

EAP Pedagogies for Doctoral Students in Professional Fields

Kristin Solli & Tom Muir, OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Introduction

After a while it's interesting with the theories and it's interesting with everything happening up here. And also I'm sitting here at OsloMet, so I'm in an environment that's... we're talking about lots of stuff....so I was afraid that it would sort of tear me away from the [PhD topic's] origins. Beatrice, PhD candidate

Beatrice worked for 10 years in a professional field – social work – before becoming a PhD candidate. She explains here the tension she feels between “the theories” and “everything happening up here” at the university and “the origins,” her professional field. This tension is typical of many of the PhD candidates we have met in our EAP work with doctoral students at our university, which has a profile in applied sciences and professions such as nursing, social work, and teaching. Underlying this tension is the fact that no professional doctorate has been developed in Norway – there are no practitioner research-based PhD programs, meaning that even a candidate who wants to conduct research on a field of practice is inducted into a very traditional academic PhD program. There is, then, no automatic transmission route for the research back to the field, and no way for the candidate to comfortably inhabit the roles of practitioner and researcher at the same time; which, we argue, complicates the “identity work” of the PhD (Kamler & Thomson, 2014), and the pedagogies we might bring to that work as EAP practitioners.

The idea of identity change during doctoral candidature is well-documented in the literature on doctoral writing. It has been figured as journeys (Barnacle & Mewburn, 2010; Wisker, 2016), transitions (Castelló, Iñesta, & Corcelles, 2013), transformations (Lassig, Dillon, & Diezmann, 2013) and “becoming” (Barnacle, 2005; Lee, 2010 & 2011). Some of the key pedagogical perspectives on doctoral writing similarly connects writing to changes in identity: from student to scholar, from

novice to expert, or from practitioner to researcher. Kamler and Thomson's (2014) articulation of the connection between "identity work" and "textual work" locates writing as the site where such transformations happen: "When doctoral students write," Kamler and Thomson argue, "they are producing themselves as a scholar" (2014, p. 17).

Much of current pedagogical literature on doctoral writing, then, presents approaches that support such production of a scholarly identity – clearing the path from "the origins" to "up here," to use Beatrice's words. We find the connections this literature makes between textual work and identity work and the emphasis on transformation very useful in our work with doctoral writers. And yet, with many of the doctoral students we met in our writing classes, this path seemed more winding and fraught. Like Beatrice, many of our students come from extensive careers in a professional field and their research focuses on professional practice. Their PhD programs, however prime them for traditional research, and most of them write a thesis by publication consisting of research articles that communicate with researchers. Many of our students seemed to share Beatrice's regret or worry about being detached from the work's origin, the professional field. This worry suggests the importance of some things to be preserved, as much as transformed, by doctoral work for this particular group of students.

Having recently conducted an interview-based study with PhD candidates in professional fields, this chapter finds us looking both back and forward. Our conversations with students like Beatrice have made us consider what our current pedagogies might be missing. More specifically, we have started to think about what pedagogical responses might be possible when there is a need for preservation as much as transformation? Our looking backward and forward has prompted us to look for ways to take these students' ambivalence about doctoral identity change seriously, rather than considering it something that must be overcome for successful doctoral transformation to happen.

In what follows, we begin with an overview of some of the central work on doctoral writing that informs our pedagogies. We continue by briefly summarising the study we mentioned above as

a way of getting a clearer sense of the writing experiences of the PhD students coming to doctoral education from professional fields in our own context. We then describe our semester-long Academic Writing Course where we meet the kind of doctoral students that participated in our study in the classroom. In this description, we use some of the findings from our study to pause at key moments in the course to wonder what was left untouched or ambivalent for these candidates. We then suggest some possible paths forward, pedagogies that might – as we have said – make use of ambivalence and uncertainty as pedagogical resources rather than treating them as problems to be overcome. Thus, our project in this chapter is not to present a “best practice” case or a model course; it is to reflect on a pedagogical challenge and start exploring what our pedagogies could become.

