Adults' perceptions of their writing practices and development as writers

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Abstract

This exploratory study seeks to gain an understanding of adults' contemporary writing practices and their development as writers. Broadly framed within the field of Literacy Studies, it uses a critical qualitative design to investigate how adults on Higher Education programmes position themselves as writers, and how they construct their writer identities across the different overlapping domains of their lives. 'Writing' is explored as one communicative element in multimodal ensembles.

The research investigates writing within a social constructionist and poststructuralist perspective that sees writing, not as a property of individuals but as a form of language that arises in interaction. It takes an interdisciplinary approach, examining the value participants give to their diverse dominant and vernacular writing practices, including their uses of different languages and technologies for writing.

The fieldwork took place between March and July 2018 in a Higher Education institution and involved individual interviews with seventeen adults (19 years +), of which ten were doctoral students and seven were undergraduate students.

The study illustrates the centrality of writing in adult lives. The findings show the value of 'communicative repertoire' as an explanatory construct in disentangling the complexities of writing, both online and offline, and in positioning the individual as a knowledgeable and active subject in communicative encounters. The research uses linguistic ethnography to analyse the 'finegrain' in communicative interactions and highlights how it can be used as a helpful tool for researcher reflexivity.

Impact statement

This study of adult writing offers a number of insights which I suggest may be of value to the academy.

Firstly, the study is of direct relevance to academics working on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in its attention to writer subjectivities. In particular, the study notes the challenges for some undergraduate students in understanding the complexities of academic writing on interdisciplinary programmes, as well as the pressure to use handwriting in timed examinations. Doctoral students highlighted positive ways in which they were drawing on academic repertoires within their diverse and overlapping life domains.

Secondly, the notion of 'communicative repertoire' (Rymes, 2014) draws on critical and socio-cultural perspectives in Literacy Studies which challenge dominant ideologies of writing as autonomous, and purely skills-based, and which portray writers in terms of deficit. As Mills and Stornaiuolo (2018) note, there is a need for more research on contemporary writing practices which instead draw attention to the ideological nature of literacies, recognising how writing is situated within adult lives and constantly re-contextualised in multimodal ensembles. This exploration of writer subjectivities crosses both academic and everyday literacies and contributes to current research in the field of Literacy Studies. In addition, the concept of 'communicative repertoire' has potential as a heuristic for understanding writing as just one element within communicative repertoires.

Thirdly, this research draws on contemporary theories in literacies, linguistics, multimodality and adult learning which recognise the complexities of writing in online and offline spaces. A communicative repertoire approach envisages a linguistic repertoire as a sub-set of a communicative repertoire. By using a repertoire approach, this study encourages an interdisciplinary perspective and offers opportunities for conversations across different academic fields.

Fourthly, this study uses linguistic ethnography, alongside latent thematic analysis, as an analytic tool to explore adults' approaches to writing, and to examine how writer identities are constructed in the everyday. Linguistic ethnography offers a useful approach to qualitative data analysis which can be utilised across academic fields. In particular, I suggest that linguistic ethnography is a valuable resource for researcher reflexivity in qualitative research.

Fifthly, study findings can add to current discussions on adult learning, and approaches to teaching writing, that are highly pertinent on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, as well as teacher education courses. Ideas can be shared and discussed through UCL Special Interest Group presentations, local and international conferences, and course team discussions.

The study also offers insights which I consider potentially valuable outside Higher Education. The notion of 'communicative repertoire' offers a very useful theoretical and pedagogical framework which could be further developed within Further Education (and possibly other phases of education). Ideas could be shared through London-wide and national professional development networks through presentations and publications, with the aim of generating funding for further research.

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Declaration

I, Vera Hutchinson, 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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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the students and colleagues who took part in this research. I would also like to thank my family and friends, and my supervisors, Dr John Yandell, and especially Dr Jon Swain, who has supported me throughout the EdD. This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Michael Reynolds, my late husband, who sadly passed away while I was on the EdD programme.

Reflective statement

Undertaking the Doctorate in Education (EdD) has been a process of both looking backwards and forwards in my professional life. In a similar way to Andrews and Edwards, the EdD has offered me an opportunity to dissect and theorise the 'backed up store' (2008:4) of my professional life in the wider context of changes in the Further Education and Higher Education sectors in England. The EdD has offered me the space to step back, to reflect and to 'notice' changes and developments in professional practice (Carnell, 2006). It has also enabled me to widen my understanding of academic literature, drawing on a broader knowledge base and incorporating different epistemological lenses. In my view, exploring one's professional world through different paradigms encourages a process of reflexivity, which in turn helps to' frame' professional practice and the development of a 'professional imagination' which, as Power (2008) suggests, helps to sustain us in our professional lives and practices. Andrews and Edwards claim that the EdD has enabled them 'to reclaim [their] identit[ies] as educational professionals' (2008:8). Making sense of one's professional experiences through a process of reflexivity is part of this 'reclaiming' process and this has also been part of my professional self-narrative on the EdD.

Before embarking on the EdD programme, I worked on a two-year action research project which focussed on initial teacher education for new teachers of adult literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) within the Further Education sector. This research was part of a collaborative project between two Higher Education Institutes and three Further Education colleges. It had a focus on mentoring pre-service teachers and, through engaging in the research, I developed a strong interest in the concept of mentoring within initial teacher education. My Foundations of Professionalism assignment on the EdD explored mentoring as a social practice and was partly an exploration of some of the contradictions I experienced during this research. It was an attempt to theorise mentoring practice within initial teacher education, moving away from a dominant 'therapeutic perspective' (Power, 2008:148) with a primary focus on individual behaviours, towards a sociological perspective that allowed for a 'sociological imagination' (Power 2008:156; Wright Mills, 1959). Arguing for a 'new'

conceptual framework to explore mentoring freed me to ask new and different questions which allowed for critical analysis.
Whilst the action research project in initial teacher education was a valuable introduction to research, I was unsure about the robustness of the action research methodology adopted within the project. At that time, prior to joining the EdD, I was unsure how to evaluate and improve the research design. Undertaking the Methods of Enquiry 1 assignment enabled me to write a research proposal with a deeper understanding of the literature on research methods. Receiving critical feedback on this assignment was very valuable in underlining the complexities in research design, the importance of structure in a research proposal, and the need for an explicit and detailed rationale for each aspect of the research process, including sampling, data collection and data analysis. This module also highlighted the importance of demonstrating transparency within each stage of the research process, underlining some of the complexities involved in the ethical review process, particularly for a practitioner taking on a researcher role within their institution.

For my assessment on the Initial Specialist Course, I chose to focus on policy within the field of adult literacy, language and numeracy, an area of specific interest to me. This essay allowed me to explore familiar terrain, but it also challenged me to stand back and make connections within a complex policy environment. Using some different theoretical and conceptual lenses to explore policy processes enabled me to make some of these connections, highlighting how policy discourse within the field is 'boundaried' (Keep, 2011) but also how 'policy windows' (Marshall, 2000) emerge across time and space. This assignment also enabled me to 'reclaim' my professional identity as an adult literacy practitioner and teacher educator, recognising how policy changes mirrored professional learning and career trajectories in my own professional life.

The Methods of Enquiry 2 assignment was a new piece of work, though building yet again on my previous professional experience as an adult literacy practitioner, manager and teacher educator in the field of adult literacy, language and numeracy, and my interest in professional learning within workplaces in the Further Education sector. My

research study addressed a current and immediate concern for my institution: what continuing professional development did organisations want for their teaching staff and what were they prepared to pay for? Whilst there is a constant process of learning and reflecting on the EdD which helps to 'frame' and reconfigure professional practice, undertaking the MOE2 assignment was particularly valuable for me as the study was part of my on-going professional work and the research findings had direct relevance to my current and future professional practice and that of my colleagues.

The process of submitting assignments and receiving written formative and summative feedback is, in my view a particularly valuable part of being on the EdD. Reflecting on feedback comments from markers for each assignment has enabled me to engage in an ipsative self-assessment process, uncovering some of my developing strengths and recognising areas for development (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). I have used my experience as a student on the EdD to develop my own learning and writing but I have also found the tutorial and feedback process invaluable as an apprenticeship, in which EdD tutors have modelled processes of giving oral and written feedback, which has informed my own practice in tutoring students on Masters level programmes. Carnell (2006) in her study of the benefits and effects of the EdD programme at the Institute of Education, identified three overlapping themes in her research findings: the value of 'belonging' to a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991); the process of learning to communicate difficult theoretical and conceptual frameworks; and the process of being or becoming a researcher. These themes highlight how EdD students may develop and strengthen new identities through their engagement with the programme: as learners, as experienced practitioners, and as researchers. In my view, one of the strengths of the EdD programme is the breadth of professional backgrounds and expertise represented within the 'community'. Participating on the EdD alongside colleagues from a range of professional backgrounds has encouraged me to develop a broader vision of professional practice and a wider world view. For example, learning about ethical issues in medical research, and other disciplines, has challenged me to develop greater rigour and a wider imagination in exploring concepts of 'good practice' within my field. Likewise, the opportunity to challenge, and to be challenged, within a

safe, learning environment encourages learning across disciplines and work contexts, enabling co-construction of learning. Presenting ideas and research findings to practitioners and researchers at conferences outside the EdD 'community', as well as lecturing, have also helped me to develop my confidence in presenting and discussing theoretical concepts and ideas. This process of 'finding one's own voice' is further developed through discussing ideas with colleagues within professional communities, through developing and extending arguments, through using and creating theory and through the discipline of writing and re-writing. In this way, personal and professional development is inextricably linked through involvement in the EdD programme.

When planning the Institution Focussed Study (IFS), I evaluated my professional learning on the taught modules, as well as considering my personal research interests and issues arising from my professional practice. My initial proposal was a mixed methods study which focussed on the practitioner as the unit of analysis. I was unable to collect enough data for this study, and so I subsequently changed my study, focussing instead on a qualitative design which involved interviewing adult literacy learners about their understandings of 'writer development' (Andrews and Smith, 2011). The IFS study proved valuable to me in exploring learner subjectivities and in developing my interviewing skills. It also acted as a pilot for the thesis, specifically in relation to the research tools. For the thesis, I chose to move outside the field of adult literacy, language and numeracy, in order to interview Higher Education students. By interviewing undergraduate and doctoral students, I have also written myself into this thesis, mainly through the use of reflexive vignettes. The process of writing this thesis has extended my knowledge and engagement with different fields enabling me to find a 'space' and to see myself as part of an academic network in which knowledge is connected and historical. Arola, writing from an American Indian perspective, sees the writer/composer as a reflective practitioner: someone who recognises 'the people, networks and traditions that make up acts of composing' (2018:281). As she writes:

> In this space, no writer or remixer is a lone genius, but instead exists in space and time and creates texts that work to solve problems, extend ideas, and further culture (2018:281).

I consider that this approach to ethical composing practices is valuable in that it enables writers to critically reflect on social systems and their claims to knowledge.

This reflective statement draws on my experience of learning on the EdD programme since enrolling in September 2008. As for other participants on the EdD programme, the process of balancing doctoral study alongside the demands of the workplace and my personal life has been part of my professional learning. I had a number of setbacks on the EdD, including interruptions, which might be regarded as 'critical incidents', described by Cunningham as an event or a series of events which 'creates a disturbance in our professional equilibrium' (Cunningham 2008:165). Cunningham argues that these disturbances, when analysed critically, may lead us to 'accelerate professional learning' (2008:161). In my experience, having periods of interruption and the deferral of an assignment on the EdD, including a forced detour in relation to the IFS, has helped me to be more strategic in planning my own learning and in defining my research interests. I have found that I am now more confident to form research questions, to look for supporting data, to challenge and to evaluate practice more rigorously. I am also more aware of the importance of structuring and editing writing in order to present ideas and describe processes clearly and reflexively.

Chapter 1: Introduction, rationale and research questions

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores adults' understandings of their own writing practices and their perceptions of their development as writers. A central aim of this study is to gain an understanding of contemporary writing practices and perceptions of 'writer development' (Andrews and Smith, 2011) from the perspectives of the writers themselves. The study is broadly framed within the field of Literacy Studies (Rowsell and Pahl, 2015), which defines literacy practices as

> not just the writing activity and the resultant texts, but also the ideologies and patterns of behaviour surrounding the process, the attitudes and values that inform it, and the aspects of the broader social and historical context which has framed and shaped it (Tusting et al, 2019:12).

The study investigates how adults on higher education programmes position themselves as writers and how they construct their writerly identities (Seloni, 2019) across the different overlapping domains of their lives, such as study, work and home contexts (Purcell-Gates,2006; Rowsell and Pahl, 2015). It also explores what value participants give to their different dominant and vernacular writing practices (Barton and Hamilton, 1998), including their uses of different languages and technologies for writing.

The fieldwork took place between March and July 2018 in a higher education institution and involved individual interviews with seventeen adults (19 years +), of which ten were doctoral students and seven were undergraduate students. All, except for one doctoral student, were studying at the same university, where I am also based.

The thesis builds on the findings from the Institution Focused study (IFS) where I researched adult literacy learners' attitudes to writing. The learners were in Level 2 Functional English classes (Ofqual, 2012), sited in an adult education institution. The IFS was a small qualitative study which explored adult literacy learners' perceptions of their own writing practices, both inside and outside the classroom, to find out what value they accorded to these different writing practices (Hutchinson, 2017). The study was

interested in how adult literacy learners positioned themselves as writers, engaging in diverse and multiple writing practices in different contexts to construct identities in the pursuit of their individual life projects. Findings highlighted how writing practices in adult literacy classes were limited to formal writing genres, including reports, articles, emails and formal letters in contrast to the broad range of multilingual online and print writing with which the participants engaged within their wider life contexts.

This thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach to writing, and to writing development. Writing research as a field is very broad incorporating different theoretical frameworks including psychological, socio-cultural and linguistic approaches (Cremin and Myhill, 2012). Whilst studies within these different traditions have been represented in handbooks, such as Beard et al. (2009), and more recently in Mills et al. (2018), there is still a paucity of research on adult writing that exploits interdisciplinary perspectives and different fields such as, for example, 'second language writing' (Matsuda et al., 2009). This research employs an interdisciplinary approach which foregrounds the writer, taking account of the myriad ways in which adults use writing for multimodal compositions across the different, dynamic and fluid domains of their lives. The thesis takes the view that writing is socially constructed and multi-dimensional (Brandt, 1990), acknowledging that various definitions of writing unfold in how adults use written texts to communicate with each other in the world (Street and Lefstein, 2007).

The study starts from an epistemic perspective that acknowledges the centrality of literacies, including writing, in everyday life, including the role of digital technologies (Mills and Stornaiuolo, 2018). The study is sited within higher education, a domain that is saturated with text, both online and offline (Tusting et al., 2019). I am interested in gaining a holistic picture of adults' writing ecologies (Alvermann and Robinson, 2018; Saes, 2012; Pahl, 2012) in order to understand the role of writing across their different life contexts.

I recognise writing as embedded in multiple literacies and situated in social contexts where meanings are contested and continually negotiated (Street, 1984; Clark and Ivanic, 1997; Blommaert, 2007). From a social semiotics perspective, writing is both a

cultural technology and a mode for making meaning (Domingo, Jewitt and Kress, 2015). Within the study, I define writing as textual representation, acknowledging that 'lettered representation' (Kress, 1997:116) does not fully represent the multilingual capital (Preece, 2016) embodied, for example, in both alphabetic and logographic scripts (Andrews and Smith, 2011). 'Writing', as multimodal composition, includes both print and digital writing, encompassing technologies such as social media (Williams, 2014) and the use of handwriting (Haas and McGrath, 2018).

1.2 Rationale

Writing is still a relatively under-researched area when compared with language acquisition and reading (Beard et al., 2009; Andrews and Smith, 2011; Cremin and Myhill, 2012; Wyse, 2017), particularly in relation to adults, and despite what has been described as a 'societal shift' from reading to writing (Brandt, 2009:54). A central aim of this qualitative study is to gain an understanding of contemporary adult writing practices and the extent to which writing matters to adult writers. Brandt affirms the value of this approach:

> The effects of writing on readers have been considered from every imaginable angle. Meanwhile, the effects of writing on the writer – positive or deleterious – go largely unexplored. Yet increasingly these effects will give human definition to mass literacy (2015:163).

This exploratory study aims to research the dominant and vernacular writing practices of a range of adult Higher Education students from differing linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds. The changing place and role of writing in contemporary late-modern society (Giddens, 1991), particularly in online contexts (Domingo et al., 2015), has transformed understandings of writing. I am interested in how adults learn to write for different purposes and audiences within this changing communicative landscape (Mills and Stornaiuolo, 2018). More recent writing research has addressed adult digital writing practices (for example, Mills et al., 2018; Burnett et al., 2014a). However, there have been fewer studies that seek to capture the online and offline 'textures' of everyday lives (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016:247). I am particularly interested in how

adults engage and participate in diverse multilingual writing practices, both online and offline, and how they position themselves when writing within these multiple contexts.

Brandt in her study of ‘deep writing’ (2015:160) discussed the emergence of ‘mass writing’ (2015:163) as distinct from changes in digital technologies. This research considers the holistic nature of adult lives, recognising the recursive, multi-layered nature of writing in everyday online and offline practices. As in Dovchin and Pennycook’s study with young urban Higher Education students, this study emphasises the importance of writing research which encompasses 'real’ and ‘virtual’ interactions and inscriptions, noting that:

> If we explore their online worlds without looking at their everyday offline lives, we fail to see how one may be grounded in the other; but if we focus on their offline lives, we fail to see how their online lives seep into their everyday practices (2018:221).

Writing is used within specific contexts and for particular purposes which are embedded in ‘discourses’ which in themselves offer particular ideological representations of the world (Clark and Ivanič , 1997). In my view, we need to continue to challenge dominant ideologies that portray writing and literacies as universalist and purely skills-based, as reflected in school and college curricula (Mills and Stornaiuolo, 2018). Following Street (1984, 2012), this study argues against literacy hegemony, or an ‘autonomous model’ of literacy, making the case for multiple literacies reflected in adults’ lives.

Writing and literacies research also needs to address issues of local and global connectedness and difference (Mills and Stornaiuolo, 2018), enabling an understanding of the complexities of literacies, identities and lives which reflect the communities and dynamic networks that constitute ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec, 2007, 2019; Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 2013). A critical literacy perspective allows us to question how these discourses and narratives shape lives and reflect the wider social order (Larson and Marsh, 2015).

Some writers (for example, Myhill, 2009; Andrews and Smith, 2011) have argued that the term 'writing' does not adequately describe the process of design and compositional fluency in which writers engage whilst using different materials, genres, modes, communicative technologies, language varieties and cultural practices to make meaning. Despite the range of affordances available to young people and adults, I argue that it is worthwhile to retain a focus on writing as a specific mode. This argument is supported by Gillen:

> A capacity to distinguish analytically between distinct activities such as 'reading', 'writing' and 'speech' is a direct contribution of Literacy Studies that should be maintained. Such activities are practised and interwoven in new ways, as users shape their practices in response to the affordances of technologies (2015:377).

In this research, I want to find out in what ways writing matters to adults within their complex lives, recognising that the writer mediates the social world through writing. The study draws on the concept of communicative repertoire (Rymes, 2014a), recognising that language, and writing within language, is just part of how we communicate in the world. A repertoire approach locates writing in an interactional perspective, as something that people do. In this study, I explore the potential for using the concept of 'communicative repertoire' to analyse writing within adult lives. I also use linguistic ethnography (Tusting and Maybin, 2007; Snell et al., 2015) in order to explore the fine grain of communicative encounters in the lives of adult students and as a reflexive tool within the study.

1.3 Positioning myself in the study

A critical approach to qualitative research requires the researcher to identify their own positionality in relation to the research context and site, as well as their identity or social location (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). Maxwell suggests that the qualitative researcher also needs to be explicit about her 'personal, practical and intellectual goals' when undertaking research (2013:24), and how these reflect the researcher's own values and beliefs. As a student who writes, I include myself in the study, particularly through the use of reflexive vignettes.

In positioning myself within the research, I acknowledge my interest in writing as multi-faceted. This thesis extends my theoretical interest in literacies as a field of study whilst my current roles as lecturer and university student position me as an 'insider researcher' (Mercer, 2007:1). However, in line with a critical perspective, I aim to avoid binaries and notions of essentialism, recognising that researchers can embody roles as both 'insider and outsider' (Ravitch and Carl, 2016:11). During the period of data collection, I was a module leader and tutor on the BA Education Studies programme attended by the undergraduate participants although I was not known to the interviewees prior to the research. As a doctoral student, I share many of the same concerns and interests raised by the doctoral participants in the study, almost all of whom attend the same university. In common with some of the participants, much of my formal education has been outside the UK educational system, as I was brought up in the Republic of Ireland. As a white middle-aged, middle-class woman, my professional background is that of an adult literacy tutor, teacher educator and lecturer with experience of working within further, adult, and higher education, mainly within the London area.

I recognise my social location in this study as historied within the field of adult literacy in the UK (Hamilton and Hillier, 2006). My personal interest stems from my work on the specialist post-compulsory Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in English (Literacy and ESOL) at UCL Institute of Education. As a tutor on this programme, I am concerned that up-to-date scholarship and research on writing, digital literacies and multimodality is available to teacher educators and new teachers. Teaching on an undergraduate module, 'Literacies across the Lifecourse' has also highlighted for me the importance of extending my theoretical and empirical understanding of contemporary writing. My previous experience of working as a practitioner, manager and teacher educator in the further, adult and vocational sector also informs the thesis, contributing to the 'implicit' or 'tacit' theories that support my thinking in the study (Ravitch and Carl, 2016).

1.4 Research questions

This study positions the writer as central, in line with Andrews and Smith's theories of 'writer development' (2011:26). From a professional and personal perspective, I am interested in how and why adults choose to make meaning through the affordances of writing. Are we now in an era of 'mass writing', as Brandt (2015:3) suggests, or has writing become marginalised in the 'wider communicational landscape' (Kress, 2015:113)? I am interested in adults' perceptions of their changing participation and engagement in diverse and multiple writing practices and the ways in which they perform identity work both online and offline. I am also interested in how adults view their own writer identities and their development as writers across their everyday practices.

The research questions which guide this study are:

1. How does writing get constructed as an element of adults' communicative repertoires?
2. What part does writing play in the construction and performance of their identities?
3. What possibilities for learning to write are available to adults within the multiple compositional contexts of their lives?

I explore each research question in turn.

1. *How does writing get constructed as an element of adults' communicative repertoires?*

In this study, writing is recognised as one mode for making meaning within a multimodal ensemble. I am interested in finding out the extent to which participants use the affordances of writing, and other modes, such as image, space, sound and other resources, to make meaning and to perform agency within a 'multimodal communicational world' (Kress, 2015:113). We understand the writer as mediating the

social world through writing, but this is always a multimodal enterprise (Brandt, 1990). Writing is recognised as a privileged mode (Wertsch, 1991) within multimodality, and we need to question the extent to which it is used as a mode for making meaning in conditions of late modernity (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016; Giddens, 1990).

There are distinct authorial and textual differences in writing online and in print writing (Burnett et al., 2014a; Domingo et al., 2015). This study aims to encourage adults to reflect on their own writing practices, considering, for example, the extent to which their practices involve multiple tools, modes, languages and authorship. I am interested in exploring when, where, what and how adults write, to gain an understanding and sensitivity to their differing worldviews as well as the demands and challenges of their local contexts (Millard, 2006; Hughes and Schwab, 2010). In addition, this question aims to find out what connections, if any, participants make between writing practices in their different life domains. What are adult students' perceptions of academic writing (in English) and to what extent is this form of writing valued by them in their current lives and imagined futures (Norton, 2013)? To what extent do they engage in writing in different languages and literacies, including dominant and vernacular forms, in the different domains of their lives?

The concept of 'communicative repertoire' (Rymes, 2014a) helps us to gain an understanding of contemporary writing practices from the perspective of the writers themselves, allowing us to recognise similarities and differences, continuities and discontinuities in relation to participants' contexts for writing, their use of writing tools, writing identities, relationships and values (Tusting et al., 2018). I have used the term 'communicative repertoire' to refer to the multimodal resources, including 'languaging' (Garcia and Wei, 2014), which participants ascribe to their meaning making across different domains of their lives. Using the perspective of applied and socio-linguistics, Betsy Rymes defines 'communicative repertoire' as

> the collection of ways individuals shape language and literacy and other means of communication (gestures, dress, posture, or accessories) to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate (2014:117).

This study did not include visual data analysis and so understandings of participants' 'communicative repertoires' were limited to signs mediated through the face-to-face interview process and reflected in the auditory recordings, the written transcripts, ecomaps and field notes. Rymes makes the point that we communicate both with and beyond language but these communicative repertoires are always situated and instantiated in specific practices. Our communicative repertoires are also historically situated, including 'an accumulation of archaeological layers' (Rymes, 2014a:290) which reflect our diverse experiences as well as the communicative resources, or affordances, that are available in individual repertoires.

2. *What part does writing play in the construction and performance of their identities?*

Participants performed identities through their writing choices and in the ways in which they represented their past, present and intended futures. Bonny Norton contends that identity refers to

> how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how the person understands possibilities for the future (2013:45)

This question explores participants' perceptions of their writing practices and their performance of writer identities in different, shifting and overlapping domains, including writing for academic, personal, social, work and faith-based practices. This includes both digital and print writing, and the use of social media. The study explores notions of time and space, looking to past and present, as well as to imagined futures (Norton, 2013). It also draws on concepts of materiality and (im)materiality (Davies, 2014) in analysing how adult writers make meaning online and offline through writing and other modes (Dovchin and Pennycook, 2018). I am also interested in how writers position themselves, and others, across time and space and the extent to which writing has an im(material) and embodied dimension which is significant to writers (Burnett, 2015).

This question also examines how adult writers position themselves as active agents in text creation across domains, taking account of writing tools, values, relationships and

writerly identities (Seloni, 2019). Purcell-Gates defines 'socio-textual domains' as contextualised social activity reflecting 'social relationships, roles, purposes, aims, goals and social expectations' (2006:20). In this definition, domains are not static or separate categories but instead are dynamic, fluid and overlapping. Blommaert and Rampton (2011) use the term 'mobile resources' to signal how social actors mobilise specific resources across these diverse and overlapping domains. This question explores how adults position themselves within the world, acknowledging how our subjectivities are moulded by multiple subject formations (Garcia and Wei, 2014). I am interested in adults' writing aspirations and in how they perform different identities, navigating both 'trust' and 'risk' (Giddens, 1990:31) across both virtual and real environments.

3 ***What possibilities for learning to write are available to adults within the multiple compositional contexts of their lives?***

This question explores what is meant by 'learning to write' from both lifecourse (Compton-Lilly, 2015) and lifewide perspectives, which reflect the temporal and spatial aspects of individual lives. This section includes academic writing, which is salient to all participants in this study, alongside participants' understandings and views about learning to write for different purposes across a range of media and contexts in pursuit of their life projects. This includes formal academic writing, alongside writing for employment and writing for social and personal purposes. I am interested in how adults perceive their ongoing engagement in learning to write for different audiences and for different purposes.

The thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach to 'writer development' (Andrews and Smith, 2011), drawing on participants' own ideas of what constitutes learning within diverse contexts. This question explores normative concepts of 'good writing' in different contexts, recognising that writing represents cultural capital for the writer (Grenfell, 2019:45) and is never neutral. In exploring this question, I am also interested in the extent to which adults rely on sponsors (Brandt, 2001), communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), or affinity spaces (Lammers et al, 2018).

I am also concerned about the interstices of writing and power where global definitions of literacies may make it harder for some adults to be heard, particularly those who have complex, multilingual, and multimodal communicative repertoires (Rowsell and Pahl, 2015). In my view, this underlines the importance of allowing space for subjectivity in literacy research (Burnett et al., 2014b).

Traditionally, the largest body of research on writing has centred on school literacies, where the focus has been on 'learning to write' within formal educational contexts. Whilst writing development in different contexts is an aspect of this thesis (see RQ3), the study is also concerned with writing practices, how adults perceive writing as part of the communicative repertoires of their lives (RQ1), and how they perform identities through writing (RQ2). Within the field of Literacy Studies, there are tensions between formalised, dominant writing practices grounded in institutions, such as education, and the vernacular, embodied and networked forms of writing (Rowsell and Pahl, 2015) that are part of adult and young people's everyday practices. I am interested in the continuities and disjunctures embodied in the different ways that writing as a mode is experienced by the writer. I am also interested in writers' perceptions of the ways in which they learn to make meaning in the everyday as well as what they see as the possibilities and affordances for identity performance in imagined futures. Mills and Stornaiuolo emphasise the importance of writing research to challenge what they describe as the 'dominant ideologies in educational practice, in society and in the media' (2018:1). A repertoire approach responds to this challenge where the emphasis is on extending communication across diverse groups and lives instead of a narrow focus on standardisation and 'correctness'. This interdisciplinary study is an attempt to extend possibilities for dialogue between different fields, taking on Rowsell and Pahl's challenge to conceptualise the field of literacy as a space of the 'not yet' (2015:4).

