Plagiarism, Intertextuality and Emergent Authorship in University Students' Academic Writing

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Although most universities have now developed websites which offer advice on how to deal with plagiarism, the information provided tends to focus on the mechanics of referencing in academic text construction and on universal notions of concepts such as 'academic honesty.'[1] Little or no attention is given to providing guidance on questions concerning the politics of text/knowledge creation and emergent authorship; issues surrounding what might constitute common knowledge or writer identity are also commonly not considered, yet all of these factors are fundamental to the processes involved in the construction of academic writing.

In this paper I present two case studies selected from a larger research project, that examined the ways in which students from a range of linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds used the words and ideas of the authors of their source texts in their research-based assignments. I discuss interviews with, and the written assignments of, Kirsty and Georgia, two student writers whose first languages are Norwegian and Cantonese, respectively.[2] I also explore the interview comments of Rodney and Celine, the academic staff members responsible for assessing the students' writing.

Drawing on Kristeva's writing on intertextuality and the *subject-in-process-and-on-trial* (1986; 1996), and the work of Penrose and Geisler on the construction of knowledge

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[1] See for example: Duke University Libraries: *Citing sources* [online resources].
[2] The names of all research participants have been changed.

(1994), my analysis reveals that Kirsty and Georgia are highly aware of the political and opaque nature of textual relations. In addition, they are confused by the prevailing notion of authorship as unified and autonomous, since it fails to conceptualise subjectivity and writer identity as sociohistorically constructed and multi-voiced. I also demonstrate the need to move away from a reductionist theory of text/knowledge construction that frames textual ownership only in terms of 'academic honesty.'

Finally, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how textual construction and ownership relates to student development, writer identity and the politics of emergent-authorship, I explore the value of discussing plagiarism and the creation of text/knowledge as dialogical (see Bakhtin 1981; 1984; 1986). As has been argued elsewhere (Thompson & Pennycook 2008a), it is only by understanding how students enter into dialogue with their source texts, as well as with their lecturers, that we can assist students in their struggle to claim ownership over the text/knowledge they produce for the academy.

'I didn't reference this because … I'd read it in so many places'
Kirsty was born in Norway, speaks English as an additional language and was in her early twenties at the time of her interview. She had been studying Modern History at a major Australian university for seven months as part of a year-long student exchange scheme and was in her second semester. She had studied English for six years and had already undertaken two years of university study in Norway, where she majored in Anthropology, before arriving in Australia. The assignment she submitted for this research was for a first year subject in Modern European History and was the first she had completed in Australia. The title of her essay was: 'Were social movements such as civil rights and feminism a product of the Long Boom?' The 4,000 word assignment was completed at the end of Kirsty's first semester of study in Australia and comprised the only assessment for the subject.

In her interview, Kirsty commented on the importance of attribution, suggesting that a failure to reference work that had been published 'is like stealing someone else's thoughts and ideas and make them your own,' although she also felt that this might be considered less important at undergraduate level. Nevertheless, Kirsty stated with some certainty that she believed that students, or she herself, sometimes used sources without referring to the 'original' author. She proposed two reasons for this: first, it was possible

to forget the source of a text; second, the author of the source text might already have been referred to 'too many times.' She added: 'Most students from time to time forget to refer everything 100% right,' or are unsure how to reference appropriately.

It is evident that there is some confusion for Kirsty over exactly how to write while, as she put it, 'having your own voice' and being 'coloured from your own perspective' yet, at the same time, 'not referencing to yourself.' Kirsty attempts to confront the dilemma of how to create a sense of authorial presence and textual ownership in her writing without the formal trappings of the referencing conventions associated with authorship. She felt that as a student-writer she struggled to 'get (her) voice in' and lacked the authority to make unsupported claims in her writing: 'You can't just write a page about what you think and feel about things without references to other people as well.'

