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## The appearance of voice: EAP and academic literacies approaches to teaching reflective writing

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### ***Abstract***

The increasingly common requirement for higher education courses to include reflective writing as part of assessment practices places additional demands on novice writers. Complex and self-referential assessment criteria mean that students on foundation and pre-sessional courses in particular find it hard to decode and match descriptors, and to balance subjectivity and critical analysis. English for Academic Purposes (EAP), the most widely adopted approach to teaching academic writing in higher education, prioritises objectivity, and teaches students to recognise generic patterns of text organisation – though it seldom includes reflective writing itself as a genre. In contrast, the less familiar teaching approach of academic literacies explores students' subjectivity, more obviously relevant to reflection, often through the development of an authentic narrative voice. As in other forms of academic writing, voice in reflective writing can be seen as a construct. It conveys a *persona* via the narrative, and an *ethos* via its specialised content. However, unlike other forms of academic writing, the *persona* in reflective writing must simultaneously communicate the author's private and public self.

With the purpose of developing students' *persona*, an academic literacies intervention in two transition courses invited students to complete a piece of timed writing in response to an autobiographical prompt. Compared with the EAP writing produced by the same student cohorts, the autobiographical writing contained a clear *persona* and consistent *ethos*. The assessed reflective writing later produced by the same students showed little change, however, particularly in its handling of *ethos*. The findings suggest that teachers of reflective writing need simultaneously to develop students' ability to communicate a credible *persona* and to handle a specialised *ethos* of formal academic content. A more principled combination of the two approaches, EAP and academic literacies, could best

provide the optimum learning environment for novice student writers to develop a balanced voice and achieve reflective writing fluency.

**Keywords:** reflective writing; EAP; academic literacies; voice; *ethos*; *persona*; narrative.

## ***Introduction***

For the first day of my Masters course in Applied Linguistics, students were asked to write a short paper introducing themselves and describing their formative experience of second language learning. I decided to explore my ambivalent feelings about learning Welsh as an adolescent in East Wales. The exercise felt risky as I noticed that the particular values I held at secondary school were different from those I held on that first day of postgraduate study. As a piece of autobiography, the task was more intimate than any form of academic writing that I had been asked to produce until then. Like other forms of academic writing though, it was difficult and challenging; and it ended with a recognition of identity change – from a rebellious teenager with a strictly instrumental view of language learning to a novice professional with a more dispassionate interest in languages.

Reflective writing is now a commonplace form of assessment in higher education, regardless of subject discipline (McCarthy, 2011). It most frequently takes the form of learning journals (Boud, 2001; Moon, 2006; Cowan, 2014) or one-off explorations of the process lived through in producing a particular piece of work (Killion and Todnem, 1991; Grushka et al., 2005). In formative situations, an additional demand is for the writer to produce a plan for change, applying insights gained from the reflective activity in preparation for some future work. The purpose and orientation of reflection at tertiary level has thus moved from a simple reflection on a past event or process (Dewey, 1933) to reflection during an ongoing event or process, e.g. trainee teaching (Boud, 1990), to reflection for a future event or process (Schön, 1987). With the current concern of Higher Education Institutions to maintain or improve their positions in league tables and respond to relatively low rankings for assessment and feedback in the National Student Survey, reflection, whose insights can be applied to future assessment and feedback, has become a priority. Furthermore, the need for reflecting with foresight in this way occurs earlier in the student's career – in the first or foundation year and during rather than at the end of a

course or module – and entails student writers: (1) being self-critical and (2) self-diagnosing for improvement. However, the reflective writing of novices often falls short of identifying and exploring a discrete number of features in depth and producing insights on which to base practical follow-up resolutions. The absence of a recognised generic structure and the provision of a specific focus also makes it difficult for these writers to locate problems and demonstrate criticality. Their main challenges are therefore to demonstrate insight and to formulate appropriate plans of action in a convincing and coherent form.

A general response to these problems has been to include some form of scaffolding for novice writers (Coulson and Harvey, 2013). Examples of scaffolding vary from the suggestion that the writer organise their reflection in sections that mirror the stages of Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle to supplying writing stems that the writer can complete and expand on. However, as these scaffolding examples suggest, it is impossible to separate students' reflective writing from the pedagogic contexts that it is produced in (Boud and Walker, 1998); and factors such as the purpose of the reflection – whether it is formative or summative – the rubric, the marking criteria, and the teaching approach may all shape the final product.

The two most usual teaching and learning approaches to literacy at UK Higher Education Institutions are English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and academic literacies, each with a radically different potential for teaching students the production of reflective writing. The teaching of writing and academic study skills on transition courses tends to privilege the EAP model, inducting the student into the desired community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and students are generally keen to subscribe to the formal conventions taught in the course content in order to earn membership of it. However, the conflict between the desire to conform to academic study advice, such as to disengage from emotion, and the need in the case of reflective writing to assess personal responses and acknowledge affective reaction, e.g. to tutor feedback, often results in confusion in navigating the two. In contrast with say the discursive essay, reflective writing is not widely recognised as an academic genre (Shum et al., 2017), and it is absent from generic examples in Hyland (2008) and Swales (1990) although 'reflective writing for personal development' is included as a genre in Nesi and Gardner (2012).

