'I was not to forget that my reader comes from another world':
An Academic Literacies Perspective on Shuttling Between the Workplace and the Academy

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Abstract

In response to pressure to participate in the 'knowledge economy', universities are offering a wide range of different masters programmes oriented to the professions. Universities are opening their doors without fully understanding what these programmes entail, and with little attention to the literacy challenges that students face together with supervisors and academic literacy teachers. This article contributes to our understanding of the mixed forms of academic discourse produced by postgraduates in professional masters' programmes by focusing on students registered for the MTech in Policing at a large ODL (Open Distance Learning) university at the point where they are writing research proposals. I trace how students use recontextualisation strategies, such as mimicry and transformation, to signal how they engage with research literacies, as they shuttle between the workplace and academic contexts. The implications for supervisors and literacy educators about the nature of social practices in an ODL context acknowledge and embrace hybridity as an emerging feature of the research literacy practices, rather than as a problem to be erased, based on a proposed hybrid PWU (Profession Workplace University) model.

There is commitment from both government and universities in South Africa to increase the number of postgraduate students and the diversity of postgraduate qualifications. This is in response to both the global trend towards 'the knowledge economy' (Usher, 2002) and to the post-apartheid need to redress past educational imbalances. The National Development Plan intends to increase graduation rates dramatically to produce 100 doctoral graduates per million per year by 2030, implying an increase from 1420 in 2010 to well over 5000 a year (National Development Plan, 2012). There are many challenges to this vision, for example funding, supervision capacity and research writing. These challenges are addressed in, for example, an analysis on low success rates which was the subject for discussion in a presentation by Universities South Africa, formerly HESA (Higher Education South Africa),

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to the Government Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training (HESA, 2014: 5). In addition, research has focussed on academic literacy (Thesen & Cooper, 2013), supervision (Butler, 2011), and throughput (Mouton, 2007).

Studies on research writing and academic literacies have identified the nexus between knowledge and academic literacies (Jacobs, 2013), and knowledge and research writing (Aitchison & Lee, 2006). For instance, Aitchison and Lee (2006: 266) describe the theoretical challenges – between knowledge production and research writing - which students face when doing research writing. My own research has explored academic literacies among policing students registered for the MTech (Magister Technologae) degree at a South African open and distance university (Ndlangamandla, 2012, 2015). It argues that academic departments are admitting MTech students without any understanding of what such a qualification might involve, and how its literacy practices are an expression of the shift towards understanding how professional practices influence writing. Furthermore, it reveals how the literacy practices might be different from traditional academic writing that is seen to serve the discipline rather than the knowledge-making practices of the fields in which mature students are located. In this paper, I show how professional postgraduate students' research proposal writing is influenced by the need to satisfy both the requirements of the academic supervisor and those of the workplace for their proposals to be accepted. This duality calls for a hybrid model of the university and the workplace with a focus on knowledge and academic literacies.

This paper describes hybrid literacies revealed during the writing of research proposals in the largest South African university: Unisa (University of South Africa). It focuses on students who were enrolled for an MTech degree in Policing at Unisa between 2008 and 2012. The MTech Policing degree is offered by the Department of Police Practice in the School of Criminal Justice, under the College of Law. It cannot be assumed that postgraduate students arrive at this stage knowing how to write a proposal. Clark (2005) explains that there are assumptions dating from the 1900s that if a postgraduate student is able to write a research text, she therefore does not need to be taught how to write the proposal. Yet, Clark (2005: 147) observes that 'writing a thesis proposal involves addressing a wider and to some extent unfamiliar audience'. It is to these imagined and multiple audiences that I return later when analysing the data.

Research proposal writing is a contested stage of a postgraduate research process that occurs in the first year of MTech registration before students can proceed to the dissertation. It is particularly challenging for mature postgraduate students who have to shuttle between the workplace and academic contexts. Therefore, it is important to explore what counts as literacy and for whom in both the workplace and the academic context. Literacy (or rather academic literacy) tends to be perceived from the point of view of traditional, deficit (Lillis, 2001), and Anglo-normative traditions (McKinney, 2017), which do not take into account diversity, particularly for students shuttling between the workplace and the academic context. Literacy is viewed as a social practice (Lea & Street, 2006). Academic literacies as a field usually focuses on university literacies as opposed to workplace literacies. Moreover, workplace literacy practices coming from the police context have not been adequately researched.

In this paper, I focus on answering the following two research questions:

1. What are the literacy practices in the police workplace context?
2. How are these literacy practices recontextualised in academic writing in the MTech proposals?