Doctoral writing pedagogies in the changing landscape of doctoral education

Over the last several decades, doctoral education worldwide has changed profoundly. Two of the most important changes are that PhD-holders increasingly work outside the academy, and that sectors such as industry and commerce increasingly look towards academia for solutions to sector-specific challenges (Andres et al, 2015; Boud & Lee, 2009; Thomson & Walker, 2010). In many contexts – but, as we have already emphasized not, ours – various versions of work-based doctorates, professional doctorates, industry-PhDs and practice-based doctorates have emerged as alternatives to the traditional PhD (Boud & Lee, 2009; Thomson & Walker, 2010; Usher, 2010).

This diversification of different types and purposes of doctoral education has also prompted discussions about the form and purpose of the main form of doctoral assessment, the doctoral dissertation. Anthony Paré, for example, argues that “changes in the past couple of decades have rendered the single-authored, paper-based, book-length dissertation obsolete” (2017, p. 408). Paltridge and Starfield (2020) trace the doctoral thesis genre over the last century and find evidence that the traditional monograph still dominates in some fields, but also find considerable diversity and innovation across fields and institutions. They also note several examples of recent doctoral

dissertations that defy traditional conventions. However, scholars have also noted how the dissertation, conceived as a traditional monograph, appears resistant to change, and advocate for doctoral dissertations that are open to texts written for diverse purposes and diverse audiences (Sharmini, & Spronken-Smith, 2020).

In our Scandinavian context, the thesis by publication has, as previously mentioned, replaced the monograph as the most common format in most fields, except the humanities (Krumsvik, 2016). The kind of publications that are included in such a thesis are peer-reviewed journal articles, while chapters in edited volumes is a permissible genre in some PhD programs, but not all. Typically, then, doctoral students write three or four journal articles and a lengthy introductory text that demonstrates the coherence between the articles. The growing popularity of the thesis by publication in Scandinavia and elsewhere, can be seen as part of a growing international emphasis on publishing for PhD students (Kwan, 2010; Nygaard & Solli, 2021; Lei & Hu, 2019).

This emphasis, in turn, has had significant implications for doctoral writing pedagogies, with calls for the development of explicit pedagogies for doctoral students writing for publication (Aitchison, Kamler & Lee, 2010; Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016; Kamler, 2008; Kamler & Thomson, 2014; Lee & Kamler, 2008). Both Lee (2010) and Murray (2010) highlight the importance of “becoming rhetorical” in such pedagogy. While, in one sense all doctoral writing – whether for publication or not – is rhetorical, writing for publication and for a community of experts, is perceived as different from writing for supervisors and doctoral committees. Paré (2010) sums up this difference succinctly in describing the purpose of what he calls “school discourse” as “display of knowledge” and in highlighting that such discourse often “fail[s] to address an actual dialogue among working scholars” (p. 30).

In this sense, “becoming rhetorical,” can be understood as a term meant to indicate how doctoral students writing for publication need to move from “school discourse” to “scholarly discourse.” As such, becoming rhetorical entails developing an ability to orient the work to an

audience of scholars, recognizing the (sometimes) granular differences between the discourse communities represented by scholarly journals, recognizing and adapting one's work to the genre differences between coursework, conference presentations, articles and so on. To explain the term further, Lee (2010) draws on Bakhtin's concept of "addressivity," (p. 17). To Lee, "addressivity is at the heart of being rhetorical" (p. 18) and Lee uses this concept to highlight how the ability to imagine an intended audience is essentially how one becomes rhetorical. Successful rhetorical becoming, then, means that one in a sense becomes the intended audience. How might this process of becoming be experienced for candidates working on professional fields in Norway?

Student experiences: transformation, preservation, and ambivalence

We conducted semi-structured in-depth individual interviews with PhD candidates who entered PhD programs at OsloMet following extensive careers in a professional field. The interviews focused on three areas: 1) The decision to pursue a PhD 2) Writing and publishing the first article of the thesis 3) Communities and groups that the participants deemed important to them in the writing process specifically, and in the PhD process more broadly. Because we were also interested in the various forms of support available to them, we asked the participants to complete a "communities plot" (Sala-Bubaré & Castelló, 2017). This plot permits interviewees to visualise their perceptions of networks of importance during the writing process and doctoral education more broadly.