Kirsty stated that she often became confused about exactly where the language she used in her assignments originated, saying that it was easier to 'make it your own words' if the author used 'difficult words' compared with authors who might use 'simple and good sentences.' In the case of the latter, it was more difficult 'to make it your sentence.' In such instances, said Kirsty, 'sometimes I maybe write every word. Cheat.' Thus 'writ(ing) every word' for Kirsty may also be a survival strategy, like that reported for students in several other studies into academic writing (Angélil-Carter 2000; Currie 1998; Howard 1999). Although this portrayal of herself as a 'cheat' conflicts with Kirsty's comments above about the need to reference work that has been published, it highlights the kind of struggle that characterises her efforts to engage with the processes of academic text/knowledge production. Kirsty added: 'I think I reference more now than I did,' thus indicating the developmental nature of academic text construction and emergent-authorship.

Kirsty explained that the main argument of her assignment ('that the economic development in Western countries was the predominant factor in the rise of feminism in the late 1960s'), 'came out of the research,' although she felt that she had simultaneously had the idea from the start, then 'read quite a lot about it and quite a lot of books supported that view.' Kirsty added that she knew she had to 'argue something' and that it was easy to justify this claim. In the second paragraph of her essay (see Figure 1), she stated:

Kirsty (p. 1, paragraph 2)
This essay will argue that the economic development in Western countries was the predominant factor in the rise of feminism in the late 1960s and that.* Social movements cannot be seen in isolation from their historical context; the economic boom created a social environment where women had to define their new role. Feminism was a response to this new position. (*Kirsty's marker noted on her essay that this sentence was incomplete)

Figure 1: Kirsty's Assignment Extract 1[3]

Kirsty described the background to three of the propositions that she made in the above paragraph. Firstly, that 'Social movements cannot be seen in isolation from their historical context,' was a point that her History lecturer used to make and she had included it in her essay because she 'just thought it looked good.' The following two propositions: 'the economic boom created a social environment where women had to define their new role' and 'Feminism was a response to this new position,' originated she said, from the reading she undertook for the essay. Kirsty had therefore not felt it necessary to reference any of these propositions because she had encountered them in the course of her classes and also throughout her readings; they had become, she said 'a common knowledge.' She added: **'**You're not trying to cheat, but maybe you don't know how to reference it, or maybe you thought already you'd referenced it somewhere else and you don't have to do it again. It's quite a hard thing.' The three sentences in Figure 1 earned Kirsty two ticks as signs of commendation from Rodney, her marker.

Kirsty discussed other instances of 'common' knowledge stating that she had not provided a footnote for the phrase 'the Marxist theory' (see Figure 2) because it was from 'the lecture,' and would therefore, she believed, require no attribution.

Kirsty (p. 8, paragraph 1, extract)
There were two influential theories behind the movement (the new ideology of feminism); the Marxist analyses and the liberalization approach. <u>The Marxist theory</u> argued that underlying economic structures, created by the upper class, were the major reason for the oppression of women, as well as of other marginal groups. Women had to fight these economic structures to gain equality with men. The liberalization theory was more concerned about civil and political rights.

Figure 2: Kirsty's Assignment Extract 2

She was less clear about whether she should have sourced the expression 'baby-boom,' an expression she first introduced on page three of her essay (see Figure 3), then proceeded to use it without punctuation markers on several subsequent occasions:

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[3] The extracts provided from students' assignments have not been edited.

Kirsty	(p. 3, paragraph 2, extract)
Another important feature (of people's lives after World War Two) was the rising birth rates between 1940 and 1960, which is commonly known as the "baby-boom". Since the early nineteenth century, birth rates had declined in the western world, but during this 20-year period they rebounded.	

Figure 3: Kirsty's Assignment Extract 3

Kirsty commented:

> I think I reference more now than I did (at the time the assignment was written). I didn't reference this because I'd read it so many times. I'd read it in so many places. I *knew* it because I'd read it so many times. I probably didn't pick it from any book. I just picked it from my head.

As with Georgia, whose experiences are discussed below, it is notable that Kirsty's conclusion (see Figure 4) offers the longest segment of continuous non-attributed writing in the whole of her essay:

Kirsty	(pp. 9-10, final paragraph, extract)
Changes in women's roles and perceptions constitute an important aspect of Western history in the twentieth century … feminism can be seen as a response to women's new position in the long boom. In the 1960s and 1970s the feminist movement also improved women's position further. Some of the achievements were inclusion of gender equalities in the Civil rights Act, and the rights to choose to have an abortion in several American states. It is therefore possible to view the new wave of feminism in the late 1960s, both as a response to women's new position in the society, and as a mean of improvement of conditions.	