While researchers are beginning to take an interest in the hybrid literacies that emerge in the interface between university and the workplace, there is a need for research that is true to the tradition of literacy as social practice, that pays attention to specific sites and institutions – in this case ODL, and the police. The academic literacies tradition is also important in that it challenges deficit notions of student texts, with an interest in student text as an expression of shifts and emergence, rather than as problematic and riddled with errors. Academic supervisors in the discipline frequently denounce and label students' writing as bad, non-standard or non-academic English. Students are portrayed as underprepared and lacking in critical thinking skills. However, I have opted to use an 'academic literacies' approach (Lillis & Scott, 2007) to find out about the literacy practices in the police workplace and professional context, and how these are recontextualised in academic writing practices. The academic literacies approach, using literacy in the plural, argues for 'a transformative interest in meaning making, set alongside a critical ethnographic gaze focusing on situated text production and practice' (Lillis & Scott, 2007: 13). Also key for this paper is the concept of genre as straddling both the professional and academic contexts, and the issue of shuttling between contexts as opposed to the more common notion of 'crossing discourse boundaries' (van Schalkwyk, 2007), which is linked to undergraduate students coming from high school. In broad descriptions, the workplace is associated with professional writing and the academic context is associated with research writing, and both are relevant and have interplay in the MTech.

Before focusing on the interplay between professional and academic literacies, I explore the types of knowledge that typically distinguish the workplace from the academic context. Blunt (2005: 1030) observes that 'linguistic challenges need to be addressed more than cosmetically if knowledge production is to be improved'. The link between knowledge and its expression in literacy practices is not often explored in conceptualising the problem, I use Gibbons et al.'s (1994) model of the Mode 1 and 2 knowledge framework and locate it in the context of an ODL institution.

Knowledge and literacies in the ODL university: a mismatch

Unisa has been a dedicated ODL institution and a comprehensive university since the 2004 merger with the former Technikon South Africa. ODL is defined as:

A multi-dimensional concept aimed at bridging the time, geographical, economic, social, and educational and communication distance between student and institution, student and academics, student and courseware and student and peers. Open distance learning focuses on removing barriers to access learning, flexibility of learning provision, student-centredness, supporting students and constructing learning programmes with the expectation that students can succeed (Unisa Open Distance Learning Policy, 2008: 2).

According to Gibbons (2004), the characteristics of comprehensive universities are diversity – by offering a range of programmes (vocational, career-focussed, professional and general formative), accessibility, student mobility, responsiveness, and flexibility. Both the ODL and comprehensive nature are factors that have to be considered in the relationship between knowledge and academic literacies.

In the context of diversity of both qualifications and students described above, I borrow the notion of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge. Gibbons et al. (1994) argue that Mode 1 knowledge is produced in the university by academics and Mode 2 knowledge is produced in the workplace by practitioners. Other characteristics of Mode 1 knowledge are that it is disciplinary, and theoretical. On the other hand, Mode 2 knowledge is transdisciplinary and practical.

Students who are admitted into the MTech programme are either working for the SAPS (South African Police Service) or other security related fields. Policing as a profession is institutionalised within the South African state through the Courts and the National Prosecuting Authority. The requirement for admission to the Mtech is that the students should have a BTech (Bachelor Technologae) in a security related field. The undergraduate programmes draw from fields of study such as the Social Sciences, Management, and Criminal Justice. The police in South Africa belong to the SAPS, an organ of the state mandated by the constitution to protect citizens and enforce the law. After completing six months of basic training, new police personnel are posted to stations and are considered competent to join the profession. Some of them voluntarily decide to enrol at a tertiary institution to pursue courses like the National Diploma in Policing, the BTech, and the MTech, the case explored in this paper.

Shay (2013) observes that the comprehensive university is a new phenomenon in South Africa and this presents unique challenges for the curriculum in terms of the academic, professional and practical content. In a comprehensive university, one would expect to find a significant emphasis on both professional and workplace knowledges and their forms. While Unisa claims the identity of a comprehensive university with its emphasis on removing barriers to access, flexibility and student centeredness, I will show that there is a mismatch between this espoused identity, and the practices expected in the way that MTech students are expected to write the research proposal. The model of a proposal endorsed is largely similar to a research masters degree within Mode 1 knowledge. Gibbons (2004) has criticised the South African comprehensive universities for not having their hybrid identity show through the curriculum.

Police studies presents a particular case for investigating the interplay between knowledge and literacies. Studies on police university education are scathing of the ethos and values in training. For example, Adlam (1999) describes an unsuccessful educational process at Bramshill in the UK, whose intention was to develop police managers to be reflective practitioners. According to Adlam, tutors tried to mitigate the gulf between theory and practice, suspecting that it was the cause of the failure of the training. However, the reasons for the failure were attributed to the unique police cultural milieu. The police training and workplace has tendencies to reinforce the command and control culture, rather than enabling an open questioning of its intrinsic value to society and the context of a set of values that should guide it (White, 2006). Adlam (1999) argues that critical reflection on police practice

is at odds with the 'rank-and-file' nature of police officers. The gap between the police sociocultural context and academic sociocultural context is expressed in the widely cited doubts about professionalism amongst the police (e.g. Ndlangamandla, 2015). Critical reflection is an important aspect of practice-based research and Mode 2 knowledge. However, there is an absence or under-use of methods and strategies to promote critical reflection in the MTech. Therefore, there is a need to explore a hybrid model to address this mismatch.