1.5 The structure of the thesis

This chapter has introduced the thesis, setting the scene for this study into adults' writing practices and perceptions of their own development as writers. The rationale has

presented a case for this exploratory study and this has been followed by a reflexive account, positioning the researcher within the study. Following on from this introductory chapter, the thesis is divided into 10 chapters.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review, including the theoretical orientation of the study. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology, including the research design, the study setting and context as well as the chosen methods and sample. This chapter considers the process of data analysis as well as ethical issues. It also includes the use of linguistic ethnography to analyse some aspects of the interview process. Chapter 4 uses an intersectional approach to introduce the full sample. It includes some findings on the participants, including data on language use and employment. The following three chapters (Chapters 5-7) introduce three individual vignettes, chosen to draw out key themes that help to answer the research questions. Linguistic ethnography is employed as an analytic tool in these chapters to explore interactional aspects of the interview process. Chapter 8 introduces reflexive vignettes on the four 'cases' discussed in the previous chapters. The purpose of this chapter is to develop the study findings, using linguistic ethnography to extend researcher reflexivity. Chapter 9 presents and discusses the main findings of the study, drawing on the main themes explored in the individual vignettes, including findings across the rest of the sample. Chapter 10 presents a conclusion to the thesis, including a review of the study and how it might offer a contribution to the field. This chapter includes a final reflexive account which highlights my learning and possible implications for my future professional and personal development.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical orientation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights some key debates and theories around writing with particular reference to the main research questions of the study. The theoretical framework, outlining the formal theory which guides the study, is a key component of the conceptual framework in a critical qualitative study. Ravitch and Carl describe the theoretical framework as

> how you weave together or integrate existing bodies of literature – to frame the topic, goals, design and findings of your specific study (2016:47).

This could also be described as bringing together the theories that 'frame (the) core constructs in context' (2016:87). This study is located in the field of literacy research but this, in itself, is very broad, crossing theoretical perspectives such as literacy studies, education, composition studies, linguistics, literary studies, applied linguistics, anthropology, rhetoric, pragmatics, second language writing and genre theory among others (Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Hyland, 2009). As described by Rowsell and Pahl, the field of literacy 'sits at a disciplinary crossroads', which also offers researchers and theorists opportunities to develop their own choreographies of knowledge (2015:3). The literature search aimed for relevance (Maxwell, 2002) and necessitated concept mapping (Maxwell, 2013) and a 'qualitative searching' approach (Mackay, 2007, cited in Robson and McCartan, 2016:55).

Developing a literature review within a critical qualitative framework requires engagement at a meta-analytic level, deciding which bodies of literature are most relevant in the theoretical framing of the study. This includes a critical gaze on 'epistemological domination' (Ravitch and Carl, 2016:47), identifying what theory gets codified as well as what is less prominent in the literature. This is also a reflexive process as the researcher positions herself in the literature, arguing for what she sees as 'legitimate knowledge' within the boundaries of specific research communities.

Understanding research as a 'set of social practices', made visible in 'citations trails' (Pahl, 2019: 6) encourages me to question the role of research and how we position both 'the researcher' and 'the researched'.

2.2 Theoretical approaches to writing

Discourses about writing across many disciplines are interlinked with notions about learning to write. Traditional approaches to writing development research can be broadly categorised as 'product-related models', where the text is the analytic object, and 'process-related models', where the writer and the writing process is central (Andrews and Smith, 2011:29; Hyland, 2009). A systematic review of research on writing, undertaken by Andrews and Smith (2011:43) is a useful starting point. A main finding from the review was that most theories and models of writing during this period, from 1968 to 2009, were based on textual analysis of children's texts including, for example, measurements of syntactical complexity and descriptions of strategies used by writers to embed ideas in sentences (Loban, 1976, cited in Andrews and Smith, 2011). In the same period, Britton extended the focus on linguistic approaches to explore rhetoric, considering how writers take account of function and audience in their writing (Pradl, 1982). Research by Britton et al. (1976) involved studying the structural and linguistic features of texts written by secondary school children and emphasised the importance of context in writing research. In regard to transactional texts, the researchers found that children were generally required to write informative texts of increasing complexity during their time in school but opportunities to write in different genres and for different functions were limited. Britton's work into the constraints of school literacy reminds us that researching writer development requires an examination of the affordances available to young people and adults in different sites, including both formal and informal contexts (Moss, 2006).

Building on this study by Britton et al (1976), Arnold's (1980) model of writing development, includes the 'audience' as a key conceptual component. She maintains that writing development is linked to how well writers align their writing to the societal

expectations of a specific discourse. She also highlights complexity in writing and the difficulty of measuring progress as writers appear to both progress and regress. In line with this study, she emphasises the importance of locating the writer as the locus of their own development in writing (Andrews and Smith, 2011).

Cognitive learning theorists, aiming to offer descriptions of how writers process language, developed models, such as Hayes and Flower (1980); and Hayes' (2006, cited in Wyse, 2017) computer-type models, which utilised flow-charts to represent the complexity involved in the writing process. These models highlighted the act of writing as composition, exploring how a writer is engaged in a specific writing task, as well as the role of memory. This model emphasises writing as a cyclical process, including goal-setting to develop ideas, picturing the audience, and placing words on the page. Hayes and Flower viewed their multilevel dynamic model as offering a description of the processes used by the competent writer. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), following Hayes and Flower (1980), made a distinction between novice and experienced writers, and argued that a second model was needed to account for differences in writing practices between what they conceptualised as 'knowledge-telling' and 'knowledge-transforming' processes. They envisaged 'knowledge-telling' as a simple model of knowledge reproduction, whereas 'knowledge-transforming' was a more complex process, involving the writer in drawing on previous knowledge, analysing content and developing an understanding of discourse and audience. They contrasted the writing processes of adults and school-age children and, whilst recognising maturation as critical in terms of managing the cognitive load involved in writing processes, they also noted that more experienced writers of any age used the 'knowledge-transforming' process more easily and more often, and that writing development was an on-going process. Cognitive writing approaches have more recently been augmented by work in neuroscience (Wyse, 2017).

However, as pointed out by Hyland (2009), these cognitive models, focussing on individuals and cognition, do not illustrate how writers change from 'novice' to 'expert', or whether the process of learning to write is similar or different for all writers. A further difficulty is that much of the research on writing has focussed on teaching children in

schools, and so the concept of children's writing development at different stages may be conflated with levels of maturation. Cognitive perspectives on writing processes also tend to centre on 'skills', with the assumption that they are common across all writers and this paradigm has been challenged as offering a deficit, reductionist approach (Andrews and Smith, 2011). Socio-cultural theorists argue that individual actions need to be seen in a holistic context which link the thinking of the individual with cultural and social influences (Wyse, 2017). Clark and Ivanič (1997) criticise cognitive approaches, such as the model developed by Hayes and Flower (1980), on the basis that they ignore the political and socio-cultural complexities of writing. Drawing up an alternative representation of the writing process, they write,

> …we think that it is crucial to include and emphasise the socio-political dimensions to the writing process…as expressed in particular in the components 'clarifying your commitment to your ideas', 'establishing your socio-political identity' and 'deciding how to take responsibility' (Clark and Ivanič, 1997:96).

Gee (2015) maintains that there is an affinity between situated cognition studies and the New Literacy Studies (NLS) contending that learning theorists, for example, Lave and Wenger (1991), argue that thinking and learning are linked to actual situations and that the mind registers actual experience instead of generalisations or abstract concepts. Gee argues that, if thinking is linked to a person's experience of focussed action in the real world, then a situated view of the mind leads us to social and cultural groups and their tools and technologies (2015:38).

However, as Wyse (2017) points out, although both psychological and socio-cultural lines of thought have offered valuable insights into writing processes, they represent often widely different epistemological positions and scholars are generally situated in departmental silos within higher education institutions with their own book publishers and specialist journals. This is perhaps less the case for socio-cultural theorists where thinking in this area is dispersed across a number of social science disciplines. Wyse suggests that Dewey's (1998) philosophical perspective on language and meaning makes a clear link between thinking and the social aspect of language. He writes:

> According to Dewey, language doesn't just enable inner experience, it is inner experience, and it is social interaction (Wyse, 2017:51).

2.3 Writing and literacy practices

The notion of 'practice' has been central to Literacy Studies since the 1970s when ethnographic researchers and theorists began pointing out that 'literacy' does not just take place in school contexts (Ivanič, 2009). Practice theory can be described as:

> a broad and capacious…general theory of the production of social subjects through practice and the production of the world itself through practice (Ortner, 2006:16, cited in Rampton et al, 2015:14).

This reflects the 'social turn' in the study of language and also of literacy (Bloome and Green, 2015). The social turn emphasises that language, both in spoken and written forms, is social and situated in human interactions. Within what has been termed 'New Literacy Studies', literacy is conceptualised as practices (Street, 1984) and events (Heath, 1983). Street, in positing his 'ideological model' of literacy, highlights the importance of seeing all literacies as culturally embedded and involving both talk and written texts (1984). Following Mills and Stornaiuolo (2018), I draw on Street's (1993) definition of culture as a verb, in order to highlight what it does, rather than focussing on what it is. Culturing is a process of production, drawing attention to literacy practices embedded in shared histories.

Key texts by writers such as Shirley Brice Heath (1983), Gregory and Williams (2000), and Barton and Hamilton (1998) have illuminated important aspects of literacies across adult lives in diverse urban and city communities. Barton and Hamilton (1998), in their study 'Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in one Community', maintain that literacy is a social activity, embodied in interactions between individuals. In their ethnographic study of a local neighbourhood in Lancaster, they describe vernacular literacy practices as literacies 'rooted in everyday experience' and serving 'everyday purposes' (1998:251). They understand these vernacular literacies as 'learned informally', in contrast to

‘dominant literacies’, which are given a higher status and linked to formal institutions, involving ‘experts and teachers through whom access to knowledge is controlled’ (1998:252). They analyse different forms of adult writing observed in the home domain, such as writing in relation to the household; writing for communication and to maintain relationships; and personal writing, which includes diaries, stories and poems.

Research within the paradigm of New Literacy Studies has contributed to our understanding of literacy as multiple, highlighting the value of everyday, vernacular literacies, and recognising the ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moll et al, 1992:132) which people bring to their reading and writing activities both inside and outside formal educational contexts. Ethnographic research within Literacy Studies has also countered the notion of writing as a decontextualized process of encoding text by showing how writers culturally shape written language within the different domains of their lives. Drawing attention to socio-political, historical accounts of writing, Howard (2012) graphically describes the political nature of writing in her stark accounts of working-class writers in nineteenth century England struggling to learn to write in order to represent themselves, their interests, and their lives in their own words. She researched autobiographical sources to uncover traditions of self-directed learning at a time when there was limited formal education for working-class children or adults. She finds that, whilst some individuals may have learnt on their own, many of these adult writers pursued their interests with others, with the support of informal mentors and self-help learning groups such as, for example, the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Society (2012:128). In this study, I am interested in the extent to which adults develop their own learning networks, such as affinity groups (Lammers et al, 2018) and communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

In her publication ‘Literacy in American Lives’, Brandt, uses the term ‘sponsors of literacy’ to identify entities or agents who support, exploit or repress people’s literacy for political or economic purposes (2001). In her more recent research documented in ‘The Rise of Writing’ (2015), she describes participants who lead what she describes as writing-intensive lives, including employees who are required to write for significant periods each day. She interviewed 60 adults and 30 young people (15-25 years), in the

United States, between 2005 and 2012. In this research, Brandt uses a realist perspective based on Bertaux (1981), arguing that this sociological approach allows her to interpret her findings as a historical account. Although her study does not explore the effects of digital technologies on writing, she argues that, as a result of the 'knowledge economy' (2015:93) writing today is now a more critical skill than reading, whilst writers are also subject to increasing surveillance, particularly in workplaces.

The term 'pedagogy of multiliteracies' was coined by the New London Group (Cazden et al, 1996; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009) to call for a new approach to understanding literacies which moved away from the idea of a singular English canon, to a multi-dimensional view of literacies in a social and political environment of increasing flows of people, a globalised economy, changing conditions of work, and multiple modes of communication, including languages, cultures and the affordances of digital and online technologies. Their starting point was the need for improvement in educational outcomes for young people across the English-speaking world, and the need for educators and learners to engage with social change and to become 'Designers of social futures' (Cazden et al., 1996:65). They argued that Designers work with Available Designs (their use of capitals) and each other to produce meanings in situated contexts, and in so doing they transform themselves and each other. In their later analysis, Cope and Kalantzis also highlighted societal changes, which they described as

> a profound shift in the balance of agency, in which as workers, citizens and persons we are more and more required to be users, players, creators and discerning consumers (2009:172).

They argue that, in conditions of late modernity (Giddens, 1990) individuals, with multi-layered identities, occupy many life-worlds, or life domains. Seeing writers as designers highlights the role of agency where the designer's semiotic activity leads to the making of new meanings. If we perceive of writing as design, this moves us away from the notion of writing as competence, or skill. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) foreground the role of agency and subjectivity, positing a critical pedagogy which encourages the designer, whilst making their representations, to also question the conventions of specific domains.

A personal starting point for me in writing research is the work of Roz Ivanič who has inspired a generation of researchers, academics and adult literacy practitioners with her seminal work on writing identities and writers' voices (Carter et al., 2009). Drawing on her experience as researcher, theorist, and teacher, and writing from a socio-cultural and critical perspective, Ivanič published an influential paper in 2004, titled 'Discourses of writing and learning to write'. In this article, she theorises a multi-layered linguistic framework, like an onion in shape, in which the textual aspects of language are embedded within the mental and social aspects of language. Text, the linguistic stuff of language, is at the centre, including both multimodal and linguistic elements. The next layer addresses cognitive processes, what is 'going on' in the minds of people in the process of meaning-making. The attention here is on 'languaging', and 'design' in relation to the texts. The next outside layer, which she describes as 'event' refers to the social interactional context, the purposes for languaging, and the specificities of place and time. The final outer layer represents the cultural context including what are perceived as powerful discourses, and what is privileged in language use. Ivanič emphasises that this outer layer extends beyond the materiality of language and language use with the potential to question and contest the socio-political agenda, including taking 'action for change' (p.224).

2.4 Discourses of writing

Drawing on a meta-analysis of research and theories about writing, Ivanič, in the same paper, identifies six discourses about writing, which include both practices and beliefs about writing and writing pedagogy. For Ivanič, 'discourses' represent

> …recognisable associations among values, beliefs and practices which lead to particular forms of situated action, to particular decisions, choices and omissions, as well as to particular wordings (2004:220).

Whilst the field of literacy studies has expanded in many different directions in the last fifteen years, I still consider these discourses a useful frame of reference although of

course each can and should be critiqued. Each discourse (Ivanič, 2004:225) is listed below, with a short description:

1. ***A skills discourse***

Underpinning a skills discourse are beliefs that primacy in learning to write involves learning sound-symbol relationships and sets of autonomous context-free linguistic 'skills', patterns and rules. 'Good writing' is associated with correctness in text, sentence, word and letter formations.

2. ***A creativity discourse***

A creativity discourse underlines a concern with content and style, where the writer is engaged in meaning-making often, though not always, in relation to literary texts (so called fictional genres) aesthetics or aspects of popular culture. Creative writing is perceived as valuable in itself and linked to the reading of literature. This discourse also supports the belief that people develop as writers by writing.

3. ***A process discourse***

A process discourse (described, for example, in the work of Hayes and Flower), originates from the work of cognitive psychologists who sought to offer detailed descriptions of how experienced writers compose a text. Pedagogical approaches focus on planning, drafting and revising processes rather than the specific characteristics of a text. Ivanič questions the extent to which this aspect of writing can be assessed.

4. ***A genre discourse***

A genre discourse originates in the work of Halliday (1978), viewing writing as sets of text-types. This discourse emphasises how texts differ linguistically depending on context and purpose. While this view of writing focuses on writing as product, it attends to the social context and is concerned with linguistic and textual appropriacy as well as notions of dominant literacies in the shape of 'powerful genres'.

5. ***A social practice discourse***

In a social practice discourse of writing, there is a focus on meanings and social purposes which are inextricable from the writing of a text. In this view, writing is socially situated and takes place in 'literacy events', described by Heath as 'those occasions in which talk revolves around a piece of writing' (1983:386). In this discourse, the focus on social practices includes a wider interest in power and the privileging of different sociocultural contexts, such as 'school' and 'home' contexts.

6. A socio-political discourse

The socio-political discourse recognises that writing, and all language, is defined by relations of power within the social world and that writing affects the writer. Critical literacy pedagogies are characterised by a critical stance towards assessment and involve an explicit examination of how specific linguistic and semiotic selections position the writer in the world.

Building on her work in New Literacy Studies, Ivanič presents these six discourses as a framework and research tool to distinguish between specific discourses instantiated in teaching, curricular and policy contexts. As she notes, conceptualisations of writing are also instantiated in talk about writing, and in actions taken by teachers, assessors and learners. Whilst isolating specific discourses is a valuable heuristic in analysing different approaches to writing and writing development, Ivanič makes it clear that actual events and texts may draw on more than one discourse in different ways and suggests that an integrated and comprehensive writing pedagogy could be developed by combining elements of these different writing approaches for use in both formal and informal contexts.

Ivanič argues that writing includes both the 'literacy practices' that are part of the act of writing, but also 'discourse conventions', which embody the norms, values, interests, beliefs and associated power relations embedded in that specific type of discourse. In her teaching and research with mature student writers in Higher Education, Ivanič notes how students' writer identities are challenged in the act of academic writing. She uses a clover-leaf design to describe these multiple identities as 'subject positions', or 'socially available possibilities for self-hood'. These include 'the autobiographical self' (the life

history of the writer); 'the self as author' (the writer's voice and authority); and 'the discoursal self' (how the writer represents her/himself in the text) (Clark and Ivanič, 1997: 137). Burgess used and extended this framework to examine how adult literacy learners were positioned by these discourses and how this affected their perceptions of their development as writers. She describes how they draw on discourses that position them as 'deficient and/or socially subordinate' and maintains that issues of identity may need to be explored before learners can develop as writers (2012:89). This study draws on Ivanič and other studies on writing identity to explore how writers construct and perform writer identities.

Lea and Street (2006), writing from a socio-cultural position, introduce an 'academic literacies' model, arguing for a new approach to student writing which challenges the dominant deficit perspective. They theorise three overlapping models or perspectives: 'a study skills model; 'an academic socialization model'; and thirdly, 'an academic literacies model' (2006:368-369). In the first perspective, writing is primarily seen as an individual cognitive skill which presupposes that students can unproblematically transfer their learning from one context to another. The second approach is concerned with how students acquire the rules or ways of writing, talking and thinking that are specific to a particular academic discourse so that they can reproduce it. The 'academic literacies' model offers a more critical and nuanced approach to academic writing highlighting epistemological issues more explicitly, such as questioning what counts as knowledge, and attending to relations of power, authority, meaning-making and identity. Whilst theorists such as Hyland (2009) offer a useful analysis of the dominant and highly contextualised linguistic features in use within diverse academic disciplines, Lea and Street's academic literacies model aims to interrogate how institutional requirements including business, government, and university systems, are also integral to requirements about what students are expected to do and learn.

2.5 Multimodality

A communicative act is always multimodal, and this is the case in any language (Kress, 2015; Andrews and Smith, 2011). The composition of writing has always required decisions by the writer in their use of colour, space, images, and use of font or handwriting. This point is supported by Gillen, cited in Mills and Stornaiuolo (2018), who researched the use and writing of British picture postcards at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gillen argues that a rapid postal service at that time offered 'near-synchronous' multimodal communication, a century before digital platforms such as Instagram were invented, enabling a spontaneity in written communication not available in letter writing.

Social semiotics is oriented towards meaning-making, recognising the agency of the maker in the making of signs in particular social contexts (Jewitt et al., 2016). Drawing on Halliday (1978), Kress' social semiotic theory of multimodality (2010) goes beyond language to explore how the sign maker, as writer/composer/designer, chooses modes to represent specific meanings. The motivations and interests of the sign-maker are paramount, and the sign maker uses modes which are at hand within a particular cultural context. The term 'affordances' recognises the possibilities as well as the constraints available in the use of particular modes in specific temporal and spatial contexts. The concepts of rhetoric and design are central to this theory, as he outlines:

> Representation and communication are distinct social practices. Representation focuses on my interest in my engagement with the world and on my wish to give material realisation to my meanings about that world. Communication focuses on my wish or need to make that representation available to others in my interaction with them. The dual frame of rhetoric and design permits both: rhetoric as the politics of communication and design as the translation of intent into semiotic implementation (Kress, 2010:49).

The author makes choices about modes, considering what each mode is doing and how the use of different modes affects the overall message in any given cultural context (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). Authorship involves decisions about framing what is to be communicated, based on the intent and interest of the sign-maker. In communicating the message, the author makes decisions based on the available affordances, which Myhill (2009) describes as design opportunities.

2.6 Digital and online literacies

Baynham and Prinsloo argue that the focus is shifting 'from the local to the translocal, from print-based literacies to electronic and multimedia literacies and from the verbal to the multimodal'. They argue that this means:

> the analytical focus needs to shift to the subtle saturations of literateness in daily life, the ways that texts are talked up over time and space (2009:13).

The affordance of digital writing and, in particular Web 2.0, have necessitated a re-appraisal of theories about writing, including the extent to which we understand literacies as situated in specific contexts. Writers make meanings across domains (Pahl, 2012); within and across contexts (Kell, 2009); and across real and virtual networks (Burnett et al, 2014a). Davies (2014), in her research with young women hairdressers who perform identity work through their use of a social media site (Facebook), observes that the friends draw on discourses, both 'local' and 'translocal' in their meaning-making practices (2014:86). She shows how the young women curate a 'narrative of the self' and how that is mediated both online and offline (Davies, 2018:155). Her research, illuminating how discourses themselves produce space (Leander and Sheehy, 2004), disrupts notions of literacies as simply situated. Her participants are constantly reconstituting space as they jointly construct and reconstruct different versions of themselves simultaneously online and offline, in what Davies and others describe as (im)material practices (Burnett, 2015). These performances of identity affect how the young women see themselves in the world.

Writing is one mode within multimodality, as highlighted by Domingo et al.:

> Writing is a mode: it is a set of resources, socially made, to enable us to achieve social purposes. In this sense, writing can be understood as a cultural technology, constantly remade, to fit with ever-changing social needs, occasions and purposes: it is shaped by the demands, structures and practices in which it is used (2015:252).

The affordances of writing have changed over time where, as Kress highlights, the complexity of writing in terms of syntax has decreased, whilst multimodality appears

increasingly complex (2003). This is particularly the case in online contexts, where understandings of authorship have changed. Domingo et al. (2015), researching writing in the contexts of food blogs on websites, show how the authority of the reader, or viewer, is now dominant, with writing, linked to other modes, often encapsulated in modular rather than linear forms. This makes it difficult to understand the function of writing as a mode apart from the multimodal ensemble of which it is a part. In writing online, it is also necessary to understand the affordances and constraints of different technological platforms and their potential for writing (Gillen and Merchant, 2013). Domingo et al. (2015) emphasise that, in order to understand how writing is likely to develop in the future, research is needed in order to analyse how different social groups use writing now in different contexts in order to develop hypotheses about future practices, forms and trends. Concepts such as 'situated literacies' and 'social events' are contested and stretched in the face of multiple and changing digital literacy practices and the use of multiple modes, alongside multiple authorship (Burnett, 2015). Burnett advances the term 'literacy encounter' to capture the abundance of ways of making meaning using digital and print practices across time and space (2015:527).

2.7 Handwriting

For Vygotsky, tools are the devices or implements needed to produce meaningful written language as signs (Wyse, 2017). These tools are generally conceptualised as handheld devices such as the use of pen or screen, although a tool can also include a scribe, as described in Vygotsky's account of a case study in which Tolstoy collaborated with a group of 'peasant children' in writing stories, leading to Tolstoy's theory of creative writing (from an article by Vygotsky (2004), cited in Wyse (2017:155)). In fact, the technologies and tools of writing in contemporary cultures are numerous and, as discussed earlier, writing, in itself, is also a technology for making meaning. The use of the human hand for writing, tied to bodily senses of vision and touch, offers embodied ways of constructing and performing identities (Clark and Ivanič, 1997; Haas and McGrath, 2018). Research in fields such as neuroscience, psychology and philosophy has demonstrated how handwriting connects body and mind through theories of embodied

cognition, emphasising the importance of haptics in our thinking about writing and literacy (Mangen and Velay, 2010; Christensen, 2009). Haas and McGrath write:

> Indeed, writers' sensorimotor interactions with physical writing tools affect cognitive processing, and different brain regions are activated when handwriting letters versus typing them…far from being transparent or incidental, technological shifts profoundly alter the embodied experience and practice of writing (2018:127).

There is a need to understand how adults use the affordances of handwriting and digital tools to perform writing in different contexts and domains, recognising that communicative practices are multimodal and materialised differently in different sites. This is a key area of interest explored in this study.

2.8 Multilingual writing

Writing research, and particularly research that seeks to foreground the writer, needs to take into account how different languages, language varieties and scripts add to the multiplicity of writing practices in which writers engage. In an early ethnographic study, Saxena (1994) recorded the multiliterate practices of a Panjabi Hindu family based in Southall, West London, noting the values that family members of different generations accorded to different writing and reading practices as well as their stances in relation to specific orthographies. The different family members used different scripts and languages as part of their complex and multi-faceted communicative repertoires. Blommaert portrays these multilingual codes as 'mobile resources or practices with social, cultural, political and historical contexts' (cited in Garcia and Wei, 2014:9). Busch argues that the idea of a linguistic repertoire is dynamic rather than static:

> The linguistic repertoire cannot simply be considered as a toolbox or a reservoir of competences. The repertoire is oriented towards the present, but it also points towards the past and the future (2016:7).

Research on multilingual writers helps to explain cultural influences and linguistic codes as well as tracing the, often tortuous, migratory patterns revealed in the lives of

communities, families and individuals. Garcia and Wei (2014) define language, from a post-structuralist perspective, as a series of social practices and actions by speakers that are embedded in a web of social and cognitive relations. Moving away from ideas of code-switching, they use the term 'languaging' (discussed earlier) to define an ongoing process where individuals use elements of their linguistic repertoires to make meaning. Agency is signalled as individuals 'translanguage', using their diverse linguistic resources to make meaning in specific contexts (Garcia and Wei, 2014:8).

2.9 Communicative repertoires

'Superdiversity' emphasises the changing structure of migration since the 1990s (Vertovec, 2007) where migration patterns have become unpredictable as people with widely differing backgrounds move across borders under different conditions and for different purposes. In addition, the rise of the internet and mobile technologies has, at the same time, changed ways of communicating, acting and being across the world (Blommaert and Backus, 2011). The concept of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981) recognises language, not as a neutral reference system but as a medium through which we engage in social relationships and their associated historical meanings, instantiated through social practices (Bailey, 2012). For Rymes, communicative repertoires are a way of expressing 'who we are' and 'find[ing] common ground'(2014:1), which motivates people in an interaction to communicate through 'comembership' (p.5) and 'affinity spaces' (Hayes and Gee, 2010, cited in Rymes, 2014:5). Drawing on anthropology and interactional sociolinguistics, Rymes has expanded on Gumperz's (1982) notion of a linguistic repertoire to include other signifiers 'beyond language' that people draw on when interacting with others, as she explains:

> As one moves through life, one accumulates an abundance of experiences and images, and one also selects from those experiences, choosing elements from a repertoire that seem to communicate in the moment, developing a potential for comembership (2014:10).

Rymes argues that, through interactions, there is an increasing diversity of repertoires in the world as individuals find ways to communicate by choosing elements of their

repertoire and recontextualising them in order to engage with others. In this process, they are also developing and extending their own repertoires. She describes the repertoire perspective as a way of dealing with diversity and a way of gaining an understanding of the 'other' within a participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), whilst avoiding essentializing categories. Taking a repertoire approach to language means taking account of the multiplicity of linguistic resources, including language varieties, employed by individuals in their engagement with others. Blommaert and Backus argue that linguistic repertoires can be described as 'indexical biographies' (2011:2) in late modernity (Giddens, 1991). Blommaert and Backus (2011) suggest that taking a repertoire perspective to language enables an analysis of subjectivities over time and space as well as an exploration of individuals' diverse learning trajectories which might include studying in formal educational institutions as well as travelling and the use of virtual learning environments. Rymes maintains that individuals signal what they, or others, are doing with language, or other elements of their communicative repertoire, by engaging in 'metacommentary', or what Silverstein describes as 'metapragmatic discourse' (Silverstein, 1993, cited in Rymes, 2014a:122). This study explores how adults use writing, including metacommentary, as part of their communicative repertoires, to make meaning in the world.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter begins with an outline of the qualitative research design, including the research methods. I next introduce the sample and the research context, including the process of setting up the fieldwork. This is followed by an outline of the process of analysis and ethical considerations, followed by some analyses of the interview process using linguistic ethnography. Chapter 4 offers a more detailed analysis of the sample.

3.1 The research design

This exploratory study is situated within a constructionist paradigm in order to explore how the experiences, meaning-making and aspirations of participants are reflected in wider discourses within society. This is an interpretivist approach which does not assume that there is a 'reality' to be found in the data. Instead, the researcher is recognised as an instrument of research and an active agent in the research process. The study adopts a 'critical qualitative research design' (Ravitch and Carl, 2016:106). As described by Ravitch and Carl (2016), the conceptual framework of a research study is a process, rather than a finished product. It generates the focus of the research including the goals of a study and the key conceptual constructs as well as the research design, the theoretical orientation and the chosen methodology.

Qualitative enquiry aims to understand the way that an individual or group approaches, views and experiences the world, and how they make meaning. In using qualitative research, we recognise people's perspectives and experiences as embedded in specific contexts which shape how they experience their lives. This requires an inductive approach alongside an 'interpretivist framework' (Swain, 2017:38), flexible and context-specific methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis that recognise complexity (Mason, 2002).