In addition, reflective writing is rarely taught or practised in EAP classes. Some of the reasons for its absence might be timetabling constraints or the wish to avoid students' adoption of textbook or other in-class examples as prescriptive models. An informal survey of popular EAP course books (Chazal and McCarter, 2012; Chazal and Rogers, 2013; Oshima and Hogue, 2016; Bailey, 2017) revealed no material on reflective writing. Study guides (Race, 2003; Cottrell, 2019) contained brief sections on writing reflection and Cottrell (2017) has a chapter on reflection ('Chapter 12, Critical reflection', pp. 187-210). Only Gillett et al. (2009), a resource book rather than a course book, defines reflection as an EAP genre (Gillett et al., 2009).

Whilst it is also concerned with genre (Russell et al, 2009), the academic literacies approach is seen as a distinct approach to teaching student writing in higher education, not least for its transformative agenda (Lea and Street, 1998; Lillis and Turner, 2001; Lillis, 2003; Lea and Street, 2006; Lillis and Scott, 2007; Lillis and Tuck, 2016), which facilitates new identities in student writers, and often works through narrative exercises. The academic literacies approach places the individual at the centre of power relations. It encourages the student to work through autobiographical free writing to develop an authentic voice and self-insights similar to those sought in reflective writing (see Alterio and McDrury, 2003), effectively constructing new identities (see Table 1). The academic literacies approach is simultaneously seen as superordinate to EAP ('A theoretical framework for EAP': Turner, 2012) and hyponymic to it ('An 'approach' to EAP': Coffin and Donohue, 2012). Compared with EAP, the academic literacies movement in higher education is less widely adopted, though the practice of reflective writing fits quite naturally in its remit. Academic literacies' enthusiasm for autobiographical writing offers a transferable chronological structure for reflective writing. Its focus on the writer as agent, and on authenticity rather than artifice - content rather than style (see Elbow, 2007) – facilitates the development of a writer's *persona*, as discussed below.

**Table 1. Synergies between EAP, academic literacies and reflective writing (based on Wingate and Tribble, 2012).**

	<b>EAP</b>	<b>Academic literacies</b>	<b>Reflective writing</b>
<b>Object of interest</b>	text	practice	meaning-maker
<b>Emphasis</b>	making the writer invisible	the writer's relationships with	the writer's relationships with

		experience and knowledge	experience and knowledge
<b>Agenda</b>	normative	transformative	transformative

This paper claims that a combination of EAP and academic literacies approaches can supply the means for students to see differences between their work and more conventional academic models and to express those differences and their resolution in a voice comprising the two most widely recognised expressive elements, *ethos* and *persona*. It is particularly concerned with reflective writing for assessment purposes, although the intervention reported was developmental, and much of the discussion might apply to either purpose. The paper is organised as follows. A general review of reflective practice in higher education is followed by a section on voice. The central section of the paper reports on an analysis of reflective writing data including marking criteria, rubrics and examples of reflections in response to EAP and ac lit prompts. The final section consists of a discussion and concluding remarks.

