'Looking Away': Private Writing Techniques as a Form of Transformational Text Shaping in Art & Design and the Natural Sciences

Peter Thomas
Middlesex University, UK

Thomas Armstrong
University of St Gallen, Switzerland

Abstract

Despite their long history and wide-spread use, the private writing techniques of journaling and freewriting remain largely underexploited in the field of academic writing instruction. They are seen only as forms of pre-writing, and are criticised by some for being under-theorised, vague and asocial. Contextualizing them within a writing-as-social-practice approach, and drawing on a conceptual framework including a notion of looking-away developed by Derrida, Vygotsky's conception of learning development, and Ivanic's notion of writer identity, this paper aims to throw new light on these private writing techniques and argues they can be transformational in developing students' learning and identity, as well as written and non-written outputs.

In this paper we theorise these practices through reflection on two instances of teaching in which they played an important part. The teaching interventions were in different disciplinary contexts (Architectural Design and Natural Sciences), with writers of different levels of expertise/competence (undergraduate and PhD), in both L1 and multilingual settings.

In both interventions, we found that these private writing techniques were transformational due to the space they allowed writers to self-reflect, and to look away from their public-facing outputs. The techniques provided significant developmental benefits and moved the students along a continuum towards a more expert-like identity.

Introduction

Despite having a long history, particularly in the field of academic writing instruction, private writing activities like journaling and freewriting are arguably under-theorised, according to Hyland (2009: 19). This limited attention seems to stem from two defining features: they are private, and they are practices rather than textual products. The majority of academic writing research focuses on the prestige discourses of high stakes public-facing texts, in particular genres such as: essays, research articles, dissertations, and other texts which can make or break novice academic writers' careers (e.g. Hyland 2002 and Tardy 2003). Writing which is less public has attracted less research and is less often modelled (Pecorari 2006) or taught. Research in this area focuses mainly on types of text which are hidden or 'occluded' (e.g. Swales 1996 and 2004) or on occluded textual features, like citation practices (Pecorari 2006). There is literature on the need to teach occluded genres and features (e.g. Swales 1997 and Belcher 2004).

Academic Literacies research calls for a shift from this focus on prestige discourses and public-facing texts to a broader focus on writing as a social practice (e.g. Lillis and Scott 2007). Part of this shift implies investigation / re-examination of forms of writing that are less well-researched (including those that are occluded), but can still be transformational for novice academic writers.

Investigation of this sort, which focuses on writers and their practices within social contexts, can shed light on the role that writing practices play as writers make developmental shifts along what Lave and Wenger described as 'a centripetal trajectory from novice to more expert levels of development' (Lave and Wenger 1991 and Wenger 1998). The practices of journaling and freewriting have widely acknowledged benefits as pre-writing activities. In this paper, we take a social practice view to consider benefits of these practices extending beyond just writing. We observe that they also help students with non-written outputs, and with the development of their knowledge and their identities as experts. We found that these benefits were highly contextualised, and present in very different fields (Architectural Design and Natural Science) and at different levels (early undergraduate and PhD).

Critics of journaling and freewriting, like Hyland (2009), North (1987) and Faigley (1986) take a reductive view of them as 'expressivist', naïve and romantic approaches. Hyland claims they support:

> an asocial view of the writer, operating in a context where there are no cultural differences in the value of self-expression, no variations in personal inhibition, few distinctions in the writing processes of mature and novice writers, and no social consequences of writing. (Hyland 2009: 24)

This view seems limited to us. It appears to fail to see the potential of using these practices in enabling the writer to become aware of their own place in their cultural context. It also seems to ignore the role the practices, along with other writing and language instructional methods and approaches, can play in raising the writer's awareness of how to navigate his or her way towards a more expert identity.

In this paper, we theorise these practices through reflection on two instances of teaching in which they played an important, and we will argue, transformational part. We begin by defining our key terms of reference: journaling, freewriting, and occlusion. We then present a conceptual framework, drawing on ideas from Derrida, Vygotsky and Ivanic, which we use as a lens to analyse and reflect on our practice in these two case studies, and how they helped students shift to new developmental levels. By considering these quite distinct techniques together we hope to shed new light on their common strengths and make a case for their wider and more well-informed use in higher education.