This research uses an inductive paradigm to examine how undergraduate and doctoral students experience the process of writing across different aspects of their lives. Whilst the sample in this research includes adults of different ages and levels of writing

experience in English and other languages, this exploratory research does not aim to contrast these two groups in terms of age, experience or writing processes. Instead, the study aims to understand the subjective experiences of the writers, including perceptions of their own learning and development as writers.

This research adopts an ethnographic approach in that it seeks to explore 'the everyday, cultural life of a social group' (Bloome, 2012:9). It aims to analyse adults' lives, writing practices and individual writing ecologies across the multiple domains of their lives. This study does not include participant observation as a research method. Instead, participants were invited to individual interviews within the university environment. Within these interviews, which in themselves were literacy events (Heath 1983:386), I aimed to co-construct knowledge with the participants, through being transparent about the study, open to participant directions and detours, and by asking participants to suggest additional interview questions (Ntelioglou, 2015). This research cannot be described as an ethnography, but I would argue that the study is informed by anthropological and sociological theories and practices of enquiry that guide the research. The study uses an emic approach which offers a holistic perspective on what writing means to writers in the varied and changing contexts of their lives. These participant understandings draw on participants' own values rooted in their personal lives and writing histories which in turn reflect their epistemological perspectives and ontological orientations. However, the qualitative researcher's own subjectivities, biases and ideologies influence all stages of the research, including the data collection and how data are interpreted and represented, prompting us to ask whose stories are being told. Examining and re-examining the role of the researcher leads us to deeper understandings of how the researcher's own cultural capital, habitus and field inform both the process and outcome of the research (Compton-Lilly, 2019; Pahl, 2019). This reflexivity is also characteristic of late modernity where 'thought and action are constantly refracted back upon one another' (Giddens, 1990:38).

The use of the ecology metaphor is helpful for a researcher who wants to capture 'everything that is going on' (Nichols, 2015:120) as it enables us to conceptualise individuals' writing practices as historical and as always embedded in human activity and

social life (Barton, 2007). A rhizomatic ecological perspective, as described by Nichols, suggests a fluid approach to researching individual ecologies, giving us a 'wide-angled lens' which enables us to make connections across multiple contexts as well as recognising temporal and socio-spatial dimensions (Leander and Sheehy, 2003). This perspective also reminds us that there is always an ethical dimension and that the researcher is implicated in ecologies.

In aiming to follow a critical qualitative research design (Ravitch and Carl, 2016), I required tools which would offer the most complex and contextualised picture of the context, group or phenomenon studied. I also aimed to ensure 'fidelity' to the accounts and perspectives of participants (Ravitch and Carl, 2016:103), through the use of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) in order to reduce threats to trustworthiness, or 'validity' (Robson and McCartan, 2016:170). Creating and maintaining fidelity and responsiveness to participants' perspectives requires an inductive approach and an openness to emerging meanings at all stages of the research.

I wanted to find out about the stories of participants and so I was interested in how they told and re-told their narratives, providing insights into how they positioned themselves and others in the world. Giddens describes narrative as a 'reflexive project of the self', as in the quote below:

> The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice (1991:32).

I selected face-to-face, semi-structured, individual interviews as the most suitable method for answering the research questions within this exploratory and flexible research design which aimed to critically examine the worldview of each participant. I suggested to participants that the interviews would be an opportunity for them to reflect on their communicative repertoires; their development as writers, and their personal learning trajectories.

3.2 The ethnographic interview

Participants in this study were invited to answer questions, give opinions, and share experiences. The ethnographic interview can be distinguished from other types of interviews in its emphasis on obtaining an emic perspective, an understanding from the participant's point of view. Studies of literacies and languages in communities and sites of formal education have used ethnographic research methodologies (Pahl, 2019) including, for example, participant observation methods which generally require extended time in the field. From this perspective, this study, which uses semi-structured interviews as the primary research method, might be perceived as generating limited data as I am relying on the participants' own interpretive accounts. However, I would argue that this research, using 'an ethnographic perspective' (Copland and Creese, 2015) and supported by the use of linguistic ethnography, offers a useful description of writing in the 'everyday', through participant accounts of their complex and mobile communicative repertoires.

Establishing a respectful relationship is critical in the semi-structured ethnographic interview where the aim of the interview is an understanding of the participant's lifeworld from his or her perspective. Managing the interview and generating data involves active listening, developing a rapport, and obtaining information through questioning and the use of prompts. Spradley describes how these elements of an interview are in a reflexive relationship:

> Ethnographic interviewing involves two distinct, but complementary processes: developing rapport and eliciting information. Rapport encourages informants to talk about their culture. Eliciting information fosters the development of rapport (1979:78, cited in Mann, 2016:114).

Copland and Creese (2015) note that the ubiquity of interviews in society can lead to particular dispositions, such as complacency or apprehension on the part of either the interviewer or the participant. It can be difficult for interviewees to know what is expected of them, and what may be deemed allowable and relevant. I began the research interviews with the consent form which established the ethical boundaries of

the interview, foregrounding issues of anonymity and confidentiality. This was followed by asking each participant to complete a short biographical form (see Appendix 3). This form asked for some initial information about the interviewee, including their use of languages and employment status. This process of generating some background information on each participant at the beginning of the interview enabled some personalised framing of questions and prompts. Interview questions were intentionally broad in order to capture the experience and situated nature of writing practices across participants' lives. I devised research questions which encouraged participants to reflect on all aspects of their vernacular and dominant writing practices, both online and offline, using open questions, such as 'Do you like writing?' to encourage participants to think widely about their practices. However, I was aware that using the term 'writing' might also suggest a singular, autonomous view of writing which was the antithesis of what I was trying to communicate. I tried to mitigate this threat by clarifying the purpose of the research carefully to each participant and using questions and prompts to encourage specificity in participants' narratives, including questions to explore and emphasise differences in their writing practices.

Participants were given prompts on cards during the interview to help them identify their different purposes for writing in their everyday lives. The prompts, including socio-textual domains such as personal, social, family, work, functional, creative, faith/spiritual, politics and social media, were used as a reflexive tool, helping to interrogate and co-construct beliefs about being, knowing and learning throughout the interview process. Some participants also added prompts during the interview. However, these organising constructs were also limiting and reductive in comparison to participants' lived accounts which drew on their historical, social, affective and pedagogical narratives located in multi-layered and overlapping domains. In addition, attending to the material and immaterial (Burnett et al., 2014b) in social practices is highly salient across all domains, recognising the different ways that we make meaning, including how we encode language online and offline, and the complex and multifaceted nature of communication across space and time.

Within a flexible qualitative research design, all phases of the research process need to be seen as connected, iterative and recursive and so there needs to be a constant interplay between data collection and analysis. I undertook a small pilot study with three participants in order to trial the interview schedule prior to the full set of interviews, and these interviews have been incorporated in the full dataset. At this point, I also realised that I needed a tool to encourage participants to reflect on their own learning processes and so introduced the ecomap as a way of encouraging participants to map their learning trajectories in each chosen domain of their lives (see example in Appendix 1). Ecomaps are used in ethnographic studies and other forms of research such as clinical studies to uncover information about social networks. Following Kendrick (2016), I used ecomaps in this study to encourage reflection on the part of the participant, and as a member check with both the visual (written content), the interview transcripts and the sound files. These acted as a form of external validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Kendick, 2016) to explore how participants learnt and continued to develop their different writing practices. The ecomap enables participants to conceptualise how they envisage elements of their communicative repertoires visually (within an ecology) and to identify their human and non-human writing sponsors. The ecomaps allow for 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) which supports interpretation. The maps also explore how humans use their agency in developing as writers, what Kendrick describes as 'webs of significance' (2016:5). Kendrick writes from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on Literacy Studies and social semiotics/multimodality, including the use of visual methodologies.

The ecomaps were not analysed separately as visual artefacts. Instead, they were used as additional data to the transcripts and the sound recordings. In this study, participants were asked if they wanted to draw ecomaps towards the end of the interview and this suggestion was taken up by most participants within the space of the interview. I asked participants to draw a simple mind map, putting their name in the centre of the page, and drawing lines to their important domains (such as academic, work, personal, social media, etc.), and asking them to note ways in which they had learnt to write within these particular aspects of their lives (see example in Appendix 1). I then asked them to talk me through what they had written. This process allowed me to cross-check answers

to previous questions and helped me to check the trustworthiness of my data. I also asked each participant if they wanted to suggest other questions about writing that they thought I should have asked within the semi-structured interview. Including this question in the interview schedule encouraged each participant to evaluate the interview process. This invitation also encouraged dialogic engagement and signalled my interest in participants' views whilst also acting as a member check. I incorporated these additional questions/prompts in later interviews so that the interview schedule developed in a collaborative, iterative manner through the process of data collection (see Appendix 2). This interactive and reciprocal process incorporated real-time learning and helped to strengthen validity by linking data generation and analysis.

3.3 Research context and sample

The IFS research, although a piece of qualitative research in its own right, has also acted as a pilot study for the thesis, particularly in the design of the interview schedule. In this study, the sample includes 17 adult students (19+ years) all but one of whom were currently studying in the university where I currently work and study. An ethnographic approach requires the researcher to pay attention to the specificities of space and place within the study setting (Pahl, 2014). Interviews were arranged by a variety of means, mainly through personal contacts with colleagues, including my doctoral supervisor (who was also a personal tutor on the undergraduate programme). After obtaining permission from the Programme Leader of the undergraduate programme, I emailed personal tutors of undergraduate students in the first and second year of the programme with information about my study to share with students. However, it was only when tutors discussed the research with their tutees, with a personal recommendation, that undergraduate students agreed to participate in the interviews. Doctoral students were also recruited through their supervisor and through individual recommendation. One participant included some information about my research on a Facebook page and this encouraged his 'friends', who were also engaged on doctoral programmes at different universities, to make contact with me and agree to take part in interviews.

The process of setting up interviews was through email. All participants, except one, took part in the semi-structured interview in my university office, which was a private workspace set aside from the main university building. In setting up the interview space, I was concerned to arrange seating for the participant around the corner of a desk, rather than sitting opposite each other, in order to reduce distance within the interactional setting. However, in setting up the interviews, I was also aware that space is more than the physical setting and that the meanings of spaces are consistently constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed into places by the people who inhabit them (Savin-Baden, 2008). Geeta agreed to an interview in a local park during her lunch-break, and a follow-up interview, to complete the ecomap, was arranged a month later. A summary of the participants (whose names have been changed) and interviews can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Research participants and interview details

Participant (pseudonym)	Date of interview	Time of interview	Length of time
Lily	2/3/18	15.38	1 hr. 5 mins.
Joanne	8/3/18	15.14	1 hr. 18mins.
Tiki	8/3/18	16.41	52 mins.
Noah	21/3/18	15.11	1 hr. 9 mins.
Siyi	29/3/18	09.43	1 hr. 8 mins.
Ethan	27/4/18	09.40	1 hr. 7 mins.
Geeta (first part)	18/5/18	11.17	53 mins.
Geeta (second part)	19/6/18	12.41	22 mins.
Afran	18/5/18	13.34	1 hr. 1 min.
Caroline	29/5/18	09.39	1 hr. 21 mins.
Adam	30/5/18	12.05	57 mins.
Ceri	5/6/18	09.30	1 hr. 8 mins.
Karen	5/6/18	13.38	1 hr 7 mins.
Patrick	12/6/18	16.24	1 hr. 4 mins.
Layla	25/6/18	11.19	39 mins.
Sara	17/7/18	12.38	1 hr. 11 mins.
Amirah	19/7/18	14.17	1 hr. 18 mins.
Guneet	23/7/18	15.07	1 hr. 18 mins.

The average interview time was 1 hr 7 minutes. The shortest interview was 39 minutes with Layla, an undergraduate participant; and the longest interview lasted 1 hour 21 minutes with Caroline, a PhD student and member of staff at the same institution.
The main themes explored in the interviews were the range of writing practices in which adults engaged across the different domains of their lives; the value to individuals of these different writing practices; the use of different languages and technologies for writing; the participants' conceptions of 'good writing' in different contexts; and how participants viewed the processes of 'learning to write' for particular purposes and

audiences, such as in academic, work, social and personal contexts (see interview schedule in Appendix 2).

3.4 The process of analysis

A number of analytic methods were used in this study, including thematic analysis, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage method; and linguistic ethnography (Tusting and Maybin, 2007). The study also includes an intersectional analysis of the sample (Block and Corona, 2016) which is covered in the next chapter.

The six-stage method suggested by Braun and Clarke was a useful guide through the cyclical and recursive process of data analysis. The six stages included (1) becoming familiar with the data; (2) coding the data; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) naming and refining themes; and (6) the writing-up of the research. Braun and Clarke insist that thematic analysis can be used across different theoretical and epistemological positions. I was also guided by the integrative approach to data analysis suggested by Ravitch and Carl, which includes 'data organisation and management'; 'immersive engagement with data'; and writing and representation', highlighting how data analysis is recursively linked to other parts of the research process (2016:217).

The dataset includes interview data, transcribed from audio files, as well as the ecomaps produced by the participants as part of the interview process. In addition, participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire which generated some self-defining biographical data (see Appendix 3). In this study, all the individual data items in the data corpus were included as part of the dataset, and my aim was to analyse and organise data, utilising rich description, which includes coding the data and defining themes. This analytic method offers a means of interrogating the data using an enquiring and reflexive stance, recognising the shifting subjectivities of the participants and the interviewer, and the limitations of the data. As all the interviews took place through the medium of English, this stance is particularly important where there is likely to be

individual variations in fluency and intercultural understanding between the participants and the interviewer (Mann, 2016).

All the interviews were transcribed in full to enable full immersion in the data and to allow me to engage reflexively with the transcript data, in addition to the audio files. The process of re-presenting data and memo writing began the process of data analysis (Ravitch and Carl 2016). Individual responses to questions on the interview schedule were collated on an Excel spreadsheet. These individual summaries (Miles and Huberman, 1994), in addition to the excerpts from the transcripts, supported the process of coding in order to generate data for each research question. Each individual interview, or data item, in this study was coded separately, using a manual process. This involved noting items in the data which were of particular analytic interest. Codes were noted manually on individual transcripts and entered on an Excel spreadsheet. A total of 151 initial codes were identified from the dataset of the 17 interviews. The thematic analysis was guided by the 'what' and also the 'how' questions (Andrews, 2003), and so prevalence was addressed by examining both within and across data items. Commonalities and differences were explored across datasets as part of the process of reducing codes whilst data extracts were linked to individual codes and grouped in themes. However, in order not to lose key data, initial codes were reviewed and linked to main themes or collated separately. I used the coding to identify the 6 main themes which appeared most salient from multiple readings of the data (see Appendix 4 and Chapter 9). For Braun and Clarke, a theme

> captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (2006:10).

Taking an interpretivist approach demands a number of readings of the data and this is especially important in order to avoid 'anecdotalism' (Mann, 2016:243). This study uses 'latent thematic analysis' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:13) where theorising is part of the process of generating and refining themes. This process recognises data analysis as an iterative and reflexive process, which also takes account of the interactional process and the context of the actual interview itself (Mann, 2016).

In order to provide a richer and more fine-grained analysis, I also used linguistic ethnography (Maybin and Tustin, 2011; Rampton et al, 2015) to generate deeper meanings from the data and to enable a higher level of reflexivity. Linguistic ethnography has an interdisciplinary focus on research 'with' participants, which offers a 'bottom-up orientation to data' (Copland and Creese, 2015; Snell et al, 2015), drawing on an analysis of language-in-use in order to develop theory. Linguistic ethnography, despite its relatively recent history, contributes to a social constructionist perspective in recognising how social worlds are produced in the analysis of everyday interactions. It allows us to question the construction of social categories and communicative practices including languages, identities and cultures within globalisation discourses (Blackledge and Creese, 2010). By examining the linguistic sign, linguistic ethnography investigates how language is used in social interactions, and what it can tell us about structures, social constraints and ideologies. Rampton et al. describe the dialectical process in this way:

> With inference, indexicality and reflexivity, analytic attention leans towards agency in the ceaseless interplay of agency and structure, even though normative expectations and their social currency and origins follow very closely in the account. With genre, the balance tilts towards stability, structure and convention, though here too, there is an inextricable role for both agentive action and unpredictable contingency (2015:26).

Rampton et al. (2015), drawing on Gumperz (1982), highlight the ongoing and dialectic co-construction of linguistic meaning and social knowledge available in discourses. Genres, as conventionalised ways of doing things, allow us to differentiate between different types of events but they are also incomplete and unstable and are only accomplished through interaction. Knowledge about genres is also very uneven between people and is a site of socialization and struggle across social groups (Rampton et al., 2015). Exploring writing in the context of linguistic ethnography means moving away from a view of language as produced by individuals to a focus on how writing is produced between individuals, offering a site for positioning and negotiation of identities. In this study, I ascribe to Norton's use of the term 'power', which she references as:

> the socially constructed relations among individuals, institutions, and communities through which symbolic and material resources in a society are produced, distributed and validated. By symbolic resources I refer to such resources as language, education and friendship, while I use the term material resources to include capital goods, real estate and money (2013:47).

In this definition, power is a relation implying a form of social exchange on a specific set of terms, rather than a material entity (Foucault, 1980). I agree with Norton, following Foucault, who holds that power does not just operate at a macro level in terms of powerful institutions such as the legal and education systems, but also at a micro level in social encounters where people have access to differential levels of material and symbolic resources. These encounters are generally bound up with language use. With access to material and symbolic resources comes privilege and power, and this affects an individual's relations with the world as well as how they perceive future possibilities. I also agree with Norton's (2013) contention that identity needs to be conceptualized as multiple, changing, contradictory, and a site of struggle. She describes subjectivity in the following way:

> Subjectivity is produced in a variety of social sites, all of which are structured by relations of power in which the person takes up different subject positions as teacher, child, feminist, manager, critic (2013:164).

In this perspective, there is space for agency where a person may be able to take up or resist the way that they have been positioned in a given discourse or create a counter-discourse. Following Pérez-Milans, I contend that linguistic ethnography enables us to view social reality as discursively produced, moving us beyond the long-standing binaries of 'local/global' and 'micro/macro' and conceptualising social structure and agency as 'mutually constitutive' (2016:84).

In this study, I aimed to capture how participants positioned themselves, whilst recognising that processes of self-representation are continually co-constructed between the researcher and the participant, what Blackledge and Creese describe as 'a dynamic interplay of individual identities' (2010:86). In order to foreground the emic positions of the participants, I wanted my analysis of the data to be led as much as possible by the participants themselves and so I drew reflexively on their accounts and

their 'language-in-use' as my starting-point, using ‘sensitising concepts’ (Rampton et al., 2015:16) and ‘rich points’ (Agar, 2008, cited in Copland and Creese, 2015: 20), rather than working within a pre-established analytic frame. Including research questions and researcher responses in transcripts (Mann, 2011) was also helpful in exploring the complex interaction between ‘self’ and ‘other’. However, tensions inevitably exist in how researchers aim to bridge concepts around language use and the wider contexts of social life (Maybin and Tusting, 2011). I used reflexive vignettes in order to reflexively explore some of these tensions inherent in the interpretive process (see Chapters 2 and 8).

3.5 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was requested and granted, with reference to British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines (2018), in line with institutional procedures for doctoral student research. The application emphasised the importance of ‘voluntary informed consent’ as well as confidentiality and anonymity for the research participants. Given that the undergraduate participants were learners within the same institution, I had a concern that they may feel vulnerable when sharing their experiences of teaching and learning. Participants were emailed information about the study in advance. They were reassured that data was confidential and held securely, and informed that it would not be shared within the institution. They were also assured that they could refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the research at any time. Ethical concerns arose during the data collection process as doctoral student shared concerns about supervision or made reference to specific members of staff. I was concerned to keep these confidences private throughout all stages of the research.

In this study, I was interested in what participants did with writing, and to what extent writing mattered to them in their diverse and overlapping life domains. I recognised participants as having expertise in the subjective experiences and perspectives of their lives. In my view, an ethical approach in this study required an ‘enquiry stance’ on the part of the researcher which, in Ravitch and Carl’s terms, ‘translates into more people-

centred, systematic and proactive approaches to understanding people in context' (2016:15). An ethical perspective also recognises the responsibilities of the researcher to adopt a relational rather than an essentialist stance. I considered it important to be open and critically reflexive about how I positioned myself with participants throughout all stages of the study.

3.6 The research process

It is important to recognise interviews as social practice, and not just as instruments of research. Interviews are interactional events which create their own contexts and where data are socially constructed. Mann emphasises the importance of turning our analytic focus to the interview process itself:

> There is still a shortage of qualitative research that focuses on a 'what' or on 'content' focus AND has a complementary, parallel or even subsidiary focus on the 'how' (2016:199).

In this study, analysis of the interview data highlights processes of identity formation and identity performance on the part of both the participant and the interviewer. In the following excerpt from an early section of an interview, Karen, a teacher and PhD student, and myself, Vera, as the interviewer, co-construct our epistemological positions on writing.

Vera. And do you think you're still learning about writing? Is your writing still developing, do you think?

Karen …Yeah, you never stop learning, and I think we all reflect what goes on in our lives, and so it's very difficult to – when you're writing really about any of the areas you've asked me about, because it's all personal and we can't help but, you know, be involved in that writing that we do. Even when it's supposedly at a bit of a distance, or kind of, you know, slightly objective.

Vera Yes, I agree. Yes, it makes me think when I do these interviews, sometimes I feel a bit anxious that I'm being a bit intrusive because it-it-writing does feel, I agree, quite encompassing, doesn't it?

Karen Yes.

Vera It does reflect us, even if it's academic writing.

Karen. Yeah. Hugely if it's academic writing, because you would only be engaged in it if you have a passion and an interest. I mean, the very subject matter that you choose kind of stakes your claim, really. It says where you are and often what your political views are, and what your social standing is, and what your experiences have been to date. Yeah.

Mann emphasises the responsibility of researchers, who are working within a critical perspective, to be transparent and reflexive, in opening up the secret interactional world of interviewing (2016). In line with Clark and Dervin, I understand reflexivity as

> a multifaceted, complex, and ongoing dialogical process that is continually evolving (2014:2).

When disclosing my concern about being too intrusive as a researcher, my interview move touched on what Mann describes as 'parameters of sensitivity' (2016:148). It drew attention to the interview context, indexing my concern that my research questions may be perceived by the participant as too sensitive or personal. In this instance, Karen acknowledges my alignment with her stance on writing, but withholds any comment on my performance of a researcher identity. My further interjection, 'It does reflect us, even if it's academic writing', signalled a further shift in my positioning to that of a fellow doctoral student, engaged in academic writing, which, in turn, elicited a fuller response from Karen.

The majority of participants were not known to me before setting up the interviews. However, I had previous contact with two of the participants who were both doctoral students and colleagues in my place of work. One participant, Guneet, had also completed a Masters in Adult Literacy, language and Numeracy some years ago when I was responsible for the programme. In this interview excerpt, the interview appeared to take on a conversational style, which I partly ascribed to our shared history.

Vera	What kind of writing are you most confident about, do you think? What makes -?
Guneet	I think I'm getting more confident with my academic writing. I think there's probably – I think I'm getting more and more confident in that. But I'm still – from inside, I'm still very nervous, apprehensive. As you are, I'm sure. You know, when you – when you have other people read what-what you write, and you think, 'oh god. What will they-what will they think?' So I-
Vera	Yeah. I think that imposter syndrome is very common across all the universities.
Guneet	Yeah. So I'm becoming confident, but at the same time I think maybe outwardly I'm more confident than inwardly. So-so I sort of give- I give the impression of being more confident than I am.
Vera	Yeah. I think probably most academics do that, don't they?
Guneet	I'm sure they do. Yes.

In this extract, my positioning as a researcher appears less well-defined. Guneet shares his feelings of vulnerability in relation to academic writing, whilst also ascribing those same emotive responses to me as the researcher, when he says, 'As you are, I'm sure'. Rather than responding on a personal level, I chose to re-affirm and perform my

researcher identity, creating a professional boundary around the interaction by drawing attention to what may be perceived as difficulties in writing for all academics, and particularly for new scholars. At the same time, I could read my interview moves as the positioning of a 'critical friend', an insider, particularly when referencing 'most academics'. Writing from a feminist perspective and aiming to avoid subject-object relations for the interviewer and interviewee, Griffin (2016) describes interviews as 'a negotiation of shifting positions' (Griffin, 2016:16), which are exemplified in the debates over the interviewer as insider/outsider. She writes,

> ..identities are increasingly constructed as fluid, embracing both insider and outsider dimensions which come into play simultaneously and/or successively in interview situations (Griffin, 2016:15).

Mann describes 'interview stances' as 'the interactional architecture of qualitative interviews' (Mann, 2016:18). This includes the 'interviewer stances' and 'interview moves' (p148) that researchers have at their disposal and which form part of the communicative repertoire of the interviewer. This excerpt highlights some of what Mann describes as 'discourse dilemmas' (2011:18) faced by researchers using semi-structured interviews.

Students appeared to take part in interviews for a variety of reasons. Whilst I did not query participants' personal motivations during the interview, this information was sometimes available through email exchanges whilst setting up the interviews, and where participants commented on the experience at the end of the interview. For Joanne, taking part in the research offered her an opportunity to practise English in a one-to-one context. Participants appeared to appreciate the 'collaborative' nature of the literacy research (Pahl, 2019), including the opportunity to reflect on their own writing practices. Some participants shared their interests or resources within the interviews: Noah introduced me to KakaoTalk, a Korean social media platform; and Joanne shared an online link for a film about a secret written language created by women in nineteenth century China. One PhD participant also invited me to join a writing group and another recommended a text on research methods.

3.7 Conclusion

In the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to respond to questions about their specific writing practices in the differing domains of their lives; their writing dispositions; and their preferred modes for communicating for different purposes and audiences in different contexts. The notion of 'context' is an elastic and slippery concept. I agree with Ivanic, who suggests that we need to avoid the 'context as container' (2006:8) metaphor, instead considering how participants in activities are engaged in ongoing processes of 'contextualising'.

The interview questions were aimed at developing a cartography (Masny and Cole, 2012), a mapping of participants' lifewide writing practices across space, as well as their lifelong writing practices, located across time. Underpinning the interview questions (see Appendix 2) are further questions about how writing is defined, the scope of writing within multimodal ensembles and the role of multilingual writing in contemporary discourse. The questions are also aimed at exploring the consequences of writing for individuals: the affordances and constraints in any act of writing, and the extent to which writing is perceived as a meaning-making resource with communicative, affective, functional and creative dimensions. I am interested in the extent to which writing, conceptualised as a verb, is used by individuals to make sense of their experience, and to what extent they act out social relationships through writing. In exploring 'writing' as a mode, and as a social and cultural practice, I am locating writing within an ideological model of literacy, recognising that there is not one but many definitions of writing which emerge from how people use written language to interact with each other and to act on the world.

This chapter has outlined the critical qualitative research design (Ravitch and Carl, 2016) used in this study, including the research methods used. The research context and sample were introduced including the process of analysis and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with two short reflexive vignettes, which use linguistic ethnography to explore some of the complex identity issues involved in ethical interviewing. The next chapter uses an intersectional approach to explore the sample in greater detail.

Chapter 4: The sample

This chapter begins with an examination of the research sample using an intersectional approach. This perspective recognises the importance of providing rich contextual data in ethnographically oriented studies. Intersectionality points to the way that different identity positions interconnect, generating an understanding of identities as complex and multi-layered (Block and Corona, 2016).

4.1 Using an intersectional approach

This study employs a critical ethnographic approach, using Pandya and Golden's broad definition of 'critical' as 'a generative questioning and process of critique' (2018:53). Intersectionality is used as a methodological lens to explore how individuals in the sample experience marginalisation, privilege, or both (Alvermann and Robinson, 2018). The concept of intersectionality in this study draws on the work of Nunez to identify 'lines of difference' (2014: 86) such as ethnicity, race, class, gender, national belonging, language, sexuality, religion, and able-bodiedness.

4.2 The participants

This section offers a picture of the participants collated from a short biographical form completed at the beginning of the interview process as well as intersectional data generated through the process of thematic analysis. The sample included six male and eleven female participants, all of whom were studying at a London university at the time of the study. Ten participants were on doctoral programmes, eight studying for a Doctor in Philosophy (PhD) either part-time or full-time; and two participants studying part-time for an education doctorate (EdD). Six participants were in their first year of a full-time Batchelor in Education Studies programme at a London university, with one mature student in the second year of the programme.

The majority of the sample were 20-40 years old, including seven students in their 20s and six participants in their 30s. The ten doctoral students ranged in age from 28-61

years, with four students who were over 45 years old. Whilst most of the undergraduate students were aged 20 or 21 years, the sample also included one mature undergraduate female student who was 39 years old. In line with BERA (2018) guidelines, all participants were given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

The majority of participants were categorised as 'home' students for the purposes of their registration on Higher Education degree programmes in England. Of the seven 'international' students, four undergraduate students described themselves as Chinese. Two PhD students had originated in the US, and another was a sponsored PhD student who described himself on the biographical form as Turkish. The terms 'home' country or 'country of origin' are vague and slippery concepts which do not fully represent the complex, linguistic, cultural and political backgrounds of participants. These 'Home/International' (H/Int) categorisations may be seen as salient indicators of citizenship status, highlighting how discourses of the nation state construct notions of social belonging and otherness. However, they also reflect the internationalisation agenda of Higher Education institutions in the Anglophile world (Reynolds, 2018).