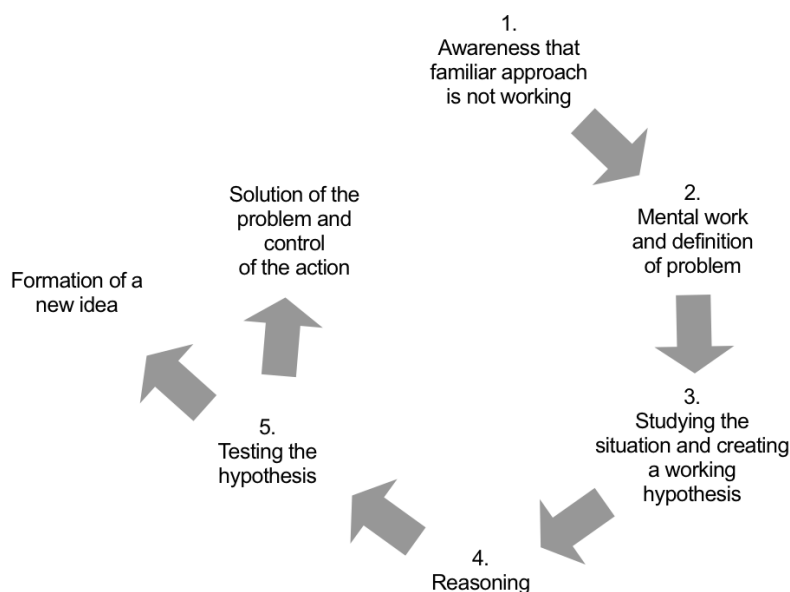
## ***Background***

### **Reflective writing**

Since the importance of reflection to learning development was first highlighted by Dewey (1933), there has been general agreement about its efficacy for both learning and praxis (Kolb, 2015). The more recent discrimination of reflective activity into three distinct functions – reflection on, reflection in, and reflection for a product, event or process – has increased its reputation as a life skill that facilitates transition learning, e.g. within foundation and pre-sessional courses, and given particular prominence to reflection for action (Killion and Todnem, 1991; Grushka et al, 2005). The dual purpose of reflecting for action is likely to contribute to improvements in general learning as well as student retention and employability. Yet, a paradox exists between the reflective model most widely used in higher education (viz. Gibbs, 1988) and students' willingness to engage with key aspects of the reflective cycle, e.g. recognising and exploring their response to a particular event (Lew and Schmidt, 2011). Recent versions of the reflective cycle have reduced its scope further by rendering it memorable but opaque in its generality (see Rolfe et al.'s (2011) adaptation of Borton's (1970) model: *What? – So what? – What next?*) and making it even more challenging for students to engage and report.

It is necessary to go back to Dewey (1933) for two distinct features of the reflective cycle more recently neglected: problem recognition and alternative concept formation (e.g. Miettinen, 2010) (see Figure 1). However, novice writers may not recognise problems, and they may be unable or unwilling to articulate them, unless they are given scaffolding in the form of external intervention (Vygotsky, 1986; Cheyne and Tarulli, 2005), and concepts and lexis with which to analyse and describe the problems. Scaffolding and feedback can help novices to take an objective stance and to notice disjuncts between their writing and that of the community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) they aspire to join.

**Figure 1. Dewey's model of reflective thought and action (based on Miettinen, 2010, p. 65).**



## Voice

'Voice' is a highly contested term within academic writing (Atkinson, 2001; Hirvela and Belcher, 2001; Ivanič and Camps, 2001; Matsuda, 2001; Prior, 2001; Helms-Park and Stapleton, 2003; Hyland, 2005; Matsuda and Tardy, 2007; Zhao and Llosa, 2008; Matsuda and Jeffery, 2012; Sancho Guinda and Hyland, 2012; Tardy, 2012; Stock and Eik-Nes, 2016; Yoon, 2017; Zhao, 2017). For example, some specialists in second language (L2) writing see seminal work by Elbow (1994) as problematic (e.g. Helms-Park and Stapleton,

2003; Zhao and Llosa, 2008) in its notion of voice, which they associate with western individualism. Although the association has been problematized by Prior (2001) and indeed by Elbow himself (Elbow, 1999; 2007), specialists in L2 student writing (e.g. Ivanič, 1998; Lehman, 2018) prefer alternative work on voice by Cherry (1988). Cherry argues that a writer's voice has a number of distinct characteristics, chief of which are *ethos* and *persona*; and the ambiguity of the word 'appearance' in the title of this paper – to suggest at the same time how voice looks and how it makes an entry in a writer's work – is intended to reflect Cherry's distinction between the two qualities of voice.

In arguing for the distinction of *ethos* and *persona* as elements of voice, Cherry (1988) notes that the two terms come from different traditions, *ethos* from Aristotle, *persona* from a later literary tradition, '[referring] originally to a device of transformation and concealment on the theatrical stage' (Elliott, 1982 p. 21 quoted in Cherry, 1988, p. 256). *Persona* is therefore a similar concept to dramaturgical 'role' and may be glossed as 'the roles authors create for themselves in written discourse given their representation of audience, subject matter, and other elements of context' (Cherry, 1988, pp. 268-269). It carries a much more general sense of the author as a person. *Ethos*, on the other hand, comprises 'a set of characteristics ... that will enhance the writer's credibility' (Cherry, 1988, p. 268). One of its elements is *phronesis* or 'practical wisdom' (Cherry, 1988, p. 253), which itself depends on the mastery of two other types of knowledge, *episteme* and *techne* (Beckett et al., 2002; Eisner, 2002; Saugstad, 2002; Birmingham, 2004; Hawk, 2004; Schryer et al., 2005). For Aristotle, the three forms of knowledge – *episteme*, *techne* and *phronesis* – were incremental (Eisner, 2002). It stands to reason that before novice writers can be expected to show *phronetic* knowledge, they first have to become proficient in *epistemic* and *technical* forms, akin to a musician that has to learn notation and practise technique before becoming an interpretive performer. In reflective writing, the first two knowledge forms, *episteme* and *techne*, would include the ability to select and discriminate formal elements of writing for further analysis.