Hybridity: a model and a theory
In order to trace the complexities in the literacy practices, I adapt Lee et al.'s (2000) model of a hybrid curriculum in the context of the professional doctorate in the United Kingdom and Australia. This model is adapted below as a descriptive literacies framework for ODL that acknowledges the inevitably hybrid nature of the knowledge-making practices:
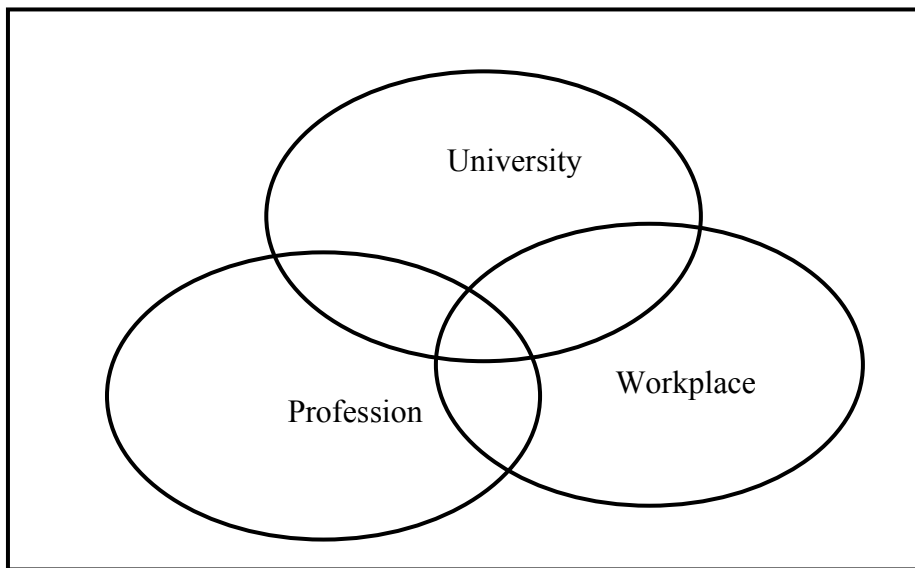

Figure 1: The hybrid contextual model (the PWU model by Lee et al. (2000: 127)

The diagram above signals the intersection between Professional (P) literacies, Workplace (W) literacies, and University (U) literacies. The student who is writing a research proposal has to position herself in the epicentre of this diagram. She has to navigate and shuttle across boundaries to realise the multiple functions or purposes for the genre of the proposal. What makes this model relevant in the present study context is the fact that it takes into account the role of knowledge in the discourses that the student brings along to the intersection of these three circles. It is used in conjunction with the notion of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge by Gibbons et al. (1994) above. San Miguel and Nelson (2007) use it to illustrate the academic writing challenges of professional nursing students registered for a professional doctorate. Maxwell (2003) explains the PWU diagram by illustrating how the university in some cases draws from both the profession and the workplace. Maxwell (2003: 286) argues that:

The hybrid curriculum does not privilege academic knowledge over knowledge produced and held by the profession. The model is useful too in that it points to the centrality of the workplace, i.e. the realities of the people and human relationships there.

In the words of Usher (2002: 151), 'the curriculum of this education is work itself'. Creaton (2016: 219) observes that the professional doctorate is 'a rich source of data for the investigation of discursive practices'. In this paper, I explore both the discursive practices and the knowledge types of the MTech degree by comparing it to the professional doctorate because there is very little research on the MTech as a professional degree. In addition, I draw on the concept of hybridity as it has been used in writing as a social practice, in order to foreground academic literacies when the three contexts intersect. Although, the term 'hybrid' has been already used above as a descriptive term pointing to a mix of elements in the hybrid model, it has interesting uses and connotations in literacy studies, where it is also used theoretically to indicate a strategy in the face of dominant practices, particularly through a postcolonial perspective on knowledge and literacy practices.

