon he used a page at the back of the book to demonstrate how an appointment should be recorded and spoke of using 'role play' to provide practice. If we use Spinuzzi's distinction between 'regulated' and 'regularised' genres, the appointments book fell closer to the regulated end of the continuum than the florist's order form and, as we will see later, the stylists' record cards. Making an appointment is a practice familiar in our dealings with a wide range of services, and the genres of appointment book and appointment card are immediately recognisable. However, when, as here, we look in detail at the textual practices involved, we see how these were, in many ways, unique to the specific workplace.

Although the way that the staff spoke about making appointments indicated a strong degree of stability and shared practice, the potential for change was also evident. Sally made reference to writing down the prices she charges clients for future reference.

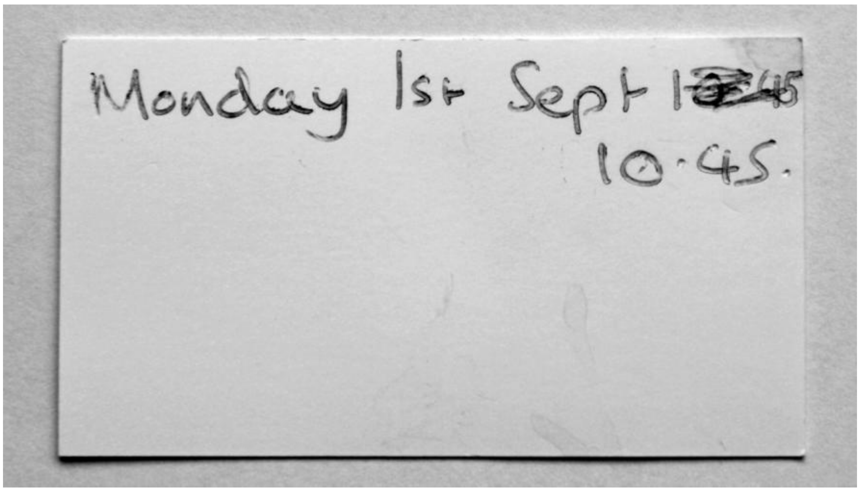
> S. As I'm asking them for like the money I would write it down next to their names so I know how much I've taken
>
> *Res. So you could check that back if you wanted.*
>
> S. Yes but it's not really um that reliable because that's not on all not on everyone if you know what I mean.
>
> *Res. No. OK.*
>
> S. It's just something I've started doing since I've been back.

The inconsistency that Sally refers to is evident in figure 5.3. Whether her addition to the way in which the book was used became part of the shared practice of the salon I did not find out. The concepts of 'genres' and 'practices' suggest a stability based on repeated behaviours but, as Schryer's phrase, 'stability for now' (Schryer, 1994), suggests, there is always the potential for change.

3.7 The appointments card

The appointment cards are simple, self designed business cards on which the name of the owner and the word 'haircutting' were placed centrally with the address and telephone number of the salon in the bottom left hand corner, all in capitals. These have, at different times, been printed in brown on cream, black on white and red and black on white. On occasions the supply of cards has run out and the staff used post-its or pieces of paper until more had been ordered.

Fig. 6.4 Appointment card for appointment described in Text box 6.1



The date and time of the appointment was written on the blank reverse of the card. Figure 5.4 above provides an example, written by Peter, for the appointment discussed in section 3.1 above. This was, however, unusual in that he has crossed out the time and written it below, possibly because it was rather squashed at the end of the top line. Peter was very consistent in the way he wrote the day, date and time. He stuck to a mix of lower case letters, with capitals as appropriate, except when the appointment was on a Wednesday when he wrote ‘WED’ in capitals, possibly to avoid the danger of misspelling it. Where more than one appointment was listed on one card he drew a line between the two. The card was written for the client so needed to be neat and clear. Sally explained:

> .... if it is just a bit of paper I’ll write um sometimes our phone number and like (.) what they’re having just so they know it’s like a hairdressing appointment >rather than just a piece of paper with a date and a time on it.< (S. laughs)

Peter did the same.

4. Clients' Record Cards

4.1 The roles of the record card

A record card was kept for every client who had their hair coloured or permed. These were stored in the small workspace where the products were prepared and written standing at a work surface. Kate told me that she wrote up the card after the colour had been put on, while she was waiting for it to develop or a bit later but if they changed the colour she would do it straightaway, commenting: 'It's important to remember details.'

I asked Sally;

> *Res. When you're working. So you've got your customer there and you're talking to them, do you have this next to you or (.)?*
>
> S. Yeah when I'm doing the consultation, I'll have it to refer to. and then when I'm mixing up the colours sometimes I'll write it out as I'm mixing it up, sometimes I'll just write it out afterwards when they've left. Um occasionally I'll write it out before. so that I can refer to it while I'm mixing up if it's quite complicated.

These comments indicate the roles the record cards could play. They were used to create a material record of very precise information that would be easy to forget. This, as Sally describes, could be useful in the short term while mixing the products but was also important as a record over weeks and months. They provided a starting point for the consultation with the client at their next appointment. They also ensured the information was accessible to other stylists who might need to treat the same client, ensuring continuity of service. I was able to discuss a range of cards with Sally and her commentary, plus detailed examination of the cards, enabled me to build up an understanding of *how* the cards were used to provide this continuity of service and to appreciate the range of resources on which the stylists drew to create the record.

4.2 Record cards as proformas

The record cards used by the hairdressing salon (Figure 6.5) were provided by a supplier. These had the physical advantages of being made of card which stood up to repeated use better than paper and a shape that would fit into a card file, however, the design of the proforma was quite impractical. The spaces for 'remarks' were too small to accommodate anything more than one word in normal sized handwriting. I commented on the fact that the sections were consistently ignored:

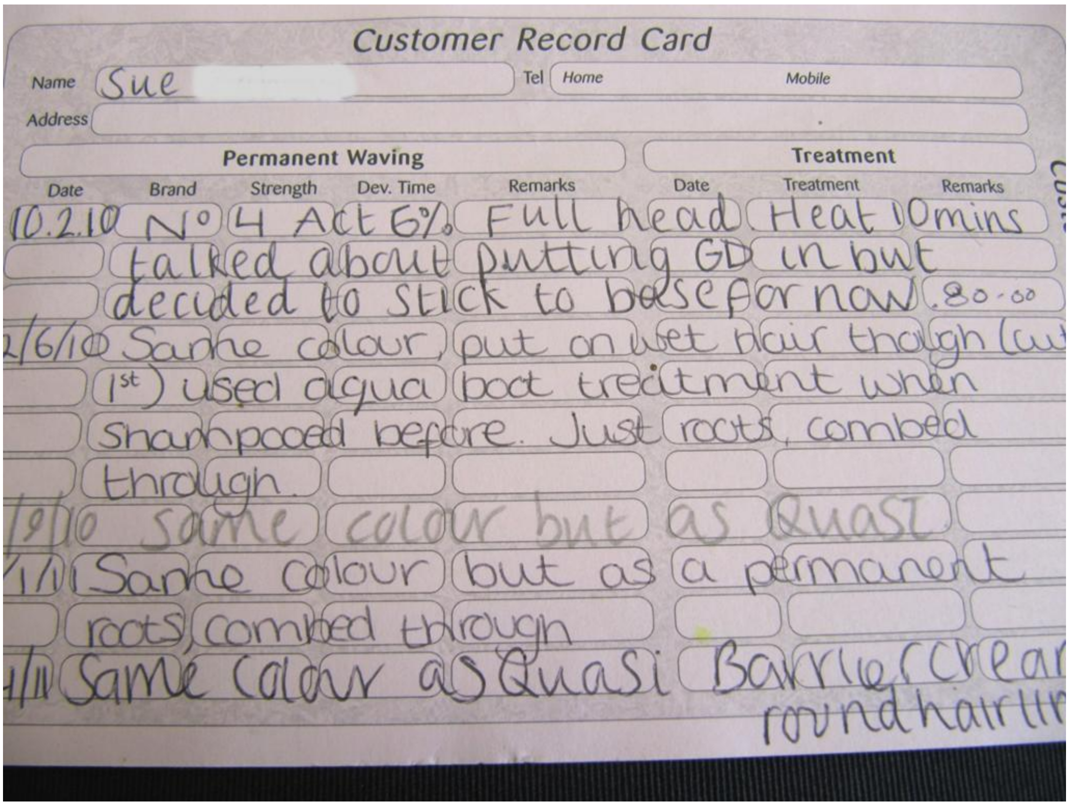
> *Res. So you're not really using those columns? ((looking at sections on the printed cards))*
>
> S. No. We're literally just use the date column and then write out what we need.

The section headings were very precise and not relevant in some cases. Kate explained that they only used one brand of hair products in the salon so there was no need to specify the brand used. As Figure 6.5 illustrates, the stylists also ignored the fact that some cards were designed for perms and others for colours. This proforma did not offer the expected advantages in terms of standardisation, completeness, speed of completion and ease of access to the reader. The stylists tended to use them as they would a blank sheet of paper and their texts were closer to continuous prose than the majority of writing observed in the four studies.

Explaining the use of the treatment cards Sally told me:

> (We) write the date. and then (.) often on a lot of clients they stick to the same as what they always have so then we just write 'same' and the price, but if we do do someone new or they change it we have to write out um (.) basically what we mix up. so um how much of each colour and how much of like the activator what you put with the colour. and then we put the methods, so whether we do like a full head or (.) highlights or (.) and like when we do highlights, how much we pull through, or like little things we need to remember for next time.

Figure 6.5 Hairdresser's record card



Customer Record Card

Name Sue

Tel Home Mobile

Address

Permanent Waving

Treatment

Date Brand Strength Dev. Time Remarks

Date Treatment Remarks

10.2.10 No 4 Act 6% Full head Heat 10mins
talked about putting GD in but
decided to stick to base for now .80.00
2/6/10 Same colour, put on wet hair though (cu
1st) used aqua boost treatment when
shampooed before. Just roots, combed
through.
/9/10 same colour but as Quasi
/1/11 Same colour but as a permanent
roots, combed through
4/11 Same colour as Quasi Barrier Crear
round hair lin

4.3 Record cards: drawing on a range of resources

On the card in Figure 6.5, the first entry provided the technical details of a treatment used for the particular client as Sally described. This assumed that those who need to read this share the professional knowledge of the writer. This is the genre for which the card is designed, characterised by brief pieces of precise information in which figures play an important role. Figures are used for codes for the chemicals, for percentages for strength, and for times, reflecting the importance of accurate measures in this task. The stylists learned this genre at college and through experience at work.

Below the technical information, the stylist switched to a less formal style:

> talked about putting GD in but decided to stick to base for now.

The owner spoke of the treatment cards recording ‘individual things’ that made up ‘the story’ of the client and here the stylist is telling part of a ‘story’, a stage in the process of finding the treatment that best meets this client’s needs and expectations. She continued to use specialist, technical terms (‘GD’, ‘base’) but the writing is less condensed. Aside from the omission of the pronoun ‘we’, a feature of all entries on the record cards, this is a complete compound sentence. This entry was, in fact, unusual, reflecting as it does the interaction between the stylist and client. On most cards the only mention of the client was the name on the top of the card and the records referred exclusively to the client’s hair, using terms like ‘full head’, ‘front sections’ or ‘ends’.

The next entry, made by a different stylist, begins; ‘Same colour …’ The single word, ‘same’ was a device used by all three stylists, across the range of cards analysed, to refer back to details in a previous entry. This entry then continued by recounting the actions taken. The omission of the deictic ‘the’, in several places, and the absence of the finite element of the verbal group are characteristic of the condensed style of what Halliday (1994) termed, ‘little texts’. These, plus the use of ‘same’ to avoid rewriting information, served to keep the entries brief in terms of space on the card and the time they took to complete. It is also worth noting that Sally used the passive voice, as in '(was) put on' and '(were) combed through'. Like the omission of personal pronouns noted above, this is characteristic, of an abbreviated, impersonal, businesslike language in which individual agency is avoided.

The next three entries revert to a brief note format, the only new information relating to the permanency of the colour applied, but the final entry; 'Barrier cream round hairline' is an example of what Kate explained as 'Tricks and tips' and Sally as '.... little things to remember next time'. Sally explained that barrier cream can protect the skin along the hairline from the chemicals used in the treatment.

On a different card, I read;

> ... went darker with 5CR instead of 6CR maybe go 4N next time – fading lots.

Here Kate does not simply recount her actions, she presents a problem to be solved and does the equivalent of thinking aloud, sharing her thoughts on what to do next. Again, this has the characteristics of narrative: a story unfolding, stage by stage. In a similar vein, on another occasion, she wrote;

> Just front pieces Didn't take at all last time. was better this time but not great maybe change Act 6% instead of 9%

These entries, although abbreviated, do not have the clipped formality of the texts' considered above. Rather, the choice of words, as in, 'at all', 'not great' and the cautious use of the modal 'maybe', something very rarely seen in the texts I examined for this study, reflect a more personal note, reminiscent of a spoken narrative, stylist speaking to stylist. In places, as Kate noted, they ‘write it as they say it.’ In the terms Jackson (2000) chose to use, the stylists here are ‘writing down’ information that will inform future treatments for the client, not ‘writing up’ what they have done as evidence of their work.

One further genre can be identified, that of giving instructions. It was used by Sally when she was preparing to go on maternity leave and was supporting Kate, a less experienced stylist at the time, who was going to take over her clients. Kate told me that Sally had written fuller notes to help her. In one example Sally wrote:

> Do front first, be very generous with colour. When painting over grey roots do it repetatively until you can’t see grey through colour. take thin sections and massage in with fingers before putting under heat and again at basin before rinsing. tada!

Here the writer provides clear and detailed guidance for her colleague. Clauses in imperative mood set out the sequence of instructions and extended adverbial groups are used to add further guidance on when, where and how the actions should be undertaken. It is written in full sentences with minimal abbreviation. The final ‘tada!’ that rounds off the instructions comes as a surprise. It is an expression characteristic of speech or text messaging and in this context highlights the more personal nature of this entry, written as it is for a particular individual. Its use here could be seen as a flash of personal identity in an otherwise generally impersonal format.

As Searle (2002) noted in her study of hotels and tourist accommodation in Australia, literacy skills used at work are ‘situated’ rather than generic and of necessity are learned in the workplace. I have already noted that Peter supported new members of staff in relation to making appointments. In the case of the record cards however, Kate spoke of learning '... as you go along' and 'learning as doing them practically.' Sally explained:

> We sort of have just followed what people before us have done. *[uh ha]* so we've written it out pretty much the same. Um (.) and just followed that.

Although both stylists had undertaken college courses in hairdressing Kate observed that the writing they did at college was more like the writing they did at school: '... to show you had the knowledge to do the job' rather than what you actually write in the job.' These observations suggest that the writing they undertook had largely been learned through participation within the salon as a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Throughout the quotations and excerpts of writing included in this chapter there is evidence of a very distinct discourse, exemplified in the use of the term 'client' rather than 'customer'; the reference to 'products' and 'treatments'; the specific meanings given to 'cut and style' and 'cut and blow dry'; the use of technical terms such as 'activator', 'quasi' and 'pre-pigged' and the many ways used to distinguish parts of the client's hair, such as 'roots', 'ends', 'front sections' 'top sections', and 'full head'. Using Gee's (2008) notion of Discourse with a capital D, these linguistic features sat alongside other non-linguistic features that were part of the discourse of hairdressing: the shampoos and other 'products' with their particular smells and distinctive bottles and the combs, clips, driers, mirrors and towels that are their tools. In addition to the discourse of their trade, the decor and furnishing and the stylist's clothes were part of a more specific discourse that defined the identity of this particular salon.

On the treatment card, the semiotic work (Kress, 2010) is achieved partly through the use of figures but, more importantly, through the use of continuous written prose. This brief analysis illustrates the 'repertoire' (Mavers, 2007, p. 7) of resources on which the stylists drew in order to ensure that the card served their purposes. They went beyond the brief outline of technical details for which the card was designed; commenting on the outcome of treatments, highlighting problems and musing on possible solutions. Constrained by the size of the card and the pressure of time, they adopted strategies to keep the entries brief. The discourse is distinctively that of hairdressing but the writing shares a number of linguistic features with written language found on proformas in the other case studies, an observation discussed further in chapter nine.

5. Use of IT

There is no computer in the salon. Peter did not feel the need for one. He had not been impressed by the computerised booking systems he had encountered in the past and felt his simple pencil and paper system was adequate for their needs. However, he did have a computer at home which he used to access the internet. He told me he had used this to track down hair products for the salon. He also used internet banking but did not do word processing. When I asked who produced the 'Takings sheet', Peter told me he had but then corrected himself, explaining that he had designed it but the accountant had typed it up. The part time stylists were both computer literate and made use of email outside work.

If the salon needed to contact a client they usually used the telephone but, at the request of some clients, had begun to communicate via text messaging when clients were at work or on the move. Peter also commented that some clients used diaries on their mobile phones to record appointments but he believed more mistakes relating to appointments happened this way and insisted on giving them a written card.

6. Conclusion

Just as in the florist’s shop, the influence of the owner on the culture and style of the business (Devins et al 2002) was clear and this extended to the ways in which writing was used. Peter’s own relationship with the written word had shaped writing practices in this business. He used the word ‘simplified’ in relation to the use of writing in the salon and certainly this was accurate for the booking of appointments and recording of takings. Keeping writing simple and brief was made easier by the fact that almost all the texts, with the exception of the appointment card, were for a small, internal audience. It was also a necessity given the less than ideal conditions for writing.

Although proformas were used these offered less support than proformas found elsewhere. The pages of the appointment book provided the framework within which a timetable was produced, as appointments were added, but offered no prompts to the writer. It had been left to the owner to design a pattern for entering appointments that everyone could adhere to. The appointment card helped to reduce the amount of information that needed to be written but again offered the writer no prompts and no frame to shape the presentation while, in the case of the record cards, an impractical layout and the irrelevance of some headings meant that the proforma was almost totally ignored and the stylists had evolved their own approach.

The two key documents, the appointments book and the record card were very different. The first was an example of a ‘multimodal ensemble’ and relied on spatial positioning and graphic devices as much as written text to convey its meaning. While the term ‘regulated’ (Spinuzzi, 2010) sits uneasily with the laid back ethos of the business, Peter did encourage everyone to use the same conventions for the appointments book and it was completed very consistently. The second, the record card, relied much more heavily on the written word and provided examples of more extended text than was common across the four case studies. While the appointments book reflected the owner’s ‘design’ the record cards reflected a format and style that had evolved as new stylists modelled their entries on those above.

In the florist’s shop, I noted the role of the order form in co-ordinating the process of creating and delivering a bouquet. In the salon, the texts are no less important. Here, attention to questions of time helps us to recognise how the appointments book and the appointment card were instrumental in the management of time, an important aspect of any business providing a personal service. Time needed to be used efficiently but Peter placed greater emphasis on ensuring that clients were given adequate time for their appointments. Unlike the order form, the appointments book did not travel but it was no less well used by different people and at different times. Likewise, the entries on the record cards were read and re-read as the stylists sought to ensure continuity of service for the individual client. In these ways writing supported the team in their aim to provide the clients with a good service and gain their loyalty as regular customers, so achieving the object of the business.

Chapter 7

The Garage

1. Introduction

The garage is the oldest of the four businesses. It was set up in the centre of town over 100 years ago and in the 1950's was purchased by the family of the current owner who built the present premises on the edge of the town centre. Since then it has remained an independent garage. It was also the largest and most diverse of the businesses studied. In addition to petrol sales, it offered servicing and repairs to all makes of vehicles, as well as MOT testing, and sold second hand cars, sweets, snacks and newspapers. At the time of the fieldwork, the owner/manager employed eight members of staff: a service manager, in charge of the workshop; a sales manager; an administrator; three mechanics and two part time petrol sales assistants.

In this case study I provide an overview of the writing undertaken across all sections of the business noting how the diversity of the services offered resulted in a sharper division of labour than I encountered in the other case studies and how this influenced the writing tasks undertaken. I restrict more detailed attention to writing in the workshop where the servicing and repair of vehicles took place as well as MOT testing. A key text in the workshop was the 'job card'. This self-duplicating form had been designed in-house to meet the needs of both the customer and the business and I explore the significance of this in relation to the way in which the form was completed. Using a flow diagram to map the trajectory of the job card, I unpick the way in which the text is created and tease out the range of purposes this proforma served within the business. I also examine the linguistic choices made by those who completed it.

The issuing of MOT certificates provided an opportunity to examine a literacy practice that was closely controlled by an external body. I note how this control was achieved, including through the use of computer software, and consider the effect the introduction of a computer based system had on the writing undertaken by the testers. In considering how we might understand the context for writing for this aspect of the work of the business I use the lens of AT and the concept of multiple and overlapping activity systems.

2. Background

2.1 The premises

The garage premises were unpretentious and gave the impression that little had changed over the past 60 years. The front door opened into the showroom and to the right was a small shop with a high counter where customers paid for petrol and could purchase items such as engine oil and car light bulbs, sandwiches, sweets, papers and ice-creams. From the shop, a door led to the workshop and the reception counter for servicing and repairs. Two offices were located close to the reception counter. One, used by the Car Sales Manager, opened onto both the showroom and workshop, the other, with glass windows and a door facing the workshop, was shared by the Manager and the Administrator. Beyond these there was a counter used by the mechanics with a small office space behind. The workshop diary was kept on this counter, open at the page for the current date, and a computer, used by the mechanics to access technical information. The floor of the workshop was divided into a series of workstations and each mechanic had their own station. Close to the reception desk, a metal bench, used by the Service Manager, housed the dedicated computer and paperwork for MOT tests. At the back, large doors allowed vehicles to be driven in and out.

There were notices and posters on the walls, many carrying detailed tables of figures or statutory information such as health and safety instructions. Many had clearly been there for some time. Above the workshop counter numerous cards and small notices, provided by suppliers to advertise their contact details, were posted on the wall, together with handwritten lists of useful telephone numbers and further tables of figures.

2.2 The owner and employees

The owner and manager, Malcolm, was a quiet man. He had taken on responsibility for the garage 30 years ago. He was in the garage much of the time and still worked on the shop floor but told me he didn't fill his day with jobs.

> I'll have a few, two or three jobs, booked in during the day. It's normally lighter stuff like electrical (jobs) or programming or something like that.
>
> ... then after that its er (.) general run of the mill stuff like (..) well general administration work in the office.

When I first spoke with Malcolm he told me writing was very important in the running of the garage but also that they did very little writing. He initially took ‘writing’ to refer to handwriting and, although I explained I was interested in other aspects of writing as well, he tended to revert to this interpretation. He admitted he didn’t enjoy writing, explaining that he was left-handed and had ‘awful handwriting’, a subject of good natured complaints from other workshop staff.

Geoffrey, the Service Manager, had been at the garage even longer than Malcolm. He joined the garage when he left school and, after 45 years, was close to retirement. Geoffrey looked after the MOT testing but also had an overview of the work in the workshop and was generally the one who dealt with customers at the reception desk. There were three other qualified mechanics. Tony, the eldest, worked with Geoffrey on MOT testing and undertook services. Kevin, who had only been at the garage for a year and a half, had moved from a main dealership in a nearby town. He undertook many of the repairs and Mike, the youngest, worked part-time in the workshop and part-time for the sales manager, checking and cleaning cars for sale.

The administrator, Maureen, had been in post for 6 years. She had a key role, liaising with the workshop, the sales manager and the petrol sales and shop. She took care of all the banking and accounts and undertook a range of clerical tasks, including answering the phone and taking bookings. She had considerable experience in this type of work and was confident with writing. The sales manager, Paul, had many years experience in the motor trade but had only joined the garage 16 months before I spoke with him. He dealt with all aspects of the car sales, including the publicity for this, online and in the press. At the time of my fieldwork this aspect of the work was very slow. Two part-time assistants looked after petrol sales and the shop. I spoke with one but the other declined to be interviewed.

The business relied heavily on the loyalty of its customers and its reputation for good service. The long serving members of the team knew many of their customers well. For a section of the population of the town, being local was an important factor.

2.3 Perceptions of writing

The insistence with which the manager and staff repeated that they did very little writing was coupled with an element of surprise that I should be interested in what they wrote. When I asked Geoffrey whether he used notes for himself while he was doing a job he commented:

> No. None of that. If I'm doing a job you don't (inaudible) write to do the job.

Given my criterion that the businesses studied should be those in which writing supported the main activity rather than constituting a product, and in the light of accounts of workers being required to use writing to evidence work done (Jackson, 2000), this comment was very pertinent.

Malcolm told me that writing was important for communication in the workplace, citing the need for the staff to know what they were meant to be doing on a vehicle. The mechanics, on the other hand, stressed the importance of writing as a means of communicating with the customer, about which I say more at a later point. Writing was viewed as necessary but was not something to which they gave much thought. Talking with Kevin, he spoke of enjoying the freedom he now had to put in the time to ensure that a vehicle left the garage in good working order, comparing this with the pressure on time and the much more closely regulated recording he had experienced in the main dealer garage. Mike, in interview, exhibited much greater enthusiasm for talking about the writing he undertook as part of his training for a voluntary role, outside the garage.

The manager told me he provided no guidance on the completion of texts and, when I asked what he felt was important in relation to writing in the workshop, he said, ‘As long as it’s legible.’ Asked the same question, Kevin expanded on this:

> I suppose in this trade, if the writing is readable. (..) because the customer wants to know what’s been done what they’re spending their money on. (.) So it has to be reasonably reasonably ((said quietly)) sort of clear to the customer to read.

Geoffrey told me spelling was most important. He explained:

> ..if I put in where it says notes at the bottom, <‘Please check T-I-R-E-S.> they’ll think, >‘Well he’s a rum’un.’< (Res. laughs) so I put spelling first yeah. and capital letters at the beginning of a sentence. Yeah.

Kevin, however, admitted that they tended not to worry so much about grammar and punctuation while the administrator told me that spelling and grammar were not their strong point. However, when I asked about writing for customers, she conceded:

> Obviously we try and get that correct but I wouldn't say we do all the time, (Res. laughs) we do try to obviously, because that's important.

For the sales manager, getting the figures right was most important but he too recognised the need for care when writing for customers.

> I don't suppose the odd spelling error is going to make too much difference. It's really the <u>figures</u>, the pounds shillings and pence that have to add up and be correct umm, (.) but then it's obviously the customer getting a copy of it so things have to look <u>right</u>, (.) and give the right impression.

When I asked whether writing ever presented problems at work the answer was always 'no', with the exception of jokey comments about the manager's handwriting, but, as in other businesses, after some probing, I was told about checking with colleagues, finding a different word if a particular spelling was a problem or simply disguising uncertainty by 'scribbling'. The Manager explained:

> I think most of them get <u>by</u>. er (..) Yeah I think most of them cope with it. ((the writing required)) sometimes when people first come some of the spellings, as you say some of the technical words take a while to get used to but most of the time they have enough, there's not a lot of writing involved, and I think they have enough writing skills to (.) get through.