In fact, although Cherry (1998) suggests a continuum from *ethos* ('writer's "real" self') to *persona* ('writer's "fictional" self') (p. 265), he also raises the possibility of each having an 'area of overlap' (p. 263), and therefore its own cline. For example, a convenient way of understanding the nature of *ethos* in the context of academic writing is by reference to Bakhtin's (1981) notion of heteroglossia, i.e. the simultaneous presence of competing



varieties of language within a single text. Novice academic writer's recycling of random academic terminology is an example of heteroglossia and represents extreme social *ethos*; and the opinionated all-style no-content expression of form represents extreme individual *persona*. No matter that other writers have emphasised the dialogic nature of voice (Ivanič, 1998; Matsuda, 2001; Prior, 2001), it remains the case that reflective writing requires the individual voice as well as the social. It is not surprising that some L2 student writers find problematic the requirement to produce academic writing that is not only social but simultaneously personal and analytical. Although the implicit expectation that writers express themselves confidently, openly and opinionatedly may seem an impossibility for novice writers, the ancient Greek philosophers offer a way to address the difficulty by offering rhetorical techniques for simulating it (Elbow, 2007).

Contemporary academic writing specialists such as Ivanič (1998), who understands *persona* as 'social role' and *ethos* as comprising 'particular personal qualities' (p. 90) (see also Tardy's (2012) social voice and individualised voice), have adopted Cherry's distinction. Ivanič argues that, as aspects of identity, both *ethos* and *persona* are discursively constructed, though she reports difficulty in associating particular textual features with *ethos* in her data, which comprised the academic essays of eight second- and third-year undergraduate students. Instead, she finds that most of her examples better fit the notion of *persona*. Perhaps Hyland (2002), in his study of authorial identity in academic writing, succeeds in a mundane sense where Ivanič failed. Hyland's data, which he explicitly compares with Ivanič's (1998), consisted of 64 undergraduate project reports, a corpus of 240 research articles, student focus groups and interviews with supervisors. By contrasting the use of the first person pronoun in the student texts with those in the research articles, i.e. by identifying textual examples of *ethos*, Hyland assesses 'the extent to which a writer intrudes into a text' (Hyland, 2002, p.1092) to accomplish a range of writerly functions such as stating their goal, though this is clearly a rather particular, formal understanding of intrusion.

Although Lehman (2018) does not formally define voice in her study, she acknowledges the transformative approach of academic literacies authors to academic writing and follows Ivanič (1998), Matsuda (2001) and Prior (2001) in combining *ethos* and *persona*, seeing them as mutually constitutive but separate. In Lehman's model of academic writer's voice, *ethos* represents 'voice as content' and *persona* 'voice as form'. Together, or separately,

they constitute the 'depersonalised voice' and the 'text' (Lehman, 2018, p. 137). For Lehman, all three voices – individual, collective and depersonalised – produce authorial presence in the text. Following Lehman, in this paper, *ethos* is defined as the reader's impression of socially marked content spoken or written about – here, academic concepts (e.g. 'I now recognise the importance of postponing the creation of an essay draft until the structure and flow of relevant ideas have been considered', from the first assessed reflection of one of the Foundation students, Student A). *Persona* is the character assumed by the writer, e.g. through the reactions reported in the following account from the first assessment of another of the Foundation students, Student B:

I realised that academic writing would be more complex in this subject because I have to read articles which sometimes have a lot of psychology jargon and statistics, so I don't particularly enjoy them – there isn't an article that gives a straight answer to say that something is proven or disproven, and there's always an argument presented or that could be had, which makes it difficult to get answers quickly.

(Foundation student B's first assessed reflection).

The central section of the paper examines key notions in a foundation level reflective writing marking scheme and features of reflective writing texts produced under EAP and academic literacies conditions. Its purpose is to illustrate the similarities and differences between the reflective writing criteria represented in the marking scheme and the writing produced under different conditions by the students, with a view to suggesting some accommodation of criteria, rubric and reflection in the construction of a credible writer's voice.

## **Study**

### **Participants**

58 transition students took part in the study. 28 reported English as a second language and were studying on a university five-week summer pre-sessional (SPS) course. The students were in two classes, 14 in each class, and had all maintained full attendance since the course started. One class comprised five men and nine women: 11 Chinese, two Taiwanese, and one Saudi student. The majority of students (11) were registered for an

MSc in Mathematics, nine for Corporate and Financial Risk Management and two for Financial Mathematics; two others for Data Science; and one for IT with Business and Management. The other class comprised eight men and six women, comprising 13 Chinese and one Saudi student. The majority of those students (11) were also registered for an MSc in Mathematics, again mostly Corporate and Financial Risk Management; two others for Engineering and Design; and one for Informatics. The students were in their early- to mid-twenties.

30 students reported English as a main language and were home students, i.e. had completed secondary schooling in the UK, and were studying an Academic Development module as part of a Foundation year Psychology course. They were in two classes, 17 in one, 13 in the other. The classes were timetabled in three-hour slots on alternate weeks and approximately 9-10 students attended each class most weeks. One class comprised three men and twelve women, the other one man and thirteen women. The students were in their late-teens or early twenties, therefore rather younger than the SPS students. All participants consented to the anonymised use of their data for research purposes.