Definitions

Journaling and freewriting are quite different: one is the practice of producing a specific type of text (a journal), and this can be undertaken in many different ways; the other is a very specific way of producing text (writing without stopping), and can be employed in the production of any text.

Journaling
Keeping a journal or journaling as an instructional tool has a long history. Psychoanalysts and psychotherapists, including Freud (1935, 1965), Jung (1965), and Progoff (1992) used journal writing to develop personal insights, creativity and indeed their own theories. In 1965 Progoff first wrote about the value of keeping a journal to enhance adult learners' personal growth and development and to help the individual harness their inner potential. In writing pedagogy, journaling has been used to promote self-reflection, to develop intuition and self-expression, to reflect on critical incidents and as a means of overcoming writer's block (Hiemstra 2001).

All of these different approaches share the idea that journaling is a form of private writing undertaken at regular intervals over time, allowing novice writers to build up their own story and focus and reflect on developing thoughts, feelings, and developmental changes. Thus, journaling exploits what Emig refers to as the 'epigenetic' aspects of writing: the idea of a 'graphically visible' record of an evolutionary journey or personal developmental story, 'from jottings and notes to full discursive formulations' (Emig 1977: 127).

Freewriting
Many terms are used to describe what is known in writing instruction as *freewriting*. Boice (1990: 48) calls it 'spontaneous writing' and reports that in an early record of this kind of writing by Bourne in 1858, it is called 'original writing'. Boice lists other subsequent terms including: inner dictation (Andre Breton), experimental writing (Gertrude Stein), automatic writing (Pierre Janet) (ibid.) and writing at a gallop (Virginia Woolf) (ibid.: 39).

Elbow, a well-known advocate, explains that to 'do a Freewriting exercise, simply force yourself to write without stopping for ten minutes' (1998: 13). Murray identifies benefits including that it helps writers 'to "force" the writing, to "get something down on paper" and to build their confidence in their own writing' (2002: 87). She also mentions that it allows writers to write in 'snacks' rather than 'binges', which suggests longer-term benefits related to developing a sustainable writing habit.

Occlusion
What these practices share is that they are both occluded. We borrow the term from Swales' notion of an 'occluded genre' (1990), a kind of text with two key qualities: it is intended as private, and it serves to facilitate a more public output. Other scholars such as Pecorari (2006) have applied the notion of occlusion to 'features' of academic writing such as citing and referencing. In this article, our focus is on occluded practices, rather than texts or features, and we argue that it is because these practices are occluded that they can be effective, in a range of settings.

Conceptual framework

The following conceptual framework is intended to shed new light on the practices defined above.

Looking away
The first component of our theoretical framework draws on Derrida's notion of blindness in drawing, and on an art school life drawing activity that involves looking away. In Figure 1 we see a woman (Butades) drawing her lover so she has a memento of him when he departs. While she does this, she cannot simultaneously look at him and at the drawing she is making.

Figure 1. Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1785) *Butades tracing the portrait of a shepherd, or the origin of painting* **(Palace of Versailles) [awaiting permission]**

Derrida observes that this is a difficulty inherent in the task of representation, noting that for the person making a representation, the object 'is represented and eclipsed at the same time' (1993: 57). Derrida calls this the 'rhetoric of the trait' (1993: 56), a form of blindness that he says is apparent when we make a representation of something; in other words, when we create our own version of a thing.

This explains a tendency for novice artists in life drawing classes to spend too much time looking at their drawing, and not enough time looking at the model. They do this out of a mixture of desire to make a nice drawing, and fear of making one that does not look right. Often this leads to drawings (versions) that are superficially nice, but are inaccurate as representations because they are based on little actual observation (of the thing).

An exercise that addresses this involves looking away from the page, and only looking at the model while drawing. The artist moves her pencil on the page as her eyes move around the model, but she does not look at the marks she is making until the end of the exercise. This does not cure the *blindness* but it removes the need to do two things at once, and ensures intense, focused observation.

At the end of the activity, the finished drawing / version often seems messy, and not conventionally accurate. However, the drawing process facilitates a more focused and arguably more accurate engagement with the model / thing than tends to happen in more conventional drawings.