Figure 4: Kirsty's Assignment Extract 4

Kirsty explained: 'I think most of this conclusion, it's not new thoughts. It's like old thoughts from the rest of the text. That's what I thought when I didn't reference it. 'Cos a little bit too much reference of ideas already referenced before.'

Academic writing, attribution and the creation of knowledge

In her account of her writing and attribution practices, Kirsty raises a number of important questions concerning 'common' knowledge and attribution that are fundamental to the construction of academic texts and our understanding of the nature of emergent authorship. First, the knowledge that is jointly constructed between lecturers and students during lectures and tutorials in the course of a period of study becomes 'common' and should therefore not require attribution. As Chandrasoma et al. have argued, determining exactly where the parameters of such instances of 'intertextual intimacy' (2004: 181-82) lie needs to be carefully negotiated between lecturers and their students and cannot be decided according to a set of universal principles.

Second, Kirsty suggests that once she had read the same point in a number of different texts, that this could also constitute a form of 'common' knowledge which could no longer be attributed to a single author. As Bakhtin (1981) explains in his theory of *dialogism*, it is important to understand communication as linguistic interaction between interlocutors. For language to be meaningful, speakers and listeners and writers and readers are engaged dialogically in a process of negotiation over meaning-making. Bakhtin's theory of communication is sociohistorically grounded in the spaces where the boundaries delineating individual ownership of words and ideas are blurred. He believes that texts are 'filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of "our-ownness"' (1986: 89), each struggling for authority: 'One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse' (Bakhtin 1981: 348).

Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and multi-voiced texts resonates with Kristeva's concept of the poststructuralist intertextually created subject-in-process-and-on-trial. Kristeva characterises textuality as 'a mosaic of quotations' (1986: 37). Producers and readers of texts experience what she terms,

> the same putting-into-process of … identities (that are) capable of identifying with the different types of texts, voices, and semantic, syntactic and phonic systems at play in a given text… the final meaning of (textual) content will be neither original source nor any one of the possible meanings taken on in the text, but will be, rather, a continuous movement back and forth in the space between the origin and all the possible connotative meanings. (Kristeva 1996: 190-91)

For Kristeva, such an intertextual framework provides the means through which all experiences of reading and writing can be understood. According to Kristeva (1996: 190), the subject is forever 'evolving' and is in a constant process of becoming; this evolving 'subject' is not only dynamic and mercurial but—following the connotations of the expression in French: '*le sujet-en-procès*'—also 'on-trial.' Such a theory of subjectivity is clearly analogous to students as emergent-authors awaiting judgement from their assessors/lecturers.

Kirsty states that she is sometimes unsure how to reference particular sources, particularly when she may have referenced the same point already. Kirsty's use of quotation marks for the term 'baby-boomers' for example, suggests an awareness on her part of what Ivanič has called the 'other-voicedness' (1998: 190) of certain words,

which carry with them allusions to other texts and contexts, despite the absence of a full in-text reference.

Finally, Kirsty felt that once she had read the same point several times, it would not require attribution because she felt that she then 'knew' it. As Penrose and Geisler explain, 'domain knowledge' becomes transformed into 'personal knowledge' (1994: 516-17), thereby creating the conditions which enabled Kirsty to enter into the processes of text/knowledge construction in her disciplinary field, which in turn led to her developing a sense of ownership, authority and control over the writing she had produced.

By confronting and attempting to work through a number of intertextual uncertainties and feelings of conflict concerning questions of textual ownership and authorship, Kirsty was able to engage with the process of text/knowledge production in ways I suggest, that were epistemologically transformative (**'I** <u>knew</u> it because I'd read it so many times')': disciplinary knowledge evolved into personal knowledge.