## Data

The data for the study included the following:

- Reflective writing marking criteria (SPS and Foundation)
- Personal narrative (Intervention) (27 SPS students and 17 Foundation students)
- Reflection on researched essay writing process (28 SPS students)
- Reflection on the process of preliminary essay writing preparation (30 Foundation students)

The reflective writing marking criteria were published in the handbooks for the SPS course and the Foundation's Academic Development module and were available to tutors and students. For the two cohorts, the intervention of the author took the form of a prompt eliciting a personal narrative of how the writer had come to specialise in their subject. Examples were collected from the two classes in each of the two cohorts. The reflective writing asked of the SPS students was a 'self-evaluation' of their researched essay process and it was worth a notional 5% of the total essay mark. The researched essay

formed a quarter of the final assessment for the course, in the late summer, before the students began their formal degree courses, usually a Masters. The Foundation students studying the Academic Development module were required to write a reflection on each piece of assessed work, five in all, and the reflection itself formed part of the assessment. In the present study, examples were collected of the reflections accompanying the first piece of assessed work, completed early in the academic year. The chosen examples of reflective writing are representative of the wider data.

### **Assessment criteria**

A content analysis (Gläser and Laudel, 2013) of reflective writing assessment criteria for the Academic Development module of the foundation course, where it was not self-referential (e.g. 'Reflective thinking and self-reflection exceeds expectations'), revealed a number of concepts employed as diagnostic criteria: 'insight', 'critical engagement', 'alternative perspectives', 'exploration of the role of self', 'clear author's voice' and 'reference to theory' (Academic Development module handbook, 2018–2019). A similar approach to the self-evaluation criteria of the SPS course (Academic essay guide, 2018) discovered two concepts: 'awareness of strengths and weaknesses', and 'future development needs' (Pre-sessional student handbook, 2018, pp. 30-32). Whilst some of the notions of 'insight', 'reference to theory', 'critical engagement', and 'alternative perspectives' will be familiar to novice writers as objective academic approaches to the work of other writers, others – such as the application of 'insight', 'critical engagement', and 'alternative perspectives' to the writer's own work, not to mention 'exploration of the role of self' and 'clear author's voice' – may be alien and confusing to the novice reflector. These discursive and iterative intra-actions require the objectification of the self and the self-authored texts.

And even if the requisite distancing is achieved, the writer may become aware of a wider audience – the marker or tutor. Whilst supposedly written for the writer self, the self-reflection must simultaneously establish a relationship with the hardly known reader. Perhaps the presence of the alien reader prevents the reflection from remaining a meditation, and the addition of future development needs provides a functional *etic* dimension to the otherwise *emic* exercise.

Although the SPS academic essay writing marking criteria include separate criteria on author voice (under the heading, 'Critical engagement and development of appropriate author voice', Pre-sessional student handbook, 2018, pp. 27-29 and 33-35), only the Academic Development module of the Foundation course refers to 'author's voice' in its reflective writing assessment criteria – in this case, the sub-section for clarity structure and expression and then only for the 60-69% band: 'The author's voice is clear'. In other bands, the notion of clarity alone seems to stand in for 'voice' (Academic Development module handbook, 2018–2019).

## Rubrics

### (1) SPS autobiographical reflection

An academic literacies style autobiographical reflection was elicited as class work from the same groups of students. It took the form of timed writing (15 minutes) with the instruction to 'Write about the key moments in your life that led to your choice of subject at university', followed by three prompts:

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- How did the experience influence you?

### (2) SPS self-evaluation

The rubric for the self-evaluation of the researched academic essay on the SPS course simply states the possibility that a given list of questions could help the student in the process:

From writing this essay:

- what have I learned about my language use?  
... and nine other questions (see Appendix for complete list)

(Academic essay guide, 2018)

From the present perfect in the first seven prompts to the reference to 'will do' and 'next time' in the eighth, it is possible to discern a movement in time. However, the reversion to the present tense in the ninth and tenth question prompts (though 10 refers to improvement) means that building a narrative structure on them is more opaque. There was no recommended word count for the SPS self-evaluation.

### (3) Academic Development module

The first of a series of five reflections over the Academic Development module of the Foundation course accompanied the submission of a small number of preparatory tasks (essay question analysis, mind map, and selection of and comment on four sources). The rubric instructed students to reflect, in approximately 100 words, on the learning process of the whole assignment. Students could select from an additional five prompts that traced the chronological evolution of the assignment process:

In the process of completing this assignment I learned ...

What I realised about academic writing was ... because

What I found most difficult was ... because

I think the strength of this submission is ... because

In order to improve future pieces of academic writing I will attempt to ...

(Academic Development module handbook, 2018–2019)

It is noticeable from the verbs that the prompts supply the skeleton of a process: *-ed/was ... is ... will*, enabling the construction of a narrative voice.

## Example reflections

### (1) SPS autobiographical reflection

The following response by an SPS student to the autobiographical prompt shows a clear sense of self and author voice.