Of all the participants in the study, four doctoral students declared their ethnicity as 'White British'. Participants also identified as 'Pakistani', 'Turkish', 'White Other' and 'Other Asian'. One participant identified as 'Black Other' and 'Polish', but he also ticked the 'White – British' category, reflecting both his subjective stance, and his possession of a British passport. Information on the biographical form was supplemented by data generated through the interviews. This information is summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Participants' gender, age, ethnicity and programme

Name (pseudonym)	Gender (M/F)	Age	Ethnicity	Programme of Study	Student status (Home/ International)
Guneet	M	47	Pakistani	PhD	H
Adam	M	34	Polish	PhD	H
Patrick	M	35	White British	EdD	H
Ceri	F	28	White British	PhD	H
Afran	M	30	Turkish	PhD	Int
Ethan	M	34	White Other (USA)	PhD	Int
Caroline	F	30	White Other (USA)	PhD	Int
Geeta	F	50	Other Asian	PhD	H
Sara	F	61	White British	EdD	H
Karen	F	55	White British	PhD	H
Layla	F	20	Pakistani	B Ed	H
Amirah	F	39	Bangladeshi	B Ed	H
Joanne	F	20	Chinese	B Ed	Int
Lily	F	20	Chinese	B Ed	Int
Noah	M	21	Other Asian (Korean)	B Ed	H
Siyi	F	20	Chinese	B Ed	Int
Tiki	F	20	Chinese	B Ed	Int

The biographical form offered a set of 'fixed' and 'open' categories. Whilst this self-reported data was useful, it included both racial and ethnic categories which were problematic as the language of the form encompassed notions of hierarchy and inclusion/exclusion, specifically in the use of the word 'other'. As some of the categories operate as indexical markers reflecting concepts of a nation state, they also silence the

voices of individuals who construct their identities outside these normative categories. Afran wrote 'Turkey' in the 'Other' category when asked to identify to which of the groups he belonged. However, analysis of the interview data also highlighted his performance of a Kurdish identity which is invisible on the short biographical form. A summary of the interviewees' written and spoken languages can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 Participants' use of languages

Name (pseudonym)	Spoken languages (in addition to English)	Written languages (in addition to English)
Guneet	Panjabi and French	French
Adam	Polish, French, Portuguese, German	Polish, French, Portuguese
Patrick	Spanish	Spanish
Ceri	-	-
Afran	Kurdish, Turkish	Kurdish, Turkish
Ethan	French	-
Caroline	Italian, some Spanish	Italian
Geeta	Indian dialects	-
Sara	-	-
Karen	-	-
Layla	Panjabi	Arabic
Amirah	Bengali	-
Joanne	Mandarin	Mandarin
Lily	Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) Korean	Mandarin
Noah	Korean	Korean, basic French
Siyi	Mandarin Shanghainese Spanish	Mandarin
Tiki	Mandarin, Shanghainese	Mandarin

An analysis of participants' most recent qualifications reflects the diverse nature of the current student body in HE, resulting from the expansion and marketisation of Higher Education (HE), particularly at undergraduate level (Barnett, 2007; Tusting et al., 2019; Preece, 2016). It also offers some signifiers as to how well students may be prepared for study in a particular disciplinary field, or within an interdisciplinary field such as 'Education Studies'. The doctoral students had all completed postgraduate qualifications

at Masters' level, which facilitated their entry on to their choice of doctoral programme. Two participants in the study also referenced their IELTS (International English language Testing System) and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores, signalling a measurement of English language proficiency required for admission to HE institutions.

The sample included a mix of full-time and part-time students, eleven of whom were employed in mainly part-time or fractional job roles. Ten of these participants were engaged in educational roles, which they described as teacher, tutor, lecturer and trainer. Ethan worked as a part-time warden at a university but had also started lecturing in the same institution. Adam was self-employed as a part-time freelance trainer.

Full-time students are not expected to engage in substantial paid employment during undergraduate studies and this was signalled on the biographical information form by the majority of the participants. However, Siyi acted as an online paid educational consultant offering her services to Chinese parents who wanted support in navigating the highly competitive routes to 'eliteness' outside the Chinese education system (Yang, 2016). In addition, she undertook part-time paid work as a photographer. Layla was self-employed as a home tutor where she also acted in a mediating role for non-English speaking parents in the Punjabi-speaking community.

Table 4: Participants' previous qualifications and employment

Name (pseudonym)	**Most recent qualification**	**Employment**
Guneet	Masters in Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy	HE and FE tutor (term time)
Adam	MPhil Education TOEFL 110/120	Self-employed freelance trainer
Patrick	IFS (Institution Focussed study)	Evaluation Manager in a charity
Ceri	MA English and Education	Teacher in a secondary school
Afran	MA Special Education	-
Ethan	PhD (just completed)	Part-time warden and lecturer
Caroline	MSc Psych of Ed	MA tutor in HE
Geeta	MA History of Education	Professional role in HE
Sara	MA Education	Lecturer in HE
Karen	Post Graduate Certificate in Professional Coaching	Home tutor for school-age children
Layla	BTEC Health in Social care	Self-employed home tutoring
Amirah	Access to HE	-
Joanne	A levels	-
Lily	A levels + IELTS	-
Noah	Access to Business	-
Siyi	IB	Part-time online educational consultant and photographer
Tiki	IB	-

Of the seven undergraduate participants, four different routes to Higher Education (HE) within the English context were identified: Access to HE courses; the International Baccalaureate; A-level (General certificate of Education Advanced level) study; and a BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) course in Health and Social Care. Of the four 'international' students who were participants in this study, Tiki completed the International Baccalaureate (IB) in a high school in China. Lily attended an international school in China until she was 14 years old, when she came to the UK to complete GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and A level study. Siyi was brought up in China but had lived abroad, mainly in English-speaking countries, for the last six years, completing the International Baccalaureate in New Zealand before coming to London to start the undergraduate degree. Joanne, another Chinese student, had lived in the UK for over two years, completing A-level study in the English Midlands before coming to London for her undergraduate programme. The learning trajectories of these 'transnational youth', as described by Skerrett (2012) highlight a strong commitment to study in English-speaking contexts, which represent cultural, social and economic capital (Wang, 2015) and reflect a form of 'elite' education (Maxwell and Appleton, 2016).

The schooling trajectories of participants designated as 'home' undergraduate students in this study, were also varied but opportunities for agency appear more limited. Noah's family emigrated to the UK when he was six years old. He had what he described as a 'difficult' time in both primary and secondary schools where he felt isolated as the only Korean child. He dropped out after GCSE examinations, but later completed an Access to Business course in a further education college which gained him entry to the undergraduate Education Studies programme. Layla was brought up in the UK, completing GCSE examinations, followed by a BTEC in Health and Social Care at a local further education college, a qualification generally associated with 'vocational', rather than 'academic' education within the UK post school context (Hodgson and Spours, 2011). Amirah was also born in London, completing an Access to Higher Education programme in a local further education college in order to return to study as a mature student. Amirah expresses her experience of marginalisation in relation to social class, explaining why she did not apply to university at a younger age:

> Not as many people went to university, and especially, you know, working-class, migrant family that I came from. There wasn't any real conversation about that.

Three participants on the doctoral programme identified as monolingual with English as their expert language for speaking and writing. There were fifteen languages other than English spoken by fourteen participants in this study. These multilingual participants claimed some written proficiency in eleven languages. The data bely the complex linguistic repertoires of the participants. Guneet and Layla both spoke, but did not write, Panjabi. Similarly, Amirah spoke Bengali with her grandmother but was unable to read or write in the Bengali language. Some participants' spoken languages or dialects did not have a written form. For example, both Siyi and Tiki communicated with parents and grandparents in Shanghainese (an oral language/dialect associated with the city of Shanghai). De Souza (2015) highlights the need for researchers to bring non-dominant and marginalised languages to the fore in any literacy research, challenging inequalities within language hierarchies.

Layla copied written Arabic from the Quran as part of her faith-based practices but was unable to speak modern Arabic. Ethan spoke some French but did not claim any writing proficiency, whereas Noah noted that he could communicate to some extent in written French but was unable to engage in conversational French. Lily wrote using either the traditional or simplified Mandarin script in order to converse with Cantonese and Mandarin speakers. Whilst the term 'multilingualism' may be perceived as a useful concept in capturing these linguistic repertoires (Busch, 2016), it has also been critiqued (Heller, 2012; Dovchin and Pennycook, 2018) for not challenging the notion of language as a bounded entity linked to a nation state. Heller makes the point that ethnography is a useful tool in this 'mess of multiplicity' (2012:24) as it requires the researcher to engage dialectically with the data and her explanations.

According to Nunez (2014), the concept of intersectionality may also include individual identifiers such as faith-based identities, sexuality and health status. These categories of difference (Davis, 2014) were not explicitly explored in the semi-structured interviews. However, some participants volunteered information about themselves in their personal

narratives. Six participants made reference to ongoing faith-based or spiritual practices. Noah and Sara were actively involved in organising communal Christian activities. Layla's faith-based practice included her charity work as well as Islamic study. Other participants identified private faith-based practices as identity indicators in their varied lifeworlds: Ethan described himself as a Buddhist; Lily identified as a Christian; and Amirah introduced herself as a 'semi, non-practising Muslim'. Both Ethan and Adam disrupted notions of heteronormativity (Gray, 2016) within the research interview. Ethan chose to position himself as a gay man, and Adam described his educational project as confronting 'sexual racism', which he described as a form of racism enacted on gay online dating sites.

Amirah made reference to neurodiversity, acknowledging a medical diagnosis of 'anxiety disorder' and 'Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)'. Whilst a social model of dis/ability recognises difference as a function of culture, rather than a property of individuals, this labelling nevertheless points to an additional constraint faced by Amirah in navigating her way through Higher Education. Layla, explaining that recent illness had affected her memory, also highlighted the notion of 'wellness', or able-bodiedness', as another 'line of difference' within intersectionality (Nunez, 2014:85). These 'lines of difference', whilst partial, expose some conflicting interests of participants, such as their positioning within particular social locations and their access to linguistic resources, which are differentially valued depending on context and power relations. They also expose how social constraints may be experienced by people as a source of privilege or as a site of struggle (Heller, 2012). Davis (2014) emphasises that intersectionality can be seen as critical methodology, interpreting identities as multiple and shifting within multi-layered relations of power.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I use intersectionality as a method of exploring the research sample in depth in order to indicate the multilayered complexity of identity dimensions. These

dimensions are not presented as essentialist categories but as heuristics for developing understandings of individual lives (Block and Corona, 2016). As noted by Anthias:

> Intersectionality does not refer to a unitary framework but a range of positions…essentially it is a heuristic device for understanding boundaries and hierarchies of social life (2013:4, cited in Block and Corona, 2016:508).

Rymes (2014a) draws our attention to diversity in social life and the need for individuals to develop communicative repertoires through interacting with others across difference. However, whilst exploring ways in which individuals are drawn together to communicate through shared interests and endeavours, she also recognises that demographic segmentations, what she describes as 'candidate comembership categories' (p.4) are important. As she states:

> …while a repertoire approach takes us away from the pitfalls of over-reliance on tired demographic categories, that does not mean that features such as someone's race, their gender, class background, or age are not important. Rather these are crucial elements of one's repertoire (Rymes, 2014:119).

In addition to latent thematic analysis, I used linguistic ethnography to draw out the main findings of the study through the use of vignettes. The next three chapters are organised as separate vignettes: each chapter introduces a different participant. The vignettes are presented as 'telling cases' (Mitchell, 1984), presenting key findings from the data. I chose to use vignettes to ensure that I analysed the data in sufficient depth. I could have chosen other participants for the vignettes and in fact I found it hard to decide which participants to foreground in this way as each interview offered some interesting insights. In choosing the participants to use for the vignettes I ensured that I took account of differences between participants in terms of academic course, gender, age and linguistic background. Chapter 9 contains reflexive vignettes related to each of the 'cases' presented in Chapters 5-8. This is followed in Chapter 10 by a discussion of the main themes, drawing on the vignettes as well as findings from other data in the study.

Chapter 5: Amirah

In each of the next four chapters, I introduce a single participant in the study. In this chapter, I focus on one student, Amirah, exploring the ways in which she performs identities as a writer/composer/designer in the diverse domains of her life. My purpose in using this vignette is to illustrate some aspects of the complex meaning-making that is entangled (Pahl, 2012) in what may be perceived as everyday family engagements that relate to the work of building and sustaining relationships in family and home contexts. In particular, I focus on the design work embodied in these encounters. Amirah uses her agency to choose specific linguistic resources and writing tools from her communicative repertoire to make meaning within the domain of her home and family. This 'case study' also explores writing within the context of academic study and the use of social media. Identities, chosen and imposed, are continually constructed and performed within and outside the family. These discursive practices also overlap and seep across into other domains.

Drawing on Norton's (2013) definition of identity (see Chapter 1), this vignette explores how Amirah takes up identities, or 'socially available positions for selfhood' (Ivanič , 1998:329), in positioning herself in the world. Within this study, I understand identities as relational and constructed through social activity, a continuous process of constructing and reconstructing the self in which language has a central mediating role (Norton, 2013).

Amirah (as mentioned in Chapter 4) is a 39-year-old 'mature' undergraduate student who is in the second year of her degree programme. She is the single mother of two school age children and part of a wider network of family and friends. She identifies her key socio-textual domains as family, her use of social media, and her university course. I discuss each of these in turn, starting with Amirah's performance of family and the ways in which she uses writing and other semiotic resources in constructing and negotiating family relationships.

Writing in the family

Amirah and her children compose handwritten notes to each other. When writing notes to her children, Amirah wants what she is saying at that moment to mean something to them such as 'cheering them up or making them feel special'. Sometimes, her 8-year-old daughter writes a note and puts it under Amirah's bedroom door. These handwritten notes are dialogic and travelling literacies, put under doors or shared elsewhere in the home. They are special, culturally significant, and they are also everyday literacies. As Pahl writes:

> The everyday is strewn with artefacts. These are objects that call up passions, identities, other memories and places (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010, cited in Pahl, 2014:82).

Language is privileged in this writing practice, but multimodal ensembles are created and communicated in the home where one wall in the living-room is used for a display of the children's writing and drawings, which they change periodically. Re-constructing these stories of writing in the home during the interview drew a reflexive comment from Amirah:

> So-so, yeah, I suppose again, without realising it, we do communicate quite a lot in that way, without consciously realising.

When Amirah's son experienced bullying at primary school, she wrote inspiring messages and jokes on little heart shaped notes and put them in his lunch box. This writing, alongside her academic essays, is the writing of which she feels most proud. She describes her son's response to this writing practice:

> He used to get embarrassed, but then I stopped doing it, and then he asked why I'd stopped doing it. He'd be like, 'Oh Mum!', and then when it stopped, 'Where are my notes, mum?

In writing these notes to her son, Amirah used her communicative repertoire to create a semiotic ensemble which allowed her to cross domains, communicating materially with her son within the school during his lunchbreak. Placing the inscription on the heart-

shaped note is an aesthetic choice which transforms the text (Pahl, 2014), signifying home and embodying messages of love and belonging. The notion of the heart-shaped note as talisman seems particularly pertinent in the context of a threat of bullying. Pahl writes:

> Literacy can be seen as a material object and can be a powerful talisman to ward off evil. Literacy can have protective forces (Pahl, 2014:71).

The materiality of literacy includes these notes and also 'stuff' such as mobile phones which offer particular affordances for making meaning. Amirah gave her daughter her old mobile phone so that they had a way of keeping in touch while she was staying with her father. Unexpectedly, Amirah started to receive lots of WhatsApp (an online messaging service) messages from her daughter while she was away from home. This new online writing, in the form of messaging back and forth, added what Amirah describes as 'a new depth' to her relationship with her daughter as her daughter constructed a new identity for herself as a mobile phone user. This 'unruly' writing practice (Burnett et al., 2014c:160), contingent on the use of a mobile device across space, enables mother and daughter to engage in identity work. It describes a literacy practice that is fluid, mobile, multimodal and experimental, offering alternative family performances in different sites as Amirah's daughter communicates with each parent using different communicative tools. This includes an (im)material dimension, as mother and daughter perform identities, communicating on and off screen across space and time (Davies, 2014).

Amirah is part of a wider family network. In the interview, she tried out her different identities within the wider family:

> 'The eldest child'
> 'Eldest grandchild'
> 'Eldest grandchild of 12'
> 'Only one that can speak Bengali'

Amirah contextualises her Bengali identity through her 'storying' (Davies, 2015:398), drawing on an oral family history of gain and loss. Having read research on Sylheti-speaking Bengali families settled in Tower Hamlets in London as part of her studies, she positioned herself outside the literature. She says:

> …traditionally, when I read about Bengalis in research and stuff, they always talk a lot about Tower Hamlets and – that's one region of Bangladesh, it's actually Sylhet, not part of – it's like Northern Ireland is to Ireland and, like, they generalise it to the whole population, which really upsets me sometimes. But one thing that – that is correct that comes out of a lot of the research is that they are very – what's the right word I'm looking for – they - they keep themselves to themselves and they don't really interact much outside.

The experience of reading research which purported to represent an aspect of her cultural heritage caused dissonance for Amirah, positioning her between the academy and her own family. In using the analogy of Northern Ireland to explain how Sylhet was a part of Bangladesh, Amirah demonstrates her ability to use her communicative repertoire to make meaningful links with me as her audience, although I do not know if at this point she had recognised my accent as Irish!

Amirah describes her experience of growing up in a white middle-class part of London in the 1980s where her working-class family was one of the first Asian families in the area. As she put it:

> When my grandparents came here, they understood and recognised the fact that the only way any of their kids were going to get anywhere was to basically jump on board, education, independence, when in Rome, you know, whatever. As a result, we may have diluted a little bit of our religious beliefs, but I think what it did do was push us all out of our comfort zone.

This shared family discourse represents a 'familial timescale' where stories told by family members embody meanings that have been constructed over time (Compton-Lilly, 2018:57). Amirah describes her engagement with this discourse as a continuing cultural 'trade-off' between what she considers the dominant English culture, represented as 'a glass of wine at the end of the day'; and her Bengali heritage, represented by her faith-based practices and embodied in a laminated prayer sheet typed on an old typewriter by

her grandfather. Amirah, as the eldest child, spent a lot of her childhood with her grandmother, communicating orally in Bengali. She describes this element of her communicative repertoire where she can speak, but not write, in Bengali:

> So, it's very broken. It's what I call Binglish, a bit of Bengali and English and it's with a Cockney, East End twang. But I can speak it, nonetheless.

Amirah's description of her language use reflects intersections of place and community but also different beliefs about languages. The term 'very broken' which she uses to describe her use of language mirrors normative views of language, described by Rymes as the 'Linguistic Monolith Approach' (2014:17) in contrast to a repertoire view of languages which recognises that in a context of change and mobility, multiple 'versions' or ways of speaking exist and become elements in a communicative repertoire, where issues of correctness are decided through participatory cultures, rather than through top-down standardized processes in grammar books and dictionaries. Amirah expressed her pride in 'Binglish', her diverse cultural and linguistic heritage, asserting 'But, I can speak it, nonetheless'. Her allusion to accent indexes a strong connection to place, i.e. East London, with her reference to a 'Cockney, East End twang' (Pahl, 2014; Rymes, 2014).

Co-constructing the concept of 'writing' was a task in all the interviews, as in the following exchange where, as the researcher, I aim to set the scene within the interview context.

Vera	So, first of all to say, when I'm thinking about writing, I'm thinking about writing as something we do in lots of different contexts. So, writing as a social practice. So, not just writing as a skill, in terms of what maybe people learn in the beginning, when they go to school, but thinking about all the different kinds –
Amirah	So, a more broader sense of writing?
Vera	Exactly, yeah….

In introducing my research to the undergraduate participants, I made reference to a module, 'Language, Literacy and Communication' which the students had completed in the first year of their course. I hoped that students would retain some background knowledge from the module which would help in explaining concepts such as 'writing as a social practice'. Amirah signalled her understanding with the phrase 'a more broader sense of writing'. In this non-standard use of the comparative, she is also indexing an aspect of her communicative repertoire, which would align with Rampton's description of a 'contemporary urban vernacular' (Rampton, 2011); or what Fox and Sharma describe as 'Multicultural London English':

> a new vernacular dialect originating in East London, displacing the original inner-city domains of cockney, and spoken by young, working class people of different ethnicities (2016:5).

Handwriting in the family

Amirah considers that writing is often a better way for her to convey her emotions than communicating face-to-face. In particular, she finds that handwriting slows down the interaction, creating time and space to reflect. Following an argument with one of her sisters two years ago, she shared her feelings with her sister in handwritten letters, which initiated a reconciliation, as she explains:

> When I was younger, I used to write lots of letters, and I miss that. And about two years ago, my sister and I had a really big falling out, and I started to write her letters, and it's what made us – it's what began our healing process.

Amirah also values the materiality involved in the writing and receiving of handwritten letters. Her moves reflect a sensitivity to pace and 'haptic communication' (Mills et al, 2018:26), which mediate her interactions and enable her to act reflexively in the world. Amirah uses handwriting to perform a nurturing role in her family, negotiating and building relationships in different ways with her son, daughter and sister. Amirah also positions herself as the family member who can best support her grandmother with functional writing tasks, insisting that the writing process is a collaborative and shared enterprise.

Using social media

The use of WhatsApp is ubiquitous in Amirah's family where different family groupings are materialised in different online groups. These are multimodal spaces supporting asynchronous communication and Amirah considers that the affordances of the online platform have increased written communication within the family. The affordances of online messaging platforms such as WhatsApp include collaboration, interactivity, multimodality, intertextuality and space for identity construction (Beach,2018). Amirah set up a WhatsApp group with her two sisters to plan a 60th birthday celebration for their mother. The affordances of interactivity mean that there is a record of their interactions, what boyd (2010) calls 'persistence'. The records are replicable; they can be copied and recontextualised. As boyd notes, it is also easy to locate information, and interactions are 'scalable' which means that they can be easily disseminated (2010, cited in Beach, 2018:88). However, despite these affordances, Amirah uses her agency in choosing the elements from her communicative repertoire, digital and non-digital, that she knows will be most effective in meaning-making with her particular audience. Knowing that one sister finds the group messaging stressful, she moves away from the digital to suggest a phone call instead.

Amirah acknowledges the value of mobilities when describing how she communicates with a friend and pays a bill on her phone whilst walking to the research interview. She analyses this fast-paced routine which is an everyday part of her life:

> And whilst .. I do like to physically talk to people, you can't get away from the fact that things can be done really, really quickly. I mean, I was walking from the station and my friend text me to remind me that I hadn't paid her for some concert tickets that we bought. So, I just jumped on my app, done that. So, I suppose there's two elements there: the fact that she was able to text me and let me know that while I'm on the go, and the fact that I was able to do that just while I was walking – walking here.

Amirah claims that she does most of her writing on her phone. As Merchant notes, mobility could be described as a 'signature tune' for this century (2018:98), where one needs to speak of 'the actual relational pair, human-technology' (2018:100), which

involves bodies, devices and networks making meanings and leaving traces in a constant flow of ideas, resources, people and discourses that connect in different places and in different ways. Williams (2018) found that participants in his research value speed, which includes speed in writing. Amirah represents herself as a social media user and describes her use of social media, such as Facebook, as a daily routine. She has about 200 'friends' on Facebook, of which 20-35 represent people who are important to her.

Rymes highlights how references to popular culture and mass media are a key part of communicative repertoires, which can both include and exclude interactants. In communicative events, references to popular cultural performances are not replicated but recontextualised, or recycled, in hybrid forms. This reflects Rymes' 'diversity principle':

> The more widely circulated and mass-produced a message is, the more highly diverse the interactions with it will be (2014a:58).

The repertoire approach enables us to trace how individuals adopt cultural messages, for example elements of languages, stories, phrases, gestures, clothing styles, media references, or ways of speaking and writing, blending them creatively to produce new hybrid combinations to produce particular effects. Rather than depending on tired, essentialising demographic categories, investigating these constantly changing communicative repertoires offers researchers a means of analysing difference.
In the following excerpt, Amirah, in response to an interview question from me, as the researcher, draws on a reference of popular culture in order to share her opinion and experience about how Facebook operates.

Vera	..So, do you think you get really good at social media through practising but maybe also seeing other people's responses to what you write?
Amirah	Yeah.
Vera	Do you think that makes a difference as well?

Amirah	Yeah. Yeah, so again, responses, and again, feedback as well. So, if you think about it, you put – I don't know if you've ever seen – have you ever seen a series of programmes called 'Black Mirror'?
Vera	I've heard of them. I haven't seen them.
Amirah	Okay. They're brilliant. If you've got Netflix, go for it. There's one on there, they touch on the most amazing and relevant things that are happening in society. So, there's one and it's all about social media and how you get points for the amount of people that like your statuses and follow you, and this and that. It's funny, because I – I've seen those people who will put a status on and they're like, 'Nobody – nobody's commented yet'. So, it then – I then ask myself, I'm like, 'Well, are you putting a status on to – because you want to put your status, or are you putting it on because you want everyone to – you want people to comment on it and you want people to be consciously aware of what you're doing?' And they're two very different things. So-so yeah. So, the responses – which can also be kind of like a bit like feedback, can't it?

In this exchange, I ask a question, with the aim of exploring how people learn to write on Facebook. Amirah responds to my prompts with 'Yeah', and then repeats the term 'response', offering these as 'receipt tokens' (Mann, 2016:127). Her interview move expands the remit of the question to include the word, 'feedback' and she then broadens her response further by asking a question, probing the communicative repertoire of the interviewer. Amirah tries to find common ground with me, making 'explicit reference' to a popular televised series, available through an online channel (Rymes, 2014a:61). However, the cultural reference reflects elements of a 'youthy repertoire' (Rymes, 2014a: 89) which is not available to me, as the researcher, and I respond: 'I've heard of them. I haven't seen them'. This interview move on my part gives Amirah space to perform the identity of a knowledgeable 'digital-age' person (Rymes, 2014a:75), where she uses her experience of, and access to, popular culture to offer a more nuanced and sophisticated reconceptualization of my interview question. In storying about Facebook, Amirah identifies with the ironic metacommentary of the 'Black Mirror' programme, which makes fun of Facebook users who are desperate for their Facebook 'friends' to comment on their statuses. She also offers her own reflexive comments, questioning the ethics of Facebook users and the ways in which they

perform self and interact with others. Amirah's final interview move in this excerpt is to acknowledge the interview context by returning to the original framing of the question, making a semantic connection between 'responses' and 'feedback'. In this excerpt, the shaping of this part of the interview is influenced by the level of familiarity with the interview topic as well as aspects of both the interviewer's and participant's identities. Amirah followed up her stance on Facebook practices with a story of performativity which reinforced her viewpoint and highlighted her critical stance:

> …so, I have this friend. She's lovely but she's social media mental. And the way she puts her pictures and puts her statuses, you would think she's having a great time or whatever, but it's not the case. And that was illustrated with when we all went out one day with our children. She took loads of pictures; the kids had a rubbish day. They hated it. Okay, we got home. My son was looking over my shoulder, and he went, 'Mummy, look, Yvette's put all those pictures and put "What a lovely day"'. And my son looked at me, and went, 'We had the worst day ever. It was rubbish'. I said, 'Don't believe everything you see, son'.

In the recounting of this story, Amirah is taking a critical and ethical stance, recognising that digital writers exist in relation to an (im)material context which should be acknowledged and represented truthfully. However, context is not always transparent to the reader and so verification and refutations of claims are not always straightforward, whilst digital actions, such as writing in online contexts, may result in amplified effects across space and time. Luke et al. describe the problem:

> Signs have been cut loose from the signified, from originary context and place, and the placement, attribution, and location of signs, signifiers and signified is increasingly difficult (2018:256).

Whilst the writing process, using an array of tools, may be experienced as difficult by the individual (Williams, 2018), there are different affordances and constraints in offline and online composing (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016). Amirah describes one of the consequences of writing online:

> I suppose as well, with, like, the online and offline stuff – like, I could rip that up and put that in the bin now [pointing to a printed text]. But if I write something

> in the techno internet world, it's there forever and it can't be deleted. You can delete it off your screen, but it's still there.

Amirah calculates that most of her writing is online where she balances trust and risk (Giddens, 1990). However, as illustrated with the story of her friend's ill-judged Facebook post, she is also positioning herself as ethical in mediating her relationships both online and offline. Luke et al., following Dewey (2008), define ethics as:

> the codes, norms and procedures that govern everyday life and interaction, civility and exchange in institutions, societies, and cultures (2018:253).

Luke et al. (2018) argue that digital ethics should be a central part of a school curriculum and that any agenda should critically engage with the values, beliefs and ideologies that learners have to navigate online. This would appear to be a project that would also resonate with Amirah's values.

Academic writing

Studying in university was a long-term project for Amirah, which began long before she enrolled for the undergraduate course. It involved finding the right Access course and preparing her children for new home routines. In analysing Amirah's experience of writing in the university, I followed an analytic process described in Tusting et al. (2019:83), in their research on academics' writing. This included a search for 'affective stance' by coding the interview transcript for words and phrases that denoted affect. The process highlighted both positive and negative affective stances which Amirah ascribed to her experience of undergraduate writing. However, she also used some ambiguous terms, such as 'bittersweet', where both positive and negative stances are expressed at the same time, signalling mixed feelings representing the embodied complexity of writing as a staged process over time. She expresses a wide range of emotions (Williams, 2018) in this direct quote from the interview:

> So there is all the reading and writing that goes along with [academic writing] which – which is kind of like a bittersweet feeling for me, because the process of writing academically is a very stressful one for me and exasperates a lot of

> anxieties. But then, nine times out of ten, at the end of that process, when I get my grade, it's a really happy time because it's a good grade and I think about the effort that's gone into it.