This research showed that the tensions between "up here" and "the origins" the difference between the life before and the life afterwards is pronounced for doctoral candidates in professional fields. The doctoral period becomes a pivot on which turns their ideas about their careers up to that point. This pivoting, however, can involve quite different dynamics, as illustrated when we compare Beatrice's experiences with those of Anna. The former sees the doctorate from the point of view of the practitioner, and the latter, sees it from the point of view of the researcher. That is to say, for Beatrice, the PhD serves a purpose for a field to which she will return, and for Anna, the PhD marks

her embarkation on a new career (she is, she says, “too curious” to go back to being a practitioner in her field. She doesn’t miss it).

The respective journeys of Anna and Beatrice are suggested by the communities plots they drew:

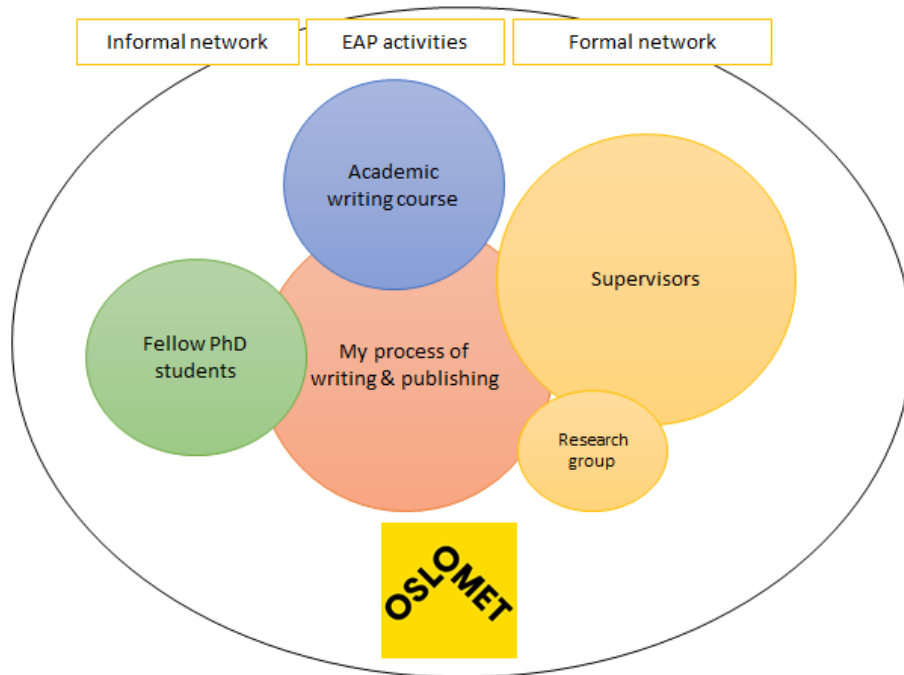


Figure 1: Anna’s community plot.