To be honest, I'm not the one who chose that subject. At the very beginning, I was not interested in studying abroad. So I told my agency that they could pick any reasonable major as long as it related to Media but with a name including

'journalism', my BA major. That was a total mistake. This major was too different for me. It was a huge challenge. Now I know I should be well prepared before doing things, otherwise there is no second chance to make a choice. I got myself into a dangerous situation where I might not have graduated in time because I hadn't checked all the information myself but just trusted my unprofessional agent. But then I decided to keep calm and try to avoid being afraid of the challenge that I faced. All I need to do is give my full attention to study and gain that 'Digital Journalism' Masters degree as well as I can.

(SPS student A's personal narrative, July, 2018)

The intimate and confessional detail of the writer's account creates a strongly agentic *persona* and the circumstantial detail combines to construct an equally strong *ethos*. However, the topic, choice of academic subject, is broader than in most academic assessed reflections (similarly, in the MSc Business Communication module, the reflective writing descriptor for content 50-59%: 'may be quite descriptive – (a narrative) rather than a critical reflection', Assessment criteria for Business Communication Skills (reflective writing), n.d.). The question is how the writer could transfer the strengths to a more conventional academic reflection.

Another student from the same class conveys a similarly clear sense of self and author voice to the autobiographical prompt in a narrative that evidences reflection in the first and final paragraphs.

In my undergraduate degree, I chose about the educational mathematic. I think I can be a good teacher at that time. However, when I really got a job to be a junior high school student, I thought it maybe not suit for me. Then I got a chance to change my work as a employer in PICC, which is a finical company.

At that time, my work is to collect and correct some information about customer's car and his traffic accident records. Then I gave the information which is treatment to my partner so that they can customize a special insurance plan to the customer.

In this process, I experience many new things. First of all, the information data is too big so you must spend a lot of time on pairing and checking. Then to some old customers who had a few of traffic accident records, we can give them a concessional rate to attract them to still select our insurance. On the other hand, to some customers which had bad records, they will have some limit.

(SPS student B's personal narrative, July, 2018)

## (2) SPS self-evaluation

The SPS question prompts yielded the following example from student A.

I thought the introduction and conclusion are not that important at the beginning of pre-sessional course. During the course, I found it essential to write a good introduction and conclusion because the introduction is the section that you can put forward the background and your argument about the topic and if it is not that attractive, readers might lose their interest to continue reading, meanwhile, conclusion is the section that you can summarise supportive material to enhance your idea. Furthermore, main body should be organized in a logical structure and give full details of what you are going to explain, otherwise, readers might feel confused.

Now my approaches to using important sources are as listed:

1. Go to the library. Search key words to find out the book that related to your assignment.
2. Search sources through online library in our university's website. If the book you want have electronic copy, you could download it to you own devices without charge. There is no need to go to the library.
3. Seek sources in the Internet. If you need up-to-date information, Internet is the best choice.

The future academic writing must be full of challenge. If I need help, I think I would probably seek help from my classmates first. If the problem is too difficult to solve, maybe the Skills Hub, Academic Development Tutorial and Work Shops are available for us to choose, not to mention that we could ask our tutors for help.



I think I would practise more paraphrase and stop quoting directly from sources. Do more brainstorm and critical thinking, cause it is so important in UK's academic atmosphere. That is what I can think of how to improve myself in the next assignment.

(SPS student A's self-evaluation, July, 2018, my underlinings)

The writer responds to the instructions to evaluate work on the essay, and the underlined words refer to four of the prompts (see Appendix). The repeated reference to the generic 'you' and unorthodox list format remove some of the agency from the writer and create a more distant *persona*. Nonetheless, the writer refers to a number of academic study concepts, such as paraphrasing, quoting, brainstorming, and critical thinking, so constructing *ethos*, to identify some general preparation for future assignments, the first two of which – paraphrasing and the avoidance of direct quotations – can be inferred to apply to the writer. The other two areas – brainstorming and critical thinking – appear to implicitly contrast with a different academic culture and are less sharply identified as needful practice for the writer.

Further examples of recycled input occupy the first paragraph of SPS student B's self-evaluation:

During 5-weeks pre-sessional writing course, I have learnt many knowledges about writing academic essay. An academic essay should have its introduction, main body, conclusion and references. Particularly, in the introduction, the most importance thing is the gap between problems and research. A clear gap can make readers understand the reason why you wrote the essay. Then, the arguments with author's voice should be clearly so that readers can find out the main topic easily. What's more, I learn lots of reporting verbs which can help me to point out my opinion and the skills about searching more information from the literature by reading the references given by the authors.

Yet the content of the second paragraph reveals a stronger *persona* as this student prescribes the 'study [of] some [financial] knowledge such as corporate finance' as a means of making progress.

In my first draft, I knew that I had some problems in organizing my written work such as the link between each paragraphs and sections and my arguments were hiding in the middle of paragraphs which make tutors ignored it. So in my final essay, I try my best to solve these problems. I write a topic sentences with my arguments at the beginning of each paragraphs and make a conclusion in each section. But I think the part of model introduction is a little bit long and boring and the part of my analysis should be increased in my final essay. I think it is a little bit difficult for me because the limit of words and my knowledge about finance.