Like drawing, writing involves the articulation of things (ideas) in versions (texts), and attending to both at the same time is an inherent challenge. Like novice artists, novice writers tend to respond to this challenge by focusing an undue amount of attention on their version, which distracts them from sufficient attention on their thing and can cause confusion. We propose that writing instruction can address this by including tools and strategies, like freewriting and journaling, to draw writers' attention to the version-thing dialectic, and enable them to control their focus on things with timely instances of looking away from versions.

Vygotskian conceptualisations of development
The second component of our theoretical framework draws on related Vygotskian concepts: the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the notion of Inner Speech, and the role verbal language plays in the development of higher order cognitive functions. We believe these

notions offer important ways of explaining how journaling and freewriting can be transformative for novice writers.

In Vygotsky's conception of development and learning, the ZPD (Vygotsky 1978: 86) describes the distance between the actual developmental level of a learner without help and what he or she can do with help. In an academic writing context, we argue here that journaling and freewriting perform the role of 'scaffolding' (Wood et al. 1976: 90), which allows novice writers to move to a new developmental level and to reflect more deeply on their research or course of study. As in the construction industry, scaffolding is essential at early stages, but as the structure / learning becomes more solid, activities can take place with less reliance on it. We believe that novice writers can use the techniques of freewriting and journaling, which we are showing them, as a set of tools to develop greater independence and craftsmanship.

Vygotsky's notion of Inner Speech (1986) is part of his conception of language development in children, which begins through social contact with others and then gradually moves inwards through a series of transitional stages: from social speech, to egocentric speech towards the development of Inner Speech. Vygotsky (1986:225) states '…inner speech is speech for oneself: external speech is for others'.

In this paper, we argue that both journaling and freewriting can be seen as a form of Inner Speech captured on the page; what could be called a supportive conversation with self. They are therefore much closer to Vygotsky's concept of Inner Speech than are more formal public forms of writing.

Vygotsky, as Emig (1977:122) points out, argued that higher cognitive functions such as analysis and synthesis develop most fully with the support system of verbal language, particularly writing. We suggest that through activities like journaling and freewriting writers are not just developing technical skills but stimulating rigorous, higher order thinking about their thing.

Novice writers' growing awareness of using a repertoire of such tools can also be related to theories of self-regulation and metacognitive monitoring, which describe how learners develop an ability to adapt knowledge and strategies and self-regulate their learning (e.g. Paris, Byrnes and Paris 2001 and Pintrich 2004). According to Negretti (2012), metacognition and self-regulation are said to enable individuals to acquire insight into their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as appropriate strategies (Brown 1994) and an ability to judge their own performance (see Schraw 2009).

Identity

A third theme we want to consider in our re-evaluation of the techniques is Ivanic's notion of writer identity. Ivanic argues that a writer's identity is 'discoursally constructed', which she explains as a process in which writers draw on 'discoursal and generic resources' (2004: 238) in order to 'affiliate themselves with others who engage in the same practice'. In other words, for a novice writer the effective use of the textual matter (words, ideas) from the discourse of a group is a key way of identifying herself with that group. For instance, by using Vygotskian principles to support a claim, the novice identifies herself as a *Vygotskian*, to an extent.

We expand the term 'discoursal resources' to include textual practices as well as textual matter, because, we argue, an identity is developed not only by attending to the language of a discourse community, but also to the textual practices of the community. This in turn extends to the values and other practices such as research methods or professional techniques, which make up the repertoire of the particular Community of Practice (CoP) the novice is trying to enter (Lave and Wenger 1991: 33-37).

It takes time for an expert identity to be formed: MacDonald (1994) for example describes how novice academic writers must pass through four stages on a continuum from novice writing to expert insider writing (MacDonald 1994). An aspect of this continuum is what Bourdieu (cited in Crossley 2013: 139) calls 'a feel for the game' or *habitus*. Here we argue

that keeping a journal, and using freewriting, over time can help the development of *habitus*, and a novice's movement along the continuum towards an identity as an expert member of a CoP. The practices appear to do this by setting up safe structures within which the novice can experiment, and engage with and learn from the 'authoritative discourse' (Bakhtin 1981: 342) of established others, and develop an awareness through reflection on themselves, and their 'internally persuasive discourse' (Bakhtin 1981: 342).