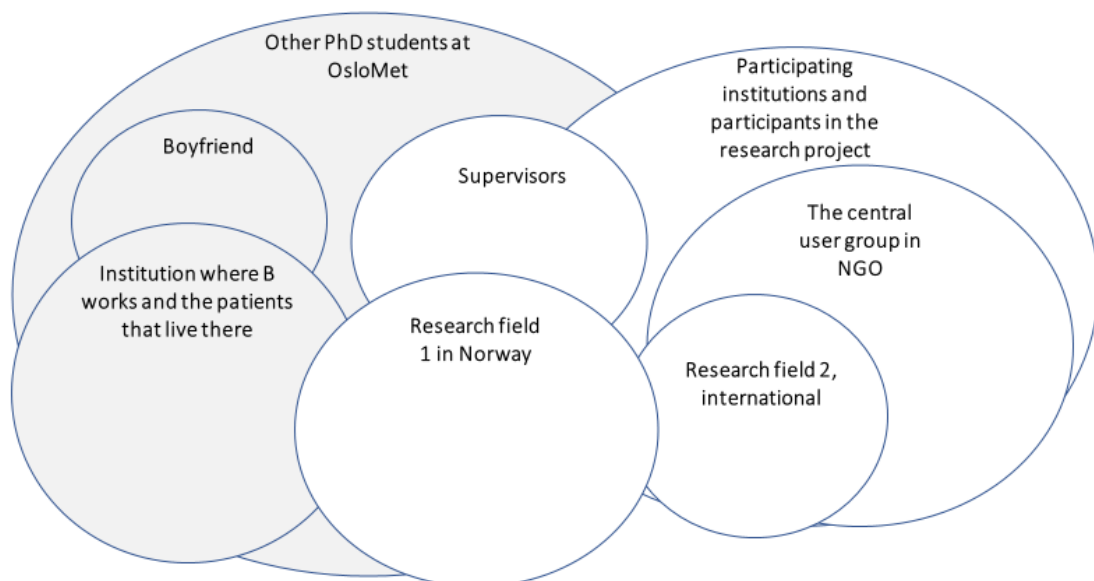


Figure 2: Beatrice’s community plot.

As illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2, Beatrice's field of practice is everywhere in her communities plot; Anna's is nowhere. A key finding from our study, then, is that the way the students perceive the role of their professional background in becoming a researcher (Anna perceives her professional background as something she needs to leave behind to become a researcher, Beatrice sees her professional background as integral to becoming a researcher) and how the students perceive how research is configured in their professional field (Anna says her professional field is not interested in research to develop professional practice, Beatrice says her field is very much interested in research to develop professional practice). In other words, we were struck by 1) that the professional field figured in the students' doctoral trajectories in very different ways 2) that the perceived dynamics between the professional field and research field made for very complex writerly positions. That is, the candidates expressed considerable ambivalence both about where they had been before entering the PhD and where they imagined themselves going after the PhD. These are the insights we use to frame our existing writing course, below, and to consider some future pedagogies in the penultimate section.

The Academic Writing Course at OsloMet: key aspects and key questions

We meet PhD candidates like Beatrice and Anna in our work in an EAP unit of a university that has gone through rapid institutional change. Our institution, OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, started out as a merger of several separate professional schools and did not formally acquire university status until 2019. The various institutions that merged, and eventually became OsloMet, had remits for education in applied fields – health sciences, teacher education, social work and so on – and OsloMet preserves this remit; meaning that it is a natural destination for researchers interested in professional fields.

A significant number of doctoral students taking our writing courses, then, work with professional fields in the sense that they have worked, say, as nurses for a number of years, and then enter OsloMet's PhD program in health sciences. In describing our main intervention – the semester-

long Academic Writing Course (AWC) – below, we want to frame it with the contrasting communities plots from Anna and Beatrice. The contrasting stories of the plots prompt the questions that punctuate our sketch of the course’s main aspects.

First aspect – Audience: AWC is a semester-long program, aimed at PhD candidates, academic staff members, and other researchers, with PhD candidates making up the majority of participants who sign up. A Master’s degree is the minimum entry requirement. Various versions of this course have been running at OsloMet for more than ten years now, and it remains guided by principles of genre pedagogy and academic literacies. Participants bring in a text-in-progress and work on this text for the duration of the course. The course always takes in multidisciplinary cohorts of no more than 12 students – part of the rationale being that exposure to the genres of other writers increases one’s sensitivity to one’s own genres (Swales & Feak, 2000). We also work with the principle that genre deconstruction tools are multivalent – if a writer can unpick the moves and conventions of one genre, they can do it for their own. Genre here tends to mean the research article – with the caveat that the genre features of research articles vary profoundly between disciplines – but the course has occasionally had candidates writing monograph chapters or sections of the extended introduction to a thesis by publication. Meetings are fortnightly across the semester, running for the better part of a day. At each session, two participants present their work in progress, followed by a discussion, so this is very much a learner-centred course. Following the presentations and discussions in each session, other elements of academic writing are introduced and discussed (and debated and queried – the academic literacies approach means that we work with the contingent nature of academic writing).