Hybridity can be a strategy for exploring the relationship between the workplace and academic literacy practices. Of interest in this paper is that by hybridising (through a strategy called recontextualisation mentioned below), some students do succeed to meet the expectations of their audiences through the proposal. However, Canagarajah and Lee warn that hybridity is not a panacea to the writing challenges of novice writers. Their view is that it needs negotiation, and it is part of the risk in academic writing (Canagarajah & Lee, 2013: 62). Both Canagarajah and Lee, and Williams (2003), examine how hybridity can be explored for writing studies by lecturers using a postcolonial lenses, drawing on the cultural theory of Homi Bhabha, which views hybridity as 'the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities…the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal' (Bhabha, 1994: 159). Williams (2003) discusses two perspectives of hybridity in a multicultural context: the first is mimicry and the second is resistance in a multicultural context. Williams observes that 'teachers expect students to recognise their authority through the adoption of the culture and values of the institution'. However, he argues that it is important that there are constraints on this mimicry: it 'must resemble authority but not replicate it' (2003: 591). Hybridity then changes its shape by showing resistance or aporia or both. In other words, hybridity can be complex to identify and needs multiple lenses. This is supported by Williams' (2003: 601) observations of his pedagogies in 'cross-cultural' classrooms. He observes that:

For all of my good intentions in the classroom, for all of the ways in which I wanted to engender cross-cultural communication and understanding, power and hybridity were constantly at work in redefining my relationships with my students. I may have not wanted to admit, but I was the authority figure of the dominant culture, and they were in a relationship with me not unlike the one Bhabha describes about the colonial authority and colonial subject. I both represented and enforced the values of the dominant culture as I taught the class, read their papers, and guided class discussions.

The first person 'I' above stands for the supervisor and the literacy teacher. Williams concludes that because of the powerful position of a teacher, students are left with a choice of either mimicry or resistance. The previous discussion has stated the problem – shuttling between two contexts with different types of knowledges and literacy practices – and described the combination of knowledge with an academic literacies lenses, foregrounding the concept of hybridity both descriptively and theoretically.

Research methodology

I have been involved with the MTech Policing students for over 10 years, having started as an academic writing tutor, then becoming a researcher and a literacy practitioner. I use linguistic discourse analysis with ethnographic framing to understand the literacy practices in policing and how they are recontextualised in research proposals at an ODL university. This method consists of limited ethnography or an ethnographic perspective (Street, 2010), as opposed to classical extended ethnography. Instead, it relies on methods like participant observations, self-reflections, and unstructured interviews combined with discourse analysis. Canagarajah (2013: 45) describes what an ethnographic perspective is, in the context of being a teacher-researcher by saying that, 'ethnographic perspectives enabled (one) to adopt an emic orientation toward students' own ways of practicing literacy without imposing unfair disciplinary constructs'.

The main concepts that are used in this analysis are intertextuality, interdiscursivity, recontextualisation and hybridity. Fairclough (1992: 84) describes intertextuality as 'the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth'. He argues that the intertextuality of the text can be seen as incorporating the potentially complex relationships it has with the conventions (genres, discourses, styles, and activity types), which are structured together to constitute an order of discourse. Fairclough (1992) distinguishes between manifest intertextuality and interdiscusivity, stating that 'manifest intertextuality is the case where specific other texts are overtly drawn upon within a text, whereas interdiscursivity is a matter of how the discourse type is constituted through the combination of elements of orders of discourse' (117-118). In the words of Fairclough (1992: 104), interdiscursivity is 'to underline that the focus is on discourse conventions rather than other texts as constitutive'.

There is a difference between intertextuality and recontextualisation. Linell defines recontextualisation as 'the dynamic transfer and transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context to another' (Linell, quoted in Gunilla, 2006: 674). My study focuses on this 'dynamic transfer and transformation' in the proposals written by MTech policing students. Gunilla (2006: 674) argues that, 'aspects that can be transformed between contexts range from linguistic expressions, like wording, phrases and propositions, to more abstract or larger entities, like stories, arguments, knowledge, values and ideologies or ways of saying things'. In the data analysis, recontextualisation strategies link the workplace literacy practices and academic literacy practices.

Ethics processes were complex. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the academic department, individual supervisors, students, as well as the SAPS. Respondents were assured that I would make all efforts to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of

the research. I use pseudonyms to protect the identity of the respondents. Two students, 'Anele' and 'Maggie', form the bases of comparison for this paper (See profiles of the students in Appendix A).

I begin with a thematic analysis of Tutorial Letter 101, which is the main form of guidance given to the students on how to write a proposal. Then, extracts from students' proposals are analysed. These extracts focus on the 'key theoretical concepts' and the 'literature review' sections of the proposal. Lastly, I analyse unstructured interviews with the students using the identified linguistic concepts. The technique that was used in the interviews with the students is similar to Lillis's (2001) method of 'talk around text', where students as insiders talk or reflect on their writing by responding to prompts from the academic literacy researcher. I then use a recontextualisation strategy analysis to link findings from the 'talk around text' with hybridity as a 'strategy' for writing.