Case studies

Case study 1: Freewriting with Interiors: Site-Writing

Method
Our reflections on case study 1 are based on data gathered in the following ways:
One of the writing instructors authoring this paper taught Interior Architecture undergraduates a session on using writing to investigate sites. During the session, he monitored progress and spoke with several of the students. These conversations were not recorded or transcribed, but the writing instructor made notes afterwards.

After the session, the writing instructor interviewed an Interiors lecturer with whom he had collaborated on the site visit (Cadwaladr), and later with one of the students (Artilio). The interviews were semi-structured and focused mainly on perceptions of Site-Writing and its potential benefits for Interiors professionals. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Permission to use data from the students and the lecturer was granted orally. To maintain anonymity, all contributor names have been changed.

Context
Case study 1 is an example of using freewriting in embedded writing provision in the school of Art and Design at a university in London, UK, with a diverse, arguably super-diverse (Vertovec 2007 cited Rampton et al. 2015: 3) student population. The diversity stems from the University's policies of Widening Participation and international recruitment, and it means that the students have very varied relationships with English, and experience of the British educational system.

The session in this case study was co-taught by the writing instructor, a lecturer from the University's Academic Writing & Language team (AWL) and lecturers from Interiors. The session was part of a system of embedded provision on writing run by AWL, scheduled at key moments throughout the degree course. This provision includes other sessions such as workshops on essay writing.

This degree programme comprises two main components: studio practice (or key technical, practical and professional aspects of Interior Architecture), and contextual studies (or theory and history of Interiors). Students engage in contextual studies primarily through reading and writing text. In Art and Design education, these two components are typically taught separately, but this course is atypical in its efforts to integrate them as far as possible in syllabus and delivery.

This integration is an attempt to address a problematic relationship, widely commented on, between the two components. Biggs and Büchler (2012: 231) call it a 'disjunction' between the distinct 'worlds of object production and textual commentary', which the Interiors lecturer (Cadwaladr) observed has resulted in a 'tradition' of disregard for writing at art school. Students often manifest this tradition of disjunction in a reluctance to write or engage with contextual studies because 'Writing is…a chore. I don't want to do it but I have to.' (Thomas 2013: 42). A related complication is the common presence of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs), such as Dyslexia, among Art and Design students[1]. This carries with it associated challenges that can complicate the relationship a student has with his or her studies.

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[1] Recent data from the University at which case study 1 took place shows that more than 15% of A&D applicants identify themselves as dyslexic (Middlesex University 2013). Note: The

The case study is an example of writing provision that attempts to address the disjunction through a practice called *Site-Writing*, to plug the students into what Kristeva calls the enriching dialectic of interdisciplinarity (1998: 9), by making students aware of how a practice associated with one discipline (writing and contextual studies) can serve another (Interior Architecture). It is an example of using writing to generate concepts for studio-based work, or a 'written representation that will shape the fabrication process' (Medway 1996: 474). This is not writing about design, or writing 'after the fact' (Lees-Maffei 2012: 4), but writing that helps to form design, *before* the fact.

Intervention
Site-Writing is a practice developed by the AWL lecturer for co-taught site-based sessions like the one in this case study. Site visits are important moments at the beginning of a project, when students survey a site to gather data about a building or an area first hand, for the first and sometimes only time. The data they gather forms the basis of their design work, so they need to be alert to any features of the site which might impact on this. Their survey gathers factual information, but also their experience and impressions of the site. It includes photographs, drawings, videos and writing, etc.

Site-Writing involves a cycle of up to 4 phases, based on a cycle of freewriting and reviewing[2]. In the first phase, students are asked to freewrite in sentences, using Elbow's instruction not to stop (1973:3). Writing is never collected at this stage. It is for their eyes only. Freewriting is often guided by asking students to focus on specific features of the building (e.g. materials in its construction), the environment (e.g. contextual sound) or their experience (e.g. their journey there). Students are encouraged to do this for short periods and in different parts of the site.