We start the semester by discussing audience – how one begins positioning one’s work for an audience of scholars. One of the activities we use for this is Thomson and Kamler’s (2013) Tiny Texts exercise. A Tiny Text, is essentially a very condensed narrative version of an argument. Kamler and Thomson have developed four key moves of such a text (Locate, Focus, Report and Argue), and they

offer helpful ways of understanding each move. Creating a Tiny Text requires the writer to have an overall command of the substance of their work and to tailor that substance for a specific audience. One cannot write the Tiny Text without a proper understanding of the research conversation the text participates in. Course participants begin by discussing the Tiny Text features, and then finding examples of them in abstracts from their fields. The participant then creates a Tiny Text of their own, explaining the relationship between their research conversation and their approach.

***First question:** This question of audience makes real the ideas of addressivity, becoming rhetorical. On the one hand, this kind of immersion is essential for the becoming rhetorical that we have been describing; but on the other hand, we wonder if there must be times when participants – particularly participants like Beatrice – might bridle at such immersiveness. In other words, is it in such exercises that someone who feels their responsibilities to be elsewhere might start to feel dragged away from those responsibilities? Could one be captured by addressivity, could one become too rhetorical? If so, one could well end up feeling that some becomings are jeopardized by others.*

Second aspect – Rhetorical positioning: As a continuation of the discussion of audience, we begin working with the Creating a Research Space (CARS) model for writing introductions to research articles (Swales 1990). Participants begin with the model, then observe the deployment – or lack thereof – of the model in their own fields. They can then begin building introductions for their own texts. We introduce CARS with a view to both explaining and questioning it, but it also serves a more general genre-pedagogical function because it affords participants opportunities to practice noticing textual features (Schmidt, 1990). In other words, when participants examine texts from their disciplines to see if or how the CARS model is employed, the process is metonymic of genre pedagogy as a whole – when you learn to notice what happens in introductions, you can notice what happens elsewhere.

At stake here is also the writer's ethos, which often concerns the move from Masters-level work to the doctorate, which, when undertaking a thesis by publication, means writing for an

audience of peers rather than for an examiner. Using the CARS model involves a sophisticated understanding of how an article deploys background knowledge and places the work amid an ongoing conversation. A hurdle many writers need to overcome is the urge to overexplain, to write many paragraphs of background before mentioning their own project. The process of noticing an article's genre features, then, means thinking of oneself as a different kind of writer, and undergoing a different kind of becoming rhetorical – one must write as an expert whether or not one feels oneself to be an expert.

Second question: *But this question of ethos, the writer's relationship to the world, to their responsibilities – how is that conditioned by their professional backgrounds? Do PhD students perceive the role of their professional background as either an asset or something that marks them as “non-academic” profoundly shapes the position from which they write? Anna, for example, explained how doing an MA was not necessarily valued by her colleagues in the profession. Anna felt that to her colleagues, her MA marked her off as an “academic” in the sense of removing her from the practicalities of everyday professional life. Yet, when entering the PhD program, and meeting researchers, she felt perceived as a practitioner, and not academic enough. Anna's becoming rhetorical thus appears as a clear break, a further removal from her professional field.*

Beatrice, on the other hand, describes having a professional background in her PhD program as giving her “capital.” Beatrice, then, perceives her professional experience as something that grants her legitimacy that other PhD students and researchers in her field without a professional background do not have. Beatrice sees her professional background as an asset, as something that gives her credibility in her research. Here then, the students display quite different ways to imagine how the research field perceives professional knowledge, and this provides quite different starting points for writing for the field.

For students like Anna, learning how to not sound like a practitioner is important. These students might be taking the course to learn “the rules” so they can sound like the others than in

developing a singular voice or wanting their writing to do something else than fitting in. Students like Beatrice, on the other hand, might be taking the course to insert herself, and to speak with a different voice, to capitalize on her professional experience in her writing. How do we develop pedagogies that support these different approaches to developing a suitable and purposeful voice?