The guidelines for proposal writing given in Tutorial Letter 101

After registration, students are given a Tutorial Letter. The document is the main departmental guide given to students to undertake their studies, after which they communicate with their supervisors for the duration of their studies. The Tutorial Letter has five sections. These sections are as follows:

- Section 1: General Information
- Section 2: Submission of the research proposal
- Section 3: The dissertation and its structure
- Section 4: The supervision process: Roles and Tasks of the Supervisor and the MTech student
- Section 5: Annexures

In section 5, students are given three different templates: a template for the cover of the research proposal, a library and information centre template, and a pro forma for the research proposal. The pro forma for the research proposal is one of the documents that is drawn from intertextually by the learners. It appears to be used by all the students, even though they have different supervisors. Students are given definitions, explanations, and advice on how to write the sections of the proposal. For example, Tutorial Letter 101 states the following about the Key Theoretical Concept and the Literature Review:

6. Key Theoretical Concepts/constructs of the Study
The problem statement contains a number of concepts that should be defined clearly. You have to provide accurate and unambiguous definitions of the most important concepts and ensure that these concepts are used consistently throughout the research dissertation.

The definition of key concepts is necessary to identify related research and to place the current research project within a conceptual and theoretical context. It involves two steps:
- *a conceptual or theoretical definition,*
- *an operational definition.*

> *The conceptual or theoretical definition should be derived from the literature. An operational definition assigns meaning by specifying what must be measured or assessed or how it should be measured or assessed. In this case, it is also important to substantiate all facts and to acknowledge all sources consulted.* (Tutorial Letter 101: 6)

According to the guidelines that the students have been given above, the key theoretical concepts should be drawn from the literature, rather than from work-based practice. Both students have a section on Key Theoretical Concepts in their proposal. However, as illustrated in the analysis that follows, the students do not indicate how the key theoretical concepts chosen relate to the rest of the proposal, and how they provide research 'theoretical' underpinnings of the proposed research. I will show that workplace concepts are recontextualised in students' proposals without the theoretical research significance suggested in Tutorial letter 101, and in the literature on Mode 1 research (Gibbons et al. 1994). Instead, what emerges in the students' texts are practices which are associated with the workplace and the profession, and Mode 2 knowledge.

Borrowing from workplace operational concepts and Tutorial Letter 1
Analysis of extract from Anele's proposal: mimicry
As mentioned in the student's profile, Anele is a warrant officer whose research is an investigation into human trafficking (a crime involving the movement of vulnerable persons for committing various kinds of exploitation and abuse). Anele starts by borrowing from Tutorial Letter 101, (although this is incorrectly referenced as Unisa (2009: 36), and a research textbook by Creswell (2003)):

> *According to Unisa (2009:36) the definition of key concepts is necessary to identify related research and to place the current research project within a conceptual and theoretical context. Researchers define terms in order to assist readers to understand what they precisely mean. This is done particularly if the reader is not familiar with the particular field of study of the researcher (Creswell, 2003: 143).*

> ***Pimp***
> *According to Oxford (2006: 1099) a pimp is a man who controls prostitutes and lives on the money that they earn. According to Koen (2009: 22) Pimps benefit from trafficking in children in that they usually end up with the money, which the child makes through being sexually exploited.* (Anele's proposal, page 7)

In the first sentence, e.g. 'according to Unisa (2009: 36)…' Anele is borrowing what is stated in Tutorial Letter 101. However, the reference to Unisa should have been to the name of the course, e.g. POL501M. He uses the word 'according to' three times in order to signal authorship or source of ideas. The repetition of the instructions from Tutorial Letter 101 is part of an intertextual chain from the guidelines and books that the students are given. What is significant is how and why the student reproduces the injunction from the Tutorial Letter in his proposal. In general, students seem eager to repeat or demonstrate that they have

understood the meaning of each subsection of the proposal before going onto the necessary explanation of a 'key theoretical concept'.

The key theoretical concept here, 'Pimp', does not feature in the rest of the proposal. This casts some doubt over the relevance of this term as a key theoretical concept. When students attempt to discuss the 'key theoretical concepts', there is a tendency to focus on 'operational definitions' rather than the more theoretical ones, as suggested in Tutorial Letter 101. If one were writing key concepts sections in proposals, one would expect that such terms should have a bearing on the theoretical or conceptual underpinnings of the rest of the study, or Mode 1 knowledge (Gibbons, et al., 1994). When reading this section, I expect to see something to do with paradigms, abstract ideas, or the theory versus practice division, as the heading 'Key Theoretical Concepts' in the research proposal might suggest in social scientific academic discourse. To summarise, Anele's mimicry is displayed in borrowing and imitation of the Tutorial Letter and the 'manifest intertextuality' of the term 'pimp'.