The second phase typically involves reviewing free-written texts, and identifying two or three 'paths' (Elbow 1973:10) within them to develop further in the third phase of the activity, another instance of freewriting, this time focused on their 'paths' from phase two. In the fourth phase, students speak about what they have written, in small group discussions of their emerging ideas. The objective here is that they go public to some extent with their texts, having worked through several drafts or phases.

Impact
Almost all of the students took the Site-Writing seriously and produced a lot of text, with great intensity. In this way, the practice allowed the students to do what freewriting advocates promise; it forced them to 'get words on paper' (Elbow 1998: 13). In her interview, Cadwaladr likened the practice to a 'kick start' of a dialogue between the students and the site. The intensity seems to have been made possible by the fact that the practice explicitly required them to 'look away' from any concern for how they expressed themselves, so that they could focus on what they wished to express. A particularly positive feature of the sessions was that many students continued using the practice on their own after the instructed part of the visit was over, and several have reported using the practice since then.

There was also evidence of looking away in what the students chose to write about. Many of them mentioned writing about emotions or memories evoked by the site, thereby looking away from describing only externally visible features of the building, towards more internal thoughts about it. In his interview, Artilio explained why he thought this was so common: 'You've got to feel it. That's what helps you to get the right ideas'.

Some students also used the writing to look away from making judgements about whether their ideas were good or bad. Initially some were not very sure about their ideas, but the non-stop quality of the writing practice encouraged them to disregard doubts and keep working. During the session, one student (Rhodri) mentioned thinking his idea was 'silly', but this later

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number of students categorised as dyslexic increases as the academic course progresses, because students are identified as dyslexic during their studies.
[2] This is a cycle that Murray (2009: 99) and Boice (1990: 47) call generative writing.

became the central concept of his design. The confidence to tolerate the uncertain nature of an idea stemmed from the safety of not having to go public with it. This sense of containment, or a 'place where it is safe to let go' (Carabine 2013: 41), is often seen as an important stage in the creative process.

In allowing these (often reluctant) writers look away from certain things, Site-Writing allowed them to focus on other things. In this way it gave them an ability to control what they looked at, and how. An important feature of this case study is the fact that a writing practice had notable positive impact on thinking, visual and spatial practices and products. The well-known benefits of freewriting as a pre-writing activity extended beyond writing.

In terms of concepts related to developmental shifts, there was evidence in the case study of effective scaffolding. Artilio outlined how the first stages of the Site-Writing cycle were effective in providing students with a means of addressing a problem they were all facing, being under pressure to 'come up with…concepts'. In a managed environment, we introduced them to a simple method they found useable and effective. Artilio said 'this system works well', highlighting particularly the value of not 'thinking' in the first stage of Site-Writing, but also the more convergent (Copley 2006: 391) nature of the second stage of 'selection'.

Within this broad scaffold, there is evidence that using language contributes to or assists higher order thinking. The context in which the Interiors students operate is complicated, and requires sophistication, in terms of how they think, speak and do their design practice. In her interview, Cadwaladr commented on how:

> our students have to defend what they do based on lots of different, sometime conflicting criteria. It has to be meaningful in lots of different ways: clients, site, brief…again it comes back to that sort of negotiating and situating themselves in quite complex territory.

The site-writing activities enabled the students to mediate this complexity, and its relation to the tangle of ideas they had, through language. This is a process that Swain and Deters call 'languaging' (2007), and could be considered a discoursal resource that our novice architects and designers draw on, on their route to developing the *habitus* of a professional.

According to Cadwaladr, a valued feature of professional architectural practice is the ability to maintain rigorous dialogue throughout a project, 'what we're always looking to reveal in our design projects is evidence of that dialogue as an ongoing discourse'. As a professional, it is not enough only to come up with a good concept, there is an imperative to then design with it, and through dialogue with colleagues, clients and contractors, to implement it. Site-Writing could be seen as a notably rigorous tool, something another lecturer on a previous occasion intimated in likening it to 'an express train to less superficial thinking' (Thomas 2013: 51). In enabling a designer to maintain this rigour, Site-Writing could also be seen as a tool for self-regulation, as it enables him to look away from distractions, to reflect and take control of his behaviour. Comments from both Cadwaladr and Artilio suggest that our Site-Writing practice has an impact beyond writing, although writing is very much at the heart of it. This is something Cadwaladr suggested in a comment about the work of the AWL lecturer, 'I'm not sure that any of us really think about what you do as just writing'.