Third aspect – Imitation: The AWC is concerned with part genres (often the elements of IMRD) and their linguistic features. This means that addressivity is baked into the course at the level of lexico-grammar as well. Various exercises across the semester enjoin participants to notice and take up the lexico-grammatical features of their fields. This may involve ‘rhetorical consciousness raising’ (Swales 1990, p.234), but also creating skeletal paragraphs, to perceive the otherwise invisible, conventional “stuff” of academic discourse (Thomson and Kamler 2013). One exercise requires participants to make a map of one (or more) articles, building up a comprehensive picture of their disciplinary discourses and observing how structures, moves and lexical choices map onto one another and cohere. Similarly, zooming in on certain sections of the map – Results, Discussions – and breaking those down into sentence skeletons can reveal the underlying structures of the sections; typical chunks of phraseology; academic language that participants can emulate. These structures and chunks can then be made available for candidates to experiment with as they write their own texts.

Third question: *What are the risks of imitation? Could the writer with a distinct sense of professional identity feel that this identity is encroached on by imitation? That they fail to find their own voice? That they speak about practices and realities of a field they know well in a language that feels removed, foreign, strange? And – looking at it from the other side – is there the risk here of an instrumental approach to teaching writing? When a writer is immersing themselves in new structures and lexis, to what degree might we or should we dwell on their potential ambivalences? And if so, with what aim? Does the EAP practitioner simply say “My job is to help you publish, and there my responsibility ends”? Or does the EAP practitioner have a different kind of responsibility, one to the*

complexity of that moment, and to its potential for teaching? Perhaps you will object – ‘So the candidate has complex feelings about their career path? Well: don’t we all; these are matters for the candidate’s shrink.’ But such an objection fails to take into account the becoming or being of becoming rhetorical, and the fact that it means, to no small degree, importing into oneself a species of new self; becoming the audience, becoming the other. So becoming rhetorical means that the writing is not easily parceled off from the being of the candidate (if it ever was); becoming rhetorical insists that we think about the being within the writing, the writing within the being.

The Academic Writing Course reconsidered: pedagogical initiatives for doctoral students in professional fields

Above, then, we have outlined three areas in which our conversations with students like Beatrice spoke back to our current pedagogical approaches and caused us to question them: audience, rhetorical positioning and imitation. How, in turn, might those questions help shape the kind of pedagogies we envision developing in the future? Learning more about the experiences of doctoral students in our courses prompted questions that in various ways deal with issues of ownership and voice in the process of becoming rhetorical. More specifically, these questions have inspired us to think about four concrete pieces of work that we would like to develop.

1. Using Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) to address questions of audience and rhetorical positioning

In terms of addressing the questions about audience and rhetorical positioning above, we think including work inspired by Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton 2014, 2016) will be helpful. Despite its name, LCT is not really a “theory” but an analytical framework combining strands of sociology and strands of linguistics to form a complex set of analytical dimensions. LCT can seem forbidding, in part because of its ambitiousness: it provides a toolkit for understanding how knowledge is constructed out of field-specific processes of legitimization. But individual aspects of it

are quite accessible, such as the Specialisation dimension (Maton 2014), which we propose using here. Specialisation is typically used to create a description of the kind of “knowing” that is privileged in a field of enquiry, whereby some fields privilege “knower” codes (i.e. who I am, my distinct experience, is important to the construction of knowledge; examples would be disability studies or creative writing). Conversely, some fields privilege “knowledge” codes, whereby the subject position of the researcher is expunged as much as possible, and knowledge is what can be observed and measured (in physics, for example).

Designing a set of tasks around exploring these codes might be a way for candidates such as Anna and Beatrice to map and process their journeys from practice to academia (and possibly back). For example, we can see Anna and Beatrice moving from fields defined by knower codes into fields defined by knowledge codes – that is to say, if one is a social worker, for example, a large part of one’s personal legitimacy as a knower comes from experience (I have training, yes, but I have worked in the field for this many years, and assisted service users with this many issues – my claims to effectiveness are embodied, experienced, and in many ways, unique to me). But to become a researcher – even in something like social work – often means moving into a field dominated by knowledge codes (my legitimacy as a researcher does not depend on my particular experience, but on what I can observe and how precisely I can document it and theorise it). LCT, in other words, provides a pedagogically useful language to think about the transitions or transformations a candidate may undergo.