Anxiety was the primary emotion expressed in the interview: the worry that each piece of work might require a re-submission; and the process of editing the draft, working out what should be left in and what should come out. Barnett describes this anxiety, linked to the assessment regime, as 'a necessary part of a genuine student experience' (2007:32). Amirah describes the writing process:

> So first -so -I've got my plan. I know roughly what I want to do, and then it's a case of just write. I write as if I'm talking, and then I will go back in and proof it to the next draft, to the next draft, and it will take quite a few moments to get from what I would call just general conversation to an academic piece of writing. And I have a – a very good friend of mine that proofs my – proofs a lot of my work. And she finds it hilarious when you go from the first to the last, because it's ultimately saying the same thing. And my mum, who is not particularly highly educated, loves reading my final stuff, because it makes her feel like – I don't know, she must think I'm Stephen Hawking or something. 'Mum, seriously, this is not that.' But I think as well, being her first born and going back so much later – no she just – she gets all emotional and teary and stuff.

As the eldest child, Amirah is positioned as being responsible, not just for herself, but for the whole family (Chowdhury, 2016), and so gaining academic success in the wider community links to the family discourse around integration. While Amirah is experiencing a roller-coaster of emotions during the process of writing an academic essay, her mother and friend are fully involved in her performance of a Higher Education student, materialised as affect and talk around the text. Identities are social constructions, as noted by Bronwyn Williams:

> Issues of identity are cultural constructions inextricable from relationships with family and communities. When identity is performed in reading and writing, what is at work and at stake is not just an individual sense of identity but also community affiliations, whether we embrace them or flee from them (2018:168).

Amirah has a sense of the academic writing process that works for her, starting with a plan and dialogic talk (even if she is just expressing her ideas to herself), followed by a number of drafts where she appears to go through an iterative process of drafting,

proofreading and editing in the process of retexturing her ideas into an academic code. She is strategic when writing essays for assessment, choosing an essay title which she thinks will be less popular with the rest of the student body so that she can 'stand out a bit', and making good use of a thesaurus to 'impress the audience'.

Amirah positions herself as a 'mature student', who is returning to formal education after 20 years and so her formal learning trajectory differs from many of her peers on the undergraduate course. She recognises her 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al., 1992) and is confident in identifying the learning strategies that work best for her. She does not value the technologies provided for her as additional learning support, such as a 'text-to-write' software package, but she does recognise the value of tutor and peer feedback, particularly in high stakes writing such as academic essays. Amirah positions herself as a good writer, someone who can get her point across, and she bases this self-evaluation on the responses of her audiences in the diverse spheres of her life. She considers that she is developing herself as an academic writer through tutor feedback, practising, and also sharing writing with her colleagues, particularly other mature students who form part of her community of practice. She describes the community:

> I mean, we've been very, very lucky with this year. There is about 18 of us mature students, and of the 18, there's about six or seven of us who are all between the age of about 35 and 45. We've all got kids. We have similar but very different lifestyles. And academically and mentally, we've been able to support each other to a great length.

Sharing writing with peers gives Amirah a benchmark for her own writing but also exposure to different points of view. As described by Lave and Wenger, this type of activity defines a community of practice, as they note:

> It crucially involves participation as a way of learning – of both absorbing and being absorbed in – the 'culture of practice' (1991:95).

Positioning herself as a practitioner, someone who can give feedback to a peer, and then seeing that feedback acted on, has helped Amirah in negotiating a writerly identity (Seloni, 2019). Engaging in collaborative writing on the academic course has also offered

opportunities for learning, using technologies like Google Docs and WhatsApp for almost synchronous communication, and where the end product is not necessarily a written text.

Amirah tries out different identities as a novice academic writer:

> 'Mature student'
> 'Not mature student'
> 'Published'
> 'Not published'

This talk around writing is an aspect of 'play' which allows Amirah to play the role of 'academic'. This is a 'performance before competence', as described by Kendrick (2016:8), which allows her to experiment by performing identities in a context of her own making, before laying full claim to this new identity. Constructing new identities creates space for movement between domains as Amirah chooses elements from her communicative repertoire to extend her activities in different sites, which includes supporting her son with school writing tasks. She reports the following comment from her son:

> Mummy, since you've started university, your expectations of me have got much higher.

Amirah uses her own experiences of learning to help her son in planning his writing, helping him to achieve a good mark from his teacher but also preparing him for writing in secondary school.

Handwriting in the academic domain

Amirah uses a range of digital and non-digital tools to make meaning in the overlapping domains of her life. Handwriting is a tool that she uses in nurturing family relationships and also in her academic writing practices. She creates handwritten notes when revising.

Initially, she used her laptop during lectures, but she then found that her understanding of the content was improved when she wrote notes by hand rather than typing. The following excerpt from the interview transcript discusses this issue in more detail:

Vera	Right, yeah. And are you – you're quite a good typist, are you?
Amirah	Yeah. Yeah, no, I'm a really good typist.
Vera	So it's not about finding the letters or anything like that?
Amirah	It's not about finding the letters or anything like that. It's about, I think – because you still need to concentrate on what you're doing, whether you're handwriting or typing. Say, if you're in a lecture, for example. There's just something about the act of physically writing it that seems to allow me to remember what I'm writing or understand what I'm writing a little more than typing it. And I – I generally put it down to my age, and say, you know, I'm in a class with 19-year-olds who [making typing sound on desk] go like that, and then you've got me and the four other mature students going like that [models handwriting].

Haas and McGrath point to embodied cognition research, detailed in Mangen and Velay (2010) which supports Amirah's personal experience of learning through handwriting. Amirah's experience of the 'sensory dimensions of handwriting' (Mills et al, 2018:34) is echoed in the findings for other participants in this research. However, she also shared the anxiety of other undergraduate students about how to manage written timed examinations where handwriting was the ascribed medium.

Writing in other times and spaces

The elements of Amirah's communicative repertoire discussed so far in this case study could be described as her lifewide writing practices, which are part of her 'synchronous repertoire' (Blommaert and Backus, 2011:16). These are the resources that she currently uses as part of her communicative repertoire across the different domains of her life. As discussed in Chapter 2, Blommaert and Backus describe linguistic repertoires, nested in communicative repertoires, as 'indexical biographies' (see Section 2.9), which expand and retract in different ways over the course of a person's life, depending on how they

place themselves in particular social arenas. All of these 'patterns of learning' matter, where repertoires are 'records of mobility' (p.22). Amirah was working in Information Technology (IT) recruitment for about 5 years between 1999 and 2004. Elements of her communicative repertoire from that period could be described as her 'asynchronous repertoire', linked to her lifelong literacy practices and still very important to her as she states:

> So whilst it's not a massive part of my life now so much, because I'm not working, it was for – for a really, really, really long time.

Amirah's performance of an IT consultant involved a lot of telephone communication, and limited writing. This period of employment coincided with a lot of communicative changes in the world of work, including the move from fax to email, which facilitated working from home. This 'worker' identity is sedimented (Rowsell and Pahl, 2007) and available to her in her communicative repertoire.

Repertoires point to the past and to the future, enabling the building of imagined futures (Holland et al, 1998). As Norton emphasises, 'subjectivity is multiple, contradictory and a site of struggle' (2013:164). A poststructuralist perspective abandons the belief in one essential subjectivity, and this opens up the changing constitution of a person's identity. In an imagined future, Amirah would like to start using Twitter to extend her professional network. In addition, she would like to write an online journal/blog to help others, sharing obstacles that she has faced and overcome, such as some difficult aspects of motherhood. She performs gender in how she positions herself in the family and also as someone who Sayer portrays as a being 'whose relation to the world is one of concern' (2011:2).

Conclusion

This vignette offers a holistic account of a participant across her most valued life domains, which include family, academic study and social media. The structure of the semi-structured interview offers opportunities for storying across the lifespan, indexing

identity work located in different times and spaces. I discuss overlaps between domains, tools, relationships and values in Amirah's performance of identities, highlighting her use of agency in choosing different elements of her communicative repertoire when making meaning in diverse life contexts. The vignette illustrates the complex meaning-making that is entangled in (im)material writing practices as well as drawing attention to the materiality of texts and writing tools, including the use of both handwriting and digital tools. It also highlights the different approaches to 'writer development' adopted by the participant in her accounts of writing across digital and non-digital spaces.

Chapter 6: Adam

Communicative repertoire

In this vignette, I explore issues of identity, language and register within Adam's communicative repertoire. I also explore how he uses his repertoire across his life domains, including academic writing and social media.

Adam is a 34-year-old PhD student who describes his expert, or most fluent, language as English although he grew up in Poland, learning Polish as his first language. In addition to Polish and English, Adam speaks and writes in French and Portuguese. He also speaks German but describes himself as not fluent, where his measure of fluency is his ability to discuss politics in a language. His language and literacy practices vary in different domains; for example, he has written and presented an academic conference paper in Portuguese but is unsure about doing any academic writing in Polish. All of these languages are part of Adam's communicative repertoire. In the communicative repertoire approach, 'language', or 'linguistic repertoire', (Blommaert and Backus, 2011:3) is embedded in the communicative repertoire. In contexts of late modernity, the greater mobility of people, participatory learning approaches, such as online groups, technologies, and networks; and individual language and communicative resources ranging from formal learning to informal 'encounters', are better defined as 'subjectivities' (Blommaert and Backus, 2011:3). Communicative repertoires reflect these subjectivities in individual biographies. Adam learnt French through living in Brussels for 6 months, and 'picked up' Portuguese through spending time in Brazil; he learnt English through watching the television programme, 'Cartoon Network' and at school in Poland. He migrated to the UK after completing his first degree in Poland. Adam's multiple 'versions' of languages reflect different times and spaces and are all elements of his repertoire which he can choose to deploy and recontextualise in interactions (Rymes, 2014a:17).

The way we talk about 'accent' or 'sound contrasts in communication' (Rymes, 2014:39) indexes ideological views of language. Canagarajah and Ben Said discuss the ideology of 'native speakerism', which assumes that 'native' speakers of a language have superior

competence. They argue that this is a form of linguistic imperialism, or 'linguicism', which they define as:

> a discriminatory attitude towards language that is played out in social practices and sustained by social institutions (2011:390).

Linguistic change is inevitable, and linguistic variation is played out in different ways, realised in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar (Kirkpatrick and Deterding, 2011). However, the myth of the 'native speaker' is a powerful trope which can affect how speakers position themselves in relation to others. In the following extract, Adam describes how he navigates his position as a 'foreigner':

> Actually, so the thing is when I write, people don't know, especially with my surname being English. People don't know that they're dealing with a foreign speaker. So – whereas as soon as I pick up the phone, they know that I'm a foreigner so there's a different attitude I would say and power relations. Writing an email helps me to, kind of, get my authority a little bit more?

In choosing to write an email rather than speak on the phone, Adam is avoiding a situation where accent can index 'foreign-ness'. His formulation of this last point as a question, '…get my authority a little bit more' includes rising intonation and indicates the way in which he is working to co-construct the interaction with me, as the researcher. This 'expressive intonation', as described by Bakhtin, is a distinctive feature of how he is using non-linguistic elements in his communicative repertoire (Bakhtin, 1986, cited in Rymes,2014a:106) to make meaning. In this interaction, I indicate alignment with Adam, offering a receipt token 'Yes' and this co-construction is acknowledged in Adam's echoing of the receipt token.

In Adam's concern about speaking on the phone, he is indexing a concern, not about mutual comprehensibility, but about how his speech might be received and what it might index to the listener. Accent is an element of 'register', which is commonly seen as typifying social structure. Rampton et al. define registers as:

> Distinctive sets of linguistic and other semiotic signs that get indexically associated with different types of person, group, activity or situation (2015:28).

Gumperz and Roberts highlight how aspects of speaking, or 'contextualization cues', such as rhythm and intonation can cause misunderstandings in encounters, or what Gumperz terms 'crosstalk' (Gumperz et al, 1979; Roberts et al, 1992, cited in Maybin and Tusting, 2011:520). Gumperz, in his research on Indian English speakers in London in the 1970s and Roberts' (2011) more recent research on institutional discourse highlight how authority and power are instantiated in talk, exercising control through labelling and gatekeeping. Adam reflects this implicit understanding in this conversation excerpt.

Performing identities

Adam constructs his identity as a multilingual adult with diverse linguistic resources whilst also inhabiting a 'transnational' PhD student identity. De Fina (following Schiller et al., 1995) defines 'transnational individuals' as

> people who actively build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement (2016:163-4).

Whilst the notion of 'transnational identity' draws attention to global flows of people, practices, and cultural products (Appadurai, 1996), there is still a lack of clarity in socio- and applied linguistics as to which groups are included (De Fina, 2016). However, analysing data from Adam's interview for categories of social belonging is a useful way of untangling his stances towards his country of origin, Poland, and his country of settlement, England. This is also useful in understanding how identity positions are defined in the context of difference (Ivanič, 1998).

Adam texts his parents and sister in Polish, but most of his communication is through English, as he describes:

> Polish is my mother tongue, but English is my main language … so 95% of my interactions are in English, my education has been in English, yes, all my friendships, relationships and so on are in English.

He presents a negative stance towards learning to write Polish in his school classroom where he did not get any individual feedback. In contrast, he has a positive stance towards writing in English where he had feedback from an individual private home tutor from the age of 13. This is discussed in the following extract:

> Vera Okay, and so the different ways of learning to write in Polish and English, did it affect how you felt about the languages?
>
> Adam I never considered that. Maybe, but I've always- I hated Polish as a subject because I was really bad at writing. So, Polish has a lot of spelling rules which I never got my head around very well. I can probably spell better in English, whereas English I always loved, you know.

Adam links his 'hatred' of the Polish language as a school subject to his poor performance in writing. In contrast, he describes the process of learning to write in English as a virtuous circle. He enjoyed learning on his own with a tutor, receiving personalised feedback and being praised for subsequent improvement, all of which led to further development. In this discussion, where he exhibits a strongly negative stance towards Polish, and a strongly positive stance towards English, Adam appears to be claiming an identity as an English writer, whilst rejecting a Polish writer identity. He does not appear to have made a link between his learning experiences and his disposition towards the two languages.

Adam has degrees from a university in Poland and two universities in England. However, this achieved status, representing a form of social capital, does not reflect the relative value which Adam ascribes to each degree. Adam describes his Polish degree as 'useless' where he says that his writing activity was limited to copying and pasting from Wikipedia. On the other hand, he values the teaching on his second undergraduate degree in an English university outside London where he received a lot of personal support. As he put it:

> The whole course how I see it was really designed to – and everything was embedded in the course to get me to be a critical thinker, to get me to be an academic writer and to get me to be a researcher… Because staff really cared about the students and there weren't many students to staff.

In Adam's description of this university programme, there appears to be a clear alignment between identity and pedagogy so that the pedagogy as espoused in the course design is materialised in the classroom practices, encouraging students to take on more powerful identities such as 'critical thinker', 'academic writer' and 'researcher'. The other aspect of the programme that is critical to Adam is that the course enacted an ethic of 'care', and a high level of personal attention. Norton's notion of 'investment' is a useful explanatory construct (2011:322) in conceptualising learner identities. She argues that language learners enact positive identities towards the target language where the focus is not on individual ideas of motivation, but on the learning community and relations of power in the classroom. As well as highlighting the importance of the learning community, she also emphasises the 'imagined community'. Norton describes this 'imagined community' as:

> a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future…. In essence, an imagined community assumes an imagined identity, and a learner's investment in the target language must be understood within this context (2013:3).

Although Adam's learning context here is 'academic literacies', rather than 'language learning', the 'imagined community' is a salient feature. This is similar to the notion of 'figured worlds', (Holland et al, 1998), as described by Stornaiuolo:

> In figured worlds, Holland and colleagues argue, people always construct identities within and through their participation, engaging in 'social play' that is agentive and dynamic (2015:565).

Adam is using improvisation, or 'social play', to explore his future identities as 'critical thinker', 'academic writer' and 'researcher'. The notion of 'play' has been explored extensively in research on children's literacies (for example, Pahl, 2014). Kendrick offers some powerful examples from her research of how imaginative play signals new possibilities, new identities, and opportunities for learning with young people and adults. In her ethnographic study of 15 women in rural Uganda, the women took on an imagined identity of 'literate woman' using props, such as written materials and pens, to rehearse their new identities. As Kendrick notes:

> Performance in these play situations and scenarios takes place in different modes of thought, not just language, and as such, it enables problem solving and enhanced competence (2016:53).

Academic writing

In response to a question on his different audiences for writing, Adam makes a connection between relations of power and his approach to academic writing, when he states:

> Adam I think it kind of stems from Polish language and Polish culture where we have a much higher distance in terms of hierarchy so towards authority. You know, the distance to authority is bigger than in English language so I'm much more official when I'm writing for academic purposes…
>
> Vera So you're [using] a more formal style?
>
> Adam Very much and I think – and I think that really stems from my attitude towards authority and the fact that I've been taught that authority's authority. Whereas obviously through my studies and through living here, I'm questioning more but still I think somewhere from the back of my head, this kind of filters in through to have a formal style, yes.

The notion of power distance refers to the extent that members of a society who are less powerful expect and accept the unequal distribution of power in that society (Hofstede, 2001, cited in Griffin, 2016:3). Adam's discussion of 'distance' in relation to authority, which also operates as explicit metacommentary, would appear to partly explain his resistance to schooled literacies, as well as his alignment with learning structures which emphasise community and encourage 'investment' in learning (Norton, 2013). He describes his PhD as oriented towards 'critical studies' and so, as he puts it, he is very critical of social structures and social institutions. His doctoral study offers a challenge to the orthodoxy with which he grew up and this creates some cognitive dissonance for him. His communicative repertoire includes elements which reflect these competing discourses. In each new encounter, such as a writing event in which he is producing work for his PhD supervisor, he is choosing and recontextualising elements

from his communicative repertoire. These repertoire elements include genres and register elements, reflecting different levels of formality and informality.

Social media

Adam is an activist on social media, using his Instagram account to advocate for the LGBTQI community. LGBTQI refers to 'the identities of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and those identifying as transgender or transsexual as well as those identifying as queer which includes a range of non-normative sexual and gender identifications' (Gray, 2016:225). In particular, Adam supports the 'trans' community as he considers them to be the most disadvantaged group in the community and he also advocates against what he describes as 'sexual racism', discussed in Chapter 4.2. Adam curates his online presence to manage his online identities. His Facebook account is private, but his Instagram account is 'open' and he has about 2,500 followers. In this open online space, Adam creates conversations, and posts what he describes as 'controversial discussions' to encourage feedback and interaction. This is an affinity space, as described by Hayes and Gee, where 'people interact around a common passion' (2010:188, cited in Rymes, 2014a:4). Affinity spaces are sites of participatory and networked learning, where participants share knowledge, which may be dispersed on other sites, and negotiate relevance (Rymes, 2014a). For Adam, online writing is easier than academic writing, and 'very relaxed', as he explains:

> I don't have to be super precise with every single word that I'm writing as I have to be in my PhD. So, I can- and I can speculate a lot when I'm writing as well and I can – online. And I can create theories or, you know, or muse on some theories which is something that I cannot easily do in my academic writing so that online writing, social media writing, is easier, yes.

Adam uses his space on Instagram to conduct these online conversations on issues of equality. He positions himself as both facilitator and social learner, contending that he learns best through talking and exchanging ideas and especially when he needs to offer explanations or develop arguments to defend his position. Adam describes this process, which includes both speaking and writing, as iterative. The online site creates space and

time for him to formulate arguments in writing before posting and sharing publicly. He sometimes reposts in French and Portuguese but mainly in English, as this is what creates the highest number of responses. He manages the online site in terms of his audience, declaring that he does not post in Polish as he does not want to open the space to engage with Polish people, many of whom he considers have discriminatory views on issues such as the 'refugee crisis'. This positioning, in the light of earlier discussions, reflects both an affective and epistemic stance, where Adam is working to maintain the online community as a boundaried space.

Adam uses the online space to explore and 'muse on' theories that are relevant to his academic writing, getting feedback from his online affinity group. He also links his academic writing to other domains, such as his current work as a trainer and workshop facilitator, and his previous work in a higher education institution as an equality advisor. He describes how he draws on these 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al., 1992:132):

> I often get comments saying that my online presence is quite different from other people so maybe I have developed my own particular style which combines a lot of what my academic writing is about and a lot of my training and facilitating experience. Because as a trainer and facilitator of workshops, all you have to learn is cover all your bases and take people's arguments and break them down and acknowledge some of them and turn them around and critique them and so on.

Adam's online discussion space facilitates multimodal discussion as members of his affinity group message on different platforms, sharing their ideas through written text, voice, emojis and GIFs (Graphics interchange Formats) or videos whilst engaging with audiences that are both local and global.

Domingo's ethnographic research with the Pinoys, a group of 6 young adults brought together around their migrant experience, their Filipino heritage and their involvement in hip-hop culture, highlighted the making and remaking of multimodal ensembles across digital spaces, as 'migrating literacies' (2014:262). In her view, the 'youth' were not shifting their practices in different digital spaces but instead were building on their cultural and linguistic repertoires, or their 'communicative repertoires', to engage in text

making, or 'cultural remix', shaping technologies using sound, written words, visuals and music, to express their 'linguistic identities' (Domingo, 2014:272) and 'voice' (Bakhtin, 1981:271) in making connections across discourse communities. Domingo offers a definition of 'migrating literacies':

> A working definition of 'migrating literacies' identified digitally enabled text making as having social, technological, and semiotic affordances for managing affiliations across discourse communities (2014:264).

For Adam, the process of 'repeating the arguments' in different real and virtual spaces is a valuable process, involving a diverse range of 'critical friends', both online and offline. Brandt's concept of 'literacy sponsors' takes on a further complexity in online spaces where distributed knowledge networks act to enable and constrain literacies in unpredictable and contingent ways. This rhizomatic form of learning is reflected in Rymes' (2014a) diversity principle discussed earlier. These new relations also represent a process of hybridisation, and new 'ideoscapes', or flows of ideas, as described by Canagarajah and Ben Said (2011:395), following Appadurai (1996). In the following exchange, Adam begins to identify how his writing practices have changed over time.

Vera Has your style changed? You know, the way that you text or WhatsApp? Did you use a different style say five years ago to what you do now?

Adam Yes, it has. Yes, you're absolutely right. It has influenced – my academic writing has influenced it. Right now, it's much longer.

Vera Really?

Adam Yes.

Vera Longer messages?

Adam Yes. Longer messages because I feel like I've got so much to say, and I know what the argument of the other person is going to be so I'm kind of like saying – responding to it - before they even make the argument.

Vera Okay, on WhatsApp or whatever?

Adam Yes, yes, so that would be an academic influence.

In this study, interview questions that asked participants to reflect on their writing practices over time were productive. In this excerpt above, characterised by 'receipt tokens', 'relational questions' and 'clarification' probes (Mann, 2016:129), Adam identifies two key ways in which his online messaging has changed over the five-year period. Firstly, he now writes longer online texts. Secondly, he engages in strategic rhetorical planning in order to represent his ideas, ensuring that he considers any counter arguments before communicating his message. Whilst representation, and communication, are a necessary part of making meaning, as defined by Kress (1997), Adam describes this more recent communicative process as more considered than before, as he draws on a wider repertoire of communicative elements in his communicative repertoire. This explicit metacommentary reveals some of the ways in which he is engaging in 'writer development'. In each new encounter, Adam draws on his 'funds of knowledge', recontextualising elements of his communicative repertoire to make meaning within new contexts, leading to what McFarlane has termed 'translocal assemblages' (2009, cited in Burnett et al, 2014a:4).

'Identity' is a verb, a process of identification (Ivanič, 2006). In deploying his communicative repertoire, Adam is exploring 'possibilities for selfhood' (Ivanič, 1998:10), drawing on his 'autobiographical self'. As Ivanič makes clear, the 'autobiographical self' may include aspects of self of which the writer is not fully conscious. The interview process itself encourages retrospection (Mann, 2016), as in this interview when Adam begins to make a connection between his use of languages and sites of learning. Adam is concerned to 'get his own voice', which he recognises as a mantra within doctoral studies. He considers that his writing on social media has enabled his 'self as author', which can be defined as the extent to which he sees himself as a writer. Adam indexes this writer identity in the following quote where he makes reference to establishing authority in his field through his use of social media:

> So it's becoming a lot – a topic - of interactions, conversations and so – and so it's kind of a conversation starter so it's a way to communicate my voice which, as you know, as a PhD you should be getting authority in your field.

Ivanič notes that, in exploring this aspect of academic writing identity, it is useful to examine to what extent academic writers attribute ideas to others and to what extent writers take up an authorial stance. Adam values his online space on Instagram as he does not feel the need to include academic references - although he sometimes includes links for readers. This space acts as a type of practice or 'play' area for Adam where, as he describes in an earlier quote, he can 'create' or 'muse on some theories', developing his authorial self in an affinity space which offers both safety and critical feedback.

The hesitations and pauses in the above quote seem to indicate that Adam is perhaps still striving to take on an identity of 'writer-as-performer', in Goffman's (1969) terms. Writing is bound up in stance-taking and affect (Tusting et al., 2019). Adam describes writing as a 'turbo process' which takes a long time, and which combines both positive and negative affect. As Ivanič highlights:

> A writer's 'discoursal self' is the impression – often multiple, sometimes contradictory – which they consciously or unconsciously convey of themselves in a particular written text … It is fleeting, insofar that it is tied to a particular text, yet it may leave a relatively permanent impression of the writer on whoever reads the writing (1998:25).

This quote by Ivanič describes the effects of writing on the reader and the ephemeral nature of the writer's 'voice'. The development of the 'discoursal self' has to be an ongoing project for writers as they (we) grapple with power relations, beliefs and values embedded within the diverse and increasingly hybrid discourse characteristics of multiple online and print texts.

There were a couple of instances during the interview when Adam appeared to contradict himself during the interview, highlighting the identity work that he was doing in the space within and between questions. For example, in the following excerpt, he started by saying that he did not do any handwriting, before changing his mind.

Vera Do you do handwriting?

Adam No, not really. I heard that it's an issue for kids now that they don't know how to do handwriting. No, I don't. Sometimes I make notes when I'm in

> a conference or something. I'll make notes handwritten, it helps. I do handwriting, yes, so my feedback – I do handwriting from my feedback sessions, from conferences. Sometimes if I want to think in, kind of, less linear way then I'll start drawing like mindmaps or something like that. Yes, that's the extent of my handwriting, I guess.

This excerpt is a reminder to me of the importance of deliberate silence on the part of an interviewer. The process of giving space to a participant is crucial in the interview process, where participants are engaged in a moment-to-moment process of identity construction and re-construction.

As Wyse (2017) notes, the story of writing is a history of technological change, and a study of the forms of writing in use provide an account of social change (Domingo et al., 2015). Whilst Adam engages with the affordances of digital communication networks, he is also using the affordances of handwriting. The use of post-it notes, and handwriting, offer what he describes as a 'spatial freedom', such as when he is organising the arguments for his thesis. This is another example of Rymes' diversity principle, which acknowledges conditions of complexity (Blommaert, 2013) and the multiple ways in which people deploy their communicative repertoires in interactions. Another example is when Adam watches a video, which he then recontextualises in writing.

I introduced the ecomap (Kendrick, 2016) towards the end of the interview in order to encourage further reflection on the part of the participant. It acted as a visual and reflective prompt both for the student and for the researcher. Adam identified four domains on the ecomap: 'academic', 'work', social media' and 'texting/messaging' (see Appendix 1). He drew arrows going from 'academic' to 'social media' and from 'academic' to 'texting/messaging'. In the following conversation, I used a number of strategies to probe further:

> Vera So the academic has influenced social media and influenced text messaging as well?
>
> Adam Yes, absolutely it has. I mean, it's a huge – writing a PhD's a huge undertaking and very transformative for me it has been. Not just in my writing style but also how I perceive the world.

Vera Really?

Adam Yes. So yes, okay.

Vera That's brilliant, thank you very much. That's a huge statement that you just made about the PhD.

Adam It is.

Vera How you see the world, wow.

Adam So you know my PhD's about race and racism so what I had to learn about is my white privilege and realise what it means in the world and how much privilege I have had, how little of it others have it, whether I should feel guilty about it, whether I should do something about it and so on, so on.

Mann (2016) emphasises the importance of reflexivity on the part of the interviewer, which includes paying attention to how identities are negotiated and managed at different points throughout a one-to-one interview. This extract of interview talk demonstrates how I continued to work on developing comembership (Rymes, 2014a), encouraging elaboration through a receipt token ('Really?'), indirect elaboration requests (e.g. 'That's a huge statement that you just made about the PhD'), and through maintaining silence. As both Adam and I are engaged in doctoral study, there is potential for a shared repertoire, the finding of common ground. The purpose on my part is to explore the liminal spaces between Adam's socio-textual domains, such as how his academic writing may have influenced his use of social media, and to gain an understanding of the ways in which he positions himself as 'transformed'. Barnett describes 'transformation' within the context of Higher Education as a contested and complex notion in late-modern societies, as he states:

> ..the transformation is the taking on of a mode of being for uncertainty: for no substantive form of life other than one in which all bets are off and all is contestable (2007:39).

Rymes (2014a) suggests that adopting a repertoire approach encourages a positive approach to diversity in this context of uncertainty, creating new spaces for communication across difference by negotiating common ground.

Conclusion

This vignette highlights how Adam's languages, envisioned as one element in a communicative repertoire, are available to him, whilst issues of register, such as accent, mark talk in particular contexts and may, at times, render him voiceless. Adam uses an online affinity group to perform and try out new writerly identities across online spaces, developing his individual repertoire through what Rymes, drawing on Goffman (1961), describes as encounters with 'strangers' (2014:118). She argues that the presence of a stranger encourages more interaction because of the absence of a shared repertoire, as is the case in Adam's large online group.