Case study 2: Journal writing for PhD Students

Context
The second case study was an example of using journaling with 32 multilingual PhD students from Material Science, Environmental Science, and Information Technology. All the participants were working on their PhDs as research assistants at various departments of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich, Switzerland. In addition to their PhD work, the students were attending weekly academic writing courses at the ETH/Uni Zurich Language Center. The Language Center offers a range of language courses to support students and employees of both institutions. All the participants in this case study were multilingual writers using English as an additional language. The majority (26) spoke German

as a first language. The students were either attending a course called 'Writing Your Thesis' or one entitled 'Writing at a Doctoral Level'. The first course was aimed at doctoral students writing a traditional book thesis, the second focussed more on writing a research article for publication in a journal. Each class comprised 16 students.

Intervention

At the beginning of the semester, the 32 doctoral students were given a large (circa 100 page) notebook and were encouraged to write regularly in this research journal during the thesis/article writing process over a 14-week period (one semester). Most of the students (23 out of 32) wrote regularly (at least once a week) in the journal. Some found it easier to keep an electronic version of the journal on their computer.

The writing classes consisted of input from the academic writing instructor, which combined a genre analysis of different sections of typical theses/articles from their fields together with process writing activities. In addition, the doctoral students were encouraged to bring along extracts of their theses/articles for small group discussion. Following class discussion of text extracts, the students were encouraged to reflect and write in their journals about their research at home. The journals were not for public consumption but were seen as a private resource. The idea of using the journals was to encourage the participants to look away from their public-facing texts and develop their thoughts about the research in private.

When reflecting and writing in the journals, the students were asked to consider various prompts adapted from Li (2007) and consisting of the following questions:

1. What progress if any, have you made today?
2. What difficulties are you having with the research now?
3. How are you trying to overcome the difficulties?
4. Have you talked with anyone (e.g. supervisor and/or fellow researchers) that might have given you insights?
5. How do you feel about your research now?

At the end of the semester, the academic writing instructor conducted semi-structured interviews with a broadly representative sample of six students, three students from each course who had used the journaling technique, equal numbers of male and female students and thesis and article writers. The six interviews were all between 30-45 minutes long and concerned the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the journaling technique. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Permission to use data from the students was granted orally. To maintain anonymity, all contributor names have been changed.

Impact

Figure 2 shows how one of the students, Tina, used the journal to reflect on the problems she was having with a first version of a research article she was writing for publication. The extract shows her determination to improve in her subsequent writing. Tina's use of a series of questions to herself: 'Was habe ich gelernt?' (What have I learnt?) 'Was lief nicht so gut?' (What didn't go so well?) and her list of bullet points in response suggest a form of internal dialogue out of which she was able to draw up a series of guidelines for her subsequent writing.
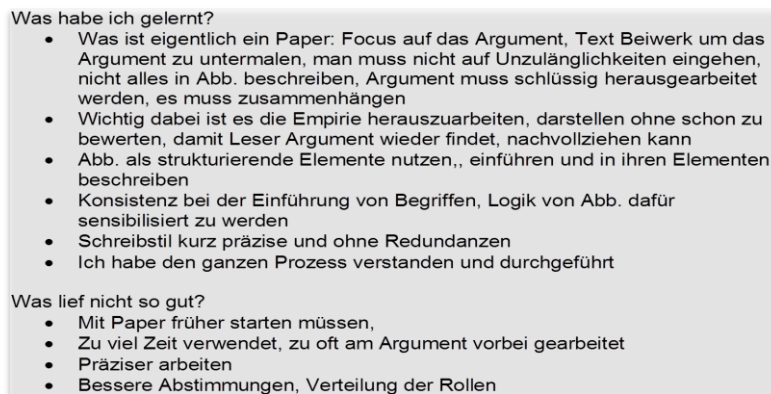
> **Was habe ich gelernt?**
> - Was ist eigentlich ein Paper: Focus auf das Argument, Text Beiwerk um das Argument zu untermalen, man muss nicht auf Unzulänglichkeiten eingehen, nicht alles in Abb. beschreiben, Argument muss schlüssig herausgearbeitet werden, es muss zusammenhängen
> - Wichtig dabei ist es die Empirie herauszuarbeiten, darstellen ohne schon zu bewerten, damit Leser Argument wieder findet, nachvollziehen kann
> - Abb. als strukturierende Elemente nutzen,, einführen und in ihren Elementen beschreiben
> - Konsistenz bei der Einführung von Begriffen, Logik von Abb. dafür sensibilisiert zu werden
> - Schreibstil kurz präzise und ohne Redundanzen
> - Ich habe den ganzen Prozess verstanden und durchgeführt
>
> **Was lief nicht so gut?**
> - Mit Paper früher starten müssen,
> - Zu viel Zeit verwendet, zu oft am Argument vorbei gearbeitet
> - Präziser arbeiten
> - Bessere Abstimmungen, Verteilung der Rollen