Here, we would be building on the work of others who have explored the pedagogical uses of LCT in writing and language-learning pedagogy (e.g. Kirk, 2017, Maton and Chen, 2020). In our case, the Specialisation codes could be given to “boundary crossers” (to use Prøitz and Wittek’s (2019) term for candidates who work at the interface of different knowledge areas) as a tool to think through the relationship between practitioner-knowledge, research-knowledge and the space they occupy with those different knowledges. What this amounts to is a *de-individuating* – at least in part

– of writerly ambivalence or uneasiness. It means seeing the “I” who writes as made up of professional and disciplinary histories, and that at any time in the writer’s life these histories – these codes – may clash or match (Maton, 2014). De-individuation here means that the writer realizes that whatever uneasiness they experience is not only to do with the difficulty of “writing” – it is because they are at a point where codes – and ethos – are in conflict.

This kind of more conceptual work would involve reading and discussing theory or pieces that are not necessarily about writing per se, but about the configuration and codes of their field. The “boundary crossers” we spoke to in our study, possess a repertoire of codes, and may have powerful feelings about the relationship of research to practice. An exercise might be to think about, or plan, an article that addresses a practice issue they have detailed knowledge of, and to metacognitively think about the codes they use when they think about it, and the codes they would require as a researcher. It may be that as a code-aware “boundary crosser” that a PhD candidate can see how to break open their “research codes” to admit other perspectives. Such “identity work” might be a way to address some of the questions our study raised for us in terms of audience considerations and rhetorical positioning. Armed with these insights, it might be easier to understand, and perhaps, accept one’s ambivalences, rather than perceiving them as personal flaws. Such acceptance might in turn inspire less insecurity and self-doubt.

2. Glorious failure: becoming unrhetorical and moving beyond imitation

Paré (2010) discusses the idea of a paper he calls a “glorious failure”. This is a writing assignment for students to really let loose on – something that will be ambitious, overblown, magnificent and absurd. The aim is not to produce a text for publication – the aim is to take risks, to be “unrhetorical,” if you will. For those who teach writing in other contexts, it might seem bizarre that a text meant not for publication should make for a special kind of assignment. In many contexts, the papers not meant for publication is all there is. In our heavily publication-focused context, however, students have few opportunities to write anything else than texts for publication. Indeed,

they might be warned against any other kinds of writing from supervisors and others, as it takes time away from the kind of writing that counts.

Some of the candidates we work with might themselves not see the point of writing such a text. However, for others, this kind of writing might be a way to use registers and try out ways of writing that might often be censored by the imagined internal readers that appear when writers become rhetorical. Such an exercise, might, in fact help students gain some confidence in themselves as writers. Hence, working in segments focusing on “writing for non-publication” might allow writers to explore, get to know themselves, or draw on previous experiences as writers in other ways than they are able to do when they primarily see the task of writing as the ability to identify and follow conventions. Such an assignment could serve as a contrast to writing as imitation, trying out what other forms of writing we achieve. Such a license to fail, might expand on the students approaches to writing and language choices, that might offer some students more confidence, or perhaps a slightly different idea of what kind of writer they are, or could be.

3. Experimental writing and life beyond IMRD

While the glorious failure assignment could quite easily be incorporated into our standard writing course, we have, in fact already, developed a separate course around the idea of moving away from conventional writing: Experimental Writing for Social Scientists. Although designed for social scientists more generally – those who would benefit from exploring life beyond IMRD – it would also be a home for students like Beatrice, and others who would find discussions of voice, identity and innovation valuable. Unlike the AWC, this course does not start with the rules of the game. Rather, it begins with the question “What do you want to do with the text”? A course like this is not for everyone, but it could respond to some of our interviewees’ needs because of its emphasis on voice and text ownership, and – to borrow Swales’s (2017) words – its emphasis on discontent with standardization.