Rodney, the marker of Kirsty's assignment, was in his forties and had been lecturing in Modern History at undergraduate level for more than ten years; he had completed his doctoral studies in this area of History (with a focus on the outcomes of World War Two). Although Rodney was aware of the Faculty desire to encourage a normative distribution of marks that would conform to a bell-curve (with 71 percent being the average mark expected for a first year Arts subject), he explained that he nevertheless tried to encourage students to adopt an 'individual style' of writing because he did not want students to 'feel alienated from the thing (their writing). If you're teaching a "one size fits all" style and approach, I think the students definitely feel alienated from the material they're writing.' Rodney wanted students to develop their own opinions about the issues they discussed in their essays: to write in ways that 'break the mould.' To do this he thought students should try to develop arguments that they could substantiate, rather than simply regurgitating other people's work.

Rodney's comments seem to echo Kirsty's realisation that what was being required of her in her assignment was to 'have distance and seem like objective and also get your voice in.' While such a hybridising rather than homogenising (Holton 2000) approach to

pedagogy[4] may have created a 'conflict of voices' (Bakhtin 1984: 74-75), between different and competing writer identities, Kirsty did not experience feelings of alienation from and lack of ownership over her writing. Rather, I suggest, the forces of hybridisation sanctioned by Rodney may have enabled Kirsty to engage with the processes of knowledge appropriation ('I knew it because I'd read it so many times'), which led to her developing a sense of authorial control and ownership over the text she produced.

Rodney contrasted concepts of ownership and research methods in the Sciences with the Humanities. For Rodney, Science students seemed to be used to 'a different thing as to what counts as people's work. They've often had a group approach. To my mind they often seem to be inadequately citing or sourcing something … It's a totally different thing about ownership and all that.' Yet in History, Rodney stated, 'it's regarded as your work. Someone else "buying in" would be not on.' Students from very different educational backgrounds are expected to navigate through such transdisciplinary contact zones in order to meet their academic assessment requirements: in the case of Kirsty, from studying Anthropology in a Norwegian university to studying Modern History in Australia.

As Kirsty recognised, knowing what constitutes 'common knowledge' is an integral part of academic writing, yet difficult to define. Rodney also found this challenging: 'We don't have an answer for it. It's a "feel" thing. It's as vague as that. It's an interesting question. It's one that I often chew over.' He went on to state that teachers cannot assume that everyone shares a sense of knowledge that is 'common.' In his essay feedback comments to Kirsty, he stated that Kirsty's writing became 'rather general' once she wrote without referencing; it lost its 'edge' and status or credibility as historical discourse. Kirsty's 'sharpness' and 'focus,' in other words, the more impressive and 'mark-worthy' aspects of her writing, diminished as her use of footnotes decreased. As Rodney wrote in his feedback: 'Towards the end of your essay, as you can tell from the fewer sources listed in the footnotes, you tend to become rather general in your writing and lose the sharpness and focus of the earlier parts of the work.'

Rodney's overall impression of Kirsty's essay was quite mixed. He found the essay

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[4] See Thompson and Pennycook (2008b: 134-36) for further discussion of this point.

'over-general' and lacking in 'historical specificity.' For example, he noted that on page 8 of her assignment (see Figure 2), Kirsty had alluded to 'The Marxist Theory' without explaining the version to which this referred. As discussed above, Kirsty felt that this point did not require referencing because it was from 'the lecture.' Clearly, these kinds of issues surrounding in-text citations need to be discussed by lecturers and their students as they negotiate the terms of reference for exactly what constitutes knowledge that is 'common' in a given pedagogical environment. In Rodney's eyes, Kirsty's lack of referencing was not considered as 'transgressive.' Kirsty received an H2B (between 70 and 74 percent) for her essay: An average mark for a student at her level.

'Because I'm just a student I feel that I can't really say much about my opinion'
Georgia was born in the U.K. and lived there for three years before moving to Hong Kong. She spoke Cantonese at home and attended secondary school in Hong Kong, where the medium of instruction was English. She then moved to Australia to complete her final two years of secondary education before enrolling in an Arts degree at an Australian university. The assignment Georgia submitted for this research was completed at the end of the first semester of the first year of her undergraduate degree. It comprised a 4,000 word essay on Tone Languages: 'What is a tone language? Using a few well-described tone languages, discuss the main issues in tone language description: level vs contour tones; lexical vs grammatical tones; tone 'sandhi'[5]; tone vs pitch-accent.' It was the only piece of assessment that she submitted for this Arts subject. As in Kirsty's case, the distribution of marks was expected to conform to a bell-curve with 71 percent the anticipated average. Celine, her tutor, stated that she was impressed by Georgia's choice of source materials and use of in-text referencing conventions. She awarded Georgia 77/100 for the assignment, with the comments: "Good work, 'Georgia'. You've demonstrated a good understanding of the topic and good research."