Chapter 7: Joanne

In this vignette, I draw attention to how a young female student deploys elements of her heteroglossic (Blackledge and Creese, 2016) communicative repertoire to construct identities in relation to her use of languages, online writing and writing for assessment. I also focus on her use of metacommentary in order to gain a more in-depth picture of the participant, and the ways in which writing matters to her.

Joanne is a 20-year-old student from the PRC (People's Republic of China) in the first year of the undergraduate degree programme. She completed A-levels in a Sixth Form College in the English Midlands before enrolling to do the degree programme. She is one of a large number of 'international' students who are currently studying at UK universities. In a context where higher education is an important global industry and state funding has been reduced, international student fees are a critical source of income for the 'entrepreneurial university' (Barnett, 2018:7).

Intercultural identities

Whilst Vertovec (2019) first coined the term 'superdiversity' to describe changes in migratory practices in Britain, the concept has since been used more widely to draw attention to communication across multiple linguistic, cultural and national contexts (Blommaert, 2010; Mills and Stornaiuolo, 2018) although Vertovec, in his article, 'Talking about super-diversity', makes the point that he does not always approve of how the term has been put to use in the academy. In this study, I am using the term 'super-diversity' to describe 'new social complexities' (Vertovec, 2019: 125) which include technological and geo-political changes, such as mass migration across national borders, as well as internationalisation and the change from an elite to a mass system within the Higher Education system in the UK (Tusting et al., 2019; Gu, 2009).

Chinese students comprise the largest international student population worldwide and so China is a major market for universities, particularly across the anglophone world (Wang, 2015; Gu, 2009; Reynolds, 2018). Joanne is a 'sojourner', as described by Wang

(2015:18), a Chinese-heritage student who is studying abroad voluntarily in a new environment with the intention of returning to her home cultures at some point. As Gu and others point out, the phrase 'Chinese learner' implies homogeneity and a form of cultural determinacy that can easily fall into a form of cultural stereotyping (2009:40). Wang explores intercultural understandings of learning in an ethnographic study with postgraduate Chinese heritage students in a British University. Whilst recognising the importance of questioning essentializing notions such as 'Westerness' or 'Chineseness' , she finds that beliefs about learning act as repertoires or resources for international students in their new learning contexts. She highlights that:

> the interactions of the two cultures of learning accelerate not only the development of the student's intellectual and intercultural maturity but also the formation of an intercultural learning identity (2015:200).

She argues that the students' dynamic learning repertoires are not just culturally transmitted but are also socially constructed and subject to individual interpretation. Joanne makes a point of referencing 'Chinese students' and so, in line with Wang, I will use this term when it appears to most clearly reflect Joanne's identifications, or her interpretation of the learning environment. Joanne chose to perform a Chinese identity within the interview, using her insider status to share perceptions and understandings with me, in my role as a Western student-researcher and lecturer. Qualitative identity research is necessarily personal, and it is even more complex to negotiate meanings where the researcher and participant do not share some repertoire elements such as language use and intercultural communicative elements (Holmes, 2014). In face-to-face interviews, the researcher and the participant need to orient themselves towards the focus of the research and, in this dialogic space, their intersubjectivities are shaped (Holmes, 2014). Weedon, writing from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, defines subjectivity as:

> The conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world (1997:32, cited in Norton, 2013:161).

Joanne chose to share a story reflecting a discourse in which her race marked her as different from the dominant group. In the following excerpt, she describes the incident in the English college, before she enrolled in university:

Joanne	..So I think only twelve Chinese students study here, and my teacher tell me that – my Geography teacher tell me that, 'Oh, you are Chinese, you - you must be very hard-working', something like that. And I think, 'Oh – I just think, if you have the image'. Image?
Vera	Image.
Joanne	Yeah, image – of the Chinese students. 'They are very hard-working' or something like that.
Vera	Like a stereotype?
Joanne	Yeah. Just- it's a stereotype. And I think, Oh okay, I will hard-working. And I think for the children in China, it's more hard-working than my – than my – my generation.

Joanne is exercising reflexivity in her description of how she has been ideologically positioned as 'other' in this intercultural communication. She recognises how difference has been constructed and, in her critical retelling of the story, she appears to be using irony as implicit metacommentary, as she says to herself, 'Oh, okay, I will be hard-working'. She is challenging the identity ascribed to her and re-negotiating an identity in her own terms. She follows this comment with explicit metacommentary, reflecting on the increased competition and pressure facing many young Chinese children to succeed academically in China. The co-construction of knowledge in this conversation involves alignment, and the offer of lexical items in order to make meaning, as in my confirmation of the word, 'image', and my suggested use of the term 'stereotype'. Joanne and I were stretching elements of our communicative repertoires to negotiate comembership, in order to find common ground (Rymes, 2014a).

Rymes (2014c) argues that an analysis of metacommentary, or what she describes as 'comments about language', enables an understanding of heteroglossic communication. Following Bakhtin, she describes 'heteroglossia' as:

> A way of capturing the baroque complexity of interaction between people on different historical and biographical trajectories (2014b:302).

Rather than disentangling heteroglossia into language codes or analysing where language use differs from normative use, Rymes is interested in how individuals draw attention to particular communicative elements whilst making meaning in that moment. Rymes notes the value of metacommentary:

> In any interaction, metacommentary signals an understanding of what a sign means without necessarily arbitrarily systematizing communicative elements but by pointing to that sign's situated communicative value (2014a:121-122).

Metacommentary makes space for subjectivity, and playfulness, within specific communicative situations, highlighting shifting identities and power relations. In particular, Rymes highlights the use of irony as metacommentary. As she explains:

> While ironic metacommentary can function as mockery, it can also display many other forms of appreciation for the repertoire range people have at their disposal, and their knowing of it (2014a:12).

In the absence of family and friends, Joanne uses a blog to create a personal, imagined and immaterial space that she can call 'home'. In the following excerpt, Joanne discusses how she creates her own imagined audience, whilst also engaging in implicit metacommentary. She explains why this writing is important to her:

> …sometimes you do not want to talk with others. For example, if you – you are under pressure, but..for example, I'm under pressure and I studying in abroad but I don't want my parents worry about me, but I need a message to express my pressure so, and no- you don't want to talk with any other people, the only thing you do – can do - is just write down and upload to the website secretly. No-one, no-one know who write all these sentences. And I think, 'Oh, maybe someone see that blog and maybe someone can understand me', and I think, oh, I think, 'I'm not lonely. I have another partner in the world'.

In this context, Joanne is using writing to avoid loneliness and maintain her sense of well-being. The notion of writing within a 'home' domain is not straightforward, particularly for international students, who are managing relationships with family and

friends both in the university, and at a distance. In Williams' (2018) research, his student participants also described online writing practices as a space of agency, a personal mobile digital writing space of their own.

Early experiences of writing

As with many other participants in this study, Joanne's earliest memory of writing was learning how to write her name. This was followed by a structured learning process, where she began by writing simple Mandarin characters before moving on to more complex characters. Andrews and Smith explain differences in the writing systems between English and Mandarin:

> Not only do the two languages (English … and Mandarin, or any other Chinese dialect/Modern Standard Written Chinese) have different writing systems; the underpinning logic of those systems is different. The English alphabet, shared with other European languages, is predicated on a linear logic which suggests that strings of letters in particular sequences made into words, and then strings of words in particular sequences, constitute meaning. In Chinese and other ideographic written systems, the relationship between elements of the 'character' or concept is spatial rather than sequential. Within a square space, the elements are put together to compose a concept. (2011:32).

Joanne appreciates her early memorisation of 'famous poems and articles', where she learnt to write (copy) the 'beautiful sentences' of famous writers. She was required to keep a diary which was corrected by the teacher. Joanne wanted a private diary for her own use and so she kept two diaries, one for the teacher and one for herself. She explains how she managed this process with the 'public' diary:

> For teacher, I write very-very – I have very good instruction. I-I use the standard sentences. For example, 'Today, I am so happy because my teacher gave me a flower, blah, blah, blah'.

In this example of ironic metacommentary, Joanne shows how she conforms to the standard writing required within the educational system. Pérez-Milans, in his research based in a secondary school in the PRC, found that constructions of a 'good student' were not limited to the academic context, as he explains:

> To be considered as a 'good student' required having high marks in all academic subjects and also a good performance in moral education activities involving community service, collectivist physical exercises and patriotic events (2016: 93).

Joanne kept her personal diary secret as a way of circumventing parental and school surveillance in relation to her personal life. She explains why this is important:

> ..if my mum find I'm in a relationship, she will contact with my teacher and say, 'Oh, do you know that boy is blah, blah, blah. He's so bad. He disturbed my daughter's study, blah, blah, blah, and you need to control that thing, blah, blah, blah.

Using language varieties

Joanne exercises her freedom to write as a form of resistance. When messaging her Mandarin-speaking girlfriends in London, she uses WeChat, a Chinese online platform which offers similar functionality to WhatsApp. She describes how she engages in gendered chat, using 'very common language', 'dirty words' and regional accents when speaking and messaging in Mandarin with her close friends. However, if she is speaking with her parents or a boy that she likes, she switches to standard Chinese and uses what she describes as 'very beautiful sentences'. Blackledge and Creese highlight where some speakers are negotiating new subject positions by using 'self-conscious anti-standardizing moves' (Gal, 2006:27, cited in Blackledge and Creese, 2016:276), linked but not equated to national identities, to perform urban youth cultures. This change in linguistic code is an example of heteroglossic speech, similar to 'youth language', or 'adolescent heteroglossia' as described by Rampton (2011).

Using textual analysis and interviews in his research with university students in the USA, Williams (2009) examines how the rhetorical forms and discourses of popular culture are central to reading and writing on-line for the young people in his study. As he notes, sentimentality and irony are rhetorical devices that saturate popular culture and also the online reading and writing of young adults. In their study of multilingual practices in a Panjabi complementary school, Blackledge and Creese (2016) also show, through the use of linguistic ethnography, how students and their teacher referenced language and

popular culture to support their use of irony and parody in communicative encounters. They demonstrate how this type of discourse has an important communicative function, but also a learning function, where students develop their linguistic flexibility and metalinguistic awareness.

Holmes (2014), in her re-visiting of her doctoral research on the intercultural experiences of Chinese students in a New Zealand university, highlights the importance of examining relationality, how research participants make sense of their relationship with the researcher and how they mediate their cognitive and emotional responses to the researcher in a language which they may not consider their expert, or most fluent, language. Joanne emphasises her Chinese identity in relation to her writing, as in the following exchange:

Vera	So first of all, what writing do you do, and do you like writing?
Joanne	I would like to write something where I have the feeling. Yeah, because I'm Chinese, I-I always write something under my blog, using in Chinese. And when I travel to some places, for example last year I travelled to Japan, Croatia and somewhere else – when I finish the trip I will take some pictures and I write some sentences and I put this information to my blog, and lots of people will see what I think, what I recommendation of these places. So, I'm quite enjoying to do that one.

By choosing to discuss her blog writing first, rather than, for example, her academic writing, Joanne is highlighting the extent to which her personal online writing matters to her. Wang argues that sojourners, such as Joanne, tend to value 'jianshi', knowledge gained from personal experiences such as travel (2015:27). By positioning herself as widely travelled, Joanne is both marking her social class and constructing an identity as a successful international student.

Writing online

Joanne is also indexing her writing practices as 'multimodal ensembles' where it becomes impossible to disentangle language, both spoken and written, from the

multimodal composition in which it is embedded (Domingo, 2016:542). Analysis of online writing needs to include the representation of non-linguistic content such as framing and layout (Domingo et al, 2015; Andrews and Smith, 2011). Domingo et al (2015) assert that understanding how writing functions in online contexts is critical to understanding contemporary writing, including ideas about authorship and relations of power in online communication. In their analysis of food blogs, they write:

> …contemporary principles of composition point to a melange of social and technological factors, in which the relations of authority and authorship, of power and knowledge, are being newly defined and 'embedded' in blog template design (2015:251).

Williams uses the term 'templates of identities' (2009:99) to describe the ease with which an individual can construct identities on web pages that can become instantly available around the world. As Domingo (2016) points out, all sites, whether offline or online, offer pre-set resources, which affect how a designer can choose modes, shaping them as available resources into a multimodal composition. The extent to which language is used in multimodal ensembles depends to some extent on the templates of networking sites and so it is not possible to analyse language on online sites, in the form of writing or speaking, without understanding the affordances and constraints of that site. In choosing modes, the designer/composer/writer is also informed by their own interests and by the interests of the audience/community (Domingo, 2016), and thus interest becomes an expression of identity (Kress, 2010). In this way, online writing is patterned by identities and social roles (Williams, 2009). Joanne's travel writing could also be described as a form of immaterial 'artefactual writing' (Pahl, 2012:213) shared with her affinity group (Hayes and Gee, 2010), who also perform identities as they respond and add to her travel recommendations.

In the excerpt above, Joanne emphasises both her ascribed identity as Chinese, and her use of Mandarin in writing the travel blog. Joanne's acknowledgement of the importance of 'feeling' in her writing is echoed in the findings of other Chinese-heritage undergraduate students in this study. In Wang's research, participants also referred to affective states when discussing writing, which she identified using the Mandarin term

xintai or 'heart state' which includes both cognitive and affective factors. She offered an explanation in cultural terms (the following quote does not include the logographic characters):

> The ancient Chinese thought that thinking was a function of heart.., so the Chinese '*xin'* (heart) has two counterparts in English: heart and/or mind. The phrase the state of heart-mind is used to capture the full meaning of the word (*xintai*) (Wang, 2015:95).

The writing that Joanne feels most confident about is poetry writing in Mandarin. She composes poems to put on her blog posts, using what she describes as 'romantic sentences'. This gives her a sense of freedom, as she states:

> I think for – for your – when you write in the blog or something like in the social media, you do not take much more concern about the grammar, I think. Speech-spelling, something like that, you just follow your heart.

The hesitations in the quote above suggest that Joanne may be thinking through her ideas as she speaks but they also reflect a tentative exploring of her writer identity. Recognising writing as a social practice means accepting that 'identity' is central in the creation and interpretation of texts (Williams, 2009). However, as Barton and Hamilton (1998) assert, literacy practices are affected by relationships of power, as they note:

> Practices are shaped by social rules which regulate the use and distribution of texts, prescribing who may produce and have access to them. They straddle the distinction between individual and social worlds, and literacy practices are more usefully understood as existing in the relations between people, within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals (1998:7).

Identity performances

Identity performances are constantly shifting, vulnerable and contingent on context as well as time and space (Williams, 2009). Power relations are also constantly in play within the context of a research interview, enabling and hindering negotiations of

identity (Holmes, 2014). Blackledge and Creese point out that identities need to be understood as:

> responses to complex, dynamic societies in which subject positions orient to the old and the new, the permanent and the ephemeral, the local and the global, and the collective and the individual (2016:273).

Using a heteroglossic perspective allows researchers to focus on competing ideologies and 'social tensions' embedded in language (Bailey, 2012:508), grounding their understandings in language-in-use, where analysis needs to include identifications, biography, nuance and stance (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011, cited in Blackledge and Creese, 2016).

Joanne uses English for academic writing, and Mandarin for writing in her personal and social life. This is an example of 'diglossia', as defined by Elster:

> The use of different languages for distinctly different functions in distinctly different contexts (2003:668).

Joanne uses a WhatsApp group in English when planning with academic work with peers, but understanding vernacular English outside the academic domain is much more problematic for her, as she explains in this conversation about her linguistic repertoire:

Vera	Right, okay. I was just wondering which writing you're most confident about? And which writing you're not so confident about?
Joanne	I think the Chinese one is my more – most confident. Chinese poem I think is my most confident. And English – how you say, the - I'm quite confident about the academic writing of the English but I look the Twitter or Facebook of some British young people, make some opinion on the Facebook and I can't understand what they're saying. They use the very-very weird vocabulary.

Joanne does not make a distinction between speaking and writing when communicating with friends face-to-face and through online messaging, saying 'It's totally same'. However, her participation on Facebook appears to be marginalised as, after making a

comment, she cannot understand the responses of the 'British young people'. She is positioning herself as an outsider because she does not share the requisite language. Rymes argues that individuals are motivated to share knowledge where there is a common interest, as in affinity groups (Lammers et al., 2018) and that, in these spaces, languages may also be pooled in order to make meaning. However, 'comembership' is also required, which she describes as:

> a careful negotiation about what those communicating share and how that common ground can build through an interaction (2014:4).

In comembership, social identities are performed between individuals and groups, which can involve demographic categories such as 'race', 'gender', 'age', etc. but also more fluid notions such as shared interests, goals and practices (Hayes and Gee, 2010), which can then be shared and negotiated through participatory spaces (Jenkins, 2006), such as Facebook or other online spaces. Rymes' repertoire approach seeks to encourage this search for commonality.

Joanne has attempted to expand her communicative repertoire by learning what she describes as 'the young people's language' in English through watching some YouTube videos made by some British-born Chinese youth, as she describes:

> They know how to use the young people's language. It's not a very traditional English, and they will share this knowledge on the YouTube, and sometimes I watch that one. I think it's very interesting. But I just watch that one. I never use that one. Maybe I use it in the wrong – I think it's- yeah. So I prefer to use Standard English rather than the – yeah. Because I can be sure – although I have some grammar mistakes, I can sure you can understand me. Yeah.

In some academic literature (for example, Blommaert and Backus, 2011), theorists suggest that informal and vernacular literacies can be quickly and easily learned through informal networks. This is not the case for Joanne who is not confident to try speaking and writing non-standard English for fear of making a mistake or engaging in crosstalk (Gumperz, 1979). Her perceptions of agency are affecting her identity performance (Williams, 2018) as she does not feel able to communicate successfully in this context.

Joanne demonstrates an interest in developing a heterglossic communicative repertoire but not all her espoused identities are available to her. As Rymes notes:

> lack of a shared repertoire can lead some students to be bystanders …. rather than full participants (2014a:111).

Despite her attempts to position herself more flexibly, Joanne is also practising what can be described as 'separate bilingualism' (Blackledge and Creese, 2010:108), or 'double monolingualism', (Heller, 2006, cited in Rymes, 2014a:23), treating each of her languages, Mandarin and English, as separate, bounded linguistic entities, linked to the notion of nation states. The assumption of language as a 'linguistic monolith' can result in people who speak different languages being afraid to talk to each other unless they consider themselves fully 'competent' in the target language (Rymes, 2014a). As Rymes suggests, an alternative is for speakers to assume a repertoire approach to language where the emphasis is on developing affinity spaces where language and other communicative elements can be shared in order to make meaning.

Joanne would also like to develop an informal written register in English in order to combine English and Mandarin in her travel blog. She states:

> …sometimes I would like to use some English sentences to show I know how to use English to express my – my opinions. Just- you know, because sometimes if you use – in China, if you use English, some people think, 'Oh that girl is quite international'. Something like that, you know that one. But I – I can't use because, you know, what I write is quite romantic and quite complex, so I only know how to use English to write the academic.

The blog writing genre is very different to academic writing conventions and so Joanne does not feel that she has the flexibility to write poems, or 'romantic sentences' in English. She engages in ironic metacommentary as she declares her interest in 'translanguaging' (Garcia and Wei, 2014), or combining elements of her linguistic repertoire, to perform an 'international English speaker identity' in her travel blog. However, although she has a level of investment in this language learning, it is, at present, just part of her imagined future (Norton, 2013).

Norton (2013) argues that the 'memory work' undertaken in interviews is not just about sharing experiences. It offers a way of exploring what participants choose to remember and how those choices are historically and socially constructed. Joanne performs different representations of Chinese identity during the interview, including the role of teacher/informant in relation to both contemporary and historical accounts of Chinese life.

Handwriting

At the time of the interview, Joanne and her colleagues were in the process of preparing a group presentation related to an undergraduate module on language, literacy and communication. They chose to research a secret language developed by women in ancient China, where women communicated with each other through writing on materials such as fans. The story, represented in popular culture through a film and book, resonated with Joanne, as she explains:

> It's for local Chinese – in an area of China, in the ancient – the women create their own language and their own writing styles to express their opinions. It's only women know how to use that language…

Joanne expresses an interest in this story because the women lived near her home town in China and so it reflects part of her personal history, but also because it reflects her developing interest in gender and social justice, explaining:

> …you know, in ancient China, the reason the women didn't have the same – the same status as men, only men can learn how to write, how to read.

As reflected in Williams' (2009) research, there was also an emotional quality to Joanne's story. She expresses sadness that, although a dictionary has been created in order to preserve some semblance of the language as 'culture', it can no longer be called a living language if there are no living speakers and, as she saw it, in modern China, women now have more freedom and no longer need their own language. Joanne particularly appreciates the aesthetic quality of the writing (van Leeuwen, 2015). During

the interview, she wrote some of the characters in the 'secret language', as discussed in the following exchange:

Joanne	I can show you what it looks like. It used say that language is the most beautiful, because the characters very, very beautiful. In the light, it's not very clear. It looks like that one. So you do not know it's the character, you think it's the picture, right? But when you done – write something on the fan, they're saying 'Oh, you just – you just draw a picture' and no-one will know that one.
Vera	No, it's very flowing, isn't it, so it just looks like a drawing.
Joanne	Yes, it just looks like that one. And you can see that – that every word, every character looks similar.

In the interview, Joanne demonstrates how the characters are represented in hand drawings, camouflaging their meaning to non-readers of the language.

This exchange is interesting to me in how it highlights the limitations and affordances of different methods of data collection. The use of semi-structured interviews in this study generated a huge amount of data. Yet as is particularly clear in this extract, the use of face-to-face interviews and audio recordings may train the researcher's gaze on the linguistic aspects of the encounter, missing out the non-linguistic features which represent a large part of each person's communicative repertoire. This excerpt is also of interest because, for Joanne, and the other three Chinese-heritage students in this study, the aesthetic quality of handwriting appears to index a person's class, level of education and even moral character. Joanne offers her view on this trope:

> If my boyfriend ..get very good at – is good at handwriting, I think, 'Oh – I think that person is a good person. I don't know, it's just a stereotype, one of the stereotypes of the Chinese person.

Joanne uses ironic metacommentary here as a way of gentle self-mockery. However, she also complained about getting lower marks in an exam in her high school in China because of 'ugly handwriting', contributing to her family's decision to send her to study overseas.

Academic writing

Joanne values the expressive power of writing, but this can be overshadowed by assessment requirements within formal educational contexts, as she explains:

> ..if you're writing on the exams, whatever in China or in England, you need to concern more about the grammar, the -the structure, I think. For example, you need to put your ideas on the first sentence of the paragraph, and you list some examples, and give evaluation. I think whatever you – what you – where you are studying, the structure of essays is similar. Yeah, but I hate that.

Joanne's strongly negative stance, represented in explicit metacommentary in the last sentence, is partly explained by a critical incident, in which she experienced being sanctioned for writing a poem, instead of an essay, in a school examination in China. Joanne also found it difficult to understand how her course assignments were graded, as she describes:

> Sometimes I write some – some academic and I got a high score. I think, 'Oh I got 80. I think it's very great. Sometimes, I-I-I think I write very good, but I only got 56, 58. I think, 'Oh'.

Understanding assessment requirements on the education studies programme, including the epistemic perspectives of different disciplines, appears challenging for Joanne, and a number of other undergraduate students in this research. Wang (2015) highlights mixed views on written assessments in her study. Blum points out that grades 'teach students that others are the only judge' (2016:139, cited in Williams, 2018:33). In my view, further research on interdisciplinary programmes, using an academic literacies approach (Lillis, 2014), may be helpful in shifting the gaze from notions of individual deficit to explore institutional and disciplinary practices.

Joanne positioned herself as a teacher in an imagined future in which her students would have the freedom to express their views in their own ways. She states:

> I think if you have lots of rules to restrict their opinions, so no-one will want to write something just exactly follow their heart. I think it's-it's not human being. So, it's my personal opinions, but yeah.

In this account, Joanne marks writing as a site of personal struggle. Her meaning-making is located in her personal history, situated in specific spaces, and instantiated in her everyday experience. It draws on wider discourses of human rights and notions around freedom of expression, including a call for social action. Taking on a gendered identity, Joanne has become more aware of gender inequality in education, questioning why some girls do not appear to have equal opportunities with boys. She aligns herself with critical approaches to education, as she asserts:

> I think the – before I take – I went to this university, I think, 'Oh education is good, everyone should have the education'. But a year ago, I think, 'Oh, maybe sometimes we do not just broad say 'education is good'.. We need to say how to get a good education, what is a good education, and how to make students more liberal and more progressive. I think that – and then lots of things about that. So, yeah.

The notion of 'investment' highlights Joanne's identities as complex, changing across space and time and reproduced in social practices (Norton, 2011). Joanne is also engaged in the ongoing process of developing her communicative repertoire, recognising where certain repertoire elements are privileged and identifying what is important to her (Rymes, 2014a). Her sense of herself as a writer, her 'autobiographical self' (Ivanič , 1998:32) is also changing as she moves through her lifespan, shaped by her discoursal and social history (Tusting et al., 2018).

Conclusion

This vignette discusses some intercultural aspects of writing, pertinent in a context where Joanne, an undergraduate student, uses different languages for different purposes. Joanne is successful in performing some writing identities but others, such as informal online chat in English, are not available to her. However, she signals her evaluations through the use of metacommentary, drawing attention to the functioning of language in communication.

Chapter 8: Reflexive vignettes

8.1 Introduction

I recognise that, as a researcher, I am undertaking 'boundary work' as I identify with some experiences narrated by participants, but not with others (Griffin, 2016:7). In using reflexive vignettes, I turn my researcher lens on myself in order to question my own assumptions and standpoints. This is succinctly described by McLean:

> The process of "coming to know" my researcher Self, requires reflexivity – a critical and public reflection on the private self (2019:91).

I am using these reflexive excerpts as a form of 'reflexive bracketing' (Mann, 2016:21) with the aim of examining myself and my research relationships in order to guard against unacknowledged preconceptions, and to increase the trustworthiness of the research.

8.2 Reflexive vignettes - Amirah

Amirah consciously uses her communicative repertoire to engage with others in the world, choosing elements of her repertoire, such as specific digital tools, to make meaning. However, identity performances in interviews are positioned within the context of the interview and the researcher needs to consider how these performances are linked to the information imparted by the researcher and the interactional context (Mann, 2016). The following excerpt is from the early part of the interview with Amirah where, as the researcher, I sought to create a safe environment by explaining the aim of the research, and the structure of the semi-structured interview:

Vera	Great. So, I have quite a few questions, but I might overlap, and in a way, it might link into some of what you've said already. Because you can't really talk about writing without talking about your life in some way. So, I hope that's ok?
Amirah	Yes, of course.

Vera	But just say what you feel comfortable saying, really.
Amirah	And I also talk a lot, so if I'm going too much off on a tangent, feel free to bring me back in.
Vera	No, that'll be great. That sounds good, but I will do. Yeah, that's fine. So, I have just some general questions, but if I – if you think I'm repeating and you've already answered, just say that. Yeah? So, we can just prompt each other.
Amirah	Sure.

This negotiation and co-construction of interview norms was aimed at reducing distance between interviewer and interviewee, formulating the interview as a 'conversation with a purpose' (Griffin, 2016:16), and encouraging metacommentary. Amirah took up this offer, positioning herself as the research participant and initiating a check on the interactional process midway through the interview, whilst discussing her views around social media and the tensions inherent in parenting:

Amirah	I think social media has a place. I think we have to be very, very careful with it. Being a mum, I'm often – you know, my son is 11 and he gets annoyed that all his friends have got Facebook and I won't let him. Because you're 11. Am I doing – am I doing what you want me to do?
Vera	Yes, that's brilliant, yes, yes. Perfect, thank you.

In this second excerpt, Amirah engages in metacommentary at the same time as she is storying, including what could be described as both 'a front story' and 'a back story'. She is recognising the role-related hierarchies in the interaction, in which I, as the interviewer have the power to ask questions and decide on the interview trajectory but she is also participating in the social practice of the interview with a measure of reflexivity and agency (Pérez-Milans, 2016).

Blackledge and Creese (2010) describe researcher reflexivity as 'maps of consciousness' (2010:86) which shape what is, and is not, noticed in the data, recognising that these maps are always incomplete. In any interview context, both the researcher and

participant are always performing different combinations of social identities which influence how they relate to each other and what is noticed in the interaction. Listening to the audio recording and re-reading the transcript can highlight places where researcher positioning can close down or open up dialogue. In the following example, Amirah describes how she writes notes for her son.

Amirah	… So I would just – I started to do these little, like, cut-out shapes of hearts and just write something inspiring, or just, like 'Remember how amazing you are', or just-just- or just, like, a joke to make him laugh, or something. So we did that for a couple of years, and then – I don't even know why we stopped. Just – it just – just stopped.
Vera	Ran out of jokes.
Amirah	Yeah, probably. Probably, yeah.
Vera	No, sounds lovely.

In this interaction, my weak attempt at humour was misplaced, and it appears to close down the dialogue as the participant offers a receipt token, 'Yeah, probably'. Realising that my interview move could have the effect of silencing the participant, I attempted to apologise and withdraw my comment, reframing my earlier response.

This attempt at 'discursive deconstruction' (Mann, 2016:16) is one approach to reflexivity which can be adopted by the researcher. It highlights the need for self-awareness on the part of the researcher recognising that positionings in a research interview are always changing.