Analysis of extract from Maggie's proposal: interdiscursivity

One of the sections of the proposal where the literacy practices of policing and the academy intersect is the literature review. Maggie displays interdiscursivity in her proposal in that her literature review resembles a professional, PowerPoint presentation. It is strange that there is no manifest intertextuality, in other words, overt referencing, in the extract below:

6.2.1 Literature Review

Crime prevention models, crime risk reduction models and crime management strategies available in the following fields will be included in the literature review:

- *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*
- *Situational crime prevention*
- *Community-based crime prevention*

Both local and international sources will be examined to find common 'best practices' in the aforementioned fields. (Maggie's proposal, page 5)

Maggie's literature review section is shorter. It is written in point form, as if it were a PowerPoint presentation. She notes the topics of the review, e.g. 'crime prevention models', and then uses three bullets to suggest point-form presentation. Maggie then animates the voice of the lecturer or guidelines, e.g., 'both local and international sources will be examined', imitating advice in Tutorial Letter 101 that students should consult both local and international sources. The 'point-form' presentation style could be a sign of an interdiscursive mix.

To follow up on aspects of the proposal, I then organised a 'talk around text' with Maggie. This involved travelling from Pretoria to her workplace in the North West Province.

'I was not to forget that my reader comes from another world': Maggie's recontextualisation strategy

In my reading and analysis of Maggie's written proposal, I observed that some information was presented in bullets, or points, and some in bolded text. I then framed the following question during my 'talk around text':

> *Researcher*: *So do you get a mismatch between what the supervisor wants and your own writing?*
>
> *Maggie*: *I think Villa did a good job in changing my style. What she did to change the style is that sometimes I would write the fact and not elaborate as to what it means. She would guide me with questions...eh...explain this to me. Tell me why do you find this interesting. Explain the significance so that the reader must understand. By providing those, it eventually changed my factual stance into a story line that one can follow. The thing is my audience has always been people in the crime world. I have clients who are police commissioners or parliament, or the private sector. Its security managers. So you don't need to explain certain things, in our world, there is a common understanding. I think that was the biggest challenge.* **I was not to forget that my reader comes from another world** *and therefore he must understand. That is one of the things where Villa played a significant role, by asking me to explain, give significance, and say why I find this interesting. After a couple of years then my statements eventually became paragraphs.*

Maggie agreed with my analysis of her writing, when I observed that it tended to be presented in points or bullets that were suitable for oral presentations, where the speaker or presenter could then elaborate. I wanted to find out why she did this because it seemed unusual to me. In her response, she not only confirmed that this was indeed the case but she also clarified that the supervisor gradually managed to influence her to change this way of writing. The supervisor asked for more explanations that would conform to academic values of knowledge, and of writing. The supervisor is located in the academic discourse community, yet Maggie straddles contexts that consist of both professional and workplace values, and is shuttling between these contexts. Maggie's regular discourse community consists of both the police and mining corporate communication. She aptly describes this when she says, 'I was not to forget that my reader comes from another world'. Maggie is using interdiscursivity within text creation by drawing on her workplace experiences. Although Maggie acknowledges the guidance given by the supervisor, it is interesting to me that I could still find these interdiscursive practices in her writing. This suggests that her writing may not be described as mimicry as was the case with Anele, but is rather a hybridisation of workplace and professional literacies. I then asked for her views on whether the use of Tutorial Letter 101 was helpful when she was writing the proposal. The following was Maggie's response to my comment below:

> *Researcher*: *I know you mentioned format, for the proposal. I know that you are given sub-headings to use for your proposal. Did you find that useful to write, the problem statement, the questions and so on?*

> *Maggie: I think the structure is one thing, and it would be difficult if you have never done one before. I think to what level you need to expand on those sub-headings was very difficult. For instance, if you take a corporate proposal, they are not really interested in your methodology. They are interested in your ethical concessions, any kind of reputational aspect that might impact on your research project, and the budget. 12 pages of the proposal is the budget. Now obviously, Unisa is very different from that. You weren't sure of how much percentage should be underneath those headings. Like we do in the corporate world, we divide it like 70% of your proposal should be the costs and how you will analyze that. Now I found that in Unisa the methodology was more important and then she told me that I must explain on this sub section. Now I went forth and did a big literature, which is not required at that level. I did half the literature for the master's when I was doing the proposal. So that is different in the corporate world, I was already with North West Mine. I was already part of the corporate writing style. They use a different template and structure, apparently Unisa does not care much about the budget.*

From the views she expresses, it is obvious that this is a student who is familiar with business proposals as opposed to academic research proposals. She mentions the functions of business proposals and the needs of the gatekeepers who are interested in the image of the company and corporate profits. She reiterates what was expected from Anele above, namely that the supervisor expected more explanations in some of the subsections, and added that there is a mismatch between the needs of the workplace audience and the academic audience. This reveals the dual functions of genre straddling between the workplace and the university. The academic and workplace contexts are worlds apart. This is seen in the uptake by Maggie and Anele of these subheadings from the Tutorial Letter. Each student brings his or her own histories, experiences, and interpretations. My reading of the students' proposals – influenced by my applied linguistic background and academic literacies approaches - can sometimes lead to some misunderstandings or 'frustrations' (Williams, 2003), as the students have to shuttle between the discourses. Maggie's expectation of a formulaic approach to writing by quantifying - for example, 70% for costs and 12 pages for the budget - may be in line with business principles but it is not necessary for the university, especially because the supervisor may not be interested in funding the proposal but instead may be enforcing the gatekeeping function of a proposal genre within Mode 1 (academic) knowledge.