2.4 The Division of Labour and the range of texts used

With a staff of nine, the garage provided an example of a slightly larger business than those in the first two case studies but it was the diversity of the services it offered that distinguished it most clearly from the other three. This diversity required a more sharply defined division of labour than was found in either the Hairdressing Salon or Florist's Shop and this, in turn, was reflected in the writing tasks undertaken by the staff. The analysis illustrated in Table

7.1 highlights the number of different texts used across the business. The great majority of these texts took the form of proformas and could be described as ‘genre texts’ (Karlsson, 2009; Spinuzzi, 2010; Winsor, 2000), designed to manage frequently recurring activities. Table 7.1 also reveals how the garage employees tended to use a particular, quite clearly defined range of texts or ‘genre set’ (Bazerman, 2004) that corresponded to their role.

The proformas relating to MOT tests were externally designed and accessed through the dedicated MOT software. The job card and the car sales invoice were designed specifically for the business and professionally printed, while other proformas, such as the time sheets, filled in by the mechanics, and the list of petrol sales to account customers, kept by the shop assistants, were photocopies of hand drawn tables. Many of the texts used, such as the workshop diary and the daily record kept by the sales assistants, were for internal use only but the job card/ invoice and the car sales invoice forms were designed to be self duplicating, providing copies for both the customer and the business. Almost all the proformas were completed by hand and while the manager, administrator and sales manager had their own desks the mechanics and the service manager wrote in the workshop in less than ideal circumstances. Sometimes they wrote standing at the workshop counter but I also saw the service manager using a clipboard and Tony rest a job card on a repair manual or logbook, wiping the oil and grease off his hands before writing.

Table 7.1 Writing tasks and the division of labour in relation to writing

Proformas	General Manager	Admin	Service Manager	Sales Manager	Tony Mech 1	Kevin Mech 2	Mike Mech 3	Shop/ petrol 1	Shop/ petrol 2
Workshop diary									
Job card/ invoice									
MOT checklists and certificates									
Parts - return forms									
Logbooks									
Time sheets								?	?
Account records									
Bank forms									
Service & account Invoices									
Petrol on account list									
Lists for stock to order									
Fridge temp.									
VAT receipts for petrol									
Car sales invoices									
Vehicle Prep Sheet									
Car adverts for web									
Other writing									
Letters									
Emails									
Notes for others									
Notes for self - on the job									
Personal work diary									
Petrol tank figures									

Main part of work | Occasional part of work

2.5 How much time is spent on writing?

Malcolm's comment that, as a business, they did very little writing was echoed by the staff. With the exception of Maureen, all chose the option, 'a small but regular part of the job' to indicate how much of their work time was spent on writing. Maureen, as administrator, believed writing took up half of her working time.

For the mechanics, the writing task they all mentioned first was completion of the job card. This was written, either while the job was in progress or as soon as it was finished. When I asked Tony how often he wrote job cards over one day he explained that this could be very variable.

> Some days a week it might be twice, sometimes it might be five or six. It depends on what the job is. If you get a big job you may only do it once a day, but then there would be a lot more writing, to explain what you done.

There were long stretches of time when no writing was done at all in the workshop. During one day of observation, Kevin worked on the same car most of the day and, by the time I left, had written only one job card, for a service done early in the morning. Tony had written one and had one more to complete and there were a few on the reception desk completed by the Service Manager. I observed both Tony and Mike complete service records in customers' logbooks and Tony write prices on the boxes of some parts that had been delivered. I saw no evidence of other writing on the workbenches except for MOT checklists[18] and, when I checked, the mechanics confirmed that they had done no other writing that day.

Despite frequent protestations that he did very little writing, Geoffrey, as Service Manager, in fact wrote more than anyone else in the workshop. This was in part because he was responsible for MOTs which took less time than many other jobs but required more paperwork. He also made bookings in the workshop diary, added advisory notes to job cards and wrote notes on labels for customer's keys. In addition, when prompted, he showed me a piece of paper in his top pocket on which he noted down the allocation of jobs for the day and reminders of things to do, something I was alerted to by another participant. It was a working document. On two later occasions I observed him take out a similar piece of paper from the same pocket to record my telephone number when I left my car.

On the day I observed, Maureen spent a very large part of the day recording information in the account books and inputting information into an electronic accounting system[19]. Other than that, she told me, she had written one note for the manager and some very brief reminders to herself which she jotted on a piece of paper pinned to the wall by her desk. The manager told me he had booked in a couple of jobs, put a few things in his diary and added up a few bills. I asked him how many letters and emails he had written in the last week and he was able to tell me, quite precisely, that he had written 1 letter and 3 emails. One of these had been an order for a new piece of equipment, another a response to an invitation and the third was to me.

---

[18] MOT checklists are discussed later in section 4.1.

[19] The administrator was working with figures most of the time, rather than words. I address the question of what we mean by writing later in this chapter.

As the case of the piece of paper in Geoffrey's pocket illustrates, careful probing and prompting could draw out accounts of writing that participants had not thought to include. Speaking with one of the shop assistants I asked if she ever got involved with ordering stock. She replied:

> Oh well yes there is, ((Rise in pitch)) I suppose so. You are more on the ball than what <u>we are</u>. You <u>forget</u>. You do it <u>automatically</u>.

Writing of this kind can become 'invisible' (Joly, 2010; Lillis, 2013), even to the writers themselves.

2.6 Written and spoken language

Although somewhat larger than the other three businesses, it was still possible for most internal communication in the garage to be conducted through the medium of speech. I observed numerous conversations in the workshop, in particular between Maureen and Geoffrey regarding bookings. The part-time shop assistants told me they normally overlapped as they changed shifts and passed on any necessary information orally. Notes were used only if someone was absent.

Text box 7.1 Written and spoken communication

'Cam-belt due'

My car had an MOT test and service in February 2013. In the 'Remarks' box, on the invoice, the Service Manager had written, 'Timing-belt'. In June 2013 the car was taken to the garage for work on the brakes. This time, the Service Manager wrote, 'Cam-belt due'. This second reminder conveyed no particular sense of urgency but, when I went to collect the car, the Service Manager made it very clear the cam-belt should be replaced as soon as possible, emphasising the potential consequence of not doing so with a dramatic hand gesture and the word, 'Gone!'

Adapted from research memo June 2013.

The ordering of parts and supplies was done by phone and the phone was used by customers to book in their vehicles and by the manager or service manager to inform them when these were ready for collection. The extract from a research memo above (Text box 7.1) suggests that the Service Manager found spoken communication more effective than writing.

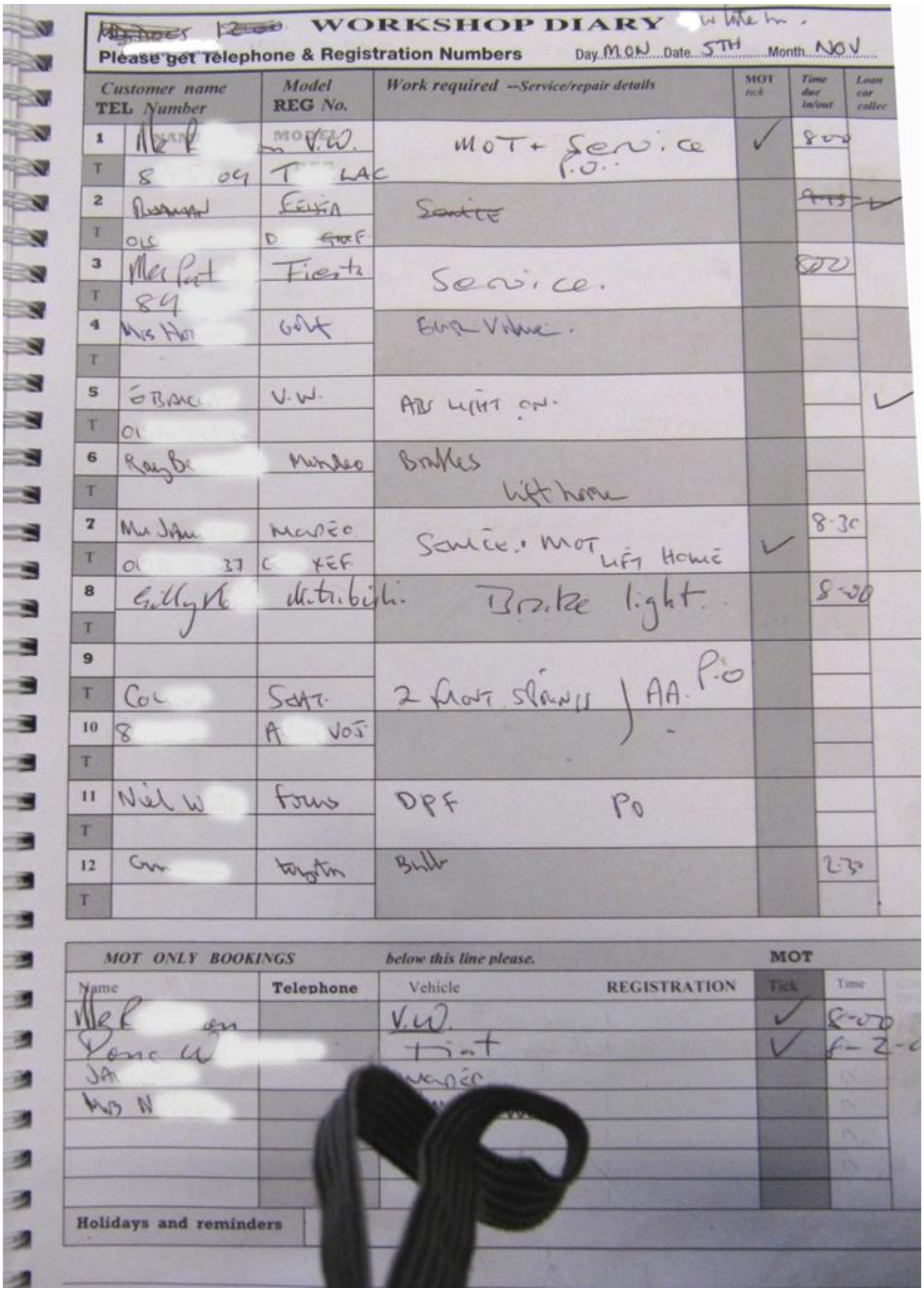
3. Writing in the workshop

3.1 The workshop diary

Focusing specifically on the workshop, there were three key texts: the workshop diary, the job card and the MOT certificate. In addition there were a number of small writing tasks such as labelling keys and spare parts, completing service records in customer’s logbooks and parts return forms. The mechanics occasionally wrote notes for themselves, a use of writing discussed in a later section.

The workshop diary, in combination with the notes the service manager kept in his breast pocket, was instrumental in managing the activity of the workshop. It was, however, less precise in relation to the management of time and the allocation of work than the hair salon’s appointment book. The time needed for a repair could be unpredictable and cars could be left outside until someone was free to work on them. The diary entries were made by Malcolm, Geoffrey or Maureen but read, in addition, by the mechanics. As in the case of the hairdresser’s appointment book, this page

Figure 7.1 Page from workshop diary



was built up over time by different writers and the entries were frequently checked, discussed, added to and changed.

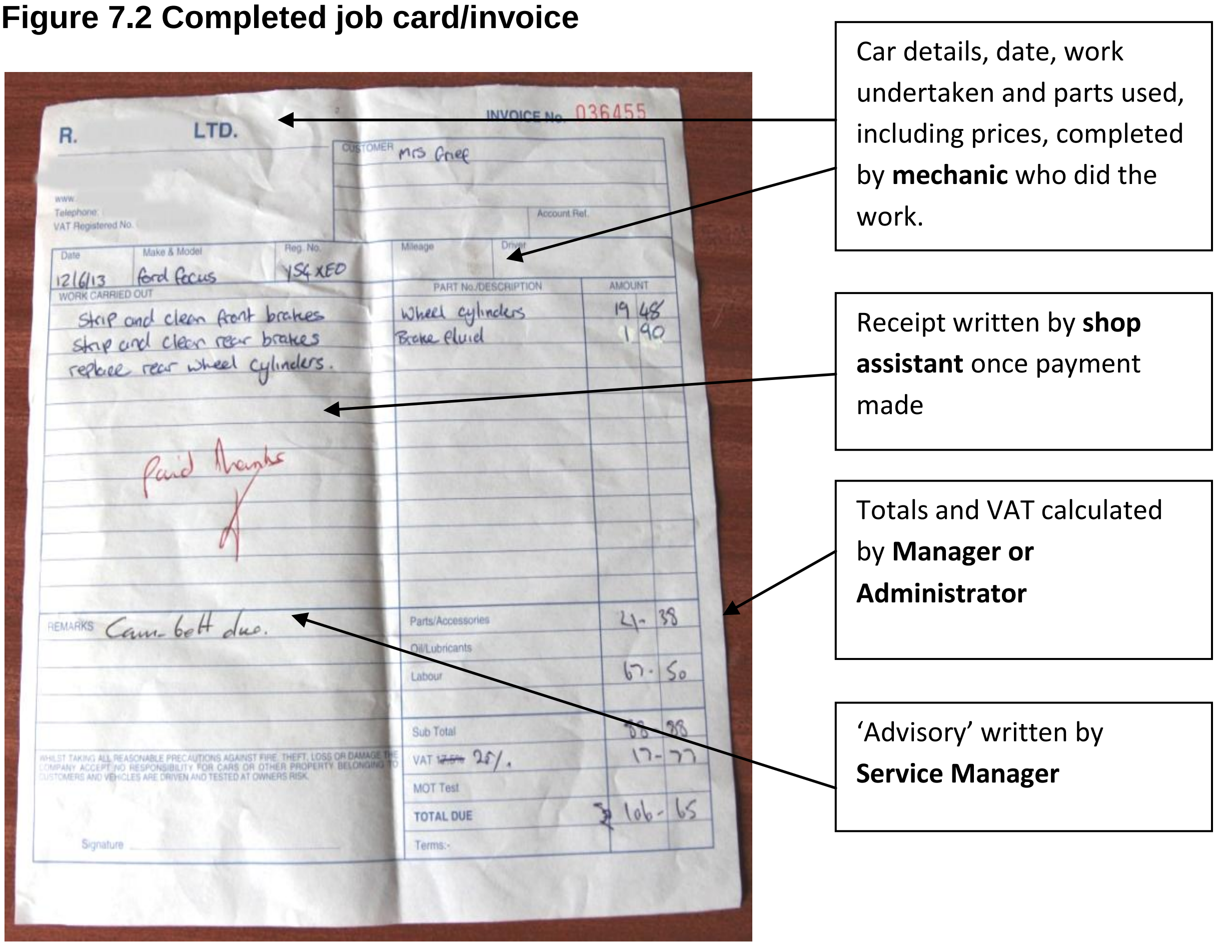
The page covered work for one day (see figure 7.1) but, unlike the appointments book, it did not provide a means of allocating bookings to specific mechanics. Who did what was organised, democratically, on the day and recorded on the paper that lived in Geoffrey's pocket. The layout of the page therefore took the form of a list rather than a matrix. The columns had headings indicating the information required. Most were completed but details, such as the phone numbers of customers, were occasionally left out. This was a text for internal use only but one that needed to be accessible to a range of people. As in the florist's shop, abbreviations were used. The manager explained to me that 'DPF' referred to a diesel particulate filter and that the addition of 'PO', used in several places, indicated that the necessary parts had been ordered. Occasionally notes that did not fit within the proforma were added, for example to indicate that a member of staff would not be in the workshop on a particular day. In the example in Figure 7.1 information of this kind was written at the top of the page and not in the small space for 'Holidays and reminders' at bottom.

3.2 The job card/Invoice: a multi-purpose text.

The main text used in the workshop and the one to which I have paid most attention was the job card. The staff, spoke about the 'job card' but, as Figure 7.2 shows, the top copy is headed 'Invoice'. I found this confusing until the manager pointed out that the second copy was headed, 'Job Card'. This copy served a different purpose which explained the title, as will be discussed later. On the example of a completed job card/invoice (Figure 7.2) we can identify written contributions from four different members of the garage staff, each representing a separate writing event. The flow diagram

(Figure 7.3) traces the sequence of these, events, identifying both writers and locations. No one writer took ownership of the whole text but it was not a ‘collaborative’ exercise in terms of writers working together to create a text. It differs from the ‘document cycling’ and ‘collaborative review’ discussed by researchers in writing intensive organisations (Kleimann, 1993; MacKinnon, 1993; Paradis, Dobrin and Miller, 1985). It differs too from the gradual building up of the appointments book by the staff in the hairdresser’s salon. Here again we see the effect of a more sharply defined division of labour.

Figure 7.2 Completed job card/invoice



In the case of the job card each writer had a different responsibility with regard to the text, related to his/her role within the business, and the contributions were written in an ordered sequence. Its journey is highly scripted (Kell, 2013). (Some responsibilities overlapped and, if, for example, Geoffrey did an MOT test he might complete all the sections on the proforma, simply leaving the Sales Assistant to deal with the payment and receipt.)

The top copy of the form (Figure 7.3) is headed *'Invoice'*. This familiar genre is commonly understood as representing a particular social action (Miller, 1984; Russell, 2009): a request for money in exchange for goods supplied or services rendered. The invoice includes the essential features of this genre: the name of the person who is required to pay, a description of the goods and services supplied, the costs and a date. However, it is also unique, differing in many ways from the invoices sent out by the florist's shop or those of the builder. It reflects the needs of a specific trade but has also been designed to suit the needs of this one particular business. Clark and Ivanic (1997) note the use of written texts to add weight to a communication and the written invoice provides a degree of formality to the transaction between customer and provider. It is impersonal, creating distance between the provider and the customer, and serves to 'mediate' (Dorothy Smith) the request for payment.

As the memo below (Text box 7.2) illustrates, the job card/invoice was also used *to provide a receipt.* The purpose of the shop assistant's contribution was to transform the invoice into a receipt. For me, as the customer, this provided evidence, should I need it, that I had paid for the work undertaken. No attention was paid to crafting the meaning of the words; they are written exactly the same every time.

Text box 7.2 Making a payment for repairs

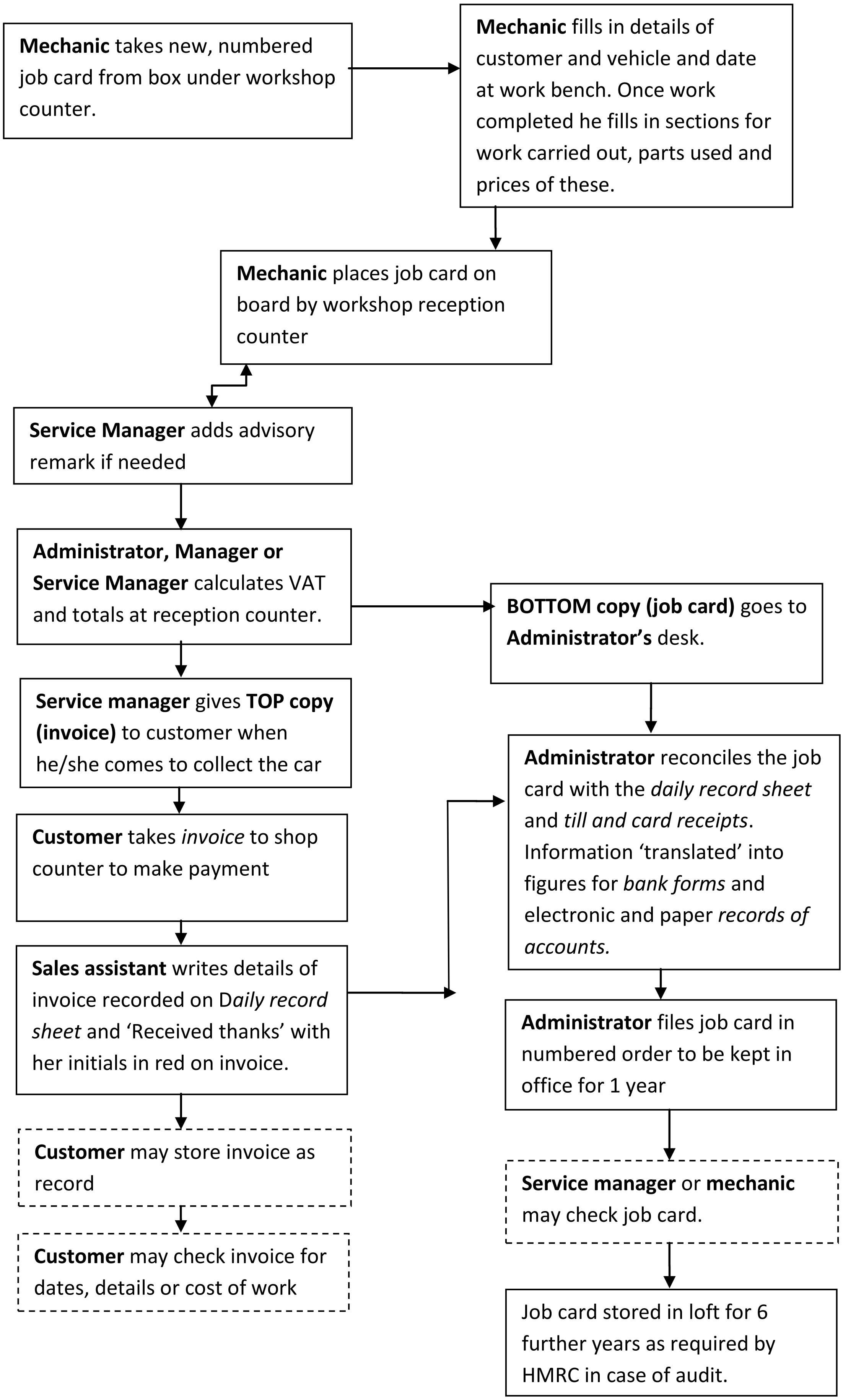
> As the customer, once I had collected my keys and the invoice from the service manager, I took the invoice to the sales counter to pay. Before taking my card payment, the Assistant recorded the invoice number, the car registration number and the sum paid at the bottom of the daily record sheet (This sheet is also used to record purchases of petrol by account holders). After taking my payment she wrote ‘Paid thanks’, together with a signature, across the invoice in red pen and returned the invoice to me.
>
> *(Memo added to field data June 2013)*

The writing of ‘Paid thanks’ and the signature provides an example of the ‘ritualised’ use of writing (Clark and Ivanic (1997, p. 110). The second copy, the job card, which is simply a carbon copy of the invoice, is for internal use. Maureen explained:

> You pay at the desk. *[Yes]* and then the next morning I do the sorting out and the banking and cashing up with the till basically. *[Right OK]* So yes the next day it comes to me to then go through the computer systems.

The process that Maureen refers to involved the interaction of different ‘genre sets’ (Bazerman, 2004). She reconciled the information on the job card from the workshop with the daily record sheet kept by the Sales Assistant and the till and credit card receipts from the shop counter. At this stage Maureen ‘translated’ (Kress, 2010) the information carried by the job card into different genres, as it became part of the information entered on bank forms and was input into her records of accounts; texts which formed part of the ‘genre set’ of the Administrator. I spoke with the Maureen to clarify how the different proformas I had observed fitted into the system and she commented;

Figure 7.3 The trajectories of the job card and invoice



‘Basically everything happening, whatever, comes through this desk’. Maureen took care of the paperwork for all aspects of the business. She described her role as ‘holding it all together’ (an approximation to her words). What she ‘held together’ represented what Bazerman (2004) refers to as a ‘genre system’ for the garage.

The completed job card, as a material and durable artefact (Clark and Ivanic, 1997), provided a record of a financial transaction, to be used in the short term to ensure that correct details were included in the accounts but also served as evidence of correct accounting; auditable evidence that could be requested by HMRC[20]. I asked Maureen what records they kept.

> <u>All</u> paperwork has to be kept for 7 years. So that means every everything. every job card. every invoice. *[Gosh]* every bank statement. every bank paying in book. Yes >there’s a lot upstairs> (both laugh)

In addition to its role in relation to finance, the job card, as its name suggested, also provided an important record of the work undertaken. The job cards were filed in order, using the unique number in red in the top right hand corner of the form, and kept in the office for one year before being moved to the loft. I observed the Service Manager referring to an old job card and discussed this with Malcolm. The following is taken from my notes.

> I asked about job card. ...... These copies are kept in numerical order so if they want to retrieve them they need to know date. They may want to check what service was done last year or a customer may want a service record.

[20] HMRC Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs

Likewise, as a customer I filed my invoice so, if necessary, at a future date, I could check what work had been done on my car and when.

The mechanics did not usually have the opportunity to speak with the owners of vehicles they worked on so they viewed the list of work on the invoice as their opportunity to ensure the owner was aware of the work they had done. When I asked them what they felt was important, regarding the writing they did, Mike told me:

> ….. (so it) gets across to the customer … fully state what you mean … as much detail as you can.

Tony responded:

> I would say perhaps, (.) what you write so it makes sense to the customer so he can get a grasp of what you've actually done.

Kevin provided a reason for the need to be clear with customers about what had been done. In response to a question about using abbreviations on the job card he told me:

> You try not to 'cos its OK for us, we we understand some of them but the customers um may not, so I try to keep them as straightforward as possible. (.) The trouble is in this trade if you start using abbreviations and things people think you you're doing something to them (Res. laughs) or trying to get something <u>over</u> on them you know. (… traders …… (inaudible)) a lot of places so, it's best to be straightforward and ..(tails off)

Drawing on evidence from observation, interviews and the texts, and tracing the two trajectories of this one text, I have illustrated how the job card/invoice provides a prime example of the ‘co-existence of many purposes’ within one text (Clark and Ivanic, 1997, p. 127). This customised proforma was designed to this end and represented a powerful means to reduce the time and effort spent on writing. It was no surprise that participants tended to emphasise how little writing they did. However, the efficiency of the system served to heighten the significance of the writing they did undertake.

Focusing on the trajectory of the text as a semiotic artefact provides a valuable perspective: highlighting the extent to which this text was used, underlining the significance of the roles the two copies of this text play in the running of the business and illustrating the way in which this text interrelates with others as part of what Bazerman (1994) refers to as a ‘genre system’.

3.3 Completing the job card/invoice

If we compare the way in which the job card/invoice was completed with the florist’s order form we can identify marked differences. The florist’s form was used loosely; some headings were ignored completely, the text spilt over the subsections and additional information was inserted where space was available. The writers made frequent use of abbreviations and crossed out errors. Graphic devices, such as use of capital letters or underlining, were common. In contrast, the job card/invoice is neatly written with the information carefully contained within the appropriate sections. Few abbreviations are used and an error in one section is corrected neatly with correcting fluid. With the exception of the use of red pen for the receipt there is no recourse to the use of graphic devices. Three factors can account for these differences. Firstly, unlike the Florist’s order form, the job card/invoice was designed, by the manager, to meet the needs of this specific business. There was no need for the staff to improvise to make the form suit their needs. Making the distinction used by Spinuzzi (2012) the job card/invoice represents a more ‘regulated’ resource than the florist’s order form. Secondly, while the Florist’s order form was solely for internal use, the top copy of the job card/invoice was given to the customer and members of the workshop team were aware of the need to consider the customer in relation both to *what* was written and *how* it was presented. Thirdly, although the physical environment of the workshop was not ideal for writing, the mechanics and Service manager were not usually under pressure, as were those in the florist’s shop, to write quickly while speaking with the customer. Finally, it is likely that the approach to writing encountered at the garage reflected the culture of the business that had developed over many years, influenced by the experience and character of the owner/manager and long standing employees.