The course takes the positive position that readers, reviewers and editors may sometimes enjoy departures from the norm and may even be happy and relieved when they encounter such texts. Participants are invited to consider a range of texts that are non-traditional in whole or part (e.g. Monastersky & Sousanis, 2015; Yerushalmi, 1990) and they are also asked to bring in examples from their own reading. At this time of writing, the first iteration of the course is still in progress. Participants have been doing work based around storytelling, voice and untypical introduction forms. Taking as a cue Bennett's (2007) fairy tale about the birth of English academic discourse, participants were asked to write a story of their own about some aspect of their research – not a fairy tale, necessarily, but a ghost story, a romance, a detective story, a comic strip. Subsequent sessions have considered unusual voice features (footnotes, anecdotes, lexical choices); different kinds of beginning (cf. Sword, 2012); and the emotions of the reader and the psychological development of the text (cf. Hayot, 2014).

4. Creating metacognitive space to foster text ownership

As Anna and Beatrice's communities plots illustrate, doctoral writers in our writing course talk about writing with many different groups and individuals. They typically receive writing advice from a multitude of sources: peer reviewers, supervisors, co-authors, members of their research groups, fellow PhD students, and sometimes from user groups or practitioners in professional fields. For some students, knowing what to do with all this advice is bewildering. Anna, for example, said she would accept the track changes the supervisors requested even if she didn't always understand why the supervisors felt these changes were necessary. We have met many students like Anna who follow advice, not because they see how it improves the text, but because they do not feel they have the experience or skill to do anything else. In this way, some students end up distancing themselves from making writing and language choices, prompting feelings of distance from their own work and lack of ownership.

Another area for future work is thus to construct the writing course more deliberately as a metacognitive space. Such work would involve configuring the writing course as a space for PhD students to draw together, collate and think through all the disparate information and sometimes conflicting advice they receive about writing and writerly “becoming.” In such a space, we would set aside time to discuss how writing is worked with, talked about, and practiced in the various communities that the students participate in. Putting these various discussions about writing in conversations might help students navigate the different voices that shape their own voices.

One specific activity to this end, could be to ask students to draw a communities plot and use it to have them to reflect on how writing is figured and discussed in each of these spaces. Such reflection could, then, facilitate discussions that center on understanding the advice of the different voices and why such advice might be offered. Such an understanding might allow the students to exercise greater ownership in the future.

Coda: Becoming pedagogical

Above then, we have outlined four pedagogical possibilities as a response to some of the particular challenges in the identity work of doctoral writers with professional backgrounds. What these initiatives have in common is that they offer course participants ways to understand themselves as writers by attempting to make use of ambivalence, hesitation and insecurity as pedagogical resources. Are Beatrice’s concerns about drifting from her origins an appropriate topic to discuss in a writing course? Can Anna’s understanding of herself as “too curious” to remain in her professional field be relevant to discussions of how she imagines the purpose and audience of writing? Do discussions of the role of research in professional fields and the role of professional fields in research have a place in a writing for publication course? We believe the answers to all these questions are yes. And the four initiatives described above are attempts of what kind of classroom work might support such discussions. The questions they emerge from are all versions of the question without which, perhaps, there is no teaching: ‘What did I miss? What did I fail to see?’

The literary critic Barbara Johnson (1982), drawing on Freud and Coleridge, talks of teaching as a kind of repetition compulsion – teaching as the repetition of something we do not yet understand. There are many ways of understanding this cryptic – even mystical – statement, but one is perhaps that teaching is almost always repeating (an exercise, a question for discussion, a response), but the significance of it is always yet to be determined. I cannot grasp what I am saying because it passes away from me. And the teacher, too, finds herself within a constellation of addressivities – to her own future self, as much as anyone. I do not know the meaning of my words now because my future self has yet to be taught by them.

And I cannot be taught by those words, those repetitions – not without Anna, Beatrice, and other students like them. The twin risks of becoming pedagogical: that whatever I say is becomes mere dogma, the arena of self-parody; or that I, too, am transformed by these encounters. Addressivity must change me, too, always, making my teaching self perpetually hasty and provisional. Always stepping towards the teacher I can only try to become.

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