My analysis of Anele's writing showed that there were aspects of his proposal where he was 'borrowing', and providing explanations, and definitions. To find out whether this was influenced by a workplace policing culture or was just an academic discourse expectation from the supervisors, I asked Maggie because of her experience in SAPS, corporate mining, and university to share her views on this:

> *Researcher: Some of the students take the heading and, before they do something or write, they start by defining – like a literature review is this – before they actually do the literature review, I think I found that a lot with the students.*
> *Maggie: Not so much the literature review I think. I would say when I am writing the methodology, I would start by defining the methodology. I think one of the reasons*

> *why you might find higher existence of that among policing students is that policing is a **definition based writing style. You need to clarify terms. For instance, the person who is reading your proposal, may not understand what is a literature review.** No one knows what it is, so because of the way things are done, we then adopt that even when we leave.*

Interestingly, Maggie locates this within the policing culture and not the academic culture. She describes policing as a 'definition-based writing style'. This complicates any attempt to locate or divide these practices as workplace versus academic, at least in Maggie's case. What is shown here is how the same student who has travelled and inhabited all three of the PWU contexts, is showing a strategy that does not valorise boundaries. Instead, Maggie shows that there are overlaps. I therefore locate the proposal at the intersection where there is fluidity and flow between the professional, workplace and academic contexts. These require integration, flexibility and diversity (explained below). Maggie also mentions the fact that the person who is reading the proposal may not understand what a 'literature review' is or a 'research design' is. I now move on to show that both Anele and Maggie are strategic in their writing practices.

Recontextualisation strategies: Mimicry and transformation

Anele shows mimicry of the Tutorial Letter 101. This is a student who may have seen very little of other proposals. Recently, in a research writing workshop students were giving peer feedback on their proposal drafts. The students pointed out this tendency to start by defining and explaining the research process and research terms, and their views were that it was not necessary. Contrary to this, one of the supervisors corrected them and said this was important. The idea of mimicry is borrowed from Bhabha, 'as a normalizing strategy of colonial domination and consolidation of power' (in Williams, 2003: 590). Williams (2003: 590) observes that, 'teachers expect students to recognize their authority through the adoption of the culture and values of the institution'. Perhaps this imitation is what the supervisors expect from their students.

In the case of Anele, the recontextualisation occurs through mimicry in the proposal. This shows that he is imitating and revoicing the genre norms (Bakhtin, 1984). Bakhtin, (1984: 202) asserts that:

> The life of a word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another, from one generation to another. In this process the word does not forget its own path and cannot completely free itself from these concrete contexts into which it has entered.

Intertextuality reveals the original context the concepts are borrowed from and how the student is using them in the proposal. On the other hand, Maggie transforms discourse conventions in her proposal. She demonstrates this when shuttling or navigating between the contexts.

Anele's mimicry of Tutorial Letter 101 and the imitation of research methodology books can be viewed as an analysis of student's literacy practices that broadens narrow

versions of academic literacies. Mimicry shows how students interpret the literacy practices when writing the proposals. Anele uses re-voicing, and mimicry to address both the workplace and academic discourse communities. On the other hand, Maggie's interpretation of the tutorial letter, and the self-help research methods books, shows interdiscursivity of her workplace and professional practices. Maggie mixes different styles and discourse conventions. In Maggie's writing, there is evidence of transformation. While she shows deference to the advice of the supervisor, she maintains her own workplace identity. In this way, she shows how the intersections of practices can be mixed and blended in the discourses, thus the focus on hybrid literacies is befitting for this discussion.

Maggie's use of interdiscursivity displays a 'meta-reflective' awareness of genre function, style, audience and purpose. However, rather than reinforcing or separating boundaries, it is useful to view the research literacies as hybrid and mixed. Maggie moves away from the binaries of police culture versus academic culture, and her work could be read using the notion of border crossing in what Pratt calls the 'contact zones' (Pratt, 1999). Contact zones describe a situation where different contexts and cultures historically kept apart collide and come together. For example, Pratt (cited in Williams 2003: 603) says that 'the texts produced in a contact zone, rather than necessarily producing new forms and voices that energize a society, can instead result in "miscomprehension, incomprehension, dead letters, unread masterpieces, (and) absolute heterogeneity of meaning"'. Readers of such texts, that is, supervisors and academic literacy practitioners such as myself, have to approach them in multiple ways in order to make sense. Both students could have been misunderstood by supervisors and literacy instructors.