There are, however, points of similarity. Just as the florist’s shop team often listed single words or nominal phrases under the heading ‘Flowers Required’; under the heading ‘Part No./Description’ the mechanics simply wrote; ‘hose’, ‘wheel cylinders’, ‘oil filter’. Where the heading was more open ended, such as the section headed ‘Remarks’, entries tended to be of a different nature. In figure 7.2 the message reads: ‘Cam-belt due.’ This has the look of a sentence. It begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, reflecting the very definite opinion the service manager expressed about the use of capitals.

> I was taught in school. Start a sentence with a capital. (Res. laughs)

In writing this message however, Geoffrey has used the highly condensed style we observed on the florist's order forms and the hairdresser's record cards. He has omitted both the deictic[21] determiner and the deictic tense (Halliday, 1994).

'(The) cam-belt (is) due (for replacement).'

In the context of the invoice and the wider context of the social situation, Geoffrey could safely assume that it would be clear to the customer which particular cam-belt ('The cam-belt *on the car we have repaired*') was due to be replaced and when ('The cam-belt *is* due *now*). In the 'Remarks' section of another job card/invoice one of the mechanics used a similar construction:

'Parts on order for rear lights'

(The) parts (are) on order for (the) rear lights

While in the florist's shop there was need for precision regarding types of flowers, colours and the form of arrangements, in the garage there was need to be precise about work that needed to be done or work that had been undertaken. The mechanics used classifiers to indicate the precise item repaired or replaced such as '*front* brakes' and *'rear* tyres'. The terms *'off-side'* and *'near-side'* were used in conjunction with 'front' and 'rear', usually written in abbreviated form; *'o/s/f wheel'*. Adjectives such as 'full' in *'full service'* and 'all' as in *'all brakes'* make clear the extent of the work. A further

[21] Halliday and Matthiessen refer to deictic words have ' a pointing out function' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 60)

characteristic of the discourse of vehicle mechanics seen frequently on the job card/invoice was the use of compound nouns: ‘starter motor’, ‘brake pads’, ‘wheel cylinders’, ‘wiper blades’, ‘spark plugs’.

3.4 ‘Smooth grooves of convention’

The section of the job card headed, ‘Work carried out’ was completed by the mechanics, the Service Manager or the Manager. Although generic terms, such as MOT or ‘Service’, were sometimes sufficient, the text in this section usually included more detail. This was presented as a list of statements, the structure of which invariably follows one of two patterns. Examples of the first are:

> ‘Fitted new key battery’
>
> ‘Fitted two new rear tyres’
>
> ‘Carried out full service’

We can analyse these as:

(*agent omitted*) event (deixis omitted) (numerative) (epithet) (classifier) thing

Here the past tense was used, as in the reporting or recounting of actions taken, and although condensed, the phrases related to the heading as in, (What) work (was) carried out (?)

> (I/ we) fitted two new rear tyres.

Examples of the second structure used are:

> ‘Replace faulty starter motor’

‘Fit new battery’

In the context of the heading on the jobcard/invoice and from the perspective of everyday speech and writing these feel less natural. We could read them as imperatives, as in instructions or items on a list of things to be done. Alternatively we could read them as infinitives without the infinitive marker ‘to’. I identified similar expressions on invoices from other local tradesmen, including the builder who wrote: ‘To take out two door linings’. I surmised that this might originate from a sentence such as: ‘To take out two door linings will cost/costs £......’ Both structures place the verb at the beginning which serves to emphasise the work that has been done and to justify the costs listed. Also, in both, the ‘actor’ is omitted, a feature which is in line with the earlier observation that no one member of the staff takes responsibility for the text as a whole.

I attempted to explore the use of the two structures with the manager and with Tony but both found it difficult to understand my question. Tony told me he would, ‘do the same’ if he wrote it again. For the workshop staff these are simply ‘the way it is done’, they write in this way without thinking about it and to them it feels quite ‘natural’. Mavers (2011) writes of ‘semiotic provenance’, the social and cultural history of all the occasions a semiotic resource has been chosen for sign making which ‘shapes its ongoing suitability’. The examples above represent well tried structures that have been learned as part of the job and, in a context that has experienced little change over many years, they remain useful. Kress notes that in such conditions little attention is paid to rhetoric.

> Socially and communicationally, things run smoothly, in well defined grooves; little reflection or effort is needed for what appear as unremarkable instances of interaction. ....The smooth grooves of convention obscure, obviate or lessen rhetorical effort: the semiotic work of rhetoric becomes invisible. (Kress, 2010, p. 45)

What we see on the job card is writing following the ‘smooth grooves of convention’. Whether these examples are characteristic of job card/invoices in other garages could only be discovered through further investigation.

4. The MOT test

4.1 External regulation of writing practices

One task in the workshop had its own separate set of written texts. This was the Ministry of Transport Test (MOT). The garage was an approved testing station and MOT tests made up a significant part of its work. Geoffrey, the service manager, and Tony were both ‘nominated testers’. Their names and photographs were displayed on an official poster on the wall close to the workshop reception desk. A dedicated computer was used to run the Driver and Vehicle Safety Agency (DVSA) software and was protected by the use of swipe cards and codes. This, with its own dedicated printer, sat on a bench close to the workshop reception counter.

I asked Geoffrey and Tony if there was much writing involved in MOT testing.

> Tony	The only things with the MOT’s is we would, (.) umm, it’s quite simplified now because all you do is scroll through the sections, and I’m going to say it was the tyre which has blown, it will come up with ‘tyre wall blown’, so we just have to tick it. So very little writing at all.

Geoffrey Very little nowadays. (its ... computers) Basically it’s er writing registration numbers, names of cars and then just numbers and ticks and using our signature. (.) Very little (.) writing.

I used to have to write down <‘the off side front spring was broken’.> Now I just press it …..

These comments highlight three aspects of the MOT process. Firstly, how closely the production of these texts were regulated by the DVSA, secondly how little actual writing the testers were required to do to generate an MOT certificate and thirdly how new technology was changing the writing undertaken at work.

Looking at the question of regulation; when the details of a car or van were entered on the computer the system provided an MOT checklist, for the correct class of vehicle, which the tester used while undertaking the test. This listed all the items he/she was required to check and the tester had to tick one of two columns, ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ against each item. A third column provided space for notes under the heading, ‘defect/comments’. Questions requiring ticks or choices from drop down menus then controlled the inputting of the test results. Based on this information, if the vehicle passed the test, the software generated the MOT certificate which the tester had to sign, thus taking personal responsibility for the decision that ‘all the test requirements have been met’ (VOSA, 2004, p. B 10). Clark and Ivanic (1997) identify ‘macro-purposes’ for writing and, in their discussion of these, cite Gramsci’s two functions of the modern state, the ‘regulatory function’ and the ‘reproductive function (Ibid p 119). The proformas involved in issuing an MOT certificate serve a ‘macro purpose’ as part of a ‘regulatory’ government scheme to ensure that all vehicles on the public highways are 'roadworthy'. A valid MOT certificate is a legal requirement for any vehicle used on public roads.

The MOT Manual (VOSA, 2004, p. A 2) states that, when a test certificate is issued, a test record must be created on the MOT database. This then links information about the roadworthiness of my car to an external system that is national in its scope. Such instantaneous transfer of personal information is now a regular feature of modern life. This trajectory is not 'horizontal (Kell 2011). Here we see a 'vertical' movement. If we use the concept of 'scales' to theorise the connection between local and wider or more distant contexts (Blommaert, 2014; Kell, 2013; Lemke, 2009) this movement from local testing centre to national database represents what Blommaert describes as a 'scale jump'. Such movements have often been represented negatively in terms of loss of power (Blommaert, 2008; Blommaert, 2014; Jones, 2000). The MOT test, however, is intended to protect drivers and, in addition, empowers individual owners and potential buyers of vehicles who, by simply putting in the registration number and make of a vehicle, are able to access the database to check its MOT history (https://www.gov.uk/check-mot-status).

Using AT as a lens enables us to conceptualise different activity systems co-existing within one business. Being a registered testing centre involved becoming part of a wider, national activity system with its own goals and its own rules and this represented a different context for writing to that for other day to day workplace texts. For the staff involved however, the two systems overlapped. As designated testers, they were charged with maintaining the integrity of the MOT test and had to work within the rules of the DVSA but their activity remained entirely local. Undertaking the test was a service for a customer and a means of earning income for the business. They had developed their own practices in relation to the paperwork, such as using a cardboard box under the MOT bench to keep MOT checklists. MOT tests were booked in using the workshop diary and the job card/invoice was used in the usual way to mediate payment. One of the criteria for selection of businesses was that writing would not represent a product of the business. We could argue that an MOT certificate was a ‘product’ the garage was supplying to its customers. However, in terms of the text itself the mechanics had almost no input.

4.2 Sponsors of IT

Returning to the comments from the service manager and Tony above, these illustrate how, since the computerisation of the MOT testing system, the writing required of the testers has changed. Rather than ‘sponsors of literacy’ (Brandt and Clinton, 2002) the DVSA and its predecessors acted as ‘sponsors’ of new technology. The changes made in 2005 required testing stations to move to a computerised system and to access information and keep up to date with changes to the system on-line rather than through printed materials. Nominated testers such as Geoffrey and Tony had no choice but to master the on-line system if they wished to continue with this area of work. The sales manager, Paul, had likewise been pressed into using a computer:

> …. when there weren’t so many computers about and people weren’t putting cars on the internet. We were doing more writing then because we were writing <u>adverts out</u> for the er newspapers. Um now we’re

> pressing buttons. Newspaper advertising isn't what it used to be, ('cos) people look at the internet now buying cars (inaudible)

5. What do we mean by writing?

5.1 Just with a pen

Writing sometimes felt like a slippery concept in the garage. I have already noted Malcolm's tendency to interpret 'writing', narrowly, as handwriting and the exchanges below illustrate a further point of discussion. I explained to all participants that I interpreted 'writing' to include the creation of texts on electronic devices but this did not tally with local understandings. I talked with Maureen about how the amount of writing in her job had changed over time:

> M. Well as I said to you earlier you consider writing (.) to be on the computer I don't. I consider writing (.) just with a pen. So in which case, it's decreased a lot.
>
> *Res. Yeah Yeah (...) Do you think the amount of, if you use it from my point of view of using both, you know what I mean, do you still think it has probably reduced?*
>
> M. Not if you wish to call writing typing. No it hasn't reduced.

Paul, the sales manager, made a similar distinction:

> P. Writing. I don't do an awful lot of writing. I spend more time on the computer. (So) writing, I write out things like order forms, invoices for customers, but that's probably the extent of the writing I do.
>
> *Res. So when you say that is the extent of the writing that is the writing you do with a pen. Is that what you are saying?*
>
> P. That's right yeah.

Maureen and Paul made a distinction between 'writing' and 'computer work' on the basis of the medium: writing 'just with a pen' on paper as opposed to ‘typing’ on a keyboard. Given the nature of many of the tasks they did on the computer, this distinction was understandable although both Maureen and Paul used computers to write emails and occasional letters and Paul put together adverts for cars online. This discussion could be seen to mirror academic debate around the use of the term ‘literacy’ and the significance of writing in the context of new information technologies, as discussed in chapter two. It highlighted the need to explore ways in which participants understand the term ‘writing’ and avoid making assumptions.

In the garage, I encountered greater willingness to engage in discussion about digital technology than about writing. Writing was taken for granted but, especially for the older members of staff, the use of computers was more controversial. It was still experienced as new and had, as we have noted, been imposed to some extent by bodies outside the business. It was accepted somewhat reluctantly as reflected in comments such as, ‘Now we’re pressing buttons’ and ‘That’s the world we live in now’. There was an element of mistrust of IT on the part of some, exemplified by the continued use of paper records of accounts alongside those on the computer, and the adoption of IT was patchy. Invoices for customers with accounts were still sent out by post, orders were made by phone and use of the computer on the workshop counter was restricted to searching for technical information.

5.2 Writing Figures

One further complication was that much of what the members of staff referred to as ‘writing’ in fact consisted mainly of figures. The Administrator’s work on the accounts involved very few words and the Sales Manager pointed out that the Sales invoice form required mainly figures. Much everyday information is commonly recorded using figures and in the garage this included: prices, dates, registration numbers, account numbers, order numbers and telephone numbers. Other examples were mentioned by the mechanics:

> Kevin: Sometimes as you're going through the job, especially if its electrical work, you may need to take the readings (.) of the electrical systems. It's handy to write things down.
>
> *Res. What would you write those on?*
>
> Kevin: Um just a bit of paper, just voltage readings, ampage readings.

Tony told me; '… when you're servicing you may want to make a note of what quantity of oil it has, the tyre pressures. Various things like this.'

We have already noted the use of figures to record precise information on measurements of chemicals and time in relation to hair treatments and, in the garage, figures used to record precise measurements of length, quantity, time or power represented an important aspect of the mechanics' work. Unique numbers also helped to identify a customer or identify a part. Using Maureen's definition of 'writing' as what is written with a pen or pencil, writing includes figures. Kress, however, argues that literacy , '... is the term to use when we make messages using letters as the means of recording that message' Kress (2003, p. 23). In this study, just as I have acknowledged that texts may rely on visual signs in addition to language, I acknowledge that texts can be, in some cases, wholly or completely made up of figures.

5. Conclusion

Martin (2008) suggests that the management of businesses with no more than four employees differs from that of larger businesses. The garage was run by a ‘hands on’ manager together with eight staff and was therefore larger than the businesses featured in the other three case studies. It was, however, not just the size but the number of quite distinct services it offered that distinguished it most clearly from the other three businesses. This diversity led to a more clearly defined division of labour which, in turn, influenced the ways in which writing was used within the business. In particular I found more clearly defined genre sets (Bazerman, 2004) within the garage. I also noted that contributions to key texts such as the job card/invoice were made on the basis of role. This diversity of the business made the role of administrator necessary and I have described how Maureen’s work involved the bringing together of texts from different genre sets and the creation of a genre system for the business as a whole

While there were similarities in the use of texts with other case studies, as for example the use of the workshop diary in the management of the work, there were also differences. The self duplicating job card /invoice was a more sophisticated proforma than those found in the other businesses and was customised to the needs of the business. Tracing the two trajectories of this text highlighted the range of purposes this text served and the extent of its use. It is an excellent example of a multi-purpose text and as a consequence was efficient in terms of the time and effort given to writing.

A number of factors shaped the writing undertaken: the customisation of the job card/invoice, the fact that this was not usually completed while speaking with the customer, and the fact that a copy of this text went to the customer. Proformas were completed neatly and the different sections of the forms were respected. There were fewer abbreviations, less reliance on graphic devices to save time and fewer examples of the improvisation and the tacit conventions found on the florist's shop order forms. In terms of the structure of the texts, however, the writers drew on resources similar to those in the other case studies and in particular the use of condensed structures to keep information brief.

I found less evidence of external influences on writing in the four businesses than I had anticipated but the MOT testing undertaken by the garage did provide a very clear example. Registration as an approved testing centre brought the garage into the orbit of the much wider activity system of the DVSA which had its own rules and standards and was set up to achieve particular goals at a national level. It involved very close regulation of text production and the use of texts to control practices in relation to the issuing of MOT certificates. This regulation and control was, to a large degree, exercised through the use of computer software. The MOT testing centre was an example of the way in which external agencies were instrumental in the introduction of computers in small workplaces. In the case of the issuing of MOT certificates the use of a computer had reduced the writing the mechanics needed to undertake

This case study also raised interesting questions relating to the ways in which the term 'writing' is understood, alerting me to the importance of exploring how the participants use the term. The distinction between ‘computer work’ and writing was made strongly by participants, a finding that drew my attention to the many issues the rapidly changing technologies of communication are raising for those who study writing. I also became aware of the degree to which texts in the garage were made up, in large part, of figures: figures that the participants spoke of ‘writing’ with a pen or pencil but in fact represent, like the graphic and visual features identified in the previous case studies, a different ‘mode’ of communication that can be used alone or in conjunction with written language.

Chapter 8

The Builder

1. Introduction

Darren did three years training in construction after leaving school and worked for a large local building firm for 10 years before choosing to work for himself. When I interviewed him, he had been running his own business for about 9 years. He undertook a wide range of jobs across the local area, some taking several weeks and others one or two days. Darren differed from participants in the other three case studies in that he worked alone, he also worked from home. He sometimes joined forces with other craftsmen to undertake a particular project and occasionally took on work for another builder. During the day his workplace could be a building site, a customer's house or garden or his truck, which doubled as a restroom and office. While he did have cause to write when he was out and about 'on the job', much of his paperwork was undertaken at home in the evenings and at weekends. His wife, Gemma, helped him by taking messages, keeping their accounts and typing up estimates and invoices.

Darren's business provided an opportunity to examine aspects of writing that differ in a number of ways from those discussed in the preceding three studies. Firstly I consider in greater detail, writing that is *not* supported by proformas or, in many cases, shaped by the need to share texts with other people. I use Darren's own narratives, as well as photographs of texts, to illustrate the writing he did when he was involved in his daily activities. I look at the contexts for this writing, the impact of these on the nature of his brief texts, their content and their uses. I also analyse the writing he did at home, tracing the ways in which information he had captured in writing during the day was re-contextualised and translated (Kress, 2010, p. 124). In doing this, I find a pattern of use that differs significantly from those found in the other businesses. Finally, I examine a process, not encountered in the other case studies, the drafting and editing of written text, as Darren and Gemma collaborated to produce estimates and invoices for their customers. In discussion of these different aspects of writing I address questions of genre, discourse and the aesthetic aspects of writing.

2. Background

2.1 The workplace

The concept of 'domain' (Barton and Hamilton, 1998) is useful in discussing Darren's work. His workplace was not defined geographically but by the activity in which he was involved. Writing was undertaken in a wide range of contexts, many far from ideal. During the day his truck was the nearest he had to an office and he described sitting in the cab in his lunch hour, ringing round to get prices then putting together an estimate for a customer. However, most paperwork was done at home in the evening. I asked him if he did this at the kitchen table at which we did the interview.

> D. Yeah (both speaking) normally when they're all out and I've got a moment of quiet.
>
> Res. OK (..) Um (..)
>
> D. An estimate um (.) an invoice I can do sitting in front of the telly. Just scribble it out, put your diary there you know, how many days you did (.) hmm and you're sitting there watching telly and you (unclear) you know and um unless it's a biggie you know or an extension or whatever and then you've got to sit here ((*at the table*))

> but if it’s only a few days and a few bits and pieces I can normally do that on the sofa.

Barton and Hamilton note the way that domains can ‘overlap’ (1998, p. 10) and for Darren there was an overlap of the domain of work and the domain of home. Within his house, work had to fit around the needs of the family in terms of space and time and with his own need for rest and relaxation. On both my visits, Darren and Gemma had problems locating the paperwork they wanted to show me. Darren explained that the children had taken over his old desk and they had plans for a new one in the kitchen. In the meantime papers had been tidied away in various drawers around the house. Husband and wife working together can create its own tensions as some good natured banter between the two in the course of the interviews indicated. Gemma, who was more confident with word processing, helped Darren by typing up estimates and invoices and taking messages on the phone, a role that, in the past, would have been seen as traditional for the wife of a self employed worker and may still be common.

2.2 Writing tasks; range and frequency

Darren had quite a clearly defined ‘genre set’ (ref Bazerman 2004) (see Table 8.1 below) and this made up the system of paperwork he and Gemma had established for the business. This system tended to be more idiosyncratic than those found in the other three businesses. Quick notes, as will be described below, were often written on whatever material was to hand. He used a small notebook when visiting customers to discuss a new job and an A4 pad of lined paper for drafting his estimates and invoices but, with the exception of his diary, he used no proformas. Because much of the time he was writing for his own use there was less need for standardisation.

Table 8.1 Texts, audience and frequency of use

Texts	Activity/Purpose	Audience	Frequency[22]
Diary entries	To *record* work done and estimate costs for future reference	Self	Every day or several times a week
Lists for builders' yard	To *aid memory*	Self	About twice a week
Short notes on the job	To *capture and preserve* information	Self	About twice a week
Notebook for recording details of new jobs.	To *record* names and addresses of customers, details of work and materials required	Self	Once or twice a week
Estimates (drafts)	To work out potential costs and prepare costing for customer	Gemma who types it up. (The customer)	Once or twice a week
Estimates (final copies) ***Typed by Gemma***	To *inform* the customer of the estimated cost of work required	The customer. The accountant.	Once or twice a week
Invoices (draft)	To work out costs and prepare these for customer	Gemma who types it (The customer)	Once or twice a week
Invoices (final copies) ***Typed by Gemma***	To *invoice* the customer for work completed	The customer. The accountant	
Text messages	To *respond* to queries, arrange times, etc.	The customer	Occasionally
Orders sent by email to suppliers	To *place an order* for supplies	Suppliers	
Kitchen **calendar**	To *record* some significant dates	Self, Gemma	Occasionally

As far as I was able to gather, when he worked with other people, communication was almost entirely oral, by phone or face to face.

[22] Based on a log Darren kept for one week and interview data. This can change significantly from week to week.

Assessing the frequency with which Darren undertook the different types of writing was difficult as this, like his work, varied from day to day and week to week. One job could take half a day or many weeks. Taken overall, he estimated that writing took up less than a quarter of his working time. He believed that he wrote less now he was self employed than he did when he worked for a large building firm. He described how, there, he had to devote the whole of each Friday afternoon to paperwork involving a site diary, work permits, plant returns, time-sheets, etc.

2.3 Darren's views on writing

Darren was confident as a writer in the context of his work and happy to engage in discussion about writing. In the initial interview he referred to the importance of writing for communication, particularly in the context of communicating with customers, and in subsequent conversations he underlined its value for storing information and as a record to refer back to, as in the case of his work diary. When I asked him how the writing he does for his job compared with the writing he did at school or college he said that it was 'a lot less' but added, '…. and then it's the responsibility. You get more and more responsible.' Darren did not elaborate on this comment but I understood him to be viewing writing as an integral part of his work which entails considerable responsibility. From this perspective, the texts he wrote had more significance than their length or appearance might have suggested.

Darren expressed a clear preference for speaking to people where this was possible:

> Well it’s quicker. It’s more to the point isn’t it, rather than have to post a letter or send an email you’ve got a decision there and then haven’t you? (.) instant.

2.4 Uses of IT

In respect of IT, Darren’s practices evolved over the period between our initial interview and our final conversation. When we first spoke he told me he found the computer useful for sourcing tools and materials but his wife took care of emails. In our last conversation he spoke of starting to use email to contact suppliers. He told me this was easier and cheaper than using the phone and commented that he could contact them in the evening, at his ‘own leisure.’ He was working for someone else at the time and observed, ‘I can’t be on the phone all day’. Darren had also started to accept online payment, appreciating that this was ‘instant’. In addition he had recently sent two bills to the person he was working for by email. Gemma used the computer to type up, print and store invoices and estimates. As I note later, the use of word-processed letters was driven in part by concern for the image of the business. Darren and Gemma, however, also expressed a degree of mistrust in IT, fearing loss of information, and retained hard copies of all estimates and invoices.

Being out and about during the day, Darren’s mobile phone was important for communication. It was chiefly used to make and receive telephone calls but he also made use of text messaging. As noted elsewhere, this was often initiated by customers. He said he wrote out his messages in full with just a few abbreviations but, if he was writing to someone he knew well, the message would be informal with some ‘mickey taking’.

3. Writing for oneself

3.1 Quick everyday notes

Darren recounted stories of how he wrote when he was busy at work. His narratives gave a sense of the immediacy of much of his writing. Showing me one of his notes, he explained:

> That was a receipt ..... but that was all I had to write down on so (.) sometimes it's a piece of wood …. If you're on a job and then it's oh? (oh) a bit of plasterboard you write down 3 bags of plaster. 2 bags cement. .... throw it on the dashboard. and off you go to the builders' yard. then you get there. 3 bags of that and then I'll invoice (unclear) and then you (use) the other side another day to go and get some more bits.
>
> Last night I had to write something for an invoice um so I wrote it on my hand. and then Mick had a post-it thing on his dashboard so I >then I scribbled it down on that<, and the address, to know, because it was his job and I didn't know the name or the address and chucked it in my lunchbox so I had it when I got home to do the invoice. .... Bear in mind that was written doing 50 miles an hour on the road (both laugh)

Darren's style in recounting these events had an energy that evoked the hurry of writing on the move, exemplified in his use of verbs; 'scribbled', 'chucked', 'throw', 'ripped' and phrases such as 'off you go'. Some texts served their purpose over the briefest of time:

> Ooh there's sizes as well? Today I um (.) part of the screw box, ripped it off, had to measure the side of a dormer window, to go down stairs, you know two flights of stairs to cut some ply so you take measurements and you write the measurements down on a piece of screw box, put it your back pocket, go down, measure it out, cut it, and up you go again

Other notes needed to last until Darren could get to the builders' yard and yet others were placed on the dashboard of his work truck as a reminder of things to be done the next day. Some were kept and the information transferred at home to a notebook or to his work diary.

When I asked the Darren if he could give me any examples of his writing, he produced a small piece of paper. This was a well thumbed page from a small pad, provided by a builders' merchant, torn roughly in half lengthways and then folded. There was writing on both sides and it included at least 8 different notes written at different times at different angles, in pencil and pens of different colours (Figure 8.1 and 8.2). This represented 8 quite separate, albeit fleeting, writing events. Each note was very brief, some comprising simply of figures. There was no framework, as on a proforma, and no headings to provide a context for the information. Unlike the information recorded on a florist's order form or in the hairdresser's appointment book the purpose of the notes was not 'communication' (Kress, 2010). These snatches of information were only meaningful in the context of a remembered phone call or a specific job and were intended solely for the writer himself. Their shelf life was short, as Darren knew only too well. He commented: 'You write shorthand down and boof' (indicating that the context of the note had been forgotten). The information that was recorded on this piece of paper is pared back to the minimum. These were not the abbreviated 'little texts' (Halliday, 1994) seen on the florist's order forms or the garage's invoices. Darren recorded only the essential details, precise information such as addresses and telephone numbers, quantities and dimensions: 'Things you'd probably forget before you get home.' Here, writing functioned (Clark and Ivanic, 1997) as a material, and therefore portable, means of capturing and preserving these details.