8.3 Reflexive vignette – Adam

The introduction of the short questionnaire at the beginning of the interview made the process of 'finding common ground' more difficult as Adam began by defending his academic identity indexed through his academic qualifications and English language assessment. Here is the beginning exchange:

> Adam My most recent qualifications would be MPhil but not a failed PhD but an MPhil from Cambridge. That's why -I always have to explain that because people see MPhil and they're like, 'Oh, you didn't quite get a PhD' and I'm like, 'No, it's just-'
>
> Vera Yes, I don't think of it like that. It's interesting.
>
> Adam Yes but, you know, yes, anyway, so that's my most recent including English language assessment. Yes, actually I took TOEFL and I got something like, I think, 110 out of 120 score but I was trying to get onto the PhD in the US and they require that, okay.

In answering the written question about his most recent qualification, Adam engaged in accounting work. He was concerned that I might position him as deficit, someone who had not achieved the PhD and, in this way, he was treating me as an 'insider', someone who is familiar with Higher Education qualifications and who therefore needs to be provided with an explanation. The discourse of credentialism embedded in the biographical form positioned Adam as vulnerable, and he engaged in explicit metacommentary to explain his qualification: 'Oh I always have to explain that.' My interview move was aimed at finding common ground in co-constructing the interview and avoiding any form of talk that might imply judgement. Adam's following account of his English language assessment score included further explicit metacommentary, indicating that he had met the required grade '..they require that, okay' but it also positioned him as an 'English language learner', indexing an outsider status.

In retrospect, this interview caused me to question the wisdom of introducing the biographical form at the beginning stage of the interview. Whilst the completed form enabled me to shape the interview using personalised questions and probes based on

the information on the form, it also positioned the participant into constructing an identity based on external norms at the very beginning of the interview.

8.4 Reflexive vignette - Joanne

Reading Holmes' (2014) re-analysis of her doctoral study in relation to researcher and participant reflexivity has been helpful to me in re-examining this vignette. In particular, comments on the interview process by the Chinese-heritage students in Holmes' study have reminded me of the intense identity work undertaken by research participants in the process of co-constructing interviews. In the following excerpt, Joanne talks about writing online fan fiction secretly with a friend while she was in school in China.

Vera	Do you think it's better to write on your own or with other people? Have you done any writing with other people? So, for example-
Joanne	Oh yeah, yeah. I can remember because I was in college, in China- in college, in high school. And one of my friends is good at writing friction –
Vera	Fiction.
Joanne	Fiction. And she-she write for money. She published on the website and my mother don't allow me to – doesn't allow me to write something – it's not – not for the school subject, for the academic. So I write – I wrote this in very secretly and every time – and we both create a fiction –
Vera	Together?
Joanne	Yeah, yeah. But it's not – this fiction, you know, it's just web fiction. It's very –
Vera	It's like a story?
Joanne	It's a romantic story and you know, it's - nowadays if I look back that fiction, I think, 'Oh, it's too boring, there is no nutrition. No nutrition.'
Vera	No nutrition?

Joanne Yeah, we – we call that one in China if you don't have very – some educational function, that thing is 'no nutrition'. It's just like a food. Yeah, if a food is very healthy, you say, 'Oh that – that food is nutrition'. And if that food is just – we call that one.

I use this excerpt to highlight the co-construction continually at play within the dialogical process of the research interview. We are both stretching our repertoire elements, as described by Rymes (2014), in order to communicate and find common ground. However, the choice of language positions both the researcher and participant, indicating assumed statuses, and influencing the negotiation of face while participants also develop identities and strategies for self-preservation in negotiating their relationship with the researcher (Holmes, 2014). However, by privileging the use of English for generating data, and by using individual interviews, I am marginalising the voices of participants who are less fluent in English and, in many ways, unwittingly disempowering them.

In analysing this exchange, I am attempting to reduce the power distance between Joanne and I in co-constructing this episode of Joanne's experience. However, I am also aware that I am asking more than one question at the same time, and also allowing limited time for Joanne to reflect on her responses, aspects of language which are often difficult for English speakers of other languages. Whereas my correction ('fiction', not 'friction') and my use of questions to elicit more detail may be perceived as an attempt to be helpful, or as evidence of a conversation-style interview, they may also be seen as directive and an attempt to hurry the interview along. This study offered limited time for relationship-building prior to the interview, an aspect which Holmes' participants cited as particularly important. However, relationship-building was ongoing throughout the interview and, as Blackledge and Creese (2010) emphasise, identity positions are never static. Towards the end of this excerpt, Joanne positions herself as knowledgeable as she explains the meaning of 'nutrition'. At the same time, she uses the term to offer an explicit metacommentary on her writing.

Chapter 9: Discussion of findings and development of themes

9.1 Introduction

This chapter, alongside the preceding four chapters, presents and discusses the main themes emerging from the analysis of data in this study. These themes, derived from the process of latent thematic analysis, are presented in 6 separate sections in this chapter: communicative repertoire; languages and literacies; writing practices; digital and non-digital tools, including social media; writer identities; and writer development (see Appendix 4). Alongside the vignettes in chapters 5-7, this discussion of findings, which includes the rest of the sample, is subject to my selections and is not intended to be all-encompassing. In this study, I am interested in the empirical findings as well as methodological aspects of the study. In particular, I am interested in the use of linguistic ethnography to explore aspects of writing and identity within individuals' communicative repertoires. Shaw et al. discuss how linguistic ethnography may be put to use:

> …researchers employing linguistic ethnography are often not satisfied with one kind of data or one kind of analysis. They use ethnography to 'open up' linguistic analysis and linguistics to 'tie down' ethnographic insights (2015:9).

Holmes (2014) notes that, in qualitative research, the researcher and participant negotiate the fieldwork together. I have used the construct of communicative repertoire to explore the topic of 'writing' whilst also examining the process of making common ground within the context of the interview. In addition to the individual vignettes in Chapters 5-7, I have also used linguistic ethnography as a tool to strengthen researcher reflexivity, using extracts from the interviews with a total of 5 participants (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 8).

An ecological approach to writing signals the importance of paying close attention to 'context-as-process' (Rampton et al., 2015:30) in participants' storytelling. In analysing findings, I have also drawn on a frame developed by Tusting et al. (2019) which focuses on participants' contexts for writing, their use of writing tools, writing identities,

relationships and values. These frames draw attention to culturally-based understandings of how language and other communicative resources are used to get things done in historically and culturally defined contexts (Street, 1984). Writers have an ever-expanding repertoire of writing stances and approaches that they use strategically when dealing with the range of communicative activities in which they participate. 'Tools' may include linguistic and other semiotic resources, as well as the affordances of handwriting, digital and online practices. 'Values' relates to what a writer does with writing and why, foregrounding their ideological stance, or worldview, and linking the writer's ontology to his or her performance of an ethical self. In exploring communicative repertoires, it is also important to explore the extent to which writers use writing and/or other modes to construct and maintain relationships within the different domains of their lives. In the next section, I discuss findings related to 'communicative repertoire'.

9.2 Communicative repertoire

The notion of communicative repertoire is explored throughout this chapter. In this section, I note 6 'critical issues' which Rymes highlights within a repertoire approach (2014a:117-119). I discuss each in turn with reference to findings from this study.

1. ***'Language' is a sub-feature of 'communicative repertoire.'***

The linguistic repertoire is nested in an individual's communicative repertoire, as discussed in more detail in 9.3. Rymes aims to de-centre language in the communicative repertoire, recognising the multiple ways in which people communicate in everyday life. As discussed in Chapter 3, data in this study were limited to audio recordings and transcripts and so non-linguistic communicative elements such as gaze and gesture were not captured. However, participant accounts and some reflexive vignettes have noted some non-linguistic elements of individual repertoires. Adam's use of register is discussed in Chapter 6. In addition, Ceri describes her new collection of photos on Instagram, documenting produce from her allotment, a practice which involves visual

images rather than language. Siyi uses oral, rather than written communication, in her part-time work as an online educational consultant and photographer.

2. *'Correctness is secondary.'*

'Correctness' is generally associated with standard varieties of a language, particularly in powerful genres, such as academic writing. However, communication, rather than correctness, is primary within a repertoire approach. Rymes emphasises how speakers choose elements of their communicative repertoire to maximise their ability to find common ground with others. This includes using non-standard spoken and written language varieties and different styles, often in the same utterance. Joanne (Chapter 7) uses 'dirty words' and regional dialects when communicating with her girlfriends on WeChat. However, using Facebook banter with her British peers is not part of her communicative repertoire and, although she falls back on ideas of Standard English and correctness, she is rendered voiceless in this context.

3. *'Repertoires emerge and recede.'*

Different encounters, involving different purposes, audiences, and contexts, call for different repertoires, which have both a temporal and spatial dimension. As seen in Chapter 5, Amirah's work in IT recruitment is part of her 'asynchronous repertoire' (Blommaert and Backus, 2011:16), a part of her life which has now receded in importance. However, Adam (Chapter 6) has been able to incorporate aspects of his previous work as an equality advisor into his current research and so this part of his indexical biography is still a salient part of his communicative repertoire. For Ethan, who has recently completed his doctorate, his recent presence on online academic platforms is an example of his emerging academic repertoire whilst other repertoires on social media sites such as Snapchat, have receded.

4. *'Accommodation is not always equitable.'*

Whereas some undergraduate students in this study, for example, Joanne and Lily, describe themselves as proficient in dominant literacies, such as academic writing, this is not the case for other participants, such as Noah and Layla. However, whilst academic

writing is privileged within the university context, it is not relevant in non-academic English-speaking settings, where those same students may be rendered invisible.

5. ***'Development occurs through growing awareness.'***

Communicating with other people involves being aware of other repertoires, recognising candidate elements for comembership, and also where repertoires may be exclusive, shutting down opportunities for engagement. Crossing social boundaries can involve stretching repertoires in order to find overlaps with the repertoire elements of other people. Amirah (Chapter 5) exercises agency in her family relationships, choosing elements of her repertoire to communicate in new ways with her daughter and her sister. Ceri, Sara and Karen use writing groups to extend their writing repertoires.

6. ***'Repertoire elements are deployed in disparate hybrid combinations.'***

As highlighted in Rymes' diversity principle, individuals constantly recontextualise repertoire elements in multimodal ensembles. Geeta describes how she set up an historical archive of tweets relating to industrial action undertaken by her university colleagues. Ceri updates a webpage and writes a blog giving details of an upcoming conference for professional English teachers. Adam (Chapter 6) watches videos which he then recontextualises in writing on his online Instagram page. All these examples highlight the ongoing creative work undertaken by individuals who combine elements from their communicative repertoires in order to make meaning, whilst extending their own repertoires at the same time. Individuals also use explicit and implicit metacommentary to draw attention to particular elements of their repertoires or particular aspects of an interaction. For example, in Chapter 7, Joanne uses ironic commentary 'blah, blah, blah' to describe the diary writing that she completed for her teacher.

9.3 Languages and literacies

Adam (Chapter 6) uses elements of five languages: English, Polish, French, Portuguese, and German within his communicative repertoire. The concept of repertoire is useful in

developing an understanding of subjectivities, mapping out the different forms of linguistic knowledge that may be available to an individual (Blommaert and Backus (2011). Adam also makes reference to competence, noting the different ways he uses the language resources within his repertoire. Rymes (2014a) does not distinguish between levels of linguistic competence, arguing that 'correctness' is of secondary importance when communicating, as the main focus for the speaker is on finding common ground (Clark, 1996). Likewise, Blommaert and Backus do not discount any elements of an individual's repertoire, as they state:

> A repertoire is composed of a myriad of different communicative tools, with different degrees of functional specialization. No single resource is a communicative panacea; none is useless (2011:19).

This is a useful point in relation to a number of participants in this study, such as Patrick, Caroline, Geeta and others (see Table 3) who lay claim to elements of languages and language variation as part of their communicative repertoires. As Rymes notes, languages take on different functions and meanings across multiple contexts. She states:

> Applied to multilingualism, a specification of the Diversity Principle is that the more widely circulated a language is, the more highly diverse the interactions with it will be (2014a:18).

Individuals' emotional dispositions can have an effect on their sense of agency (Williams, 2018). Patrick learnt Spanish in Mexico, as a teenager. He tries texting in Spanish, but he feels silenced by some of his friends, as he explains:

> I've got - I've got a couple of - of Spanish friends who - who live in London, but they always text me in English. And because they – they take – they take the mickey out of my Spanish because it's -it's very informal and very colloquial, and it always tends to revert back to typing in English.

Rymes argues against the homogenisation and standardisation of languages where normative rules have the effect of silencing individuals, rather than looking for points of engagement. Three doctoral students in this study, Sara, Ceri, and Karen describe themselves as monolingual. However, Rymes contends that individuals can take part in

multilingual interactions if they have at least some minimal knowledge of lexis or knowledge of different language varieties. She also highlights register as an important element in communicative repertoires, as in Adam's vignette where he identifies 'accent' as a central concern in 'formal' phone encounters (see Chapter 6).

For Joanne (Chapter 7), parts of her multi-lingual repertoire are 'specialized' (Blommaert and Backus, 2011:15) so that whilst she is competent in English academic written registers, she is not fluent in the language varieties, or slang, employed by many of her English-speaking peers in informal online environments, and this is also the case for Lily. Whilst Siyi appears more comfortable in English-medium online environments, using Mandarin to explain academic concepts was difficult for her and for other Chinese-heritage students. Siyi would like to share her learning experiences as an undergraduate in a London university with a Mandarin speaking public on WeChat. However, she finds it too difficult to translate her academic learning in English into Mandarin.

Traditionally, where languages are treated as discrete codes with independent structures, the perceived difficulty for the bilingual is in keeping the two languages separate to avoid 'interference'. More recent research and thinking on languages in the context of globalisation (Lin and li, 2015), has emphasised languages as social practice, as outlined here by Pennycook:

> To look at language as a practice is to view language as an activity rather than a structure, as something we do rather than a system we draw on, as a material part of social and cultural life rather than an abstract entity (2010, cited in Garcia and Wei, 2014:10).

Participants in this study highlighted their use of multiple linguistic resources on the short biographical form (see Appendix 3) and during the interview. However, participants' use of languages reflect different ideological perspectives on language. The following conversation is from the interview with Lily, a 20-year-old undergraduate student who views her use of languages from a 'double monolingualism' perspective (Heller, 2006, cited in Rymes, 2014a: 23). The following exchange explains this standpoint:

Vera Have you written anything that you're especially proud of?

Lily Yes. Like it could be some of my essays in the past. I got really high grades. Some of my little, tiny poems that I've written. Oh-I'm not proud but I'm quite happy with one thing because I never mix languages, so I never mix Cantonese, Mandarin and English together. Like when I speak, when I write, I never mix them together. That's a thing I'm not proud, but happy of myself, because I don't like mixing subjects – I don't like mixing languages. I never mix languages in my life.

Vera So you'd see it as a mistake if you did that, rather than just a different way of communicating?

Lily I-I just feel like sticking in one language – yeah, it's more standard for me to stay in one language instead of speaking like half Chinese and half English. For me, it makes sense to just use one language.

Vera And do you have a lot of your friends that are mixing languages?

Lily Yes. It annoys me a lot. And some – some of them -I don't – I don't get annoyed if they don't have a choice, like some – some of my friends, they were actually born in the UK and they try really hard to speak – like they really want to speak Chinese with me, but sometimes they mix it because they don't know how to say it in Chinese. But some of my friends, they do it to show off. So, when they went back to China, they mix it a bit, to show off in front of friends. I've been here like nearly six years, and I - I used to go to international school before I came here as well. But I never – people always ask why? – why I – why have I never forget how to say Chinese, or why have I never mixed the language? I just feel like it's not appropriate for me to mix languages. Yeah.

The above exchange highlights a view of languages as bounded and linked to notions of a nation state. Lily sees herself as a 'traditional learner', indexed by a description of her practices as 'standard' and 'appropriate'. She constructs her identity as a speaker of three languages; and her performance of a multilingual speaker is linked to her performance of a pedagogical self where school and university subjects are clearly delineated and separate. Where she perceives friends as learners, she is prepared to perform a teacher or mentor role which has a pedagogical as well as a communicative purpose. However, she distances herself from peers who speak English in China to 'show off', labelling their actions as performative, and from her perspective, 'inappropriate'. Lily offers a very different perspective to Joanne who aspires to mixing English with

Mandarin on her online blog posts, indexing her elite background (Dovchin and Pennycook, 2018).

Other participants, such as Afran, a doctoral student, and Noah, an undergraduate student, deploy their linguistic repertoires in very different ways. Afran is fluent in speaking Kurdish, Turkish and English, and, although he generally writes in English for his academic work, he sometimes writes articles in Turkish for a magazine run by friends. He describes how he communicates orally with friends:

> …my mother tongue is Kurdish and then educated in Turkish and now I'm studying in English. I don't feel comfortable in any language now. Even sometimes in Turkish, in Kurdish, I don't have some concepts, for example, just one concept from English, one from Turkish. I use all of them generally but when you feel the person you communicate will know the phrase in other language and it is best to explain because sometimes translation is not good. I use the ..multiple languages.

Afran is mobilising his communicative and linguistic repertoire, taking account of the linguistic resources of his fellow speakers. He is translanguaging (Garcia and Wei, 2014) to get his meaning across. Li Wei explains:

> ..the act of translanguaging itself creates the social space within the multilingual user that makes it possible to go between different linguistic structures and beyond them. It is *the speakers*, not the space, who are in control of the languaging performance, by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity (2011, cited in Garcia and Wei, 2014:40).

This approach to 'languaging' emphasises agency on the part of the speaker/writer. Afran's use of languages also indexes what de Souza calls 'historical intercultural epistemological inequalities' (2015:157), where Kurdish speakers and writers are asserting their linguistic rights, using the linguistic resources available to them in their communicative repertoires, and resisting domination in their language and literacy practices. Participants' 'linguistic repertoires' are varied and constantly changing, relating both to their past and to their intended futures (Busch, 2016:7). These linguistic repertoires are, in Heller's words, 'sets of circulating, constructible, and deconstructible

resources' (2012:31). Heller makes the important point that linguistic resources are not equally valued:

> ..we are exploring what it means to understand multilingualism as a set of ideologically-loaded communicative resources always unequally distributed, on an always uneven playing field (2012:32).

The term 'translingual' points to how languages influence each other, producing new hybrid grammars and meanings in the process of interaction (Darvin, 2016:529). This process of meaning-making highlights how both languages and literacies are negotiated in time and space and the ways in which they act as interfaces between communities (Andrews and Smith, 2011). In addition to translating sermons from Korean to English, Noah also prepares and teaches Sunday School to children in a Korean Christian church using a mix of spoken and written Korean and English, as he explains:

> They're very similar [to me], that they understand English better than Korean, so in a way it's easier for me, but there are some things that are easier to describe in Korean, and some things that are easier to describe in English. So, I need to mix those up well.

Noah describes how he also mixes the two languages when messaging and speaking to his friends. The idea of 'negotiated literacies' offers a useful counterpoint to the model of 'situated literacies', highlighting their contingent and unruly nature (Canagarajah, cited in Darvin, 2016). Rymes (2014a) embraces this linguistic diversity, arguing that combining languages and styles of speaking is not an aberrant act but an essential constituent in all communication.

In addition to using her different varieties of English, Amirah (Chapter 5) also uses what she describes as 'Binglish', a mix of English and Bengali to communicate orally with her grandmother. Guneet, a doctoral student, and Layla, an undergraduate participant, are similar to Amirah, in that they both speak, but cannot write, Panjabi. For Tiki and Siyi, who are on the same undergraduate programme, sustaining family relationships in China involves communicating with parents and grandparents in Shanghainese, an oral, indigenous language spoken in the city of Shanghai in China.

Recognising writing as just one element of a communicative repertoire creates the space to explore the many ways in which participants utilise and combine elements of their individual repertoires in making meaning. Physical, aural, and visual modes, for example, all offer different sets of resources. Andrews and Smith (2011) describe written and spoken systems as operating alongside each other, sometimes corresponding closely and sometimes not. They argue that written words (or elements of other languages) constitute 'abstractions' which may then develop into concepts. Whilst the process of reading or hearing words may be described and felt as a sensory experience, the written word itself offers a symbolic representation of experience and so is one step away from felt experience. The capacity of writing to handle concepts and abstractions marks it as a highly valued discourse. There is a pressing need to develop our awareness of the affordances and constraints of writing alongside other modes in order to challenge the ways in which writing is privileged, particularly in educational assessments. Equally, we need more understanding of the increasing fluidity of spoken and written modes, particularly in online contexts, as expressed by Darvin:

> By developing a mode of communication where writing approximates speaking, instant messaging (IM) and texting have facilitated the production of new words and styles that bridge the interactive nature of speech and the documental capacity of writing (Darvin, 2016:523).

This latter point was exemplified by Joanne (Chapter 7) who describes writing and speaking as commensurate with each other in her online communications.

9.4 Writing practices

There is a lot of overlap between participants' use of writing for personal, academic, functional and social purposes and for communicating with family and friends. The majority of participants engage in some personal writing practices which range from online messaging to poetry and diary writing, using hand-written journals alongside blogs and Instagram posts. Creativity is embodied in many forms, including poetry and playwriting, multimodal assemblages, and approaches to academic writing. As in Domingo's (2014) study, I contend that writers build on their range of cultural and

linguistic repertoires rather than just adapting their practices to the literacies and languages of a specific space.

Academic writing

An ideological approach recognises how literacy practices are inherently shaped by history and power relations, influencing which literacy practices are perceived as powerful, who has access to them and what technologies are privileged. The field of academic literacies (Lillis and Scott, 2007) draws on the work of Lea and Street (2006), as discussed in Chapter 2. It sets out to examine literacy practices in academia and the consequence and meaning of those practices for individuals and institutions (Lillis, 2014). Academic literacies as a field emerged as a response to changes in the academy following the expansion of Higher Education in the UK in the last three decades (Gu, 2009; Barnett, 2018; Tusting et al., 2019). It created an academic space to explore the marginalisation of students positioned as 'international' who were perceived as 'developing' academic English, alongside 'home' students who were perceived as 'improving' academic English in the context of Widening Participation policies (Lillis, 2014). The field of academic literacies draws on Literacy Studies to challenge an ideology that positions the student as 'deficit', shifting attention from discussion of individualised skill and competence to institutional and disciplinary practices (Lea and Street, 2006). This perspective is in line with Rymes' concept of 'communicative repertoire'.

All 17 participants in this study were engaged in academic study at undergraduate or doctoral level (though Ethan had just completed his PhD study), and academic writing was therefore a major part of their writing-intensive lives. The doctoral students, unlike the undergraduates, had already completed studies in Higher education, such as Masters' programmes and so they could be expected to be more familiar with academic writing. However, students take up study opportunities at different points in their lives and academic writing requirements vary across disciplines (Lillis, 2014). As discussed in Chapter 4, using an intersectional approach is useful in framing how age, experience and other segmentations, marginalise, or act as resources, for academic writing. The next

section presents a discussion of findings in relation to academic writing, first for the undergraduate students, and then for the doctoral students.

Academic writing and undergraduates

The sample includes four 20-year-old international undergraduate students, who have lived in the UK and/or other English-dominant countries for varying periods of time. Both Siyi and Lily have studied abroad for the last 6 years; Joanne came to the UK to do A-levels over 2 years ago, and Tiki arrived in the UK 5 months ago. Joanne (see Chapter 7), whilst recognising that she needs to think more about structure and grammar in her academic writing, recognises that she is now more critical in her thinking and appreciates her developing understanding of inequalities in education. Siyi and Lily both position themselves as quite confident about writing in an academic genre. Tiki, although newly arrived in the UK, had recently completed the IB and was open to what she described as non-traditional educational approaches. She enjoyed academic writing if she liked the module but found writing very difficult if the content did not interest her. Tiki viewed the assessment of academic writing on the undergraduate programme as subjective. Known as 'essay killer' on her IB course, Siyi held a similar view. She gained nearly full marks on all her IB assignments and was now struggling to understand the differences in assessment processes on the undergraduate programme. Siyi describes her mixed feelings as follows:

> ..for me, I quite like the process to write this essay. Even though sometimes I couldn't get like a good mark. Because – because the tutors – it's quite – it's quite annoying that different tutors mark the essays differently. So like – but I might be like annoyed by that kind of results, but I'm fine because I learnt something, and I think that's more important to me.

Siyi reiterated her grievances about the nature of written assessments on a number of occasions during the interview, expressing conflicting emotions about the course assessments, and expressing her annoyance about what she perceived as 'subjective marking' by tutors, including tutor requirements to change her style or structure her essay in a particular way. At the same time, she continued to maintain that the process

of writing was more valuable than the grade. The written text in the form of an assignment or examination is central in educational work, particularly in the academy. Tusting et al., drawing on Bernstein (2000), explain:

> .. the pedagogic text's larger purpose is to inculcate the writer into a system of socially sanctioned beliefs and values (2019:406).

This socialisation process may be partly resisted by the student, as in Siyi's case. Much research on tutor assessment feedback relates to the type of feedback given and its effect on student writing, rather than students' perceptions of their positioning through the feedback process (Tusting et al., 2019). However, Potts' research on the effects of audio feedback to Higher Education students is interesting in how it highlights an increase in affective responses to tutor feedback but also demonstrates how a student chooses to use the affordances of audio feedback to critically evaluate the tutor's performance, checking if the tutor is correct or not in their assessment (reported in Tusting et al., 2019).

Amirah, Noah and Layla could be regarded as 'home' students enrolled on to university courses under the Higher Education 'Widening participation' agenda, as they have not entered English Higher Education by the traditional A-level route (Lillis, 2014). Amirah (see Chapter 5) considered that the Access course she attended prior to enrolling on the undergraduate degree offered her a good preparation for Higher Education study and, as a mature student, she is bringing her broader life experiences to the role. Whilst she still finds academic writing stressful, she is gaining confidence in her academic writing ability and has achieved good grades. However, both Noah and Layla appear less well prepared for academic writing on the undergraduate degree course. As Noah states,

> I think I'm sort of using my first year as like a practice – getting used to academic writing. Because there seems to be a sort of way of writing academic, it's different to just normal writing.

This excerpt highlights the student's bewilderment with academic writing requirements, what Lillis describes as the 'institutional practice of mystery' (2014:365). As with Noah,

Layla is unsure how to develop her writing and she is also unclear about academic writing genres and assessment requirements. Although she successfully completed a BTEC Health and Social Care course in a further education college, and she tutors children and young people on GCSE English Language courses, these experiences have not equipped her for academic writing on the undergraduate degree, as she relates:

> Yeah, my writing isn't as it's meant to be, and that causes me to get less marks. Like, it's -I've only realised now because – I don't know before, I think, when – when you do assignments for college and when you do assignments for uni, they're two completely different things. Because In my college ones – I assume that they're both – that they're both the same things, because it's still essays. But my judgement was wrong, because in college, I used to get distinctions for every single essay, and I'd never get less than a distinction, and in uni now, it's sort of opened my eyes because instead of me getting like, full marks, I'm getting, like a 40 or a 30 in, like, them argue essays.

For both Layla and Noah, their self-positioning as writers of academic assignments appears tentative and fragile. Rymes notes that 'development occurs through growing awareness' (2014a:118). Layla realises that she is in a new and different cultural context which demands an expansion of her communicative repertoire. This requires adapting her current repertoire of literacy practices and engaging in new academic writing practices. Understanding and meeting university requirements is not only a question of 'writing' but also a question of identity (Ivanič , 1998). The interview with Layla highlighted a discursive dilemma for me as an insider researcher. As a lecturer, I am familiar with writing support services in the university. Recognising this as an ethical dimension of interviewing, I chose to advise Layla about available support after I had completed the interview, suggesting that she contact the Academic Writing Centre as well as her personal tutor in order to access academic writing support.

For all the undergraduate students, notions of peer feedback are subject to complex negotiations between students in relation to issues of face, identities and notions of correctness. Amirah (Chapter 5) is becoming confident in giving peer feedback and she finds that reading other students' work broadens her ideas and also gives her confidence in her own work. On the other hand, Tiki worries about plagiarism and does not want to read other students' writing in case she will inadvertently plagiarise them. Lily is careful

never to criticize other students' writing styles, whereas Siyi, when working on group tasks, takes on the responsibility of 'fixing' other students' grammar. She states:

> So, I do know how to help them with their writings, but for my Chinese friends, they probably won't really like people to like change their mind. They are quite like steady with their own thoughts and writing styles, so I found maybe just fix it so like – otherwise it's a waste of time. Like say – it would make them actually more uncomfortable if you do that, if you really try to teach them. Unless this person ask for me – asks for my help. Otherwise, they will feel like you're showing off.

These varied views on peer assessment, a common pedagogical practice in HE teaching contexts, highlight interpersonal and intercultural complexities for undergraduate students. Amirah, Siyi, Tiki and Noah also voice their concerns about requirements for handwriting in the timed end of year examinations and, in particular, their overriding worry that they might be unable to write down all their answers in the allotted time, as their handwriting speeds do not match their typing speeds.

Academic writing and doctoral students

For doctoral students, academic writing is personal, as described by Karen (see Chapter 2). For Sara and Caroline, writing is integral to their development as academics. Caroline describes how she uses writing:

> ..it goes hand-in-hand with learning and thinking and all of these things, but we don't really acknowledge that…Like, I know with my thesis, looking at all these different drafts I've written of chapters, like it has helped my thinking.

As is the case for a number of doctoral students, Caroline has changed her field of study since completing her Masters, moving from Psychology to the interdisciplinary field of 'Education'. She also works on an interdisciplinary research project with other PhD students and this has heightened her recognition of discursive differences associated with different fields of study. As she says, 'we write differently and think differently as well'. Caroline, using a critical feminist theoretical perspective in her doctoral study,

highlights competing discourses as a factor in her PhD supervision, where her supervisor is critical of her use of the first person in her thesis writing.