Georgia explained that the best way for her to understand clearly what was required of her was by example. She found it useful not only to attempt to learn different synonyms and expressions but also to try to learn how to structure her writing by following the structure of other similar genres of writing. Georgia gave the example of the phrase: 'In this research, I am blah, blah, blah' as an instance of copying what she termed the 'structure' of a text, as opposed to its 'content.'

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[5] Tone 'sandhi' refers to the ways in which tonal change occurs in specific contexts of use.

Georgia struggled to reconcile her awareness as a university student of the need to reference source materials in her writing with her understanding of how learning and the construction of her 'own' knowledge took place:

> If someone has said it, then I have to reference it, then I think that all my piece will be, has to be, sourced because all the ideas I've learnt … So how can I differentiate when I'm actually using someone idea, or it just happens that both of us think the same? … I feel that, like, how nice to say that it's my idea.

Although Georgia finds it difficult to identify where ownership of ideas might lie, since she believes that all knowledge is learned from others, she nevertheless expresses a desire to claim authorial ownership for herself ('How nice to say that it's my idea'). Georgia explains further:

> I feel that there's nothing that you can strictly say is definitely my own and no-one has ever mentioned or put it in this way before. 'Cos there's so many people in the world, I just feel that it's impossible. Everything people say, it's just gathering information from all different sources … But … your selection of articles and information is actually … your manipulation of all these sources that present your idea.

Georgia raises a number of important points in relation to the construction of knowledge and textual ownership. She found the concept of originality to be highly problematic ('there's nothing that you can strictly say is definitely my own … there's so many people in the world, I just feel that it's impossible'). Georgia then related this insight to the research she undertakes for her university assignments, saying that it simply involves 'your manipulation of … sources.'

Georgia explained that she had difficulty knowing whether she might be considered to be 'stealing' if she did not quote directly from her sources. She then became concerned that she could be thought to be making excessive use of quotations, thus clearly demonstrating her difficulties as an emergent academic writer in knowing how to textually manipulate her source materials to the satisfaction of her lecturers. The section of her assignment to which Georgia is referring is presented in Figure 5:

Georgia	(p.1, paragraph 3)
Pike (1975: 105) suggests that "tone forms basic to a tone language" usually occur "on the shortest structural units of that language". These include "short vowels, single short syllables, or short morphemes," as seen in the following examples …	

Figure 5: Georgia's Assignment, Extract 1

In contrast, as in Kirsty's assignment, Georgia's concluding paragraph (see Figure 6) contained no in-text references. I asked her whether this was intentional. She responded that she had presented the ideas of other people in the rest of her essay, so the conclusion was the point at which she could express her 'own' thoughts and ideas in her own way. Furthermore, Georgia wanted to believe that her efforts at performing as an academic writer would result in subsequent readers referencing her writing: she would have earned her place alongside the authors of her source texts as a legitimate member of the disciplinary community she had been engaging with. Georgia concluded her essay with the following paragraph:

Georgia (p.8, paragraph 3)
In any case, it is perhaps obvious from the above analysis in the essay that the distinction between tone and pitch-accent is just as ambiguous as that between level-tone language and contour tone language, and is thus open to further study. This gives a good overall picture of the types of issues linguists face when attempting to analyse tone languages, and shows that linguistics is indeed a dynamic and challenging field.

Figure 6: Georgia's Assignment, Extract 2

When I asked Georgia to whom the rest of her essay belonged, if she was claiming ownership only of the conclusion, she replied (with a laugh):

> At university I feel like I'm always using, I'm just using other people's work. I can't, I don't have much room to do my own thing. I think unless you're writing, like creative pieces, that you can't have everything that belongs to you, otherwise, most of the time, to have a good essay, it seems like you have to make a lot of references to people to show that you have understand the idea how to research … but the way you choose it and use that structure in a way that supports your argument, is yours … When you're more credible yourself, then you probably have the room to go beyond these conventions.