Figure 8.1 Builder's note, side one

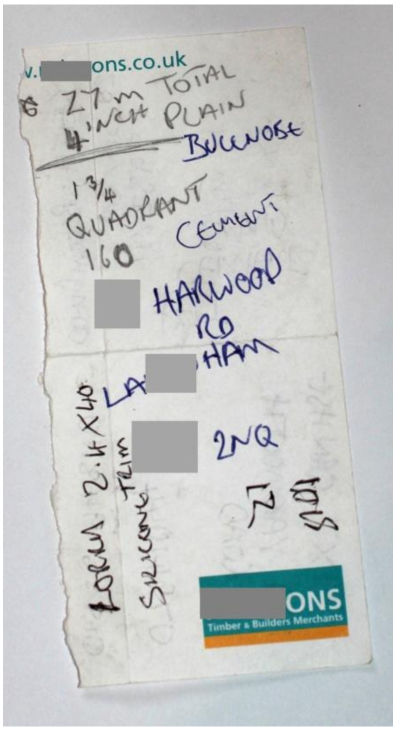
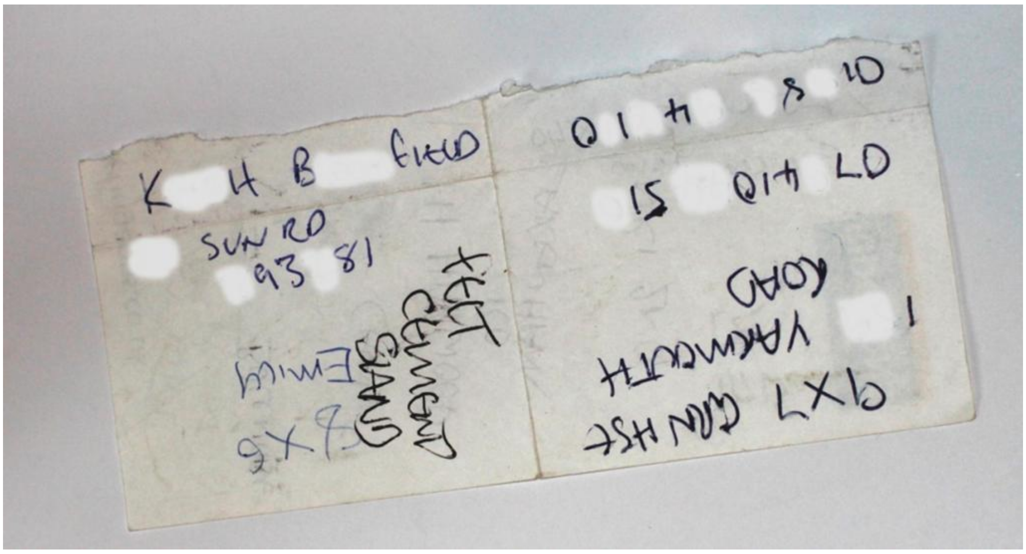


Figure 8.2 Builder's note, side two



Although scruffy and insignificant looking, this scrap of paper held information that could be vital to securing a job, purchasing the right quantity of materials or ensuring that the correct costs were included on an invoice. Gemma recognised the potential importance of these notes describing how she rescued bits of paper from Darren's pockets when she washed his clothes. In terms of the organisation of his work, much of the information was kept in his head. However, he was very aware of the fragility of memory:

> If you don't write it down as soon as you get home (.) the week later most of it's out of your head

These notes illustrate Darren's use of upper case letters for all his writing, a habit he said he has got into since leaving college but could not explain further.

Ormerod and Ivanic (2000, p. 96) argue that literacy practices can be inferred, '… not only from events but also from the characteristics of the 'text' itself.' I did not witness the writing of these notes but it was possible to find, in the notes themselves, physical evidence of Darren's literacy practices that corroborate the accounts he provided, written as they were on odd bits of paper, at different angles, folded tightly to fit in a pocket or wallet and greyed from contact with dirty hands.

3.2 Keeping information safe

This piece of paper was taken from Darren's wallet and the sharp creases came from being folded into a shape small enough to fit. Written records are only of use if they are kept safe and can be accessed when needed. Darren explained:

> I also keep notes in <u>here</u> so that I know …… (looking at wallet)

> This is just what was on the go as a (.) job down A……….. Road and another job I've got to do in B………….. which was taken over the telephone he said we need this and that, so I'll pick that up on route but that's in there 'cos I know where it is and that's organised that is.

As Darren described in one of his stories above, his lunchbox also provides a 'safe place' for a scrap of written information. He did not transfer the information immediately but stored it until he was ready to draft an invoice or estimate.

3.3 Darren's diary: writing to record rather than to plan

Writing was also used to preserve information over longer periods. At home Darren wrote up his diary every night. Showing me this he said:

> Day to day diary, which I put in there every day what I've done. then when I come to bill the customer how many days (.) and exactly what I did?
>
> Yeah you see most of these are minimal (Gemma comes in. Exchange of greetings) I was on a job recently for three weeks and I just put (unclear), and 'skirting and architrave' (looking in diary) and the following day, 'skirting, doors hanging doors and skirting' (.) um day after 'painting at home'. Another one would be 'Thomas, kitchen fitting and extractor fan'. (Brief interruption) Yeah always the name at the top um (Unclear) 'repointing, slates on roof', and then at the top what materials I got for that day. So that's pretty much it. It just varies from day to day.
>
> …….. and then at the end of the job? you trawl through, work out how many days you've been there and that will say don't forget you put a bit of fascia board up or something or you knock a pier down and took the rubble away, you know because you can forget, over the course of a few weeks.

The entries were brief but the dated pages of the diary and inclusion of customers' names ensured that they were meaningful when he came back to them. In addition to calculating the costs for a job that was completed Darren also explained how it helped with estimating costs for a new piece of work:

> .... also (.) for future jobs if I get something of a similar size I can look back as a reference and say oh yes that took us 3 months or four months and um there's a good indication as to how long that's gonna take ...

Although Darren used writing to capture and store important pieces of information and to remind him of things to do the next day, in this business there was no one text that had a coordinating role like the florist's order form or the hairdresser's appointments book. His diary was used almost exclusively to record work undertaken, not to book future work. Occasionally the calendar in the kitchen was used to record a particular commitment and the date and time of a meeting with a customer was often recorded in his notebook along with the name and address. On the whole, however, Darren managed his time without the help of writing. His work involved fewer but lengthier jobs than the other businesses, enabling him to take a more relaxed approach to timing. Writing however, as in the garage, did play a significant role in relation in the financial side of the business and, in particular, the production of estimates and invoices for the customer.

4. Following the life histories of Darren's texts

4.1 Recontextualisation and formalisation

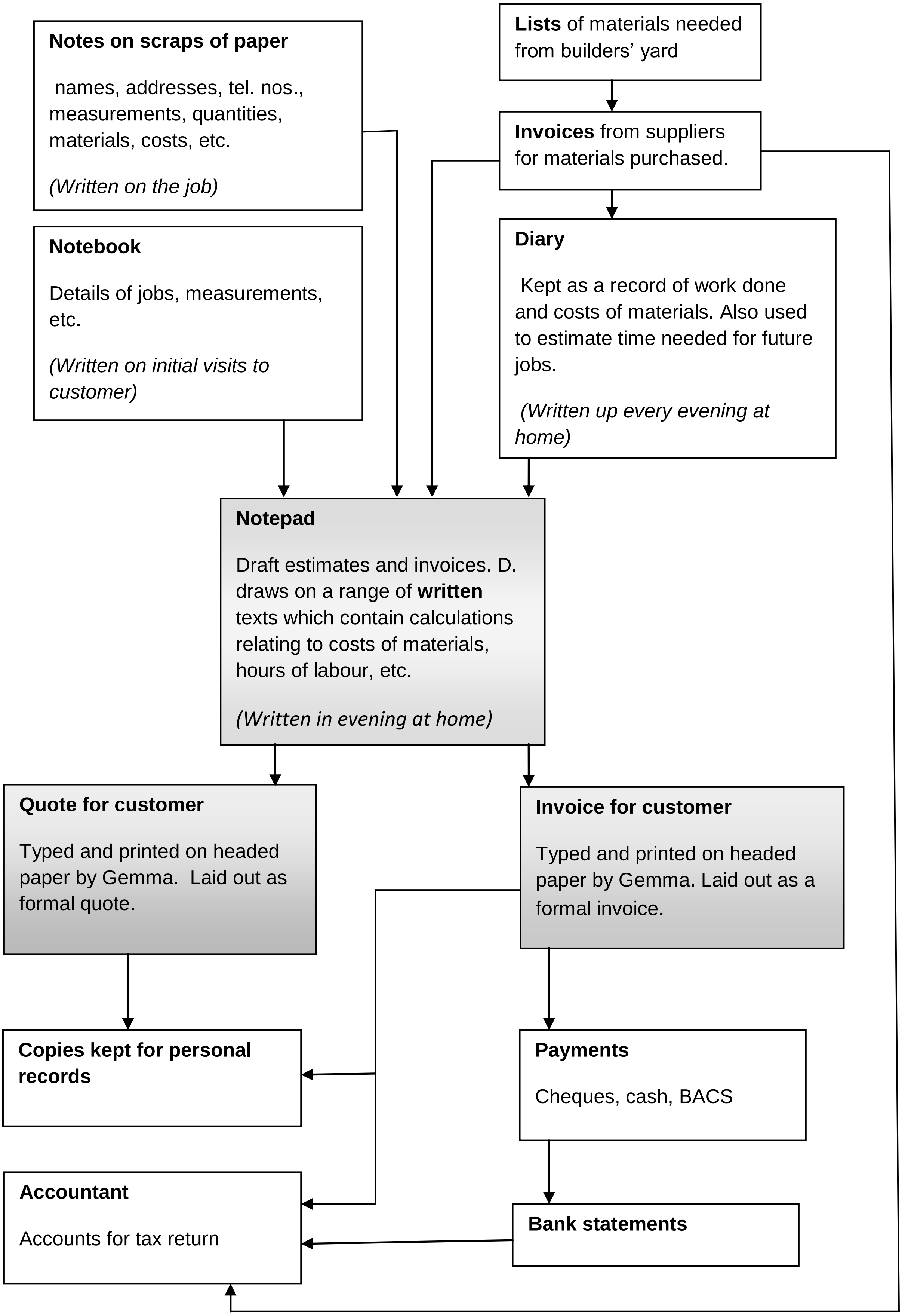
If we attempt to trace the life of Darren's texts and the interrelationships between them, we find a somewhat different pattern to those in the other three businesses. Rather than tracing the 'trajectory' of one text, as in the case of the order form, the appointments book or the job card/invoice, we find information being transferred from one text to another. The items on

Darren’s lists of materials were re-contextualised as they were ‘formalised’ and ‘translated’ (Kress, 2010, p. 124), becoming items on an invoice from the builders’ yard: a less ephemeral text and one that had status as evidence of expenditure that Darren could retain for his accountant. Information on the materials purchased was also transferred from the invoice to his diary, as noted in the section above.

The process of drafting an estimate or invoice involved the aggregation of information from a number of different sources (Figure 8.3). Information was not simply copied. A draft estimate from Darren’s pad (Figure 8.4) illustrated how the costs of materials were calculated and totalled up and the time taken was multiplied by a daily rate to provide labour costs. The cost of labour and materials were then combined to provide a single figure, a process that, in this case, involved some rounding down. The information was ‘translated’ into a new and more formal but very familiar genre, that of an estimate or an invoice. As figure 8.5 illustrates, the draft estimate or invoice then underwent a further transformation, this time a change of medium, as Gemma used word processing software to create a neatly printed version of Darren’s handwritten text, customising this with an appropriate header and footer[23]. Kell’s (2011) use of the term ‘meaning trajectories’, as discussed in chapter two, is apt in this case. It was not the texts that were re-contextualised but the ‘meaning’, held by the different texts. Following the ‘trajectories’, illustrated in Figure 8.3, helps us to appreciate the system that lay behind what could appear a rather chaotic way of working and the roles the many different texts played within this. It enables us to recognise how writing was

[23] I have not included the header and footer in figure 8.5 in order to preserve anonymity.

Figure 8.3 Tracing 'meaning trajectories': how Darren's texts are used



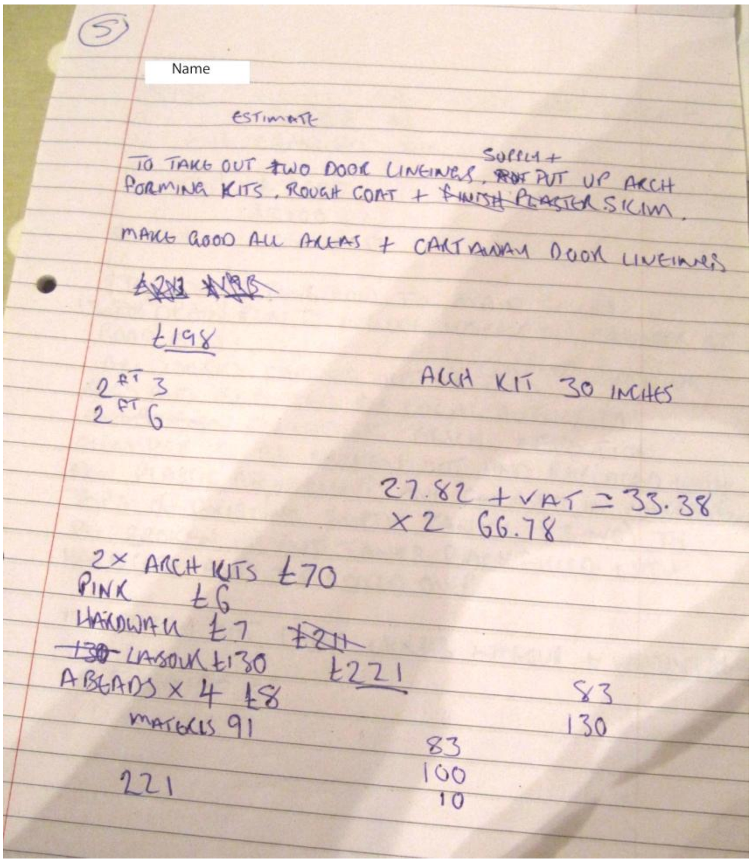
used to ‘mediate’ (Engeström, 1999; Smith, 1990) the process of pricing and requesting payment.

4.2 Drafting and editing

In all three previous case studies we have noted that participants wrote directly onto proformas, labels and cards, even where, as in the case of the garage’s invoices or the message cards in the florists shop, these texts were for the customer. In Figure 8.4, however, we see Darren drafting an estimate, drawing on information recorded in different texts, calculating the costs and putting together a text that provides a summary of the work needed or the work he has completed. He drafted the main body of the text in full. Darren’s crossings out and alterations to the wording suggest a degree of editing, not just of content but also of style as, for example, in the change from ‘finish plaster’ to ‘skim’. This process comes closer to that of ‘composition’ (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996) than observed elsewhere.

Gemma used a previous invoice or estimate as a template, altering it as necessary, so Darren did not bother to include headings such as, ‘Labour and materials’ or the formal closing. He usually put the name and address of the customer at the top but in this case these were already known. Gemma made decisions on the layout. She also edited the text if she thought that was necessary and told me she found the spelling and grammar tool on the computer useful for this. In the example in figures 8.4 and 8.5, she corrected the spellings of ‘linings’. I noted that because Darren wrote wholly in capitals, it was left to Gemma to work out where capitals were appropriate in the word processed version.

Figures 8.4 Darren's draft for estimate 1


(5)

Name

ESTIMATE

TO TAKE OUT ~~TWO~~ TWO DOOR LINEINGS, SUPPLY + ~~PUT~~ PUT UP ARCH FORMING KITS, ROUGH COAT + ~~FINISH PLASTER~~ SKIM.

MAKE GOOD ALL AREAS + CART AWAY DOOR LINEINGS

~~£2?? £198~~

£198

2 FT 3
2 FT 6

ARCH KIT 30 INCHES

27.82 + VAT = 33.38
x 2 66.78

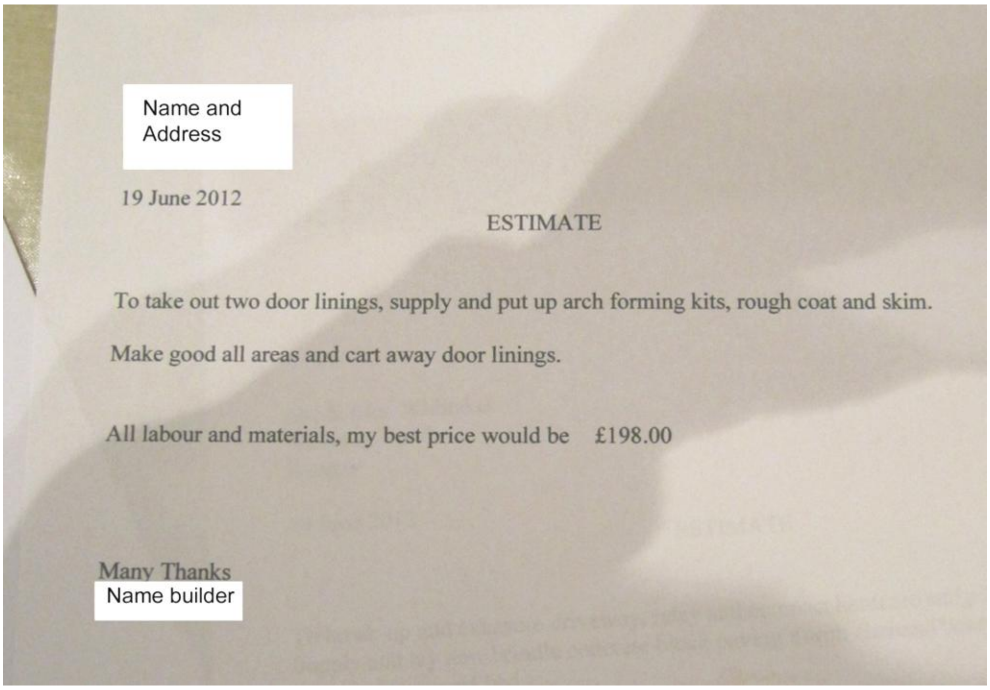
2 x ARCH KITS £70
PINK £6
HARDWALL £7 ~~£211~~
~~130~~ LABOUR £130 £221
A BEADS x 4 £8
MATERIALS 91

83
130

83
100
10

221

Figure 8.5 The word-processed version of estimate 1



Name and Address

19 June 2012

ESTIMATE

To take out two door linings, supply and put up arch forming kits, rough coat and skim.

Make good all areas and cart away door linings.

All labour and materials, my best price would be £198.00

Many Thanks

Name builder

Darren checked the printed version and, if he felt something was not right, he marked it for Gemma to alter and print again. This to and fro of the text provided an example of collaboration: in this case, collaboration relating to the editing and presentation of the text rather than its content. This could, however, lead to misunderstandings as described below.

5. Genre, discourse and multimodality

5.1 Genre

When I asked Darren whether Gemma made alterations to his rough drafts when she typed them up his reply provided an insight into his understanding of his writing.

> She does actually and then um she'll give them back to me and I'll read it and say it doesn't read right and she'll say what you write didn't make sense, but its building terminology. You know. Cart away associated rubbish. (both laugh) You know

Gemma recognised that Darren used language in a particular way but struggled when trying to give me an actual example.

> .... I don't do it so much now because I've got used to it but some of the things that Darren writes down is in builder's terms so when he writes something like um number of windows, I would type um (.) what will I type? What does he do? Um. He will put (.) 'number three windows', rather than three windows. Um, because that's just like a builder's term and that's just what he's been taught ....

Both referred to 'building *terminology*' and 'builders' *terms*' when what Gemma was trying to describe were in fact the linguistic structures Darren used. She recognised these as different but, like others interviewed for this study, she did not have the meta-language to explain this easily.

Darren and Gemma showed me a printed estimate that Gemma had to change twice. Darren's handwritten draft read;

> … LAY NEW 100 mm DRAIN ON P STONE BED TO JOIN BUNGALOW TO MAIN SEWER.

When she typed this the first time Gemma interpreted the word 'bed' as a verb, as in the sense of bedding a post in concrete. She therefore inserted a full stop after stone and began a new sentence with a capital letter.

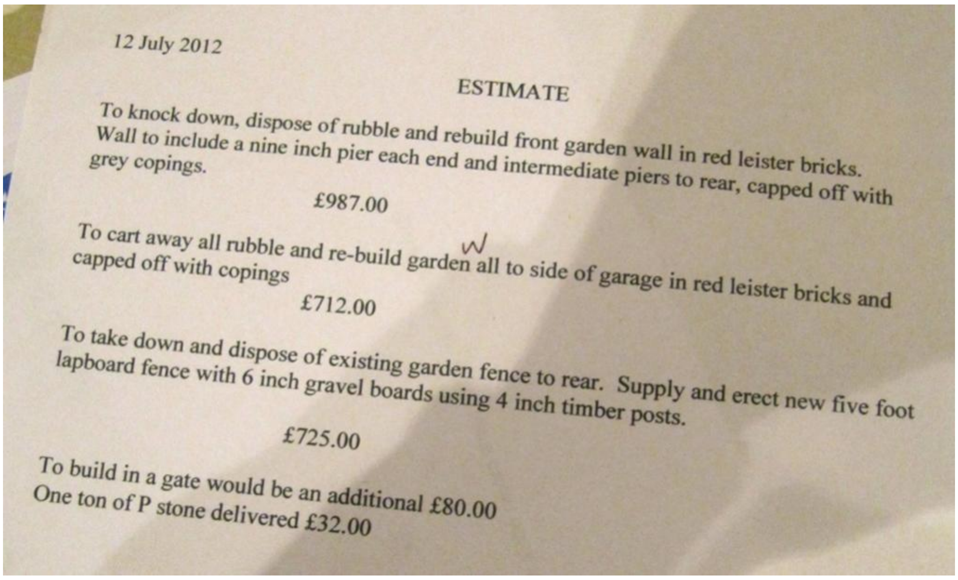
> ... lay new 100mm drain on "P" stone**. B**ed to join bungalow to main sewer'.

Darren crossed out the full stop and put a small b for bed but Gemma, still interpreting ‘bed’ as a verb, placed a comma after stone;

> ‘.... lay new 100mm drain on “P” stone**, b**ed to join bungalow to main sewer’.

Here the ‘builder’s terminology’ caused a problem for Gemma but Darren’s use of upper case letters contributed to this by making the sentence boundaries less visible.

Figure 8.6 Builder’s estimate 2



12 July 2012

ESTIMATE

To knock down, dispose of rubble and rebuild front garden wall in red leister bricks. Wall to include a nine inch pier each end and intermediate piers to rear, capped off with grey copings.

£987.00

To cart away all rubble and re-build garden w all to side of garage in red leister bricks and capped off with copings

£712.00

To take down and dispose of existing garden fence to rear. Supply and erect new five foot lapboard fence with 6 inch gravel boards using 4 inch timber posts.

£725.00

To build in a gate would be an additional £80.00
One ton of P stone delivered £32.00

The estimate in Figure 8.6 illustrates features of the genre of estimates. It comprises of a concise list of statements, setting out the proposed work in some detail, with prices attached. The heading ‘Estimate’ provides the textual context and allows the writer to treat certain aspects of the communication as ‘given’ and therefore leave these implicit. Each statement begins with ‘To’, echoing the construction used on invoices at the garage. As in the case of proformas, it is possible to imagine the text that has been omitted:

The price I will charge *to* (build/repair/demolish) ……. is £….

A string of verbal groups at the start of each statement places the emphasis on the work that needs to be undertaken and paid for.

To *knock down, dispose of* rubble and *rebuild* front garden wall.......

The statements are quite complex in structure including a number of co-ordinated and subordinate clauses. As on texts found in the other businesses, the actor is omitted, giving the text an impersonal and businesslike tone.

Other features of the language are more specific to the building trade. These, include the frequent use of phrasal verbs such as, 'knock down', 'cart away', 'capped off' and 'build in' and long strings of classifiers. The latter are used to provide precise descriptions of the materials to be used.

> Supply and erect new five foot lapboard fence with 6 inch gravel boards using 4 inch timber posts.

Brief descriptions of place in which the deictic is omitted are also common, such as, 'to side of garage' and 'to rear'. As noted in the discussion of 'little texts', the writing is highly condensed. Using this genre enabled Darren to set out concisely, but also quite precisely, for the customer, the work that will be done and the cost of this.

As Gemma recognised, the structures of the text in his estimates and invoices differ markedly from those of everyday speech or the personal writing found in informal messages and letters. When I asked Darren how he learned this way of writing he explained:

> …. and um (.) you just pick it up and take it with you I suppose. and then some of it you make up yourself? and others you get from other people? Um (.) Yeah other people's invoices are important too. (From) other builders I suppose.

It is something that Darren has learned as part of the job. He believed that he began to develop the use of this genre during his time with a large building firm. Although much academic interest has focused on the explicit teaching of genre (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993b), it is quite possible for the writer to use a genre without a full understanding of its linguistic features:

> In the world outside schooling, the world of self-taught and self-inducted social mobility, immersion in the social practice of a genre is sometimes sufficient to 'pick up the language' so to speak.
> (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993b, p. 7)

This informal, 'picking up' of a specific way of writing that Darren describes, and was evident in the garage workshop, is an example of what Lave and Wenger describe as learning through 'peripheral participation' and is part of the process of becoming a member of a particular 'community of practice', in this case the community of employees in a building firm and a network of local builders (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

5.2 Discourse

If genre describes 'how' a text is put together, discourse addresses the 'what': the content of the text (Kress, 2010, p. 114). Darren's notes and his estimates and invoices included many words that had specific and often technical meanings in the building trade. The following is an example from the estimate in Figure 8.6:

> Wall to include a nine inch *pier* at each end *and intermediate piers* to rear, *capped off* with grey *copings.*

This 'builder's terminology' is one part of the 'Discourse' (with a capital D (Gee, 2008)) of the building trade. It sits alongside the builder's truck, the tools and the overalls that helped to define Darren's identity as a builder, an identity that was evident in his stories, in incidents such as writing notes on bits of plasterboard.

5.3 Image and Presentation

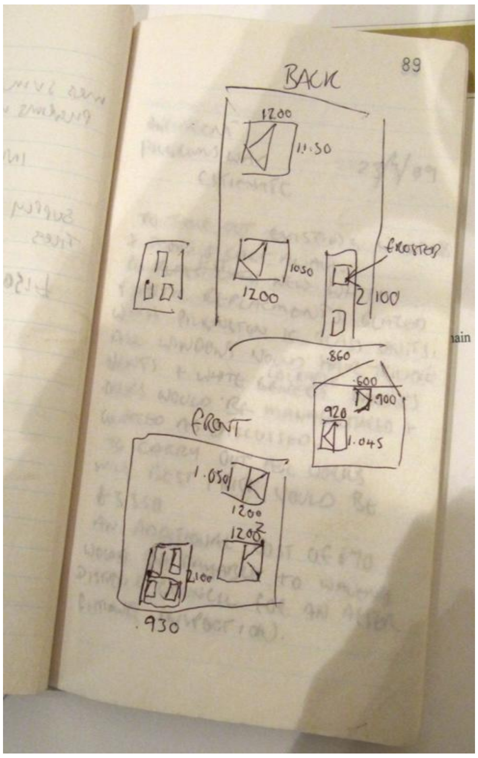
At the time of the fieldwork, Darren's estimates and quotes were word processed on white A4 paper, using a template for the header and footer. The template, which Darren and Gemma had found online, was specifically designed for construction workers. They used the Times Roman font and, explaining this, Gemma commented:

> ... that's just a nice font, it's nothing too fancy but that's not too (.) < plain and square>. It's just a just a nice font. So we stick with that.

Some local builders handwrite their invoices on headed paper or use commercially available, generic invoice pads. Darren, however, believed that using the computer offered a number of advantages or 'affordances' (Kress, 2010): the header and footer could be stored as a template on the computer which meant they didn't have to purchase printed stationery, he felt it was easier and probably quicker for Gemma to type and print them than for him to handwrite them and it enabled them to keep electronic copies and print these when needed, as for the accountant. Darren also thought that using the computer looked more ‘professional’ and repeated twice that it was ‘the modern way’.

5.4 Multimodal texts

Figure 8.7 Page from builder’s notebook



This page from Darren’s notebook (Figure 8.7) illustrates his use of sketches and plans, ‘resources’ that have particular affordances in relation to aspects of his work. Here, by using the visual rather than verbal mode, Darren has captured, succinctly, information that would have been difficult to record, and to use, in written text (Lemke, 2004). With figures placed by each window to provide the dimensions and occasional words, this is an example of a multimodal ensemble (Kress, 2010, p. 162).