Figure 2: Extract from Tina's journal

As a result of this internal dialogue, Tina identified the need to focus more on the argument and not be diverted from the main idea: 'Focus auf das Argument …nicht auf Unzulänglichkeiten eingehen'. She also resolved to adopt a number of scientific writing conventions which had been covered in the course, such as a clear line of argument and a coherent structure. At the micro-level she decided that paragraphs should be consistent and built around one main topic, while at the meta-level the focus should be on 'communicating with the reader and guiding the reader through the text'.

Tina also used her journal to reflect on the role of her supervisor in the writing process, an issue which previous research suggested was a problem for many similar novice scholars (see Armstrong 2015). In one journal extract, Tina stated that she regretted the amount of work her supervisor had had to do on rewriting the first version of the paper. Reflecting in her journal about what could be done differently next time, Tina wrote that her supervisor should do less himself and restrict his role to commenting on her text and giving advice. Tina explained that she felt her supervisor had done 'too much of the writing and had taken over the text to some extent, so it was no longer my text'. As a result, Tina argued her supervisor should 'leave (her) alone to make the changes because that's how you learn to write'.

Discussing the journaling process with the academic writing instructor at the end of the course, Tina said that keeping the journal had helped her to 'adopt a more systematic and scientific approach to writing' and this in turn led her to feel more confident and autonomous.
Another writer, Stefan, commented that keeping the journal was a way of sorting out and defining the problems: 'The journal allows me space to see that these are the issues I'm facing… Without keeping the journal it would be difficult to highlight what I've found over time. Without writing the journal I think I would have to write more papers to get the same knowledge'. Stefan's reflections in his journal led to a better understanding of the data during the writing process, deciding what data to focus on and how to make his claims accordingly. Stefan began to see the process of writing an article as a continuous process of 'argumentation': 'in the journal I have a chance to reflect on the appropriateness of the methods, the strength of my results and the rightness of my conclusions'.

Both Tina and Stefan seemed to be using the journal to look away from their text and focus more fully on their research and on their roles as researchers. Through this process, they were able to take on a more autonomous and independent role in the subsequent writing process. The two writers' journal reflections can be seen as representing important steps towards the adoption of a new scholarly identity as a scientific writer, a form of what Clarke and Ivanic (1997: 159) refer to as 'ongoing identity construction'.

Discussion and Conclusions

Using the lens of our theoretical framework, we have examined these two distinct private writing techniques in diverse settings and found several important commonalities. Based on our framework and analysis of the findings from our case studies, we conclude that the practices of freewriting and journaling can be transformational in a range of settings.

Looking away

The two writing practices outlined here allowed the writers to look away from the 'version' and to look at the 'thing' with clarity and intensity that revealed elements or levels of understanding that, we argue, they would otherwise not have seen. For Interiors students their 'thing' was the site and concepts for their interventions; the PhD students' 'thing' was their research project. The non-superficial thinking evidenced in many of the Interiors concepts, and the PhD student's realisation about her supervisor (Tina) are instances of this, among others.