Therefore, I will begin to study some finical knowledge such as corporate finance during my master's degree courses and find some support of my academic writing in the website or the school skill hub. I think I can improve my structure and put more proportion on my own work in the next essay in the future.

(SPS student B's self-evaluation, July, 2018)

### (3) Academic Development module autobiographical reflection

The same autobiographical prompt administered on the SPS course elicited the following response from one of the Foundation students. With its use of subject-specific vocabulary (e.g. 'mental health problems, symptoms and treatment' and 'atypical experience') and strong authorial voice (e.g. 'I can recognise retrospectively' and 'I began to see the vast array of applications'), the writing is rich in *ethos* and *persona*.

Psychological ideas and approaches to experience and emotion have been a point of interest to me since perhaps the beginning of adolescence a time at which others around me of my age began to become aware of the development of their feelings and attitudes in relation to the arrival of new, significant experiences – such as starting secondary school and overcoming conflicts in newly-formed interpersonal relationships. I can recognise retrospectively that I had a budding fascination for exactly why others responded to certain difficulties in ways different to me and other people around them, It was around the age of twelve that I first learned about mental health problems, symptoms and treatment of such and was intrigued by this seemingly unusual but predictable vulnerability that humans have to develop illness

in a form separate from that which is physical. The decision to study psychology at GCSE level pushed this interest further as I began to see the vast array of applications that psychology can have, both in the realms of atypical experience and that which is relevant to everyday life for almost everyone. A-level psychology became disheartening as the structure and content was not as expansive as many of us would have liked, though this did not dampen my intrigue and I considered at this point that a psychology-relevant career might suit my future self best. It is a subject that I was always content with exploring during my own free time, through for example reading literature created by psychologists – both fiction and non-fiction – a desire that no other academic subject has managed to provoke in me.

(Foundation student A's personal narrative, October, 2018)

With its first-person pronouns and mixture of stative and dynamic verbs, Student C's first paragraph conjures strong intentionality and a vivid *persona* but the *ethos* is less consistent.

Okay so, basically I thought I was going to be a swimmer for ages, but I wasn't good enough to be Olympic, so focused on drama, music and English at school: parents told me to get academic background, picked psychology A-level found human behaviour fascinating, no longer interested in English (actually hated it A-level) so changed my mind and decided to pursue psychology at uni, with hopes of helping mental health issues in the performing industry (if I don't become a famous actor/singer beforehand).

(Foundation student C's personal narrative, October, 2018)

#### (4) Academic Development module, first reflection

The chronological nature of the Academic Development module prompts lent some narrative structure to the reflections that students produced, although the more insightful submissions comprised more than the suggested 100-word target. In the following example from student A, underlined words and phrases respond to the prompts, though not in a predictable way.

By completing stage one of the assignments I learnt that firstly, before you even begin the research process you must establish what the question is asking you to do. I found the PQRS [parts, question words, relevance, structure] strategy very useful as it allowed me to recognise two important parts of the essay and the judgement I would need to make. Further, by highlighting the importance of directive words such as 'justify', it meant that I focused equal attention to this part of the question, where previously my mind would be stuck mainly on 'Do dreams really mean anything?' [the essay question]. However, I had difficulty in narrowing down which words went in the 'relevant' category. This and other steps made me realise that I struggle with being concise. This is something that I would like to work on in the future. The thing I found most useful was the mind map as it enabled me to organise my ideas and to recognise links between my ideas. It was helpful to visually see these links. I think a strength of this submission is that it takes you through a step by step process. This makes the preparation less overwhelming, while also encouraging you to take a more critical and thorough approach.

(Foundation student A's first assessed reflection, October, 2018, my underlinings)

Much like the SPS student's autobiographical reflection in (1), the student's incorporation and adaptation of the prompts and use of the first person helps to create a balance between *ethos* and *persona*. The detail of the 'struggle' and approval of visualisation contribute to the sense of a writer with some agency. *Ethos* is constructed through lexis such as 'PQRS' and 'directive words' and it is clear from the underlining that the scaffolding prompts combine to form a narrative *persona*, weakened only by the inclusion of 'you' in the first and last two sentences, perhaps where the writer was more self-conscious of their task.

The prompts work harder to provide the cohesion in Foundation student C's shorter reflection. The superficial coherence they provide, supported by the student's linguistic fluency, barely disguises the similarity in *ethos* with SPS student B's self-evaluation above.

In this assignment process, what I realised about academic writing was that it is a much lengthier and carefully planned process that I initially thought, with all the research and background reading to form a solid argument with weight. What I

found most difficult is finding relevant sources that related directly to the question, but that relates to what I think is the strength of the submission, which is the wide range of psychological approaches I considered in answering the question. To improve future academic writing pieces I will attempt to explore the counter argument further, to avoid producing a biased essay.