6. External influences on writing

Like all businesses Darren had to submit tax returns and like the hairdresser chose to use an accountant. Hard copies of all invoices were printed and stored for the accountant. I asked about other official paperwork but gathered from his responses that there was nothing onerous. Some of his work was subject to building control which involved inspection but little writing on Darren’s part. Darren would also have been subject to Health and Safety regulation but writing linked to this would have been intermittent and was not included in this study.

7. Conclusion

Darren’s business differed in a number of ways from the other three and in this chapter I have attempted to highlight how these differences impacted on his writing practices. The first is that in the course of the everyday practical activity of his trade Darren worked independently much of the time and his writing was chiefly for his own use. Kress’s distinction between the social processes of ‘representation’ and ‘communication’ (2010 p 51) is helpful in understanding how this independence affects Darren’s writing. In writing his notes, Darren’s ‘interest’ (ibid) focused on the information he judged it was important for him to capture and preserve, in material form, and in each case he chose the most ‘apt’ mode (ibid) in which to *‘represent’* this for himself; using words, figures, abbreviations, a diagram or a combination of any of these. Because, while he was out and about during the day, he did not need to use writing to *‘communicate’* with others there was not the same need for standardisation so proformas offered fewer advantages and his somewhat idiosyncratic practices were adequate for his purposes. When, at home, he drew information together to produce estimates and invoices for customers, however, there was a need to *‘communicate’* both with Gemma and with his customers. Working independently also meant that, unlike the florist’s shop or the hairdressing salon, Darren did not have the same need for a text to co-ordinate the work and the use of time. When he worked with other craftsmen, this coordination was achieved almost entirely by word of mouth.

The jobs Darren undertook usually took considerably more time and were therefore often more costly than those undertaken by the other businesses and this required him to deal more formally with questions of cost and payment. Each job was unique and thus required Darren to set out clearly for the customer how he arrived at the estimated price and, likewise, to provide a breakdown of the final bill. While some tradesmen used proformas for estimates and invoices, Darren and Gemma chose to create their own word processed texts which meant these had to be prepared at home in the evenings and weekends. This separation of paperwork and the daily work activity, although seen to a degree in the cases of Linda and Malcolm, contrasts with most of the writing practices encountered in the other businesses, as do the processes involved in the production of their estimates and invoices. Darren did not write invoices directly. He brought together information from a range of different sources and used this to calculate his prices and to compose a text to explain these to the customer. This involved a cycle of drafting and editing in which, in turn, Gemma also became involved as she ‘transformed’ (Kress 2010 p 123) Darren’s handwritten draft into a formally presented, printed text.

Because Darren’s estimates and invoices were not constrained by proformas they illustrate very clearly how his awareness of the genre of the construction trade shaped his texts. In his estimates and invoices we can identify linguistic features and aspects of layout that are typical of this genre and recognise the affordances it offered in conveying both concisely and precisely how the costs for a job were made up. This genre is one which his customers would also recognise and find appropriate to the situation, lending his invoices and estimates a formality that befitted transactions involving large sums of money. In addition, analysis of his invoices and estimates illustrates the degree to which Darren was using the ‘discourse’ of construction and how this also helped him to describe the work briefly and accurately.

In each of the case studies I have attempted to trace the life histories or ‘trajectories’ of key texts and have noted their dynamic nature. In the case of the builder, we find ‘recontextualisation’, not of a text itself as a material artefact but of information or ‘meaning’ as it is transferred from text to text, brought together and used as elements in new texts. In describing this I have chosen to use Kell’s term, ‘meaning trajectory’. Mapping out how the many different and often very brief texts Darren created were used helped me to appreciate the system he had established for his paperwork, but it also highlighted the fact that, compared with the systems found in the other businesses, his was more demanding in terms of both the writing process and the time it took. While out and about, Darren's notes kept writing to an absolute minimum. However, in producing texts for the customer, he and Gemma abandoned the principle of 'economy of effort' and chose to invest time and effort in drafting, editing and presentation. In doing so they exercised full authorial responsibility.

Chapter 9

Cross case analysis

1. Introduction

In this chapter I look across all four case studies and consider how, together, these can enhance my understanding of the ways in which writing is used within traditional microbusinesses. I use themes that emerged from the fieldwork and the coding of the data as a framework for more detailed analysis. In this I attempt to identify patterns of behaviour, in relation to writing, that are common across the cases and those that are distinct and explore the factors that explain these commonalities and differences. In doing this I draw on the theoretical approaches and concepts discussed in chapter two, using these to help me describe, order and interpret what I found.

It was my aim, in this study, to make the perspectives of the participants my starting point. In line with this, I choose to organise the following two sections of this chapter around two messages that emerged from my interviews in the four cases studies and with the owners of businesses I interviewed in my initial scoping exercise. Paraphrased, these were:

> We/I do very little writing in the course of our/my work.

> Writing is very important in the running of the business.

On the face of it these messages are mutually contradictory but I will seek to show that this impression is misleading.

Exploring the reality behind the first of these messages involved more than an assessment of how much time was spent on writing or how many written texts were produced. In section two, I consider the participants' perceptions of the writing they undertook at work, the contexts for writing that the workplaces provided and the constraints these imposed and I look carefully at the texts that are used and the resources on which the writers called when writing.

To understand the second assertion, regarding the importance of writing to the running of the businesses, in section three, I consider the responsibilities that come with writing. I then use a distinction, made by Clark and Ivanic (1997, p. 72), between the 'purposes' for which writing is used and the 'functions' that writing is well placed to perform, highlighting the affordances writing offers to the businesses. I also consider what I have learned by viewing texts as 'semiotic artefacts' (Maybin, 2013) and, tracing their uses beyond a single writing event. This approach enabled me to better appreciate the many ways in which written texts were used, and to recognise the significance of the roles texts played in the organisation of day to day activity. It also offered a wider perspective on the work undertaken by writers and the context for their writing.

The fourth section focuses on a 'foreshadowed' idea: my expectation, arising from the literature review and popular discourse, that external factors would play an important role in the ways in which writing was used in the businesses. I note that external influence on writing is limited to specific aspects of the work and, drawing on Activity Theory, I argue that the concept of multiple interrelating activity systems (Engeström, 2001) enables us to conceptualise the co-existence of different contexts for writing within the workplace, working on different scales (Lemke, 2009).

Aware that microbusinesses are distinct in many ways, I draw on the review of the literature on workplace literacy (chapter three) and explore how, as very small, independent organisations, the four businesses compared with larger businesses in relation to their uses of writing. I then consider briefly how the four businesses have responded to the rapid pace of change in the technologies of communication.

One final section seeks to balance the picture by acknowledging the many unique characteristics of the individual businesses and I return to my discussion of case studies in chapter four and the potential significance of differences across the cases in terms of their trades, their size and the gender balance of the teams.

In my concluding section, I start from my research questions and, taking each sub question in turn, attempt to summarise what I have learned from the cross case analysis that enables me to offer a response. In addition, I attempt to draw together common characteristics of the writing I encountered across the businesses.

2. 'We do very little writing'

2.1 Time spent on writing

By starting with this assertion I need to make clear that my interest is less in how much time was spent on writing than in the nature of the writing, the factors that shaped this and participant's perceptions of what they wrote. It is also important to reiterate the criteria I used in the selection of case studies, namely that writing should not form the product of the business. I was not expecting to find a lot of time spent on writing. As the Service manager in the garage summed it up, in these businesses; '... you don't write .... to do the job.'

My efforts to obtain an objective measure of the time different participants spent on writing and the frequency with which they undertook certain writing tasks provided limited and unreliable results. I have explained the participants' reluctance to keep logs in chapter four but this was not the only problem. The questions put to participants assumed a shared understanding of what was meant by 'writing', something that, despite my efforts to provide a definition, it became clear could not be taken for granted. In addition, the question of how time spent on writing should be measured was a tricky one given the degree to which writing was embedded within wider work practices. Lastly, responses to questions about the time spent were bound to be subjective and shaped by participants' particular identities in relation to their writing at work.

From evidence drawn from interviews, observation, and the logs, it is possible to say that writing was used on a regular basis by *all* the participants. However, for the majority (15 of the 19), including three of the owners, writing took up a small or very small proportion of their time. The range of writing tasks participants undertook on a day to day basis varied significantly and patterns of use were complicated by the need for flexibility. So, for example, the florist's delivery driver, who generally did very little writing, did on occasion take orders and write labels if she was needed to help in the shop. In the garage, the largest and most diverse business, division of labour was most clear cut and the mechanics and the sales assistants wrote only a narrow range of texts whereas, in the hair salon, writing was shared equitably between the three members of the team. Not surprisingly, the owners, with the exception of Peter, tended to undertake the widest range of writing tasks.

For Jo in the Florist's shop, Maureen as garage administrator and Gemma, the builder's wife, writing constituted an acknowledged part of their work roles and they generally spent a higher percentage of their time on writing although it would be very difficult to quantify this. In addition, Linda, owner of the florist's shop, may well have been correct in her judgement that writing took up a quarter of her time. Jo, in particular, saw writing as an important aspect of her work and probably overestimated the time she spent on this. She had confidence in her writing, while Peter, the hairdresser, and Malcolm, manager of the garage, were, for differing reasons, less confident and tended to play down the writing they undertook.

2.2 Participants' perceptions of their writing at work

Assertions by participants that they did very little writing reflected the value they placed on the writing they undertook. My interviews include many examples of participants speaking dismissively about the writing they did at work: 'Scribbling', 'minimal' (Darren, builder), 'trivial little things' (Geoffrey, service manager at the garage), 'little notes' (Sally, hair stylist), 'basically instructions' (Kate, hair stylist). Many of the participants appeared to find it strange that a researcher should be interested in the type of writing they undertook and one owner suggested that I was looking at the wrong kind of business. These responses echo the attitudes to writing at work that I refer to in chapter one and reflect an implicit comparison with different, more highly valued forms of writing. Street and Street comment;

> ... the variety of literacy associated with schooling has become the defining type, not only to set the standard for other varieties but to marginalise them ...... Non-school literacies have come to be seen as inferior attempts at the real thing. (Street and Street, 1995, p. 72)

A number of writers refer to the tendency for certain types of writing to become invisible (Barton and Papen, 2010; Lillis and McKinney, 2013; Pontille, 2010) and I found that some of the writing undertaken as part of the day to day work was invisible to the writers themselves. When we began to talk about it, several participants expressed surprise at the range of writing tasks they did, in fact, undertake. Careful probing and prompting drew out accounts of writing that they had not thought to mention. It can also be argued that the kinds of texts examined in the case studies have also been invisible in relation to academic research (Pene (1995) cited in Joly (2010)).

2.3 Workplace forms or proformas

When I asked participants in the florist's shop, the garage and the hair salon what writing they did as part of their work, all immediately made reference to key texts, integral to their day to day work practices: order forms, appointment books, invoices, receipts. Such texts represented commonly used genres, associated with familiar social actions (Miller, 1984) such as taking orders for goods, booking appointments for services and charging customers. Genres provided tried and tested solutions for dealing with recurrent writing tasks and as Spinuzzi (2010) describes, makes it possible to reduce the time and effort that writing can demand.

In three of the businesses these key genre texts (Karlsson, 2009) took the form of workplace forms or proformas. Their use was a conventional response to situations in which writing tasks were routine and time was prioritised for the core activity of the business. The significance of time to microbusinesses is stressed in the NIACE report on microbusinesses (2012). It was not discussed explicitly in my interviews but the preference for keeping the time and effort spent on writing to a minimum was implicit in comments from the owners regarding their criteria for the writing undertaken in the course of the everyday work and Jo’s comments on the need for speed in writing orders in the florist’s shop and Darren’s narratives, about notes on the job, both highlighted the need to keep writing brief. Minimising the time and effort put into writing was also important because conditions for writing were generally poor. I have described how much of the day to day writing I observed was undertaken standing up, resting on surfaces designed for other uses, in busy and sometimes noisy and dirty environments, often while speaking with the customer. There was also pressure to ensure the customer was dealt with efficiently.

Proformas offered a range of affordances, providing a degree of standardisation in the recording of information, acting as a prompt to ensure the writer captured all the information required and helping those who used them to locate the information they need speedily. Most importantly, in relation to the current discussion, proformas served to significantly reduce the ‘semiotic work’ required of those who completed them. Many aspects of authorial responsibility rested with the designer of the proforma. The designer defined the categories of information to be included and the spaces within which this should be placed. This meant that the writers did not need to pay attention to the layout of the text or the way in which the information was sequenced. I have also illustrated how, on the forms used by the florist's shop and the garage, text boxes and sub-headings pre-empted the 'given' aspects of the situation, providing a textual context into which the writer simply had to place the 'new' information (Halliday, 1994). Simple phrases or single words were, in many cases, all that was needed, leaving little or no need to 'compose' (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996) sentences or paragraphs. A good proforma is *designed* to capture the necessary information as efficiently as possible and, as observed in the case studies, enables the writer to record essential information directly without need to refashion or edit what they have written. It removes much of what Davies and Birbili (2000) refer to as the 'pain' of writing.

While proformas made life easier for the businesses and were efficient in terms of time and effort spent on writing, they could also constrain or control what could be written. I encountered proformas at very different points on a continuum between the highly 'regulated' (Spinuzzi, 2010) online forms required for the MOT test and the very loose, but still 'regularised', use of the hairdresser's record cards and the florist's wedding forms. Spinuzzi (2012) suggests that 'regulated' genres 'blackbox' the 'voice' of the writer and this was reflected in Geoffrey and Tony's remarks about the forms they completed for MOT tests. On the other hand, on the loosely 'regularised' record cards used by the hair stylists, we can 'hear' Sally's 'voice' as she supports Kate to take over her clients and Kate thinking through what to do when a colour didn't take well. The writing that participants did on proformas was shaped to a considerable degree by the proforma itself.

One factor that influenced the way a proforma was completed was the degree to which it was customised to the needs of the business. The job card/invoice used in the garage had been designed by the manager and suited the needs of the business well. The mechanics therefore rarely felt the need to change the way the form was used or make the types of additions and improvisations found on the florist's order forms. The greater freedom the participants in the florist's shop and hairdressing salon exercised over their writing was, in large part, an unintended consequence of using poorly designed forms. Although trade specific, these did not reflect the practices of the individual businesses leaving the workers to develop their own solutions. In the case of the florist's order forms, the team had devised ways of using the forms that further reduced the writing required while in the case of the hairdresser's record cards, the stylists chose to write at greater length than the forms were designed to accommodate. The audience for a text, a factor discussed in a later section, and the time available to the writer to complete the proforma, were also factors in the way in which proformas were completed.

With regard to the use of proformas, Darren was an exception. Working alone much of the time, there was no need for the standardisation required when information has to be shared. He was the only one who needed to use the texts he wrote when he was out and about during the day and he had his own idiosyncratic methods for keeping writing brief. He did, however, use genre in the presentation of his estimates and invoices, using the distinctive structures, vocabulary and style associated with these texts and particularly, with those of construction workers. Use of this had become routine and saved him effort. It enabled him to provide information briefly and precisely. In addition, the templates which Gemma kept on the computer helped to reduce the time it took her to type them up.

2.4 A repertoire of resources

Examples of completed forms from the florist's shop and the hairdressing salon look, at first glance, to be messy and somewhat chaotic. Closer examination reveals a range of strategies that enabled the writers to achieve the purposes of the text under difficult conditions. To explore this I draw on concepts from a social semiotic approach to multimodality (Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016; Jewitt and Kress, 2003; Kress, 2010) and, in particular, the concept of semiotic 'resources'. Examination of the texts and interview data reveal that, within each individual business, the participants drew on a shared 'repertoire' of linguistic 'resources' (Mavers, 2007) and that these generally supported 'economy of time and effort' in relation to writing. Rosemary, in the florist's shop, referred to this as their 'shorthand'. These 'resources' included abbreviations, specialist terms, stock phrases, shared metaphors and use of a condensed form of text that omits 'given' or 'taken for granted' information in the interests of brevity (Halliday, 1994). They were learned on the job, a process that was facilitated by the small size of the businesses.

These resources were not limited to language. Mavers (2007, p. 157) argues:

> ... writing consists of a whole array of semiotic resources. It is a mode of representation/communication consisting of resources beyond those recognised in linguistic analysis alone.

Examples of completed proformas illustrate the underlining of words, the use of capitals, different coloured pens, size or boldness of letters and messages written at an angle to the main text. Other graphic devices included stars, arrows, squiggly lines and cross hatching and the spatial positioning of text. The florist's order forms and the hairdresser's appointment book are examples of what Kress (2010, p. 28) refers to as 'multimodal ensembles', depending on a combination of linguistic, graphic and visual resources. These made use of the affordances of different modes to ensure meanings were communicated as efficiently as possible.

The multimodal character of many current texts, in particular the increasing use of visual modes, tends to be seen as a recent phenomenon, attributable, at least in part, to the affordances of new technologies. Lemke (2004) credits scientific writing with pioneering multimodal texts. However, my data would suggest that the use of a range of modes has probably been a significant feature of texts in traditional businesses for a long time. Like scientists, workers in many trades need to represent and communicate 'topological' aspects of the world: matters of 'degree, quantity and gradation' for which language is not well suited (Lemke, 1998, p. 87). The builder's sketch of the positions and dimensions of the windows in a house and the mechanic's diagram of the way a cam belt is fitted conveyed information that would be difficult and time consuming to express in words. Diagrams and sketches often sat alongside written text but were also used in isolation; their meaning implicit within the immediate situation or within a context held in the memory. Photographs of floral displays were often used in the florist's shop to help customers visualise the options available. Figures featured prominently in texts used in the garage; recording rates of emissions, the pressures of tyres or strength of electrical current. Likewise, the hair stylists used percentages and fractions to communicate accurately the mix of chemicals used to colour hair and the builder recorded dimensions of rooms and quantities of materials.

One aspect of meaning making I had not anticipated and which also helped to avoid unnecessary writing was the placement of texts. This was used to indicate the status of a text, as in the use of Darren's wallet, or to indicate the timing of work as in the case of the florist's folder and pin board. Texts were also located to facilitate sharing of information, for example, the workplace diary, the florist's message book and the hairdresser's appointments book. These remained in one place, accessible to everyone and open at the current page. Such practices avoided the need for replication of texts. Choices of materials for texts in terms of size, thickness and durability were made in relation to their use, as in the case of the hairdresser's appointment card. Writing tools, too, were chosen for a purpose, as in the use of pencil for appointments in the hairdressing salon so these could be erased if necessary.

I have approached the concept of a repertoire of resources here as something shared by those working within a particular business but individuals also drew on personal repertoires. This was evident in the language used on the hair stylists' record cards and Jo's distinctive handwriting in the florist's shop.

2.5 Choice of medium

It was not only the types of texts used and the way that they were written that reduced the writing the participants needed to undertake. The small size of the businesses and the proximity of colleagues made it possible to rely on talk for much internal communication. Speech was generally, although not always, the preferred mode of communication among the participants, favoured for getting things done, being more direct and saving time. Orders for supplies were mostly made over the phone and, where necessary, the phone was used to contact customers. Barton and Hamilton (1998) note that speech often accompanies the use of written texts and, in my examination of writing events, I noted the small proportion of the time spent on writing compared to that spent talking.

For key, internal texts, all four businesses had maintained tried and tested pen and paper systems. These were judged to be simpler, more flexible and more reliable, than computer based alternatives. Computers were used only for specific purposes. Reminiscent of academic debates, participants held differing opinions regarding the impact of digital media on writing. Some in the garage argued that they did less writing because of the use of computers, making a distinction between writing and 'computer work'. Computer use, on the other hand, could, in some cases, increase the writing required. The affordances the computer offered sometimes outweighed additional effort in terms of writing. The asynchronous nature of email provided a useful way for the florist's shop to keep in contact with brides-to-be who were at work during the day but, as Linda's emails illustrate, this entailed considerably more writing than the traditional face to face and phone communication. The builder found email useful for sending orders to suppliers in the evenings and he and his wife chose to produce printed invoices and estimates on headed paper to present a good image of the business. I also encountered considerable scepticism about the reliability of computers which led to duplication of effort, as in the keeping of both computer-based and paper based files of accounts and using the phone to check on the receipt of email orders.

2.6 The audience for texts

Where texts were exclusively for internal use, a shared repertoire of semiotic resources and reliance on shared knowledge worked well; the context of the work could be taken as given. Where, however, the text was to be given to the customer, different considerations came into play. The texts were still kept brief and, to a degree, writers could still rely on the shared context and understanding but, across all four businesses participants made reference to the need to consider the customers and to ensure that their writing promoted a good image of the business. They tended to avoid abbreviations and other features of the local 'shorthand', including most of the graphic devices noted above, and took greater care with handwriting and spelling. In some cases, particularly where money was concerned, writing was used to bring a degree of formality to a communication.

Some writing such as Darren's brief notes was not designed to be shared. His notes could be ephemeral, used to record specific details for the briefest period of time but others carried important information that needed to be kept and transferred to a safe location at home. The garage mechanics jotted down specific measurements relating to the vehicle they were repairing and Malcolm scribbled figures for the levels of the petrol tanks before transferring these to the computer. The hairstylists added notes against appointments in the appointments book and Jo listed items to add to an order for stock. These notes often comprised of just one or two words or a string of figures. They could appear cryptic, to an outsider, but the writer could rely on memory to provide context and thus meaning, a strategy, however, that could mean their shelf life was limited.

2.7 A matter of necessity and design

Returning to the assertion with which this section began, the evidence suggests that the participants were correct; the majority of them did undertake very little writing and what they wrote was usually very brief. This was not because they were unable to write in different ways or at greater length[24]; it was a matter of necessity and of design. Time is a valuable resource for microbusinesses (NIACE, 2012) and time used for writing meant less time for productive activity. The constraints of the physical environment and the work activity also made it desirable to keep writing brief while, on the other hand, the small size of the businesses made it possible to keep systems simple and rely on the spoken word for much communication.

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[24] In interviews participants were asked what writing they did outside work and their responses indicated a very varied range of writing activities.

Keeping writing to a minimum had been built into their systems and, with the exception of Darren, the use of proformas was central to these. It was also facilitated by a repertoire of resources for meaning making that were learned, shared and developed within the business. Where, however, texts were shared with the customer other considerations were taken into account although texts were generally still very brief.

It is helpful to note the criteria the owners and participants used in relation to their everyday writing. Stress was placed on legibility, on communication, 'getting the message across' and on getting the content correct. Many were quite frank, admitting that aspects of writing such as spelling, grammar or punctuation were not their strong points, individually or collectively. This was not perceived as a problem although there was broad agreement that when a text was for the customer, greater effort was needed to get these correct.

3. 'Writing is important in the running of the business.'

3.1 The affordances of writing, functions and purposes

When, in my initial scoping exercise, I challenged the owners of micro businesses in Eastmarket to say how important they thought writing was to their business, all but one told me it was 'important', 'very important' or 'vital'[25]. In the case studies we find participants acknowledging its importance in very practical ways: Sally imagining how difficult it would be to do her job with no written records, Linda contemplating the implications of losing an order form and Gemma rescuing Darren's notes from his pockets before

[25] See list of choices presented to interviewees in Appendix 3.

putting clothes in the wash. At its simplest, writing was essential as a repository for important, detailed information.

Despite the fact that considerable authorial responsibility lay with the designer of the proforma, it would be wrong to assume the writer's work was simple or mechanistic. Darren spoke of 'responsibility' in relation to the writing he did at work and I have noted within the other case studies the responsibilities born by writers. There were different aspects to this responsibility. The use of proformas was closely embedded within the workplace activity and the content of the texts almost always represented decisions made or negotiated by the writer: the date of a booking, the duration of an appointment, the cost of a bouquet, the parts required to repair a car. In making these decisions, the writer needed to be aware of the implications of a particular piece of work in terms of timing, supplies and the capacity of the business. In Hull's term (1999), they needed to be 'a literate employee'.

The writers also exercised responsibility by deciding which details to record, judging what was necessary, what could be assumed, what needed to be made explicit and what needed to be highlighted. The details had to be accessible to other workers and, where appropriate, to the customer. The format and style of the proforma was fixed but the writers were responsible for the presentation of their entries and these had to be legible, meaningful and sufficient and able to be read and understood quickly and easily. I have noted how the writing of texts, such as orders and bookings, 'fixed' meaning and represented a commitment to the customer, on behalf of the business. The writer bore a responsibility to capture the key items of information that would enable that commitment to be met and in this way their writing was 'consequential' (Brandt, 2015, p. 160).

One approach to the exploration of this assertion would have been a classification of the purposes for which writing was used in the four businesses. However, Clark and Ivanic (1997) suggest such lists are unlikely to be exhaustive. They point to the importance of understanding *why* writing is chosen in favour of other 'communicative means' and here it is useful to use their distinction between 'purposes' for writing and the 'functions ... which writing, as a semiotic medium, is particularly well designed to achieve' (Clark and Ivanic, 1997, p. 108). Being visual, relatively durable and portable, writing is well suited to keeping records, and to providing a means of communication with others at a distance or over time. Writing can also, as Clark and Ivanic (ibid) suggest, be used as an aid to thinking, to take care over wording, to keep evidence of a communication and to add weight to a message, even to avoid interaction with others. Participants made reference to using writing for almost all of these reasons.

3.2 Tracing the life of texts

As I began to analyse my data I found myself paying greater attention to texts as material, semiotic artefacts. Intrigued by a reference the owner of the florist's shop made to the order form 'travelling', I used a diagram to explore its journey. This illustrated a series or 'chain' of literacy events (Barton 2001), in each of which the order form played a part. These events involved different people and took place at different times and in different locations. Reading Catherine Kell's work on text trajectories (2011), I began to look at the journey of the order as a trajectory. Like many of the 'trajectories described by Kell, this one was horizontal and local; the order was moved from situation to situation within the limited network of the business and its customers. Unlike hers, however, it was predictable: a routine journey repeated daily with small variations. Using Kell's distinction, it was 'scripted' as opposed to 'emergent' (Kell, 2013).

This analysis demonstrated the significant role played by a single, handwritten text, in the activity of the business. It was the key 'thread' (Kell, 2011, p. 2) that linked the different stages of the process involved in preparing and delivering a bouquet The diagram also illustrated the relationship between the order form and other texts such as lists of flowers to be ordered, notes on the whiteboard, labels on buckets of flowers in the store and the message card attached to the bouquet.

I decided to find out what I could learn by applying the approach to key texts in the other businesses. In the case of the garage workshop it was possible to trace 'trajectories' for both copies of the jobcard/invoice. These illustrated how different people, each with a different role within the business, contributed, in sequence, to the text as it moved from place to place, and together produced an invoice and receipt for the customer as well as a record for the accountant and the workshop. This reflected the well defined division of labour that existed in the garage. It also highlighted the multiple purposes the one text served.

In the hairdressing salon, metaphors relating to travel were less apt. Different people contributed to the appointment book at different points in time, in this case over the course of weeks or even months; the text however, remained firmly in one place. Again, a sequence of small writing events contributed to the production of one text, a page which provided a timetable for a particular day. Tracing the life of this text underlined how it was frequently revisited as the writer, and others, booked in further clients on the page and checked the work schedule on the day itself. It also reminds us that texts can be deleted or altered, as when a customer cancels or asks to reschedule an appointment.