In both cases this clarity is a product of freedom from concern for conventional reader expectations and making mistakes. The Interiors student whose concept was 'silly' had the confidence to pursue it in a private written dialogue, which allowed the 'seed' to grow, and eventually become a designed output. For the PhD students, linguistic errors in the writing were not a worry because the journals were private and had no reader, which led to greater fluency and focus in the students' thinking.

Vygotskian conceptualisations of development

Both Journaling and Site-Writing appear to facilitate development, on two levels: the development of specific outputs, and development of control over the process of creating these outputs. The specific output by the Interiors students was a designed intervention in a site, and for the PhD students it was their thesis/research article. The fact that writing practices had impact on a non-written output as well as a written one is evidence of the relevance of the practices in a range of settings.

The development can be traced back to the Vygotskian notions outlined in the conceptual framework. In terms of ZPD, both practices appear to allow the students to move through stages towards more sophisticated levels of development because they are simple activities that are less daunting or complex than the main output. They scaffold the students' route towards it.

In terms of inner language, both techniques allow students to 'language' (Swain and Deters 2007), or turn in on their own thoughts, and engage with complex phenomena through private and spontaneous writing. The practices also encouraged shifts in perspective from external focus to this internal reflection and back to the external output. The ability to shift in this way is characteristic of the control exercised by more expert practitioners.

In terms of verbal language and the development of higher cognitive function, both practices produce texts which can be reviewed and re-read. This allowed the novices to build up their own developmental story and gain a progressive understanding of their research. A higher level of understanding was clear in the nuanced way the Interiors students' spoke on their concepts, and in the PhD students' decisions about, for instance, what to prioritise (Tina), and how to use data (Stefan).

Identity

Both practices helped the students to take steps towards new identities as experts by allowing them to use and gain confidence with key tools / resources. The practices helped students develop ways of thinking and doing that are important in their community of practice. For the Interiors students, the dialogic thinking facilitated by Site-Writing is highly suited to engagement with sites. It enables an intense focus, so the key features of a site get noticed. It also sets up a safe and fertile environment for creativity, without which their work would be considered unremarkable by the community.

This kind of dialogic thinking was also a highly valuable feature of Journaling as it allowed the PhD students to think reflectively about their own experiences of grappling with research issues, including problems they were having with supervisors, and tensions related to their own positions as novices. Regularly writing in the research journals also allowed them to build their own research story, develop a *habitus,* and a sense of what it means to be a member of a specific academic community (Ivanic 1997: 343).

Conclusions

Journaling and freewriting can be considered transformational in our case studies because they enabled our students to make developmental shifts, suggesting they were making progress along the novice to expert continuum mentioned in the introduction. The use of journaling and freewriting allowed the students to shift between external and internal perspectives; they facilitated a managed progression towards more sophisticated practices, and they allowed the students to move along a continuum towards expertness. In some cases the students then also adopted critical positions in relation to their contexts and took steps to transform them (e.g. Tina's need for her supervisor to back off).

The settings of the case studies were different in a number of ways, and the practices showed that there can be such differences, including: level of study (undergraduate and doctoral), student relationship to English (speakers of English as a first language and multilingual speakers), discipline (sciences and design), language of reflection and of output (German / English), and mode of major output (textual and visuo-spatial).

This last difference points to another factor: the fact that these practices can have impact beyond writing, and can be used in the development of both textual and non-textual outputs. However, to say that they are only of use in relation to outputs is a simplification, as we found that they also had a person-focused impact, and developed the writers, not just the writing. It appears that the impact of the practices stems mainly from their private nature, which allows a crucial safe space for development. Privacy is one of the defining characteristics of occlusion (Swales 1990) along with supporting higher stakes output. The perception by some that the practices are under-theorised stems partly from the fact they are occluded and so have fallen beneath the research radar. Criticism of practices like those in our case studies appear to be underpinned by different priorities to ours, namely a primary focus on the textual product as opposed to the writer or their writing practices.

Our position, which sees writing as a social practice, has a broader focus, very much informed by the practical experience of teaching writing, in which these practices form part of a repertoire of tools or resources for the students to draw on. Our interest is in the transformative potential of these practices and their ability to empower students to think for themselves. Our attempt here has been to consider their potential in relation to theory, and to call for further research into them and their wider and more well-informed use.

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