Implications for academic literacies work

This section explores implications for the pedagogy of academic literacies in complex, blended, changing contexts such as the MTech in policing at Unisa. Students are merely given sub-headings, checklists, and spreadsheets to use in the context of ODL when writing the proposal. To complicate the teaching of the research proposal, students are not likely to understand its functions, or interpret the subheadings and guidelines that are given in guidelines and self-help research methods books that continue to dominate at Unisa.

The PWU model used here shows that the MTech has the three contexts represented in the following knowledge characteristics; University: Mode 1, Workplace: Mode 2 and Profession: Mode 1 and 2. The interplay of academic knowledge, practical or workplace knowledge, and professional knowledge is complex, especially when considering the power relations and the gatekeepers within these contexts. The MTech degree shows characteristics of Mode 2 knowledge by being practice-based and drawing largely from workplace practical knowledge. This means that there should be more explicit integration of academic and workplace knowledge than is currently the case (Scott, Brown, Lunt, and Thorne, 2004: 41 – 55). According to the views of some of the academics that I have interacted with in the Department of Police Practice, the discipline is both multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary, but this is not reflected in the pedagogy around proposal writing.

As an academic literacies researcher and teacher, I am able to identify and learn from the mix of hybrid knowledges in the ODL context, using linguistic analysis to uncover tensions in the proposal, and 'talk around the text' to understand the agency of the student

writers, to uncover the hybrid literacies. 'Talk around text' – particularly when arranged in sites where students spend most of their professional time - is essential to allow students to express themselves about their texts and audiences. This methodology shows the fluidity of research literacies. The contribution of the academic literacies practitioner involves exploring relationships between knowledge in the different sites of practice to bring hybridity to the surface. It also uses hybridity as a strategy to make visible students' agency.

Implications for supervisors and assessment

There is no evidence of hybridising and integration either the curriculum and/or knowledge in the current tuition. This is important in the diversity of programmes currently being offered at Unisa and other institutions that value research degrees for professionals. Although the MTech is a practical and professional degree, it is solely assessed through the writing of a full dissertation and the proposal is a step towards writing a dissertation, yet professional masters and doctorates elsewhere have a variety of instruments, such as projects, portfolios, and coursework to guide students (Maxwell, 2003). Usher (2002: 150) observes that 'the very culture of the PhD by thesis orients research into narrow disciplinary channels and encourages a lone, "ivory tower" way of working which does not sit well with notions of useable knowledge collaboratively produced'.

The Tutorial Letter 101 and the expectations from the proposal seem to privilege traditional academic knowledge at the cost of workplace knowledge. One of the ways of integrating the practical and academic knowledge would be through flexibility (in terms of the structure of the proposal and the expectations of both the workplace and academic audiences) and introducing alternative forms of assessment, such as portfolios and projects. The place to begin would be in the structure of the proposal and the subheadings that are currently given to the students to use. Perhaps students should be given more flexibility to write about practice-based research, using reflective writing based on their workplace experiences and learning. This could lead to alternative forms of assessment, such as journals, and portfolios, if it is possible to alter the seemingly rigid structure of the proposal. Although both Anele and Maggie's research proposals were accepted by the supervisors and they were therefore allowed to proceed to writing the dissertation, it cannot be ascertained if the hybrid literacies are accepted or understood by the supervisors. This requires ongoing collaboration and support between academic literacies practitioners and supervisors.

Further research is needed to ascertain how the MTech contributes to the career advancement of these police officials. In my research, there was little evidence of cooperation or partnership between the workplace and the university and in some instances, they seemed to be pulling apart rather than blending.

A final point is that the ethnographic orientation of the academic literacies approach can enable teachers to surface the values and textual practices in sites of practice such as the masters in policing. Presumable the supervisors are aware of these differences in practice, but they were not aware of how to translate them in the way the proposal is introduced and taught to students.

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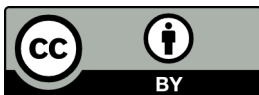
Appendix A: Students' profiles

Maggie

Maggie speaks Afrikaans as a home language and English as an Additional Language. She is a senior security Manager at a Mine in the North West Province (hitherto referred to as North West Mine). She joined the police in 1992. She spent 10 years in the South African Police Service (SAPS). She left the organization when she was a captain of the Crime Intelligence Unit. During the time of my research, Maggie had already left SAPS and joined North West Mine. When I interviewed Maggie, she was about to send her dissertation for editing and then submit it for examination.

Anele

Anele speaks isiXhosa as a home language, and English as an Additional Language. He joined the police in the year 2000. He is a warrant officer in the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offenses Unit. He has been in this unit for four years. His duties are to attend to crime scenes, collect evidence, liaise with the court and the prosecutors, do the preliminary investigation at the crime scene, and follow the docket until it reaches the court.