In the case study of the salon, I explored the importance of time and tracing the uses of the entries in the appointment book illustrates the significance of writing in the management of time across the business. Brief as the entries were, just a name, an abbreviation and a squiggly line, this exercise demonstrates how texts like these '... cumulatively assemble the structures and processes of people's daily lives ...' (Kell, 2013, p. 2). The role of writing in relation to time emerged in the other cases too. In the florist's shop writing supported the timing of work, as orders were filed according to the delivery date and labels ensured flowers were ready at particular times. The workshop diary was used to ensure a realistic workload for one day and the builder used his diary to plan the timing of future jobs.

Lastly, in the case of Darren, I found a plethora of small texts: notes, invoices, lists of materials, measurements, addresses and telephone numbers; the production of each representing a fleeting writing event. While some were short lived, the information held by others was transferred to a safer place: 'recontextualised' (Kell, 2011) in Darren's diary, on a list for the builder's yard or on his notepad. In the process, the meaning was 'translated'

(Kress, 2010, p. 124) from one genre to another. As he pulled together the information he needed to draft out an estimate or an invoice, figures were subsumed into more general sums and details of work into broader categories. Darren's drafts were then 'translated' (Kress, 2010) by Gemma into a new medium, a word processed document with the addition of an appropriate header and footer. Here, Kell's (2011) preference for the term 'meaning trajectory' had relevance. Kell noted how a meaning expressed in one mode could be recontextualised, not only in a different time and place but in a different mode. In the case of Darren's system, it is not the material text but the information or meaning that we can trace from scribbled note to a component of a neatly presented invoice.

Each flow diagram traced a different story but all shed light on the assertion that writing was 'very important' in the running of these businesses. Firstly, in every case, this approach highlighted the degree to which individual texts were *used*. They were read and acted on by different people at different points in time, and in different places, placed in particular locations, added to, altered, aggregated, translated into different genres and media, incorporated into larger texts and stored for future use. These texts, far from being 'inert' (Maybin, 2013), something we examine at just one point of time, were shown to be 'dynamic' and 'processual'. The participants knew that the texts they wrote would be consulted, many times, by themselves and/or others, in the course of the day to day activity and, for this reason alone, recognised them as important.

Secondly, this approach to analysis demonstrated the significance of the roles that texts played in the running of the businesses. These included: co-ordinating work processes, managing the use of time, managing information, keeping records and ensuring correct payment, all vital if the businesses were to remain viable and profitable. My tracing of the histories of texts allowed me, not only to identify these roles, but also, in line with Kell's emphasis on 'reading out' from the data (Kell, 2013, p. 20), to illustrate, at a micro level, *how* texts were used to undertake them.

Tracing the uses of texts highlighted the ways in which the text in question related to other texts used in the business and how these, together, created 'systems' (Bazerman, 1994). These were, as Peter, the hairdresser, emphasised, very simple, constituting small numbers of standard texts and relying almost entirely on pen and paper but, in all cases, they had stood the test of time and were seen to work well. Darren and Gemma's system for dealing with paperwork was less elegant than those used in the other businesses but was consistent and served its purpose.

Thirdly, looking beyond immediate writing events draws our attention to a wider context for any act of writing and here, AT provides a useful lens. It enables us to view individuals who interact with a text, at different times and in different places, as involved, not only in short term, goal directed activities, but as part of the longer term activity system of the business, a collective enterprise with a common objective (Engeström, 2001). It is this activity that provides the context (Nardi, 1996). Activity is not, by definition, static; the elements that make it up are complex and, as Ivanic (2006) notes, '... co emerge and are dynamically relational' (ibid p.3). Viewing context in this way serves to underline the responsibilities that the participants bore when they wrote key texts (see section 3.1). In exercising these they drew on their knowledge, experience and understanding of the business as a whole; which was vital given the size of the businesses, their flat structures and the flexibility this required of the staff.

One further value of this approach, perhaps more relevant to the analysis in section 2, is worthy of note: the light it sheds on patterns of co-authoring. Barton and Hamilton (2005), among others, refer to ‘collaborative writing’ as a recognised feature of workplace literacy. In the examples above, however, I found few cases of collaboration in the sense of writers *working together* on a text (Grief, 2007). Instead, in the hairdressing salon and the garage we see writers contributing independently to texts at different times. Additions to the appointments book could be made by whoever took a phone call or treated a client’s hair and the sequence of additions was erratic. On the job card/invoice, contributions were made on the basis of individual’s roles and responsibilities and followed a predictable order. The ‘to and fro’ of texts that Darren and Gemma engaged in, as the final estimate or invoice was produced, was perhaps the best example of collaborative writing I encountered. These patterns of co-authoring throw light on another, frequently mentioned feature of workplace literacy, namely the anonymity of the texts (Joly, 2010, p. 95). Gemma put Darren’s name at the end of his estimates and invoices but none of the proformas I saw required the identity of the writer(s) nor were any of the texts I examined signed with the exception of the MOT certificate. Internally, however, the author was usually recognisable from their handwriting, should anyone need to query a text.

Unpicking what lay behind this second assertion has helped to confirm and explain the participants’ understanding that writing was important to the running of the businesses. It has also highlighted further elements of writing practices, which are common across the businesses but it has also drawn attention to differences.

4. Local independence and influences beyond the local

4.1 Small independent businesses in the changing world of work

The two preceding sections began with observations made by the participants. This third section begins by noting what participants did not mention. My reading of the literature on workplace literacy and popular discourse of ‘red tape’ and ‘too much paperwork’, led me to expect grumbles about writing and accounts of paperwork imposed by external agencies. I encountered neither.

In chapter three I noted how many studies of workplace literacy have focused on the impact of changes in the world of work; the imposition of new systems by distant companies on small suppliers (Farrell, 2001), the introduction of new practices in line with the ethos of ‘the new work order’ (Gee, Hull and Lankshear, 1996; Hart-Landsberg and Reder, 1995) the introduction of schemes for quality management and continuous improvement (Belfiore, Defoe and Folinsbee, 2004) or additional paperwork for purposes of accountability (Jackson, 2000; Tusting, 2012; Varey and Tusting, 2012). The use of writing in the workplace was generally seen to be increasing but also changing. Scheeres (2004) wrote of the ‘Textualisation’ of the workplace suggesting that:

> ... workplaces that may have been sites of physical or ‘doing’ work, with talk and texts supporting or even incidental to that work, are now becoming sites where *textual practices constitute and represent work* in a range of ways. (Scheeres, 2004, p. 22)

In the light of the argument made in the section above, it would be wrong to suggest that the texts used in the four cases were ‘incidental’ to their work. It would also be wrong to present the four microbusinesses as immune from currents of change in the world of work or society more widely. As independent enterprises, providing goods and services exclusively to local customers,[26] they had not been under pressure to make significant changes to their workplace practices or the associated texts. In each, the key texts and systems I analysed had been used, with little change, for many years. In a time of recession when other businesses in the town, some long established, were closing, it was not surprising that, owners and managers of micro businesses tended to be risk averse (Childs, 1997; NIACE, 2012). Any changes tended to be gradual and the potential benefits of change were weighed carefully against the affordances of tried and tested practices.

The basic texts used in each workplace provided almost all the records required. On a day to day basis, with the exception of the MOT certificate, very little, if any writing was required solely to evidence work done or compliance with standards. The studies cited above, among others, include many examples of workers who were ambivalent about or uncomfortable with the writing asked of them. Some experienced a conflict between the writing they were asked to undertake and what they perceived to be the job

[26] Excluding the making up and delivery of floral arrangements ordered over Eflorist by customers in other parts of the UK and beyond.

they were intended to be doing, whether this was keeping the production line running (Belfiore, Defoe and Folinsbee, 2004) or supervising the children in a nursery class (Tusting, 2010). Some resisted uses of writing that brought with them a new workplace culture and new work identities (Farrell, 2000; Iedema and Scheeres, 2003) and others felt the way in which they were required to write at work hindered useful communication (Nikolaidou and Karlsson, 2012). I encountered no such issues in the four businesses I studied.

The management style in each business was unique but, in all cases, communication between the owner and members of the team was, whenever possible, spoken and face to face. The way things were done, including writing, had evolved over time and was based on tacit understandings, rather than written guidelines. Writing was rarely used as a tool of management. In three of the businesses, the use of proformas did, to differing degrees, control what employees wrote. However, the case studies provide evidence of participants exercising agency in the ways in which the proformas were completed and even dealing with them creatively. They appeared to be accepted as a natural part of the job.

Clark and Ivanic (1997, p. 123) distinguish between writing that is ‘self-generated’ and writing that is ‘imposed’ but evidence from my case studies suggests this binary may be too simplistic. The writing the participants did at work, while it could not be described as ‘self-generated’ as, for example, in the case of a personal letter or diary, was recognised as a meaningful and necessary part of the work and not felt to be ‘imposed’. Only in the case of the MOT testing, where the official software left the participants with no room to exercise discretion (Spinuzzi, 2012) did I encounter any suggestion of discontent.

Gee, Hull and Lankshear (1996) recognised the irony in the fact that the small Nicaraguan co-operative they studied, as a contrast to their case study of a large company in Silicon Valley, exhibited many of the features of a new work order workplace. The same holds true for the traditional micro-businesses I studied. They were run by small teams with flat management structures. Workers were motivated, understood and supported the aims and values of the business and each contributed different experience and expertise.

4.2 External influence over writing

Although I found less evidence of external influence over writing than I had predicted, there were significant examples. All the businesses had to complete tax returns and compliance with the requirements of HMRC involved the storage of certain texts. The garage was approved by the Driver and Vehicle Safety Agency (DVSA) to issue MOT certificates and the florist's shop placed and received orders through the international organisation, Eflorist. Other examples included the requirements relating to arrangements for finance deals on the sale of cars, the need to keep records of fridge temperatures for inspection and references by the hairdresser to the paperwork required by the local Further Education College in relation to the assessment of stylists completing NVQ qualifications.

In each case, although the writing involved was undertaken in the physical context of the workplace, the context for writing differed from that for locally designed texts. Participants were drawn into a different activity system, one that operated on a larger scale, controlled by a distant organisation with different rules and regulations and which existed to serve different goals. The forms required by external agencies were designed to serve the needs of the wider system. These tended to be highly ‘regulated’ (Schryer and Spoel, 2005) and there was little freedom for improvisation or local conventions. Texts were used to ensure standardisation, as in the case of the MOT checklist, and to manage the range of choices, as in the set list of products available to order through Eflorist. The creation of texts was also carefully controlled through use of computer software. The information gathered was automatically translated into a standardised text, for example an MOT certificate, an Eflorist order form or a tax return.

There were, however, differences. In the case of HMRC and MOT certification, the ‘object’ of the system was enforcement of a legal requirement, the agencies involved wielded considerable power and texts were tightly controlled to ensure the security and integrity of the systems. Eflorist, on the other hand was a commercial organisation to which the florist’s shop subscribed in order to increase its trade. While its forms required insertion of specific information, choices to be made from menus and codes inserted for set arrangements, they accommodated some flexibility and provided opportunity to include personalised requests. In addition, the completion of the form involved florist communicating with florist, albeit at a distance, and this was evident in the use of the discourse of the trade in the form of shared abbreviations and trade specific vocabulary.

Activity systems can overlap and interact (Engeström, 2001) and the writing involved in producing texts for an external organisation was, with the exception of some tax returns[27], undertaken in the workplace as part of day to day work, alongside local practices (Farrell, 2009, p. 188; Joly, 2010). Although this writing was shaped to serve the goals of a wider activity system, in many cases it also contributed to the object of the local business. The work involved in obtaining an MOT certificate, making and delivering a floral arrangement, ordered from a distance, or arranging finance for the purchase of a car constituted a service to the customer and earned income, directly or indirectly for the business. Hybrid practices had developed (Farrell, 2009; Street, 2003); the garage mechanics wrote out a jobcard/invoice for each MOT and in the florist's shop Eflorist orders were printed out and placed in the appropriate section of the blue plastic file alongside other orders.

4.3 Sponsors of IT

Brandt (2001) introduced the concept of 'sponsors of literacy' and I choose to borrow this term in suggesting that, in the four businesses I studied, external agencies were acting as 'sponsors' of the use of new technology. This was evident in the garage which had been required to move to a computer based system for MOT test certificates and likewise in the florist's shop when, in 2009, Teleflorist changed to Eflorist. The Sales Manager at the garage commented on the need to place adverts for cars online, as opposed to in the local press, and, during my scoping exercise, I learned that

[27] In the case of the builder and hairdresser these were completed by accountants. Linda, owner of the florist shop did her own returns at home.

the requirement for businesses to make VAT returns online had prompted several owners to become more familiar with new technology. A rather different instance of the sponsoring of new technology was the adoption of text messaging as a means of communication in response to requests from customers for who use of mobile phones and asynchronous communication were convenient.

5. The unique characters of the four businesses

In looking for common features, it is important not to overlook the unique character of each business, a theme in its own right. Each could be defined by its trade and its size and writing practices were clearly influenced by both but how writing was used was also a matter of its history and the way its practices had been shaped by the personality and experience of the owner and the contributions of employees as well as the quirks of its premises and the demands of its customers. The case studies highlight many 'micro-practices' (Ivanic, 2009) that were unique to one case: the use of coloured pens on the florist's wedding form, the distinction between slanting and wavy lines in the hairdresser's appointment book, the storage of important notes in Darren's wallet: practices that could only be learned on the job.

In chapter four I state that the four cases were selected on the basis of similarity but I also acknowledge the differences between them: their different trades, their size, the gender balance of the teams. While I cannot generalise from such a small sample I briefly note ways in which these were found to impact on the writing undertaken in the four case studies. In terms of the different trades, each had its own ‘Discourse’ (Gee, 2008) and I have noted where this was apparent in the use of language: the vocabulary used and the linguistic features characteristic of their texts. The size of a unit of work was reflected in writing practices. I have noted how a builder’s ‘job’ took much longer and consequently cost much more than a flower arrangement or a cut and blow dry and how this was reflected in the time and effort Darren and Gemma put into their estimates and invoices. The nature of the service also influenced writing. Both the garage and the hair salon made appointments but timing needed to be more precise for a personal service and this was clearly reflected in the organisation of the appointments book.

In terms of size, cause and effect were less clear cut. The garage was the largest of the four businesses and had the most clearly defined division of labour. This meant that the genre set of the mechanics was narrower than that of the members of the florist’s team where there was greater flexibility of roles. This however, could be judged as much a factor of the range of services offered by the garage, the inclusion of an administrator in the team or the more sophisticated system of paperwork. Working alone was probably the most significant factor in relation to size. This removed the need to share texts and, in Darren’s case, the absence of proformas although I noticed that other tradesmen in the town who worked alone did use preformatted invoices.

Regarding gender, I did not actively pursue this as a potential factor in the way writing was used but was alert to the possibility that this was the case. No clear evidence emerged that would enable me to attribute differences in writing practices to gender. I was aware that the florist’s shop was run entirely by women while in the garage men outnumbered women by two to one but although this may have had some impact on my experience as a female researcher in each business any further observations would be purely speculative.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Responding to my research questions

In conclusion, I return to my research questions and, taking each of the subsidiary questions in turn, I summarise what I have learned from this analysis that enables me to respond to these. Finally, in table 9.1, I attempt to draw together elements of writing practices that are common across the four businesses, making links to characteristics of the contexts for writing and to features of the texts I examined.

1. In what ways do writing practices and texts support the day to day running of traditional microbusinesses?

Although, in these small businesses, spoken language was often the easiest way to communicate, the participants were correct; writing had a significant place in their day to day activity. Writing offered affordances that speech could not. In particular, by virtue of its durability and mobility, writing made it possible to record information which would be needed by the writer or others at a future time and possibly a different place. In all four cases, written texts acted as a repository for important details for which memory alone would not suffice. Across three of the businesses, proformas provided a standardised and efficient means to record this information and these were designed to be shared. Less formal texts tended to be for individual use and often when information needed to be used or kept safe for a relatively brief period.

Focusing on the material nature of texts, and tracing their histories beyond the point of inscription, served to highlight the extent to which the texts were used. It highlighted different patterns of recontextualisation: texts being physically passed from place to place and person to person in sequence, texts consulted by different people at different times, texts made up of contributions from a number of different writers and texts translated into new forms. Writers were aware that others, as well as themselves, would use these texts, sometimes on multiple occasions, and therefore recognised the importance of ensuring that what they wrote was legible, sufficient and accurate. Also, as only one text I encountered was duplicated in any way, the location of texts was important to ensure that everyone who needed the information had access to it.

Written communications were not ad hoc. Tracing the lives of texts also illustrated how texts of various kinds related to each other and, together, formed ‘genre systems’ (Bazerman, 2004) that supported the work of the business. These were well-tried systems that had evolved over time, some of which were elegant in their simplicity. Within these systems there was little if any redundancy. One key text often provided a common thread across a sequence of literacy events, holding together information relating to one unit of work or one customer. One text could also serve a range of different purposes.

Finally, tracing the lives of texts shed light on the roles that texts, individually or in systems, played within the businesses, illustrating how texts were integral to the management of time, the co-ordination of work processes, securing payment for work, ensuring continuity of service and the keeping of records for later reference: tasks that were essential to the smooth running and the survival of the businesses. Using the model of 'an activity system' enables us to recognise these texts as mediating artefacts in the achievement of the object of the system or business and, by unpicking their trajectories or histories, we can make visible what Kell (2013) refers to as the 'mechanics' and Ivanic (2009) the 'fine grained' details, that lie behind the concept of a textually mediated workplace (Smith, 1990).

2. How are writing practices, and the nature of the texts used, shaped by the context of the business and its activity?

In a quotation, cited in chapter two, Lemke observes:

> … every human community, is an individual at its own scale of organisation. It has a unique historical trajectory, a unique development through time. But like every such individual on every scale, it is also in some respects typical of its kind. (Lemke, 2009, p. 278)

The case studies underline the unique character of each business, including the ways in which they used writing. Practices had evolved over time, shaped by the experience and personalities of managers and employees, the physical features of the workplace, the nature and organisation of the work activity and decisions such as the choice or design of a proforma. However, as very small, independent businesses, they shared similar opportunities and challenges and, in relation to writing, their responses to these had features in common.

One significant feature microbusinesses share is the limited nature of their resources, particularly staffing, which, in turn, underlines the importance of time (NIACE, 2012). Writing, though important, was not their product and the effort and time invested in it tended to be kept to a minimum. They adopted a number of conventional practices to achieve this: in particular, the reliance on genres to deal with frequently recurring tasks and the use of proformas to reduce the semiotic work involved in day to day transactions. While trade specific and very different in design, the proformas offered similar affordances and constraints and analysing these helps us to better understand the nature of the writing undertaken. I have illustrated how the design of a proforma can impact on the ways in which it is completed and on questions of authorial responsibility and the agency of the writer.

Further aspects of the context encouraged the keeping of writing to a minimum: the constraints of the physical context in terms of suitable places to write and the impact of the work activity itself, such as noise, grease and dirt and the need to respond to customers face to face and on the phone. On the positive side, their size meant that spoken communication could be used for many aspects of day to day work while small, flexible teams made it possible to rely on tacit understandings and shared knowledge, thus avoiding unnecessary writing.

The audience for texts also shaped the writing undertaken. Notes for oneself could be cryptic, relying on personal shorthand as an aide memoire, while writing for internal use usually had to be shared with others so, although, as noted above, it was possible to rely on shared conventions, it was important to ensure all the necessary information was presented in a form that was accessible to others. Writing for the customer, on the other hand, involved different considerations, in particular, the need to project a good image of the business.

3. How are the everyday writing practices and the nature of the texts used shaped by factors external to the business?

Across the four case studies much of the day to day writing was shaped chiefly by internal factors, as described above, using systems that had remained largely unchanged for many years and were closely embedded in the work of the business. There were, however, examples of external influences that affected writing, relating to quite specific aspects of work. In these cases the participants found themselves part of a different activity system and one that was wider than that of the business alone, a system with its own objectives and its own rules and regulations. Larger organisations, managing work from a distance, required standardisation and used on-line forms to facilitate this. Texts were more tightly regulated and authorial responsibility was severely limited. In the case of MOT testing, only designated people could complete the forms. Writers' choices were limited to selection from a limited range of options or the insertion of figures. Such forms restricted the agency of the writer as did the automatic generation of texts. This was particularly the case where external agencies were exercising a legal duty, as in MOT testing or tax collection. Eflorist, as a commercial agency offered greater flexibility. Participants had no choice but to work within the rules of the relevant system but, wherever possible, externally imposed texts were integrated with local practices and systems.

A number of other aspects of the work, such as health and safety, were subject to regulation by agencies outside the businesses. Once policies were set up, these required little writing and were dealt with by the owners as and when this was necessary. These lie outside the remit of this study.

External agencies, including the Driver and Vehicle Safety Agency, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and Eflorist, had been instrumental in the introduction of computers in two of the businesses, acting as 'sponsors' of digital communication. In the two others, external accountants undertook their tax returns, thus reducing the need for a work computer, although the builder and his wife used one for the presentation of their invoices and ordering on-line. In relation to mobile phones, it was the customers who had driven the use of text messaging in three of the businesses.

The extent to which external factors shaped the writing in the four microbusinesses was not as great as had been anticipated. Drawing comparisons with studies of larger organisations, discussed in the literature on workplace literacy, the four businesses, as very small independent enterprises, had escaped many of the pressures those organisations had faced to change their cultures, their systems and, in turn, their uses of writing. They had avoided the need to adopt externally monitored systems for quality assurance and continuous improvement and were not subject to the accountability literacies that played such a significant role in publicly funded services. Issues relating to quality and standards were dealt with informally through tacit understandings rather than written texts and no additional writing was required to evidence that work had been done or problems addressed. Writing was very rarely used as a tool of management. The writing they did was closely embedded in the day to day work and was viewed as meaningful and purposeful. Although it could be argued that proformas placed constraints on the writers, they also supported their work and were accepted by participants as a natural part of the job.

6.2 The characteristics of writing used in the four microbusinesses

As I drew together this cross-case analysis, I became aware that many features of writing practices and texts were common across some, or all, of the four cases. To explore this further I turned to the work of Ivanic and others (Ivanic, 2009; Ivanic *et al*, 2009) on ‘elements’ of literacy events and practices and, extending this to my own study, I have attempted to draw out common elements of writing practices that I identified across the cases and the ways in which these were reflected in the texts I collected. In doing this I also drew on work on discourse analysts (Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2011; Johnstone, 2017). These elements were commonly found in the writing I examined but not all the elements I list were found in all the texts.

Table 9.1 represents an attempt to present this analysis and, in so doing, to provide an overview of a form of written discourse that differs significantly from discourses that are more usually the subject of analysis. In the first column I list ways in which writing of this kind can be characterised and the nature of the purposes it served. Column two provides a list of the common elements of practices I identified and column three unpicks, in more detail, what each means in terms of writing practices and written texts. This offers a first step towards making visible a type of writing, with which we are all so familiar and yet is so easy to overlook. It also provides a basis for comparison with discourses in different domains.

Table 9.1 Common elements of writing practices across the four case studies

<table>
<tr><th>Features of this writing</th><th>Common elements of writing practices</th><th>What this means in terms of practices and texts</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">Writing that is used for communication of information rather than the representation of ideas

Writing that is largely used for internal communication.

Writing used in situations of stability (Kress, 2010).

Writing that is ‘instrumental’ (Davies and Birbili, 2000) designed to ‘get things done’ (Joly, 2010).

Writing that is expected to be used by the writer and others at different times and places.

Writing designed to be undertaken quickly.</td><td>Use of commonly recognised genres</td><td>Reduces need for writers to make decisions regarding the form and structure of texts when undertaking recurring writing tasks</td></tr>
<tr><td>Use of proformas</td><td>Reduces semiotic work.
Authorial responsibility for many aspects of the text lies with the designer of the form. This frees the writer from concern with:
selecting the main categories of content
layout
organisation of content
grammatical cohesion
composition of sentences and paragraphs</td></tr>
<tr><td>Writing directly onto final text</td><td>No drafting and no, or minimal, editing</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reliance on shared knowledge and shared context</td><td>Shared knowledge is taken as ‘given’ and left implicit.
Facilitates a condensed form of text which omits deixis in many cases.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Use of a shared repertoire of resources</td><td>Allows writer to use shorthand devices:
abbreviations
technical terms
shared metaphors
stock phrases
condensed structures
non-linguistic features of writing, e.g. underlining text</td></tr>
<tr><td>Use of multimodal resources</td><td>Using written language in conjunction with:
non-linguistic features of writing, e.g. underlining text.
graphic devices e.g. arrows, stars
pictures and photos
diagrams
figures</td></tr>
</table>

	Meaning is attributed to placement of texts	Location used to • indicate the status of a text • facilitate sharing of texts
	Criteria for acceptability based on adequacy for purpose	Criteria include: • content sufficient for purpose • the text is meaningful to intended audience • the text is legible
	Texts are often co-authored	Other writers, at a different time, can: • add further information • complete further sections of the text • remove or change parts of the text
	Texts are anonymous	No attribution No signature

Chapter 10

Concluding discussion

1. Introduction

The aims of this study were to achieve a better understanding of how writing was used in the day to day activity of traditional, local microbusinesses and to provide both a description and an analysis that would have value to practitioners in adult literacy. In this concluding chapter, I first look back: summarising what has been done to achieve these aims, appraising the value of the theoretical materials on which I drew and considering the limitations of the study. I then look forward: outlining opportunities for further investigation and assessing the potential contribution of the study in terms of both research and practice.

2. What has been done?

To inform my investigation I undertook two literature reviews. The first, in chapter two, explores the theoretical literature that provided a framework for my analysis. In relation to LS I paid particular attention to three areas of discussion that I believed would have relevance to my study; the refining of analysis by identifying ‘elements’ of practices, developments in thinking around the concept of context and the tracing of texts and meanings beyond the point of inscription. My specific focus on writing led me to pay closer attention to written texts than is often the case within LS and I recognised the need for frameworks and a vocabulary that would enable me to both describe and analyse these. I therefore chose to include a number of approaches that provided insights into the texts I was examining. All shared an understanding of writing as a social phenomenon and all had their origins in the work of Halliday on systemic functional grammar. All, too, contribute to the analysis of discourse.

The second review, in chapter three, provided an overview of the literature on workplace literacy. This highlighted the fact that there have been very few LS studies of businesses that resemble those in my case studies. However, reviewing studies of literacy in very different and mostly larger workplaces offered helpful insights and provided a background for my study by highlighting the cultural, economic and technological changes that are affecting the wider world of work. It also highlighted the differences in the uses of writing between these and the businesses I studied.

To find answers to my research questions, I undertook case studies of four traditional microbusinesses, located in a small market town (chapters five to eight). The use of case studies enabled me to draw on a range of evidence in real life situations through recorded interviews with the owners and employees, observation of their activity and uses of writing and examination of written texts. I built up a picture of the ways in which writing was used in each business which took into account the participants' own accounts and explanations as well as their perceptions of the writing they undertook. I refer in chapter four to the potential for case studies to illuminate the reader's understanding of a phenomenon (Merriam, 1988) and I believe that these accounts of writing, in individual businesses, could have value in this way.