(Foundation student C's first assessed reflection, October, 2018)

The similarity of voice between SPS student B's self-evaluation and Foundation student C's first assessed reflection illustrate how *persona* alone is insufficient to construct credible reflective writing; the fact that the confident expression of *ethos* is also necessary provides support for a dual approach to teaching the genre of reflection in academic writing, as discussed in the next section.

## ***Discussion and conclusion***

The concept of voice as *ethos* vs *persona* offers a lens through which to view the composition process of reflective writing. Lehman's (2018) model of authorial self-representation in academic text (p. 52), employs the notions of *ethos* and *persona* as the subject positions that the author occupies and the writer's social roles respectively. The fluency and coherence of responses to autobiographical prompts often results in writing that is persuasive in these respects. Here, the positioning of the writer's social role is clear; the audience is addressed and invoked, and consequently both *ethos* and *persona* are successful. In Lehman's (2018) model of academic writer's voice (p. 143), however, *ethos* and *persona* are conceived as discursively marked by interactional features such as hedges and attitude markers (*ethos*) or as metadiscourse or signalling such as transitions and code glosses (*persona*). In contrast, *ethos* in novice reflective writing, the writer's 'real' self, is generally not a convincing representation, but *persona* can be more successful.

More helpful is to understand the reasons for the lack of conviction and credibility, which is likely to be the result of an inconsistent representation of the self, created by a mixture of *personas*, the effect of multi-voicing, or heteroglossia. The listing and liberal use of special terms like 'resources', 'lecture', and 'note-taking', 'vocabularies, grammar and idioms' in

the SPS student's self-evaluation above are imports from course material and classroom experiences. Rather than representing 'the extent to which a writer intrudes into a text' (Hyland, 2002, p. 1092), the extract illustrates the extent to which text intrudes into the writer's *persona*. It is an example of the writer borrowing the verbal accessories of a discourse community to claim authenticity. In contrast, the prompts given in the Academic Development rubric enabled the Foundation students to construct a more cohesive and coherent voice; *ethos* and *persona* are more consistent in the semi-narrative of the first assessed reflection above. Although neither student cohort, SPS nor Foundation, had former experience of writing reflectively, it may be that the largely East Asian students of the SPS course found introspection especially problematic, associating it with western individualism. For example, Chan (1999) notes the Confucian-derived 'self-effacement' of Chinese culture, its emphasis on the concrete, and the 'non-development of abstract thought' (p. 299). In any case, the extracts are a reminder that a form-based understanding of writer identity, as in Hyland (2002), is insufficient for analysing and assessing reflective writing.

For students who are not given such prompts, or who find difficulty in selecting economically from the target discourse community, a principled approach might be to encourage a sense of self through autobiographic prompts to establish an authentic *persona*. The student would be encouraged to transfer the narrative approach to reflection, observing themselves from within, as in the lived experience of the autobiographic account, and objectively reference alternatives, thus establishing a convincing *ethos*. Neither EAP nor academic literacies approaches appear to be completely successful with novice writers of reflection. A hybrid to the scaffolding of reflective writing, starting with autobiography and developing a critical analytic approach via tutor comment and peer discussion, would more likely attain the end points in Dewey's (1933) model of a solution and a new concept, leading to a transformed identity.

It is unsurprising that the novice writer can feel alienated faced with an array of academic conventions. The realisation that for many from non-academic backgrounds the alienation felt was a manifestation of a power imbalance that required re-calibration gave rise to the academic literacies movement. Practitioners in the academic literacies movement teach novice writers to become aware of differences between their past selves and the new communities they seek to join, as expressed in new and exotic forms of literacy. Students

are invited to write about themselves. However, EAP steers a determinedly objective course, fixing on conventions rather than exceptions, and the text rather than the individual. The nature of reflection necessitates a constant shifting of focus and address between *emic* – here, the internal perspective of the individual writer, and *etic* – the interpretation of an outside observer as the writer imagines it, and a self-appraisal of the writer's thoughts and sensations. Through its transformative agenda, the academic literacies approach enables deep, rather than surface, learning, encouraging through *gestalt*, i.e. the shifting viewpoint of details and wholes, the instability that leads, in Dewey's (1933) model, to revision and change. By playing with perspectives, the novice writer is able to alight on a problem to investigate. Revision and change enable new concept formation, leading to the gyration and evolution of Dewey's reflective cycle rather than simple closure. As I discovered in my first attempt at writing reflection in an academic setting, the scaffolding of autobiographic narrative is a potential enabler for novices to develop the necessary writer's voice and more convincingly transition to confident reflective writing.

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## **Appendix**

### **Self evaluation**

The following questions may help you to write an evaluation of your work.

From writing this essay

- what have I learned about my language use?
- what have I learned about using information sources?
- what have I learned about reading and note-taking?
- what have I learned about constructing an argument?
- what have I learned about structuring my written work?
- what have I learned about organising my time?
- what have I learned about how to get the most out of tutorials?
- what things will I do differently next time?
- what do I feel more confident about?
- what do I need to improve?

(Academic essay guide, 2018)

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