The field of academic literacies situates academic writing as a social practice with an ideology that points to an 'ideological', rather than a 'normative' stance (Lillis and Scott, 2007). As discussed above, and in Chapter 2, this position acknowledges how academic writing practices are culturally embedded and subject to the power differentials associated with specific disciplines or fields of study (Ivanič , 1998). This stance recognises writing conventions as contested, and so meaning-making becomes a site of struggle associated with 'risk' (Lillis, 2014:368).

Amirah (Chapter 5), Joanne (Chapter 7), Sara, Karen and Geeta note how academic writing has affected their writing practices in other domains. Sara and Karen envision more writing and speaking possibilities for themselves in their academic and working lives. Geeta, whilst recognised as an expert blog writer in her work context, realises that she now needs to extend her academic writing repertoire and this has made her critical of her writing practices across all domains.

Writing in other practices

Eleven study participants were employed or self-employed for different proportions of their time. Although for most participants, writing was part of their working lives, this was not the case for all participants. Adam is a freelance trainer and for him, speaking at work is more important than writing. Likewise, as a self-employed online consultant, Siyi's chosen modes of communication are voice messaging, Skype and face-to-face communication.

Karen, Noah, Layla, Geeta and Sara are engaged in writing in relation to their voluntary work interests. Geeta, Sara and Karen support charities or local groups linked to their professional interests, which include arranging talks and events. Noah, Sara and Layla are also committed to their faith-based practices. Layla is engaged, with her family, in

organising fundraising events for the provision of education for children in Syria, as she describes:

> When we do these charity events, there's like a lot of quotes within the Qur'an of how by donating to charity, it could benefit one. So that's where I think it came from, and where the whole charity thing came from as well.

For Layla, the authority embedded in a sacred text is meaningful, requiring moral action (Elster, 2003). She is engaged in multiple literacies, reflecting her values and culturally-based understandings of how to get things done. In this instance, she uses digital technology to write to commercial companies asking for sponsorship.

9.5 Digital and non-digital tools, including social media

In this section, I discuss participants' tools for writing, recognising how participants make choices from their communicative repertoires with reference to purpose and audience, and the semiotic resources available in particular contexts. These findings need to be interpreted as a continuum, where the use of tools, in online and offline spaces, reflect changing communicative practices.

All participants had access to computers and the internet, representing their privileged position in relation to 'the digital divide' (Warschauer and Tate, 2018:63). This included use of a laptop computer, smartphone and also, for some students, an iPad. Whilst all study participants use messaging services such as WhatsApp, dispositions towards online platforms are varied and contingent. Fifteen participants use a range of social media in addition to i-messaging services. Two doctoral students use very little social media: Guneet has deleted his Facebook and Twitter profiles, whilst Afran has stopped using social media platforms as part of an experiment he is undertaking in relation to his doctorate. Whereas 9 participants use Facebook, some, like Caroline and Geeta, have reduced their online presence, or moved to other platforms. 5 students use Instagram; 4

Chinese-heritage students use WeChat (a multi-purpose platform developed in China); and 3 doctoral students use Twitter.

Patrick, a doctoral student, strategically uses Twitter for making complaints about services but otherwise limits the use of social media in his personal life in order to maintain his own sense of well-being. He states:

> I tend to steer clear of social media, just because I would become a very angry person very quickly if I started to engage in social media. That, and most of my friends and family are on it, and I want to ignore them half the time, if I'm honest, and just escape.

Mills and Stornaiuolo (2018) highlight the importance of exploring affect in examining how meaning emerges between people across space and time through the use of digital literacies. The use of online global networks can amplify the effects of actions, as Luke et al, note:

> Digital actions – even those of children and youth, students, and 'average 'citizens – may carry higher stakes and have amplified consequences that exceed the scope of their actions through speech, writing and other modalities in everyday life (2018:253).

Whilst Patrick uses the affordances of online platforms to get things done, he resists the loss of privacy (Mills and Stornaiuolo, 2018) and the pressure to perform an online self in his personal life, or 'backstages', as described by Goffman (1969).

Joanne uses Weibo, another platform developed in China which she describes as similar to Instagram. Noah uses KakaoTalk, a Korean messaging service, alongside Facebook. Students also use other platforms such as Googledocs for collaborative writing, and some doctoral students use platforms and mobile technologies available within universities, schools or other workplaces. Participants were asked to estimate the ratio of their writing practices which were 'online' or 'offline'. Not all participants found it easy to quantify their practices in this way and responses varied widely between participants. The majority of participants estimate that they do more writing online than offline, with a quarter of participants (mainly doctoral students) claiming that they

spend more time offline than online. However, students also note how the online/offline ratio changes substantially in term time and holidays or depending on personal factors in their lives.

The vignettes in Chapters 5-7 illustrate the complex choices which participants make when choosing available tools for writing. Joanne prefers using her laptop and phone for all communicative purposes, whilst Adam and Amirah use handwriting in addition to digital tools when writing for different purposes. There is a similar picture in the sample as a whole where most students engage in some handwriting for personal or creative purposes, taking notes, or planning academic writing. Siyi also uses an Apple pen, offering her the affordances of handwriting in a digital format.

9.6 Writer identities

Identities, both chosen and ascribed, emerge in interaction (Bucholtz and Hall, 2010). Linguistic ethnography offers a social practice lens, recognising individuals as participating in interaction through language with some level of agency as well as reflexivity (Preece, 2016). In this study, I argue that individuals' identities should be understood as self-defined, emic positions which are constantly shifting and contingent on time and space (Blackledge and Creese, 2016). Language ethnography and the notion of communicative repertoire, including metacommentary, help to untangle the heteroglossic linguistic resources deployed by individuals in communicative encounters. As the vignettes (Chapters 5-7) illustrate, identity performances are negotiated with others, but they are also constrained where individuals cannot command the 'emblematic features' required to be recognised as a full member of a social group (Blackledge and Creese, 2016:276).

Patrick, a part-time student on the EdD programme, works as an evaluation manager in a charity where he writes what he describes as 'quasi-political, quasi-academic writing',

in addition to work reports. He describes the struggle to find his authorial voice in these different discoursal contexts:

> …And I know there's – there's a writing voice that -that lots of people aim to -to find. Most people don't, I think, but I'm yet to find mine and sort of be – be confident with it, and moulding and making it malleable to different contexts. At the moment it feels like there's a [Patrick] who writes for academic purposes, there's a [Patrick] who writes for work research report purposes, and then there's a [Patrick] who writes somewhere in the middle. It feels like three different people rather than someone who's fluid and can write different styles and still have a voice.

Patrick's search for 'a writing voice' reflects his dilemma around his 'autobiographical self', the 'self as author' as well as the 'discoursal self', in Ivanič's terms. Ivanič describes her own experience:

> I have often had the experience myself of not being able to find the right words for what I want to write, and then realising that it is not so much a problem of the meaning I want to convey as a problem of what impression of myself I want to convey. I have come to see every act of academic writing as, among other things, the writer's struggle to create a discoursal self which resolves the tension between their autobiographical self and the possibilities for self-hood available in the academic community (1998:336).

This reflexive quote from Ivanič highlights a dilemma that a number of participants faced, and which also reflects my own academic writing experience. Identities are relational, in the sense that they offer both opportunities for performing group membership as well as highlighting the differences and boundaries between social groups. Paradoxically, it may be that, for Patrick, extending the repertoire of 'voices' or 'styles' in his communicative repertoire may best support his emerging writer identities.

Siyi is constructing an identity as 'online friend' as she communicates with her 700 'friends' by posting messages in Mandarin on WeChat, as she explains:

> …sometimes it's hard for me to express my feelings just orally. I would always like to write it down and post on my WeChat circles so that my friends see it and they will come and talk to me.

Siyi's online and offline communication is meshed so that, as in Dovchin and Pennycook's (2018) research, it is difficult to see where online and offline worlds conjoin or separate. In this excerpt, it is unclear if Siyi's friends talk to her in real or virtual spaces and it is likely that communication takes place in both spaces simultaneously. Siyi's online posts are also heteroglossic. They are multi-layered with competing ideologies, in Bakhtin's terms, as they draw on narratives of friendship at the same time as pointing to her achievements as a transnational student and self-employed career advisor.

Participants in this study identified with a wide range of subject positions, in relation to the academy and their wider lives. Exploring past histories and future writing aspirations were productive in highlighting the plurality, complexity and fluidity in individual identity performances. Whilst all participants made reference to family relationships, Amirah (Chapter 5), Karen, Geeta and Afran also positioned themselves as parents in relation to their writing practices. All participants were invested in their academic futures, but Amirah (as discussed in Chapter 5) also had plans to write an online blog on parenting, whilst both Siyi and Joanne shared an aspiration to write books about their experiences of studying abroad. Guneet, Ceri, Lily, Tiki and Sara also shared imagined futures as poets, novelists, or playwrights.

9.7 Writer development

In this section, I discuss approaches to writer development. Andrews and Smith (2011) describe learning to write as both an epistemological and ontological process, where writing is just one form of expression within multimodal forms of discourse. From their perspective, learning is 'transformational', marking a change or difference in a person's knowledge/awareness/being. They state:

> Learning we take to be a transformational process and act resulting from engagement with or within a community. It is an act that moves us forward in some way (2011: 30).

Andrews and Smith also perceive learning as an effect of communities, leading to learning about the mores, values and knowledge of those communities. In their view, writer development is a project that continues over the lifecourse, resulting from a series of progressive acts of learning which they see as primarily individual. I would argue that the notion of writer development is a form of identity making (Holland et al, 1998), similar to Livingstone and Sefton Green's description of how young people are reflexive in their identity work 'talk[ing] themselves into being, as it were, by drawing on the genres, tools and narratives available to them' (2016:33-34).

Drawing on the vignettes and the rest of the sample, I discuss a number of key learning approaches which emerge from the data: communities of practice; human and non-human sponsors; and affinity groups.

Communities of practice

In Chapter 5, Amirah describes her undergraduate peers as a Community of Practice (COP). This reflects a social view of learning which emphasises learning as situated in communities. Alongside a group of mature students on her course, there is a smaller group, the 'full participants', who form the nexus of the COP (Lave and Wenger, 1991:29). The focus on social engagement within a COP (Davies, 2005) accords with the notion of communicative repertoire, with its emphasis on comembership. Amirah described the positive effects of giving feedback to a peer, where the feedback was then acted upon. Sara, Karen and Ceri take part in different writing groups which can also be described as communities of practice and which include doctoral students, researchers, and English teachers.

Human and non-human sponsors

Participants reported a wide range of writing sponsors (Brandt, 2015) who offered writing feedback to students, including academic tutors, mentors, peers, family members, partners, teachers, and line managers in the workplace. Whilst feedback on academic writing was generally perceived as positive, some participants also perceived

sponsors in negative terms, as discussed in 9.4 above. Two doctoral students used online writing assistant packages which they found helpful in composing and editing texts: Patrick used ‘Grammarly’ and Caroline used‘Scrivener’.

Online affinity groups

Online affinity groups offer opportunities for distributed learning around particular practices and it is this shared interest that identifies members. Drawing on Gee (2004), Lammers et al. describe affinity spaces as:

> physical, virtual, or blended sites of informal learning, where ‘newbies and masters and everyone else’ interact around a ‘common endeavor’ (2018:174).

Adam’s open group on Instagram acts as an online affinity group, where members discuss issues around LGBTQI. Research on affinity groups highlights the role of audience in shaping the writing in these spaces although, as Lammers et al. (2018) point out, constructive feedback might be limited.

Chapter 10: Conclusions

10.1 Meeting the aims of the study

In this section, I return to each research question in turn and briefly discuss the extent to which the aims of the study have been met. The chapter then presents what I consider to be 8 key findings that emerge from the research before outlining how I believe the thesis has made a number of contributions to knowledge in the field of Literacy Studies. After briefly considering what the implications of this findings are to my personal and professional practice, the chapter concludes by suggesting what I would like to do if I get the opportunity to carry out further research on this area given the time and resources.

1. ***How does writing get constructed as an element of adults' communicative repertoires?***

This study explores how the concept of 'communicative repertoire' is a useful construct in understanding the role of writing across the multiple and overlapping domains of adult lives. Writing is conceptualised as just one element of an individual's communicative repertoire, recognising how adults combine modes and other elements of their repertoires to make meaning. The study also acknowledges how digital literacies unsettle the relationship between writing, speech and the visual (Kress, 2003). In this study, adults appear to build on their communicative repertoires in different sites. In particular, the process of developing academic writing has an effect on the dominant and vernacular writing deployed by doctoral students in their other writing contexts.

2. ***What part does writing play in the construction and performance of their identities?***

This study recognises writing, not as an expression of individuals, but as a form of language that arises in the interaction between individuals and groups, offering opportunities for the performance of identities. The notion of communicative repertoire enables us to explore subjectivities, understanding how people choose to make

meanings in different ways, including through the use of metacommentary (see for example, Chapter 7). Writing is perceived as salient in identity-making across space and time, and linked to the notion of investment (Norton, 2013). Linguistic ethnography enables researchers to analyse points where identity-making is enabled and constrained in interactions.

3. ***What possibilities for learning to write are available to adults within the multiple compositional contexts of their lives?***

Adults use agency in developing their communicative repertoires, recognising that opportunities for learning may emerge in contingent and unruly ways (see, for example, Amirah's family writing in Chapter 5). In this study, learning is perceived as social, linked to identities, and dependent on the extent to which individuals are prepared to find common ground with each other. Communities of practice, sponsors and affinity groups also emerged as providing valuable opportunities for adults in constructing new learning identities.

10.2 Key findings

I suggest that this study has 8 key findings:

1. A communicative repertoire approach challenges normative, or autonomous, views of writing which focus on issues of competence and correctness. In aligning with Literacy Studies, the notion of communicative repertoire offers an ideological perspective on writing, addressing issues of power by challenging deficit views of writers.

2. Adults perform agency in choosing elements of their communicative repertoire, including writing and other modes, in order to develop comembership (or find common ground) with others, but this is not always possible. Agency may be

enabled or constrained in different contexts, depending on whether individuals can find points where their repertoires overlap, and whether particular repertoires are privileged.

3. Adults use their linguistic repertoires, including oral and written languages, within their multimodal communicative repertoires, to construct identities. This includes aspects of register and other modalities, such as storytelling and referencing popular culture. They may hold different ideological perspectives on language which enable or constrain their ability to find common ground with others.

4. The notion of explicit and implicit metacommentary has potential as an explanatory and reflective tool when discussing or engaging in writing. It also offers opportunities for constructing identities, by pointing to the use of irony and affect in interactions.

5. For a majority of the doctoral students, academic writing practices seep into their writing practices in other life domains and this was perceived as a positive outcome of academic study. This was also the case for some undergraduate students, but issues of assessment were also experienced by some undergraduate students as a site of struggle, including both peer and summative assessment. An 'academic literacies' approach may be helpful in questioning overt and covert expectations within interdisciplinary programmes, including the requirement for handwriting in examinations.

6. Adults value a range of diverse 'dominant' and 'vernacular' writing practices across their life domains. Academic or work writing practices were not necessarily most prominent in participants' accounts, which also drew on material, immaterial and (im)material literacy practices, reflecting personal, family, social, political and faith-based interests.

7. When stretching repertoire elements to create comembership with others, adults make choices about tools, texts, languages and technologies. They deploy these elements in increasingly diverse ways using both 'real' and 'virtual' environments. When engaging in digital contexts, issues of digital ethics were highlighted by a majority of the participants.

8. Adults learn to write by developing their writer identities in different domains, including the use of human and non-human sponsors, friendship and family groups, affinity groups, and communities of practice.

10.3 Contribution to knowledge

I argue that this thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in the field of Literacy Studies. It builds and extends Rymes' (2014a) definition of communicative repertoire, offering a useful construct for recognising and valuing the range of writing practices in adult lives. In line with Literacy Studies, it challenges autonomous views of writing, encapsulated in normative writing assessments, and instead posits an ideological perspective on writing which recognises and values diversity. A repertoire approach offers an holistic perspective on writing lives, enabling opportunities for identity construction and performance. It does not preclude notions of competence but, in positioning individuals as knowledgeable, it recognises their everyday experiences as central to our understandings about writing.

The thesis also underlines the value of linguistic ethnography as a reflexive tool, as highlighted in the reflexive vignettes in Chapters 2 and 8 of this study. Following Rampton, I acknowledge the 'social constructionist poststructuralist perspectives underpinning contemporary research in linguistic ethnography' (2015:38) and the importance of taking a discursive approach to data collection and data analysis. Reflexivity, in the context of this study, is 'a process of assessment, calibrating the words you hear with your sense of the (dynamically evolving) situation' (Rampton et al.,

2015:25). In other words, taking a reflexive approach means taking account of the constantly changing heteroglossic resources which speakers and listeners bring to the interview encounter, recognising that meaning-making is dynamically co-produced by interactants. The reflexive process calls for transparency on the part of the researcher, and the inclusion of substantive excerpts from interview transcript to provide the reader with an appreciation of the fullness of the data from which the researcher has inferred structure.

10.4 Implications for personal and professional practice

Ravitch and Carl use the term ‘thought communities’ to refer to the different audiences for research (2016:36). In my view, this study may be of interest to academic scholars, researchers, teacher educators, and teachers. This thesis has offered me the opportunity to investigate the topic of writing and writer development in some depth; to explore different research methodologies and tools; and to consider issues of representation, ethics and impact.

A repertoire approach encapsulates a way of thinking about teaching and teacher education that prioritises engagement with others over a didactic teaching approach. Rather than seeing the teacher as the repository of knowledge, a repertoire approach recognises knowledge as produced in interaction, whether that be through reading, classroom interaction (Yandell, 2017) or everyday contexts. The notion of communicative repertoire is a valuable addition to existing theory on socio-cultural approaches to writer development. I hope to share study findings through academic journal articles and conferences. I plan to discuss key concepts with colleagues, new teachers on PGCE English (Literacy and ESOL) programmes, and students on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. I also plan to review my professional practice as a teacher educator from the perspective of a repertoire approach, particularly my approach to teaching writing. In addition, the notion of 'citizen sociolinguists' (Rymes, 2014a:50) offers opportunities to expand notions of professional

learning, creating research opportunities for teachers and students to engage collaboratively in writing research in adult literacy and ESOL classrooms.

In general terms, this study has also extended my understanding of linguistic theory, including what Silverstein describes as the 'total linguistic fact':

> … the datum for a science of language is irreducibly dialectic in nature. It is an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualised to situations of interested human use, and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology (Silverstein, 1985:220, cited in Rampton et al, 2015: 23).

The concept of the 'total linguistic fact' includes the dynamic relationship between formal structure, or code; activity, or language-in-use; and language ideology. I intend to develop my understanding and use of such useful theoretical frameworks in my future academic, research and pedagogical practices.

10.5 Further research

Whilst recognising that researchers face challenges in finding funding and time for fieldwork (Blackledge and Creese, 2016), I would like to extend my methodological engagement in ethnographic research in order to explore how the concept of 'communicative repertoire', and principles of the repertoire approach, can be utilised within and outside adult and further education classroom contexts (Rymes, 2016).

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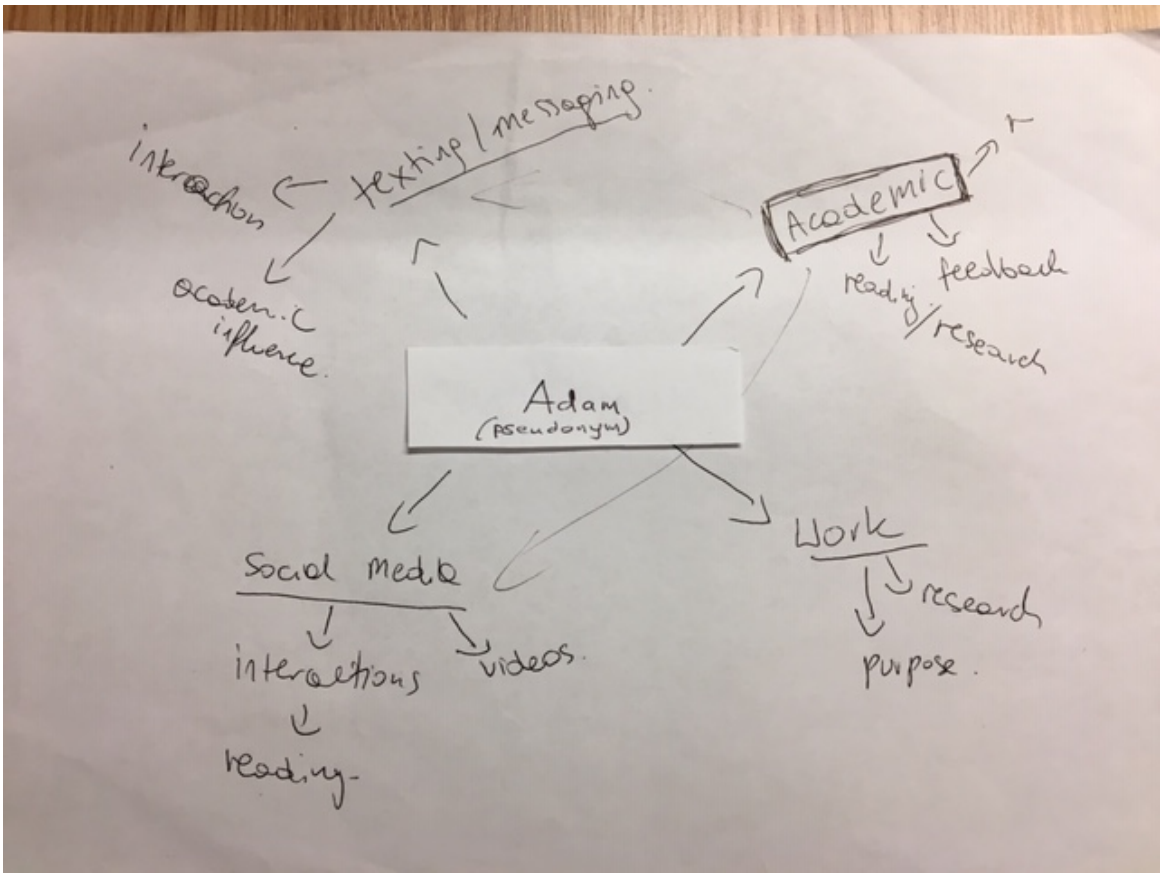
Appendix 1: Ecomap



Appendix 2: Interview schedule

Semi-structured Interview Schedule
Intro: Recognise writing as a social practice, and we all have a wide range of writing practices. Also recognising that writing is one way of making meaning within multimodality. Hope that interviews will be an opportunity to reflect on your development as a writer; your communicative repertoire and your learning trajectories.

Interview questions	Prompts
1. What writing do you do? Do you like writing?	Different kinds of writing in different domains; online and offline; use of different languages
2. Do you think writing is important to you? Why/why not? How? Check use of different languages.	Writing for different purposes as prompts on cards: functional, creative, academic, work, personal, social, family, faith, politics, social media, voluntary work, other.
3. How did you first learn to write? If multilingual, when did you first learn to write in English? How did you learn? How are you developing your language/writing skills now?	In what languages?
4. What do you think has most influenced you in developing your writing in different contexts?	Reading books, journals, talking to others, etc. In what languages, and what kinds of writing?
5. What are the most usual ways in which you communicate with other people? (i.e. what are your preferred modes, e.g. video, drawing, music, etc?) How important (or not) is writing in different contexts?	Emphasise writing as one mode within multimodality. Messaging, phone, speaking face-to-face, social media platforms, email. (clarify audience)
6. How do you most like to communicate with other people?	Link to interests, where people are, and purpose of communication (e.g. writing, speaking face-to-face, messaging, etc.)
7. What technology do you have access to? Do you think there are differences between handwriting and writing on a computer or mobile device? (A)	Home/university, etc.

8. Who are your different audiences when you write? How does that affect what and how you write?	
9. What writing do you do in relation to your study?	What do you think about the writing you do in university? What do you enjoy/find difficult, etc.? What tools do you use to write? Where do you write?
10. What different writing practices (or different kinds of writing) do you do in your life outside university?	Home, work, responsibilities, interests. What different tools do you use?
11. How much writing is online/offline? (Follow-up to first question) 12. Do you think there are differences between writing online and offline? If so, what are they? (A)	How often/frequently do you do these? What is your most common form of written communication? What social networks or platforms do you use? For what purposes?
13. Are there platforms or networks you would like to use that you are not currently using? If yes, why? Is there online writing that you would like to do, or that you would like to do more of?	If yes, what is stopping you?
14. What kinds of writing are you most confident about? What makes it easy for you?	Check differences in language use
15. What kinds of writing are you least confident about? What makes it difficult?	What are your main worries about writing? Check differences in language use
16. What is most important to you when you write? How important is technical accuracy for your different audiences?	Getting meaning across, accuracy, creativity… In English, other languages? How much dependent on context?
17. Is it better to write on your own or with other people? Do you write with other people? How often?	In what contexts? Can you give an example?
18. Do you think you are a good writer? How can you tell if someone is a good writer?	What kinds of things do you base your decision on?
19. How did you learn to do different kinds of writing? What helps you to write? Or how do you think people learn to write (informal + academic writing, etc.)?	Changes in writing practices over time? Use responses to earlier questions. Examples such as messaging, email and academic essay. Include print/digital and online/offline.

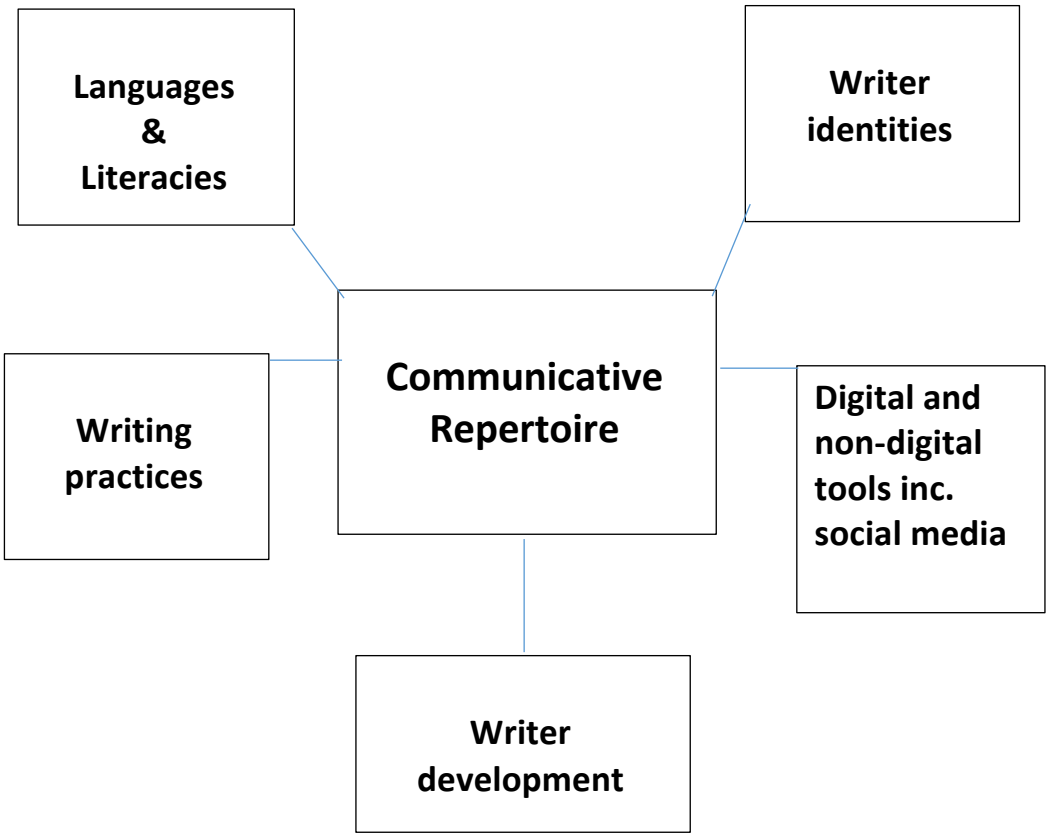
	Introduce ecomap: what writing do you do, and how have you learnt or developed that type of writing?
20. Have you supported other people with writing? How have you done that?	
21. Have you written something that you are proud of? If so, what is it?	
22. Is there writing that you like to do in the future (that you are not currently doing), or writing that you would like to do more of?	Will you need to develop your writing skills and practices? How?
23. Do you think there are other questions about writing that I should ask? If yes, what are they?	
24. (Later question) Has the writing that you do changed in the last couple of years (or 5 years)?	Audience, purpose, process, practices, use of technology
25. (Later question) How do you go about writing? Describe the process you work through with a particular piece of writing? How does that compare with other writing you have done?	

Appendix 3: Biographical questionnaire

About you

Age	
Gender	Male Female Prefer not to say Or please describe your gender in your own words: ……
Do you speak any languages apart from English? If so, what language(s)?	*Which language(s)?*
Do you write in any languages apart from English? If so, what language(s)?	*Which language(s)?*
Are you employed?	*Yes/No* *If yes, what is your job? How many hours do you work pw?*
Are you a home or international student?	
What are your most recent qualifications? In what subjects? (including English language assessments, if appropriate)	

Which of the following groups do you belong to? *Please tick.*

White-British		Bangladeshi	
White- Irish		Chinese	
White-other		Other Asian	
Black-African		Mixed	
Black- Caribbean		Other:	
Black- Other			
Indian			
Pakistani			

Appendix 4: Key themes