In chapter nine I looked across all four case studies and explored the themes that had emerged, seeking to identify patterns of behaviour across the cases and explanations for these. In doing this I also sought to understand what lay behind the somewhat contradictory views about writing in the workplaces, expressed by the participants, and to explore to what extent and in what ways the broader context of the world of work impinged on their day to day writing. From this cross case analysis I was able to draw together what I had learned that had relevance to each of my research questions and to set out my response to these in the concluding section of the chapter (section 6).

While they provided the focus for the study, the research sub-questions could not embrace all that I learned through undertaking this study. In chapter nine, I attempted to identify elements of writing practices and events that were common across some or all of the businesses. Bringing these together and drawing on insights from the cross-case analysis, I began to set out the characteristics of a type of writing that I encountered frequently in the four microbusinesses. This exercise was not anticipated in my sub-questions. It arose, in large part, from analysis undertaken in relation to sub-question two which focuses on the impact of the context of the business and its activity on the writing undertaken and it has clear relevance to my overarching question.

Also not explicit in the research questions was my curiosity regarding the relevance of theory and the applicability of approaches to the analysis of writing to texts of the kind used, day to day, in the workplaces I studied. This is addressed in the following section.

3. A review of the theoretical materials used in the study

In this section I review the theoretical materials I have used within the study. I first acknowledge the breadth of materials used and seek to justify this. I then address the different theoretical approaches, concepts and models I have used, explaining in each case why I chose to use them and appraising their value to the study. The study comprises an empirical investigation but drawing on theoretical materials helped me to make sense of what I learned and allowed me to draw out analytical generalisations (Yin, 2014) that might have value to further investigations.

In my analysis I have drawn on a range of theoretical approaches, concepts and models. I am aware there is a danger that these might be seen as ‘ad hoc’ and that using such a range, could open me to charges of eclecticism. In explanation, I make several points. Firstly, I argue that my use of this range was purposeful. My research question was intentionally broad and my aim was to provide a holistic description, to achieve a better understanding of writing in the context of microbusinesses. Secondly, I refer back to my discussion of triangulation in chapter four and the suggestion by Flick (2009) that use of multiple methods and theories, ‘.... should produce knowledge on different levels, which means they go beyond the knowledge made possible by one approach and thus contribute to promoting quality in research.’ I also note the advice of Lillis (2013, pp. 169-170) that we become aware of the range of approaches and assumptions that exist in relation to writing in order to challenge our own assumptions and her warning that, by only recognising what our particular frame of reference allows, we may fail to recognise the very phenomenon we are seeking to understand.

Thirdly, from the start, my interest has been the writing itself, both practices and texts, rather than the light a study of this might shed on other issues. In the light of my motivation, to provide a description and analysis that could inform practice in adult literacy, it was my belief that to achieve this it was necessary to address the characteristics of texts in some detail. I have also noted Barton's challenge (2001, p. 98) to researchers to bring together, '... in a motivated way', approaches that start with practices and those that make texts their starting point. Aware of the need to take care in combining different methods and theories (Fielding and Fielding cited in Flick (2004)), I chose approaches to texts that shared an understanding of writing as 'social' and a concern with language 'in use'.

In my introduction in chapter one I explain my decision to locate my study within the tradition of LS. Central to LS, and to my perspective on writing, were the concepts of writing events and writing practices. I recognised the value of the analysis of 'writing events' in requiring me to ground my study in real life activity and, in the case studies, I have, where possible, drawn on specific events, some of which I was part, some of which I observed and others that were recounted by participants. The concept of 'writing practices', on the other hand, defines the way in which I understand writing, not as mastery of an arbitrary set of rules, independent of context, but arising from social interaction and shaped by its social, cultural and historical context. In use, both concepts presented some problems. Taking an order for a flower arrangement appeared to provide a straightforward example of 'writing event' but, when I began to trace the life of the order form beyond this point, the boundaries of the event become less clear, as I discuss further below. Kell

(2011) questions whether we should reconsider the concept of a literacy event and proposes new terminology to describe the components of trajectories (Kell, 2009). In respect of the trajectories or histories of texts in my study, I felt comfortable describing sequences or ‘chains’ of events, albeit agreeing with Kell that some events can be very brief. Less straightforward was the identification of events when the participants were at a distance and communication is asynchronous, as in Linda’s email exchanges.

With respect to the concept of writing practices, I found the term ‘practice’ widely used in academic literature, sometimes very loosely. This presented two problems. The first, the scope of the term, particularly in relation to texts (Tusting, Ivanic and Wilson, 2000), I address in chapter two, responding to Street’s (2000) call for researchers to make explicit their use of the term. The second, the degree of abstraction at which the concept should is used, initially troubled me but I found Lemke’s concept of ‘time scales’ helpful, enabling me to recognise that practices can, at one scale, be unique while also being typical of practices of a broader kind. Efforts to refine the concepts of literacy events and practices (Hamilton, 2000; Ivanic, 2009; Street and Lefstein, 2007), in particular the work by Ivanic et al (2009) on identifying ‘elements’ of events and practices across domains, also proved valuable. It offered a theoretical framework within which to organise and present the common features I identified across the cases while still recognising the unique aspects of many of the practices I observed.

Tracing the trajectories or histories of texts is an approach that has been used by a number of writers, for different purpose and in different contexts within LS and LE (Blommaert, 2010; Kell, 2011; 2010; Pontille, 2010;

Woydack and Rampton, 2015). While work by Kell, on text trajectories, (2006; 2011; 2013) first caught my attention I was aware that the trajectories I was exploring differed from hers in significant ways and, while Kell was concerned with theoretical issues, my interest was focused on what I could learn about the uses of texts, the roles they played and their importance in the running of the business. Studies by Woydack and Rampton (2015) and Pontille (2010) of text trajectories in the workplace provided more relevant models. Using the basic premise and tracing the lives of texts across space, time and participant networks proved productive, providing a new perspective and shedding light on the significance of writing within the microbusinesses. It is an approach that could be usefully extended in any further studies in this context.

My introduction of Activity Theory and the concept of the activity system links closely with the approach discussed above. Tracing the lives of texts raised the question of context. I became aware of the wider processes, beyond the single event, that the writers needed to take into account and the concept of an activity system felt particularly apt in this situation. I have noted (chapter two) how understandings of context have changed and, following Ivanic (2006) and others, recognised the potential of the concept of ‘activity systems’ to provide a heuristic that could embrace the complex and dynamic nature of context in a manageable way. It also encompassed both short lived, goal directed actions of individuals and the more durable collective activity system against which these short term actions need to be interpreted (Engeström, 2000) which resonated with the distinctions between the unique and the generic, the immediate and the habitual, discussed above. In addition I found the notion of multiple activity systems helpful in conceptualising how external agencies created a separate context for writing that existed alongside but could also overlap with the context for internal communication in a business.

I have not attempted to present analyses of the businesses in terms of AT. The theory provides analysis at a macro level and while it proved valuable in conceptualising the broader context for writing, it does, as Ivanic (2009, p. 116) notes, reduce the 'constituents' of practices to the minimum. In my exploration of writing, analysis at a micro level or what Ivanic refers to as a 'greater degree of delicacy' (Ivanic, 2009, p. 101) in relation to practices has proved most useful. While AT can shed light on the concept of 'textual mediation', these more detailed approaches help us to explain *how* texts are used to achieve this.

With regard to the analysis of texts, I chose to use Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014; Halliday, 1994). His focus on meaning making and language 'in use' made this compatible with my understanding of writing as social practice. This decision was ambitious. Halliday's grammar is challenging in its detail and complexity and my familiarity with it was limited. It did provide valuable concepts that had particular relevance to texts in my study but, undoubtedly, someone with a more confident grasp of the grammar could use it to better effect in this context. Discovering an appendix, in the 1994 version, on 'Little texts' (Halliday, 1994, p. 392) was helpful, lending both legitimacy and inspiration to my efforts to find regularities in the modest texts I encountered. Recognising grammatical structures that enabled the writer to abbreviate their writing while retaining its meaning corroborated what I learned from interviews and observation about economy of effort in relation to writing. A further justification for using Halliday's work was its importance to the development of discourse analysis, multimodality and social semiotics, areas of study on which I also call in my analysis of texts.

I used discourse analysis to help me understand more about the nature of the writing I found and to present what I learned. I did not use it to analyse spoken language nor to throw light on a particular issue. I was unsure whether it would be possible to speak of discourse in the context of the texts I examined and certainly a number of the aspects of texts that would normally be attended to when analysing longer texts of different kinds (Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2011; Johnstone, 2017), were either difficult to relate to these texts or, in some cases, quite irrelevant. Using the lens of discourse analysis, however, did help me to draw out some of the distinctive features of the writing while, at the same time, underlining how different this was to the text types more usually analysed.

One aspect of discourse analysis that had particular relevance to my study was the notion of genre. Kell (2006) notes that genre is underused in LS. One explanation is that the concept 'literacy practice' can be seen to adequately encompass this, as implied by Lillis (2013, pp. 70-71). I questioned whether it was necessary to use it. However, in the context of my study, habitual uses of writing, such as taking orders, making appointments and invoicing were so closely bound up with the nature of the texts used that I decided it would be helpful. Doing so emphasised the way in which texts can shape practices. Writing an order form, for example, constitutes a 'social action' (Miller, 1984) positioning both parties and defining behaviour appropriate in the situation. Again, the term genre can be applied in a very broad way to refer to the use of a text of a recognisable kind or much more specifically to refer to a text used regularly for a particular purpose, in a particular setting. In the latter case, Karlsson's use of the term 'genre texts' proved useful (2009).

It was impossible to ignore the fact that, in many of the texts I collected, writing was only one of a number of modes used to make meaning and to address this I turned to literature in the field of multimodality. This presented a complex range of approaches and exhortations to make explicit which I was using (Kress, 2010) or to speak simply of 'adopting multimodal concepts' (Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016, p. 5). I chose to do the latter. Looking at texts from this perspective presented a challenge. I needed to take care not to assume the primacy of writing but to recognise that different modes each offered distinct 'affordances' and, working together, created a fuller meaning than was possible using any one mode alone. I also needed to take care to refer to 'texts' rather than 'writing' in many cases. Lemke's article 'Multiplying Meaning' (2009) helped me to recognise how different modes were suited to the expression of different kinds of meanings while Mavers' (2007; 2011) work on children's writing helped me to see writing itself as multimodal and sensitised me to aspects of the texts I might otherwise have overlooked. Venturing into the 'Social Semiotic Theory of Multimodality', as set out by Kress (2010), I found the understanding of text creation as 'design' involving 'choices' from a repertoire of available 'resources', was helpful when discussing what writers did when they wrote.

This view placed emphasis on ‘agentive design’ (Mavers, 2007) rather than ‘correctness’ or ‘competence’ (Kress, 2010, p. 6) and avoided recourse to normative frameworks (Lillis and McKinney, 2013, p. 419).

These theoretical approaches have provided lenses through which to view my data and, to differing degrees, have proved of value in my quest to better understand writing as used in traditional microbusinesses. I am aware that by drawing on a range of approaches I have not, of necessity, exhausted the potential of all of these in relation to my subject. I hope, however, that the study will open up opportunities for more sharply focused investigation that can test, and possibly extend, what I have found. These are issues that are discussed further in the sections below.

4. Limitations of the study

In earlier chapters I have made reference to the evolution of my thinking and the discovery of new approaches as the study progressed. This was a positive process in many ways and strengthened my analysis but it meant there were aspects of the fieldwork that, in retrospect, could have been planned in a more focused way. Two examples in particular, are worth noting. Firstly, had I recognised the value of tracing the lives of texts beyond one specific event at an earlier point, it would have been useful to have planned to trace the use of specific texts over time. My flow diagrams were based on observations or accounts of events, involving different but similar texts, which I used to build up a generalised picture of routine practices. Following specific texts would have grounded the findings more firmly in day to day practice and may have offered further insights. It is however likely that the logistical problems, discussed in chapter four, would have made this difficult. Secondly, it would have been helpful to have built in opportunities for discussion of specific, completed texts with participants, at or close to the time of writing, a research strategy and pedagogic method Ivanic referred to as ‘talk around texts’ (Lillis, 2009). I was fortunate to record a number of valuable conversations with participants, relating to specific texts, but my analysis could have benefitted from a more systematic approach in this respect.

In the previous section, I noted how the range of theoretical materials I used, while valuable in many respects, placed limits on the depth of my analysis in some cases. I also made the point that the scope of the study was intentionally broad. As my involvement in the project deepened, I did consider focusing more sharply on just one of the approaches I explored but chose not to for two reasons. Firstly, I was aware that my data might not support this but, secondly and more importantly, I continued to believe there was value in the approach I had taken and that this could provide a starting point for further more in-depth investigations.

To ensure the manageability of the project it was necessary to establish clear boundaries. In chapter four I explain my original plan to include the full range of writing tasks undertaken by the owners of the businesses, and the reasons for my decision to limit the study to writing undertaken as part of the day to day activities. A study of the writing involved in the setting up and running of a microbusiness could complement my study. It might also offer a picture rather different to the one I have presented. As a further example, my interview guides included questions relating to participants' writing practices outside the workplace but it quickly proved unrealistic to pursue this line of enquiry, in any depth, across four case studies. A study of just one business could provide an opportunity to explore the relationships between writing at work and writing in other domains of participants' lives. Yet another angle I have only touched on very briefly is the question of how people learn to write at work and how this compares with what they learned at college and school. Finally, although I judged it to be too important to overlook completely, I did not attempt to provide an in-depth analysis of the use of new communication technologies in the four businesses. As elsewhere, businesses in Eastmarket were in a stage of transition in terms of their uptake of new technologies and there would be scope for a study to trace the progress of this.

During the years between 2010, when I embarked on this project, and 2018, thinking in the fields of LS and LE evolved and research has taken new directions as the quotation from Rowsell and Pahl (2015), which I include in the first chapter, suggests. I have attempted to keep abreast of new publications but there came a point when I felt the need to draw a line under what I had learned and focus my attention on bringing this together to complete the thesis. It is possible that new perspectives could shed a different light on writing in micro-businesses and uncover new or different insights.

5. What can the study offer to research and practice?

In respect of research, this thesis makes a contribution to the literature on workplace literacy by focusing on a category of business that has received little attention and one in which, the current study indicates, uses of writing differ significantly from those in larger workplaces, better represented in the literature. I have argued that it is important to address this gap. Very small, independent businesses, engaged in a traditional trade, within the local community are part of the local economy in every part of the UK and offer employment to significant numbers of people. Many people have worked in such businesses at some point in their careers and others may aspire to do so.

The study differs from most LS studies in its specific focus on writing and, more particularly, on a type of writing that is easily overlooked. While texts, not unlike the kind I encountered in the four businesses, are by no means absent from LS studies (Belfiore, Defoe and Folinsbee, 2004; Joly, 2010; Jones, 2000; Karlsson, 2009) the focus of these studies is more often on social and political issues in the workplace and the implication of texts in relation to questions of power, agency and inequality. I do not claim that no such issues existed in my case studies, but that my motivation lay in an interest in the writing itself: its forms as well as its uses. The study attempts to draw out the characteristic features of the writing encountered in many of the day to day activities of the four businesses. In relation to the analysis of discourse, this represents a very different form of writing to that more usually analysed. This analysis could be compared with, for example, the characteristic features of writing in an educational context. It could also usefully be tested in other microbusinesses and further refined.

A significant feature of the writing in these businesses was the use of proformas. I have demonstrated how using these differed, in a number of respects, from the common understanding of 'form-filling'. The study does, however, throw light on the structure of forms and the ways in which this can shape the writing required to complete them. Forms, as Barton and Hamilton (2005, p. 3) note, 'have not been studied extensively' and, as Barton (2009, p. 48) suggests, represent a type of text that are becoming increasingly common online.

Two other aspects of the study could have relevance for further research in workplace literacy. Firstly the demonstration it provides of the value of bringing together approaches to writing that start from a study of practices with approaches that start from the study of texts (Barton, 2001). Secondly, the potential insights that it illustrates can come from the tracing of the life histories of texts.

In relation to practice, I have noted, in earlier chapters, my hope that the four case studies would engage the interest of practitioners, within the field of adult literacy, and help to extend their understanding of writing in workplaces of these kinds. I believe the cross-case analysis and the summary of characteristics of the writing I encountered could also prove of value, contributing to a fuller understanding of the day to day experience of writing for many people, including a significant number of adult literacy learners.

I shared examples of the texts I collected with a group of Adult Literacy practitioners and teacher trainers. In the course of our discussion the observation was made that many of the completed workplace forms would not provide satisfactory evidence in an assessment of literacy skills. However, at the same time, it was noted that a form, completed to the standard required for assessment, was unlikely to be practical or appropriate in the context of a busy workplace where speed is of the essence and shared knowledge can be assumed. Insights such as this could help practitioners to better understand, not only their students' writing, but also their students' perceptions of writing. The study could stimulate discussion of how, and why, writing differs across contexts and inform teachers' practice as they help students to master the writing of education.

6. Final comment

As one of the business owners pointed out, if I wanted to find out about writing, businesses, like his, provided an unlikely context for my research. It was, however, for this reason that I chose to look at writing in local, traditional microbusinesses. In the light of this observation, it is helpful to return to the origins of my thesis, set out in chapter one. There, I explained my curiosity regarding the reasons why some students of adult literacy discounted the writing they did at work and my aim to achieve a better understanding of everyday writing in this context. This curiosity was reinforced when I discovered how strongly this dismissive attitude was mirrored in my case studies, yet, at the same time, the participants were telling me how important writing was in the running of their businesses. Ivanic (2009, p. 118) writes of 'the power of Literacy Studies to make invisible, discounted practices visible' and I believed that writing in this context of traditional microbusinesses could repay closer investigation.

I found much truth in the remarks made by participants in the case studies about their writing. They did not do a lot of writing and what they did was brief, often hurriedly written and much of it on proformas. However, my study helped me to uncover a more complex and nuanced picture of the ways in which writing was used in the four businesses and, importantly, to recognise the factors that shaped this. What I found was writing practices that were a response to the imperatives of the businesses and the practicalities of their day to day activities as well as to the affordances that their size and independence offered. It was intentionally kept brief. Proformas were designed and used to reduce the time, effort and the 'pain' (Davies and Birbili, 2000) that writing can require. The writing was not ad hoc. Most of the texts I observed were part of tried and tested systems, deliberately kept simple and involving little if any redundancy.

As I drew together the features of the type of writing commonly used in the four businesses I could appreciate why the students I referred to in my introduction felt that the writing they did at work was so different to the writing they wanted to master in their class. The writing I encountered in my case studies was instrumental, concerned with communication of information rather than the representation of ideas, and judged by criteria very different to those that operate in the field of education. It is recognition of this contrast and an appreciation of the nature of writing, as it is used much of the time in traditional microbusinesses, that I believe could be of value to adult literacy practitioners and to academic research in the field of writing.

Returning to the student I refer to interviewing in chapter one, it was not difficult to understand why he felt comfortable with the writing he did at the garage where he worked. Although I found that writing practices tended to be unique to each workplace and were therefore learned on the job, once these were mastered, completing genre texts became largely routine. I have shown how the writers tended to call repeatedly on the same structures and the same phrases. However, I also noted that the writing participants undertook on proformas required them to exercise agency and responsibility and in doing so to take into account the wider context of the business. It sometimes called for improvisation and a degree of creativity and could even be appreciated for its aesthetic qualities. Although there was no written attribution of authorship, within the business this was both recognised and significant. Most importantly, the participants understood the importance of what they wrote to the smooth running of the business. They recognised that, however scruffy or brief their texts might be, their writing was ‘consequential’.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Details of the businesses included in the initial scoping study

Business	Number of people	Description	How long established in 2012	Importance of writing to the running of business	Next stage
1. Garage	9 (3 Part time)	Car sales, car repairs, petrol and miscellaneous sales	90 yrs	important	Y Possible site
2. Drapery and furniture	15	Retailer: drapery and furniture	200 yrs	Very important	Y Too big. More staff than anticipated
3. Fencing	8	Manufacturers and suppliers of industrial and domestic fencing	42 yrs	Vital	Y Possible site
4. Cake suppliers and Cafe	6 (Some PT or week-ends only)	Makes and delivers cakes Cafe	5 yrs cake bus. 3 yrs cafe	Vital	N Space in kitchen, Health and Safety
5. Garden Centre	5 plus (Varies with season) Some PT or Saturdays	Garden Centre Retail	30 yrs plus	Quite important	N
6. Florist	5 (3 PT and Saturday girls)	Florist Retail deliveries Eflorist	16 yrs	Very important	Y Possible site
7.Card shop	Owner plus 2 PT (20%)	Gift and card shop Retail	20 yrs	Vital	N did not ask,
8. Builder	1	General builder	9 yrs	Vital	Yes Possible site
9. Cafe 2	Owner plus 2 PT	Teashop	2.5 yrs		No.
10. Hairdresser 1	Owner and 2 PT stylists	Hairdresser	16 yrs	Not very important	Yes Possible site
11. Delicatessen	Owner FT plus 3PT	Delicatessen Retail	15 yrs	Vital	Not asked.

12. Hairdresser 2	Owner plus 3 PT (Also Saturday girls and work experience)	Hair stylist	30 yrs	Vital	Yes Possible site
13. Quilting and patchwork shop	2 FT + 4PT	Quilting and patchwork retail and tuition	17 yrs	Very important	Yes Possible site
14. Electricians	4 FT	Electrical contractors	30 yrs	Vital	No. Could not spare the time.
15. Screen printer	Mother (daughter helps part-time)	Screen printer supplies and prints clothes and outsources embroidery	40 yrs	Very important	Did not ask retiring soon – spends time abroad.
16 Jewellery maker	1	Makes jewellery, sells on-line, commissions, craft fairs.	3 yrs	Essential	Did not ask. Not a traditional business.

Appendix 2.1

Interview guide for scoping study

(Person in charge of business)

Introduction

Brief explanation of research

Permission to record/take notes

Consent form

1. Information

Name of business

Name of person in charge

Age 20-30 30-50 50 plus

Telephone

Email

Address

2. Nature of business

How would you describe the business? *(Different aspects of work, make reference to adverts or websites)*

How many people work with you? *(Full time/ part time/ roles/gender)*

How long has the business been established?

How would you describe business at the moment?
(*Changing/flourishing/struggling)*

3. Writing

3(a) Importance

How would you respond if someone asked **how important** writing is for your business?

Vital very important important quite important not at all important

(Use sheet with these choices.)

(Explain what I am including in terms of writing e.g. written communication using digital technology as well as handwriting.)

Why would you say that? Can you give me examples? Can you explain?

3(b) Nature of writing

Could you give me an idea of the kinds of writing **that you need to undertake** as the person in charge of the business?

(Prompt if necessary, elicit nature and purposes for writing. Prompt to ensure full range of media is included.)

What about the **people working with you**. Is writing important in their work?
(Prompt if necessary, elicit nature and purposes for writing, who writes, when and where. Prompt to ensure full range of media is included.)

Is ability to write to a certain standard something you consider when **recruiting** staff?

3(d) Change

Would you say that the writing done in this business has **changed?** (e.g. over the last 10 years)

If so how? *(More/less, type of writing, reasons for writing, who does it)*

In what ways have **changes in technology** affected writing in this business?

Are there **agencies outside the business** that require writing? *(Who? What do they require and for what reasons?)*

3(e) Writing challenges

Does writing ever pose a **challenge** for the business?

Could you **explain** in what way?

What do **you** find a challenge?

What do **people working with you** find a challenge?

4. Research Project

Explain need for detailed observation and understanding how people in work actually write and feel about writing – observation and interviews and copies of documents

Would you be willing for me to spend time with your business and speak with the employees etc?

Thanks

Appendix 2.2

Interview guide (Owners of the four businesses)
(without prompts)

Introduction

Refer back to initial interview

Advise that there may be some repetition of this but need more detail

Permission to use recorder

Consent form for phase 2

Explain structure of interview.

(i) personal information for background

(ii) more detail on the writing they do themselves at work

(iii) checking information I have collected on writing in the business as a whole

1. Personal information *(Ease in)*

Check any outstanding questions relating to their ownership of the business and how long they have had this position

1a your age (if happy to give this)

1b at what age did you leave school?

1c Did you undertake any education or training after you left school? If so can you describe this? *Qualifications*

1d What made you become a ……..?

1e Have you done any training specifically for this job? *(Where applicable)*

1f How did you come to be running ………?

1f Have you done other jobs in the past? If so what were these? *(Where applicable)*

2. About your job

2. Could you give me an idea of what a typical day at work Is like for you?

3. Writing at work

(3a Recap on information offered on the writing their job involves as given at initial interview, in response to 2 above and what has been obtained through observation

3b What percentage of your writing is done with pen or pencil and what percentage on computer (or other digital device)

3c Which of these would be true for you? *(Use A4 sheet with this question and the options)*

I do **hardly any** writing

Writing is a **regular but small part** of my job

Writing takes up **a quarter of my working time**

Writing takes up **one half of my working time**

Writing takes up **more than half** of my working time.

3d Regular writing tasks

Check out what is involved for each of most frequent writing tasks. Draw on answers to questions above and initial interview to avoid repetition.

3e **what** do you have to write?

3f what is **the reason** for the writing?

3g **who** reads it?

3h **where** is writing done?

3i **when**?

3j **how**?

3k Are there any **rules or guidelines** for writing this?

3l Are other people involved?

4. Learning to write at work

4a When you take on a new job it can be quite tricky knowing how to write in different situations. How did you learn how to .... *(e.g. write quotes)*

Refer back to previous employment or training as appropriate.

4b If you were unsure about how to write something at work, what would you Do?

4c What do you think is most important thing to get right when you are writing at work?

4d Why?

4e In what ways do you assess/check writing when taking on new staff?

4f Do you offer any training to people who work in your business regarding the writing they need to do?

5. Your thoughts on writing

5a How does the writing you do in this job compare with the writing:

- You did at school
- You did at college *(if applicable)*
- You did in a previous job or previous role *(If applicable)*

5b Did the amount of writing needed in this job have any part in your career choice?

5c Would you consider a job that involved more writing?

5d. Why?

5e Given a choice between doing something through writing or speaking to someone directly which would you choose?

5f Why?

6. Writing outside work

6a Do you do much writing outside work?

7. Business as a whole

7a Are the systems that require writing in the business working well?

7b. Are there any obstacles or sticking points?

7c Are any changes planned or predicted?

Keeping a diary

Access to examples of documents

Meeting again

Thanks

Appendix 2.3

Interview guide (Employees of the four businesses)

(Without prompts)

Introduction

Introduce myself

What the research is about

Reason for research

What it involves

Consent form

Permission to use recorder

1. Initial questions *(Putting at ease)*

Check my understanding of their role in the business, what they would call themselves, full or part time.

1a How long have you worked here?

1b What made you choose …….?

1c Have you done other jobs?

1d Have you done any training for this job (or for other jobs where applicable)?

1e Did you need any qualifications?

1f If so what were they?

1g Did you have to complete an application form or CV for this job?

2. About your job

Could you explain to me what your job involves?

Describe a typical day / what you did yesterday Every day the same?

3. Writing at work

3a Can you tell me what writing your job involves?

Pick up on earlier references or observations of writing.

Extend what they take to be meant by writing if necessary

3b What percentage of your writing is done with pen or pencil and what percentage on computer (or other digital device)

3c Which of these would be true for you? *(Use prepared sheet as for interviews with owners)*

I do **hardly any** writing

Writing is a **regular but small part** of my job

Writing takes up **a quarter of my working time**

Writing takes up **one half of my working time**

Writing takes up **more than half** of my working time.

Check out what is involved for each of most frequent writing tasks building on answers to above questions and observations

When you ………… *(e.g. fill in an order form)*

3d what do you have to write?

3e what is the reason for the writing?

What happens to it?

3f who reads it?

3g where is writing done?

3h when?

3i how?

3j Are there any rules or guidelines for writing this?

3k Are other people involved?

4. Learning to write at work

4a When you take on a new job it can be quite tricky knowing how to write in different situations.

4b How did you learn how to ….. *(e.g. write invoices)*?

4c Did you have any training?

5. Your thoughts on writing

5a What would you say if someone asked you how important writing is in your job? *(use options used for owners, phase 1)*

5b What are your reasons for choosing that?

5c How important would writing be if you were running your own business (of this type)?

5d How has the writing you do at work changed over the last 10 years

5e How does the writing you do in this job compare with the writing:

- You did at school
- You did at college *(if applicable)*
- You did in a previous job or previous role *(If applicable)*

5f What do you think is most important thing to get right when you are writing at work

5.g Why?

5h If you were unsure about how to write something at work, what would you

do?

5i Given a choice between doing something by writing or speaking to someone directly which would you choose?

5j Why?

5k Did the amount of writing involved have any part in the job you chose?

5l Would you consider a job that involves more writing?

5m Why?

6. Writing outside work

6a What writing do you do outside work?

Final questions *Cool down*

23. Would you be happy to tell me:

- your age
- when left school
- vocational training
- qualifications *(titles, levels, etc)*
- do you live in Bungay or outside town?

Keeping a diary

Access to examples of documents

Meeting again

Thanks

Appendix 3

Participant Consent Form

Page 1 of folded A4 sheet, printed both sides

Leading education and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

The uses of writing in small businesses

A research project

Information for participants

The Researcher

My name is Sue Grief. I live in [redacted] and I am a mature student at London University.

I am happy to answer any questions about the research.

Email [redacted]

Telephone:

What is the research about?

- The aim of the research is to find out:
- How important writing is for different businesses
- How much writing is done at work
- What types of writing are used
- Who writes what
- Whether writing is ever a problem?

Consent Form Page 2

Who will be interested in the results?
The findings of the research will be useful to teachers and trainers and to people who plan education and training.

Who will take part in the project?
A number of small businesses, of different types, in [redacted].

What will the research involve?
I will need to visit the workplace and watch what people do. This will help me to understand how the business works and the ways in which writing is used in the day to day work. I will take notes.

I will need to meet each person working in the business and talk to them individually about their job and how they use writing in their work. The interviews will be informal. With your permission I will record these interviews.

I may return later in the year and speak to some people again to check information and ask further questions.

I may ask you to keep a record of what you write at work for one day or one week.

I will look at examples of the types of writing used in the business.

What happens to the information I collect?
All the notes and recordings I collect will be stored safely in line with the data protection Act 1988.

Consent Form Page 3

When I have completed the research I will write up a report. I may also write articles and speak to people about the research.

What about personal information?

I will change the names of business and the names of people in my computer records and in reports of the research. I will also change the name of the town so you and the business cannot be identified.

What you say to me will be kept confidential. The only time I will tell anyone else about what you have said and give your name, is if I think someone risks being hurt. In this case I will talk to you about this first.

Do you have to take part?

I hope that you will enjoy taking part in the research and find it interesting. It is important you know that:

- taking part is voluntary.
- you can choose not to be interviewed if you prefer.
- if you decide to take part you can drop out at any time
- you can tell me if you would prefer not to answer particular questions.

If you spend time talking with me *outside work hours* I will offer a voucher to thank you for your help.

Consent Form Page 4

Consent

I have read this information leaflet and I agree to take part in this research.

Name ……………………………………………………………………

Work address ……………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………….

Signature …………………………………………. Date ………………………

I have discussed the project with …………………….. and answered any further questions he/she had regarding the research.

Signed ………………………………………………. (Sue Grief)

Date ………………..…………………………………..

Appendix 4

Transcription

Appendix 4.1

Transcription conventions used for the initial transcription of all recorded interviews

Features identified	**Conventions used**	**Examples**
Overlapping speech	Brackets and initials were used to indicate overlapping talk.	'its when the girls aren't in to colour. (Res. Right) that lady's hair.'
Sections that were unclear	Brackets containing an explanation.	(inaudible) (unintelligible)
Pauses	One or more dots within brackets. The number of dots provided an indication of the relative length of the pause. One dot indicated a brief but distinct pause.	Spelling is definitely (.) very important.
Laughter	Word 'laughs' in brackets at the appropriate point plus an initial to indicate who is laughing or 'both laugh'.	I just don't want to go blank. (S. laughs).
Other relevant information	Observations placed in brackets at the appropriate point in the transcription.	Less time if you're computer literate that I aren't. (G. demonstrates one finger typing)
Punctuation	Punctuation was used to indicate grammatical features, where possible, rather than intonation.	

Appendix 4.2

Transcription conventions used for quotations in text and for the sample interview (Appendix 5)

The symbols used were based loosely on those used in the Jefferson Transcription System (Jefferson, 2004).

Features identified	Conventions used	Examples
Overlapping speech	Square brackets containing words of second speaker. Researcher's words in italics.	…obviously the date, *[day]* yeah day, the name of the person
Sections that are unclear or cannot be transcribed	Words within round brackets represent the best approximation to what was said. Round brackets containing an explanation for why a section cannot be transcribed.	(so it) gets across to the customer ... it can be quite annoying if you're serving a customer. (inaudible) We keep it turned low.
Pauses	Round brackets containing one or more dot to indicate the relative length of the pause. One dot indicates a brief but distinct pause.	Spelling is definitely (.) very important.
Laughter	Round brackets containing word 'laughs' and initials indicating who was laughing or 'both laugh'.	I just don't want to go blank. (S. laughs). *Yes. That's quite a lot. (both laugh)*
Transcriber's comments	Comment within double brackets.	'As picture provided'. ((reading from form))
Change in speed of talk	More than and less than symbols around sections of text. <> spoken slowly >< spoken quickly	>We hardly ever fill in today's date because we just don't,< <I am very fortunate>, as in my accountant does <absolutely everything> for me.

Continuation of talk with no break	Equal signs indicate where there was no break between one utterance and the next where this might be expected.	*You don't keep to capitals?=* =No, no
Stress or emphasis	Words stressed are underlined.	That's <u>extremely</u> important you know.
Part of original text omitted	Line of dots.	It's really busy .... sometimes the girl says
Punctuation	Punctuation is used to indicate intonation	
	A full stop indicates a definite falling tone.	No. None of that.
	A question mark indicates a definite rising tone	A typical day. What right from coming through the door?
	Commas are used to indicate a slight pause or a change of tone.	I'll have a few, two or three jobs, booked in during the day.

Appendix 5

Transcription of a sample interview.

Interview with [redacted]

Length 28 minutes 18 seconds

For the transcription conventions used, see Appendix 4.1. The researcher's words are written in italics.

Sections have been blacked out to preserve the anonymity of the interviewee.

1. *Can I ask you how long you've worked here?*

2. Eleven years.

3 *OK. (.) And have you trained as a* [redacted]

4 I have yes.

5 *(...) Do you know to what level you did that?*

6 (unclear) Level three

7 *What was that level three?*

8 Yes. City and Guilds *[City and Guilds. Right of course]* level three

9 Yes

10 And additional [redacted] design course as well

11 *I suppose those go together well don't they?*

12 Well. That is a tag on. That is an extra bit you can do *[For an advanced course?]*

13 It is purely [redacted], not =

14 *=Oh I see. Not the full thing, not ... OK* [just [redacted]] (unintelligible)

15 *And have you done other jobs in the past or is this =*

16 = >Yes I have< done other jobs yes.

17 *OK. (.) Did you do that locally, the training?*

18 [redacted] College, near [redacted].

19 *Ah right. OK. ....* ((information that could locate the college omitted))

20 *And umm, when you got this job with* [redacted] *did you have to do a formal application of any sort?*

21 No.

22 *Can I ask how it was done? … >I’m not interested... well I am interested because of the writing aspect of doing cv’s or application forms<*

23 [redacted] I came straight out of school, worked for them[28] for a year before going on *[oh right]* to a bigger [redacted] > and it was very small compared with what it is now< it’s only half the size, just built up from there. So [redacted] knew of me. So ([redacted] laughs) =

24 *= So it was a personal contact. That’s all I really need to record. Yeah that’s fine. OK*

25 *Umm. Would you like to tell me what a sort of typical day is for you in terms of what you do for your work?*

26 A typical day. What right from coming through the door?

27 *Yes*

28 Check the answer machine. (.) Um. Turn on the computer. We open the doors and we put [redacted] and we always double check the [redacted] I mean that is an ongoing throughout the day. ((intake of breath)) Umm check my [redacted] to see what orders need to be done for the same day if any. we do try to keep a day ahead with the orders but >obviously Monday mornings you can’t because you’re not here on Sunday<. *[No no]* ((intake of breath)) Um put them into order if there’s any [redacted]. [redacted] tend to be times because *[that is obviously a timed event]* and [redacted] is the other one. Um we check. Do any orders that are in [redacted]. Serve the customers, answer the telephone. No two days are exactly the same.

29 *No=*

---

[28] The interviewee referred to people known to the owner.

30 =If all orders are done, for that day and the next day check ahead to see if any [redacted]

31 *I'd never thought of that. (Both laugh)=*

32 =So we always work ahead when it comes to that sort of thing because you need everything [redacted] you see. So you have to keep alert to what's going on. *[mm hmm]* ahead of time also. Umm check future orders to see if anything needs ordering. If you want any particular [redacted] in a quantity or a [redacted] that's not usually on the lorry in great quantities which they might not have that you need, to guarantee that you have the colour that you need ((audible intake of breath)) Phew!

33 *Yes. That's quite a lot. (Both laugh)*

34 It is and in-between we sweep the floors, [redacted], do dusting and keep a constant check on stock, see if anything else need ordering

35 *Ok. ((very quiet))*

36 At the end of the day till up, make sure the answering machine is on, the lights that are not on timers are all turned off, computer's turned off, and that's the other thing constantly checking the computer to see if any orders have come through from the [redacted] as well. (..) They're done direct.

37 *It doesn't go ping or something when that happens?*

38 Um it does have a. If you've got the sound on that does say you have an incoming order. but it can be quite annoying if you're serving a customer. *[inaudible]* We keep it turned low so you don't necessarily always hear it. [*Mmm.]* So you constantly check.

39 *And in terms of those jobs for yourself, obviously I've spoken to* [redacted] *so I know the sort of things they do, what writing do you get involved with?*

40 Writing. If I'm actually in the shop, taking an order I do write down the order and the same with answering the telephone, I write the orders down.

41 *Um, but that would be the main things that you would write during the day?* [yes]*You don't get involved with invoices or things like that?*

42 Er. Sometimes. It depends if a customer wants an invoice, but as regards the accounts at the moment that is [redacted] deals with that side of things.

43 *And you are talking about constantly checking you know* [redacted] *you may not have on the van and things like that* [yes] *Is there a way of recording that. Do you write notes to yourself or have you got a system for that or?*

44 Umm. (..) Yes I suppose we do. We have white boards. We have one in my room as well for reminders which we don't always use as often as we used to. and also a book near the computer to take any messages for [redacted] if she's not in (.) that she can then or customers that have been in that need to speak to her personally, any compliments that we've had from customers as well and complaints obviously, which we don't get many of but they tend to stick in your mind more than the compliments that we get. Yes (both laugh)

45 You can't please everybody all the time, it doesn't matter how hard you try.

46 *OK so you have a room to yourself that's where you* [well everybody else] *Yes but that is=*

47 =That is mainly my back room, yes.

48 *Ok so you don't have scraps of paper floating*

49 Yes. Yes.

50 *You do. Ok.*

51 Yes that's another thing, we do put [redacted] to save we do put a note on the [redacted] as well.

52 *(..) You spoke of having a* [redacted]*. You spoke of putting the things for the day in order.*

53 The orders yes.

54 *So when say* [redacted] *takes an order* [uh ha] *what do they do with that?*

55 Put it in my [redacted].=

56 *= Ok=*

57 =If it's for the same day or the next day.

58 *And then you will look at those. <Do you order those?> > I don't mean order, I mean put them in order and then* [Yes] *and prioritize because of the dates and things?<* [Yes I do]

59 *(..) But the other people in the shop do they sometimes make up the orders?*

60 They do sometime. Yes [redacted] does a lot of the [redacted], but I am the main person to make up the orders.

61 *So when you get those orders <umm what sort of details do they have on them because I didn't really ask* [redacted] *that>.* [OK] *You know what they write down in terms of the* [redacted]*? >She showed me some orders but the one I saw was very simple it just said* [redacted] *or something.<*

62 Yeah, they often are just very simple. Umm sometimes they just come through as a [redacted] and anything goes, um sometimes that can be really detailed if a person wants a particular [redacted] then we use those but generally it is um like a [redacted] and [redacted] on the order sheet and it's up to us.

63 *What umm (.) Do people (.) You, you have abbreviations don't you.* [We do yes] *I know* [redacted]*. What other things do you do as well as* [redacted]*?*

64 [redacted] (Oh I see.) It's either SE or DE(.) [(inaudible)](both laugh)

65 *Ok I don't need to have all of them. It's nice to get a feel for what you do. What if your customers, um do they sometimes request particular* [redacted]*?*

66 They <u>do</u> yes. We endeavour to try our best to get the [redacted] you know, that they require, but that's not always possible so you still do go know the [redacted].

67 *When you order* [redacted]*, (.) so you use, you are ordering them say from the wholesaler,* [mmm] *you use the names* [redacted]*?*

68 Yes proper names [proper names]

69 *Are those quite difficult to spell sometimes? >Just thinking I don't know how to spell* [redacted]*.<*

70 Yes they can be. Yes. We do have a book. We can check. (both laugh) The computer's quite good for giving spell checks as well if needs be. (...) Again we have abbreviations for some of the flowers so (....)

71 *And the orders, umm do those go um (.) mainly by telephone or email, on the internet?*

72 If we are sending to other places then usually the internet yes. (...) or on the [redacted] system. We do occasionally have, no we don't not if we are sending out, its only if we are receiving we tend to have the phone calls.

73 *And actually the um when you are ordering* [redacted]*, so not ordering for a customer directly but you're ordering from the wholesaler or something. Is that done by phone or email?*

74 Oh some and some because you've got the local [redacted] and you can do it by phone, umm but if it's from the [redacted] then it's an email >and sometimes by phone because you want it at short notice< and know that they're on their way can you save it, type of thing, not sell everything.

75 *(....) When you write things down um do you tend to write in handwriting or in capital letters?*

76 Handwriting. handwriting.

77 *You don't keep to capitals?=*

78 =No, no

79 *So that's just a preference thing because* [mm] *yes ok.*

80 *(....) When you actually took up the job, um going back sometime now, um did anybody give you any kind of training in how to do the writing that you needed or was it something you knew already or something you picked up?*

81 Something I picked up.

82 *(...) So that would be from people in the shop?*

83 Yes people in the shop. And each individual shop has their own way of setting out. >I mean you have your basic order sheet but there's certain ways of< (.) people like it done.

84 *So are there any kind of umm (.) rules or conventions or anything that you particularly use in this shop?*

85 Not really, no. you just (.) as long as we know whether the order is paid or not. You make sure you've got the date correct, the customer's details, telephone, you know, the name of the person who's ordered, placed the order, sorry, and then also their telephone number in case we have a problem. >You can always guarantee that if you haven't got a telephone number, that's the one where the problem occurs.< (both laugh)

86 *And what about um big things, like if you have a* [redacted]*?* [Yes] *Does that entail any different types of processes or writing or planning?=*

87 =Umm. Yes, I suppose that does. But again, basically. We do always take an email address for [redacted] as well because that , umm, with work commitments , [redacted] tend to be more likely to be at work than an older customer say or a customer that's got a young family so if you're able to contact them in your working day do much so email is very important, in that sense, but getting the details correct again. What time [redacted],> what time they would like us to deliver [redacted]. Some people only want them an hour before hand, some people want them two or three hours beforehand because they distribute [redacted] themselves, they want [redacted]< (both laugh) ((interviewee got in a muddle saying this)) want to do it as well. Umm. Then you get the details of the [redacted] important to match up and (.) ah if they've got [redacted]. I mean obviously [redacted] sometimes so you have to have a little bit of knowledge to know when to push in the right direction if it's not, I mean some [redacted] come in and they know exactly what they want. They want that, that, that and that.

88 *And others are depending on your expertise to get it right?*

89 Yes they've got an idea of [redacted] they want but they've got no idea apart from that. ([redacted] laughs)

90 *And do you have any kind of diary or planner so that, because presumably people book in* [redacted] *quite well in advance*

91 We’ve got a calendar on the wall. but also we’ve got a folder which is purely just for [redacted] so that we can check in there so that we don’t overbook because you can’t be in three different places at once on a [redacted]. >or even like a [redacted] when you need to [redacted]<.

92 (inaudible). ((Researcher sorting papers)) OK. It’s a question I’m asking everybody um and it’s about the percentage of writing at you do. Um, that could be writing on a computer, writing with a pen, <u>any</u> kind of writing you do. [OK], as part of your job. Would you say that for you, that, I hardly do any writing. writing is a regular but small part of my job. it takes up a quarter of my working time. one half of my working time or more than one half of my working time?

93 It varies from day to day but I would have said it’s more likely to be the small *[but regular]* but regular

94 But it varies day to day?

95 It does vary day to day because like if I’m left here in the afternoon by myself then I’ll obviously do more writing with the customers.

96 Would you consider a job that involved more writing than the one you do now. or a job that used writing in other ways?

97 I really don’t know because I’m actually not very academic so being, ([redacted] laughs) changing job, probably I mean (..) I don’t know how to answer that one. OK? *(both laugh) [inaudible]*=

98 =You are quite welcome not to answer it. That’s fine.

99 OK, Umm. Ok this is not because of what you just told me. This is a question I would have asked you anyway. Umm, do you ever, get sort of stuck with writing at all? Do you have any problems with writing?

100 No

101 You’re quite confident with all the writing you’re doing in in in the shop?

102 Yes, yes

103 Umm. There’s obviously quite a lot of aspects of writing. Writing is, I mean there’s the spelling, handwriting, grammar, what you actually write, there’s what it looks like as well. [Yes] *What do you think is important in the writing in this job? Um. What things are important in terms of writing?*

104 Here is (.) You need to actually get your spelling correct because obviously names of people are important. Um and getting the details down correct. Grammar not so much, because we write a lot in shorthand. Um, yes grammar once you put the writing onto a [redacted] that someone's asked you over the telephone but we do a lot of shorthand so perhaps, but not the shorthand that typists use if you know what I mean (both laugh) We have our own sort of shorthand that we do. So yes, to me getting the details correct is a bit more important than the grammar side. Spelling is definitely (.) very important.

105 Mmm. Ok. That's good.

106 While over the time that you've been working as a [redacted] *do you think that the writing that is required has changed in any way?*

107 No. No.

108 *Has technology, you know the use of computers and things altered it at all?*

It has yes. (both speak at once, inaudible) but they were then coming about when I started

109 Ok so technology has yes. Does that make more or less writing, do you think using computers, for the job?

110 Probably less handwriting but then you type in what you need don't you so (.) because before we used to do tel err over the telephone, you we had, you know, the relay system where now it's done on the computer.

111 So actually things would have been written down twice

112 Not on our behalf no because we'd write the order down. Then telephone and read out what we'd written down to them *[whereas they would write it out themselves] (both laugh)* Whereas now you do it on the computer and send it and then you print it out the other end.

113 You've already told me you use the computer and um you've got the book of [redacted] *and things when you get stuck, umm* [yes] *if you are unsure about something you want to write at work are there any other ways in which you=*

=We've got a dictionary. We've got a dictionary.

114 A question I've asked everybody umm. If you had a choice in a particular situation between doing something by writing or speaking to someone directly, which one would you prefer to use?

115 Speak directly.

116 Can you say why?

117 If you write you've got to wait for that reply to come back in something and if you can do it face to face it's an instant thing. You get your reply straight away.

118 You don't need to tell me anything you don't want to but do you do a lot of writing outside work?

119 Only crosswords and that type of thing. Write birthday cards but no, not other than that not a great deal. Shopping lists ([redacted] laughs)

120 I'm just going back to something I just remembered I didn't ask you earlier. You obviously say you use emails and you've got the [redacted] system. Do you ever use mobile phones at all for work? Text messaging?

121 No not for work

122 Ok

123 Not as in texts but [redacted] always has her mobile phone with her so we can always() but not () We're not encouraged to have our mobile phones at work, unless we are [redacted] because that's a completely different situation. We can have our mobiles in our bags but it's not professional to have your mobile with you all the while. *[It doesn't look good]* I don't think so personally, no.

124 I mean, we all need to have them so that families can contact us rather than using the phone. I mean [redacted] doesn't mind them ringing on the work phone but it's easier if they text (inaudible) grab a pint of milk type of thing (Res. laughs)

125 But [redacted] doesn't, you don't actually text [redacted] you would ring her?

126 No we would ring her.

((Discussion about seeing examples of writing and need to speak about this with the owner))

127 I don't know if - It might be useful if I looked at this one ((referring to the whiteboard in the office)) and then look at your whiteboard as well

128 Yes

129 To get a kind of feel for the

130 No the Saturday job side of things, ((indicating right hand side of whiteboard)) is mainly for the [redacted], mainly when she first started, she knows these are things that can always be done. You don't have to keep coming out into the shop and saying what can I do next? Because Saturday mornings can be quite busy and you don't want to keep being interrupted. The other side, actually some of that has got to come off now – they've been dealt with. But rather than keep lists of private numbers if you put it on here, people we've got to get hold of.

131 So these are people you've got to get back to and [overlapping speech, indecipherable]

132 Yes OK

134 It's just better rather than keeping pieces of paper everywhere.

135 These things are not necessarily wanted straightaway. They're things that if and when we can get type of thing.

136 OK. So that's something anyone can see and they can see, that if they need that information

137 Yes

138 ((Researcher requests to see orders and folders in shop if possible and explanation of not wanting to invade privacy and reasons for wanting to see them))

139 So the [redacted] comes in and (.) That is someone from school?

140 Yes. Yes ((interruption as someone enters room)) Hello. (..) We are also teach the shop as well, how to deal with customers.

141 So it's sort of working like a work experience?

142 Yes

143 So those are the jobs she does?

144 Yes there are other things as well that (..) we think of for her to do in between as well as cleaning but Saturday is a cleaning day so ..

145 Yes OK.

((Researcher closes recording. Move to shop to see papers))

Appendix 6

An initial list of codes used for data analysis

The codes not in italics were closely linked to the questions on the interview schedules and represented ‘foreshadowed ideas’, arising from the reading of relevant literature (see Chapter four, section 7.2).

Codes in italics were added to the initial list as data analysis progressed. These arose either directly from the data or from reflection on this.

Some of the codes in this list represent a higher level of generality and as coding progressed the codes were grouped hierarchically. Some codes were discarded and others added.

This list does *not* represent the final set of codes used[29].

Codes

Where writing done/location

What written on /medium

When/frequency

Immediacy (writing on the spot)

Time and effort.

Purpose

Audience

Records of work done

Information for later use/supporting memory

Writing relating to payment

Image/publicity

Storage of paperwork

Management of time

Communication over distance

Proformas and templates

[29] Due to a software problem the final list of codes was no longer accessible.

Legibility

Abbreviations

Genre

Relationship Oral/written communication

Collaboration

Handwriting

Computers

Narratives

Multimodality

Division of labour

Learning to write for work

Support for writing/problems

Comparison with school

Change

Writing used outside work

The importance of writing

How participants see writing/attitudes to writing

Image/discourse/identity

Individuality

Appendix 7

A list of themes drawn up following the writing up of initial accounts of the four businesses and their uses of writing

General

- Time spent on writing is usually a small percentage of participants' working time
- The systems used tend to support an economy of effort in relation to writing
- Written texts are pivotal to work practices

Context for writing

- Audience is significant in relation to writing. A distinction is made between writing for internal use and writing for the customer and this is reflected in the form and presentation of the writing
- Some written texts are for personal use only (writing for self is writing for representation. Writing for others is writing for communication (Kress, 2010)
- Immediacy of writing. Writing done on the job. Things are written directly with very little time to edit or correct
- The physical environment is not ideal for writing: standing up, work surfaces, noise
- Division of labour influences what writing participants undertake. (Most marked in garage)

- In a small business with small premises oral communication is easy

Uses of writing

- Writing is used to store information and aid memory – some for a long time, some only briefly
- Writing used to communicate with absent colleagues
- Writing serves to ‘fix’ choices and information
- Aesthetic qualities of writing are appreciated (Jo and by Gemma)
- Writing is recognised as projecting an image of the business
- Writing is used to co-ordinate work and manage use of staff and time
- Writing is used in relation to different aspects of time (Adam, 2000; Tusting, 2000)
- Texts can be multifunctional.

Nature of the writing

- Proformas – most of the writing is on proformas in 3 of businesses. Those designed in-house different from those purchased from suppliers
- Very few texts involve the need for composing full sentences (some exceptions e.g. the builder‘s invoices and estimates)
- Genres: proformas represent familiar genres and builder uses genres of invoice and estimate
- Discourse: each business used technical and specialist terms and the vocabulary of their trade. This sits alongside the tools, clothes and

other aspects of the trades to make up the Discourse (with a capital D(Gee, 2008)) of the trade

- Getting information down correctly and legibility is important.

Practices

- Some texts are collaborative, built up by different members of team over time
- The influence of owner on the way the businesses are run and on writing practices is significant
- Conventions regarding how these texts are written, evolve over time
- The placement of texts can be important.

Attitudes to writing

- Problems relating to writing: very few, if any, identified
- Most participants are confident with the writing they need to do at work (Problems with writing have not stood in the way of running a successful business.)
- Most participants (but not all) prefer oral communication when possible
- Delegation of writing tasks to others (scribes) e,g, accountants
- Writing is neither ‘self-generated’ nor ‘imposed’ (Ivanic, 1997). Writing is recognised as simply part of the job.

Information technology

- Use of IT is limited. The businesses are in a stage of transition in relation to this

- Use of computers can be influenced by external institutions which act as ‘sponsors’ (Brandt, 2001) of IT .

Theoretical and methodological themes

- Tracing the uses of writing over time, space and participants can be helpful to understand what participants ‘do with writing’ – how texts are used (Kell, 2009)
- The materiality of texts can help to triangulate the accounts provided in interview
- Situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991): writing at work is learned on the job, writing of other members of a team is used as a model
- Participants draw on other modes of communication as well as written language. They make choices based on the affordances these offer
- Gender: the builder’s wife was more confident with the computer and typed up invoices and estimates and looked after the accounts
- Reification of texts which represent units of work: orders, bookings, appointments, etc. (Barton and Hamilton, 2005).

Comparisons with studies of writing in larger organisations in literature

Compared to larger organisations:

- The impact of globalisation is not so great
- Less emphasis on questions of power in relation to writing
- Accountability: writing rarely used for this
- Writing not seen as a problem. Participants understand the reasons for writing and accept it as part of the job.