Once again, Georgia highlights the tensions surrounding textual ownership in academic writing, suggesting that the lack of credibility and status accorded to students by the academy served to constrain creative possibilities and undermine students' struggle for authorship:

> I remember when I studied Chinese there are certain conventions that you have to follow, but the really famous poets, they are the ones who can go beyond these conventions and they are still considered right, but they're actually wrong, grammatically or whatever, they're wrong. They don't follow the rules. So I think it's the same here. Because I'm just a student and I feel that I can't really say much about my opinion … I think to be able to produce your own ideas you can't, you have to go beyond just like, OK reading them and OK, I just draw this conclusion. It's more like you are really thoroughly learn it and then you can speak of new things.

Intertextuality,[6] originality and the creation of new knowledge

Georgia provides us with a crucial insight into the paradoxical nature of originality and authorship in the academy when she comments: 'all my piece … has to be sourced because all the ideas I've learnt … (but) … how nice to say that it's my idea.' Yet, Georgia's reliance on imitating the structures of academic writing in her essays not only provided her with the linguistic means for self-expression, but also with a framework for learning that enabled her as an emergent academic writer (a subject-in-process-and-on-trial) to engage with the processes of text/knowledge production in her particular field of study. As Bakhtin explains: 'The better our command of genres, the more freely we employ them (and) the more fully and clearly we reveal our own individuality in them' (1986: 80). For Georgia, however, as a first year undergraduate student, being able to reveal her own 'individuality' by 'freely' using the words and structures of others was proving particularly frustrating and difficult.

Georgia's lack of status and knowledge as a student writer she believes, confines her to reproducing the ideas of others using other people's rules and conventions. She seems to be suggesting that it is only once a writer has gained mastery over these conventions, as in the case of poets, that they are then able 'to go beyond these conventions (yet) they are still considered right, but they're actually wrong' in order to 'speak of new things.'

Once again, Georgia's comments not only echo Bakhtin's belief that 'individuality' lies in a freeing up of the traditional conventions associated with particular genres (1986: 80), but also resonates with Kristeva's view that the language of poetry provides a 'perpetual challenge (to) past writing' by being in 'constant dialogue with the preceding literary corpus.' Through this dialogue with previous texts, claims Kristeva, established linguistic codes can be transgressed and additional (inter)texts created in a process of ongoing 'defiant productivity' (Kristeva 1986: 39-42). Artists and the writers of novels or poetry in any society, states Kristeva, are most able to embody the notion of a 'subject-in-process' because they have already been accorded the status of textual 'creators,' as opposed to 'reproducers.' It is precisely by becoming part of a productive (rather than re-productive) and creative process that the subjectivity of a speaker (or writer) can be affirmed (Kristeva 1996: 190).

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[6] See Chandrasoma et al. (2004) on transgressive and non-transgressive forms of intertextuality.

While Georgia does not classify herself as a poet, she is nevertheless a subject-in-process-and-on-trial struggling to 'write herself into' and take control of the texts she produces by textually manipulating her source materials in order to 'present' her own ideas. The words and ideas of others act as the dialogic medium through which Georgia battles to 'present' her 'own' ideas, thus intimating the intertextual universe outlined by both Bakhtin and Kristeva above.

Celine (the marker of Georgia's essay) was in her thirties and had been employed as an undergraduate tutor in Linguistics for three years; she had completed a Masters Degree in Speech Pathology, and at the time of her interview, was also working as a research assistant in Linguistics. She voiced similar concerns to Georgia, stating that students often discussed with her the difficulties of presenting their 'own' opinions in their academic writing. Some were 'scared' and 'unsure how much of their own opinion to present,' while others were not clear exactly what constituted 'their own opinion.' Celine felt she should devote more time in lectures and tutorials to discussing the documentation of sources in relation to questions of textual ownership, authorship and writer identity. She suggested that if time could be made for students to draft their essays and receive feedback on them before the allocation of grades, this would constitute a very valuable learning experience.

Celine went on to talk about her own lack of confidence as a student with respect to the construction of knowledge:

> I used to be terrified about making statements in an essay because I wanted someone else to have said it. Because if they've said it, they obviously know better than I do, so I'd just quote them … in first year essays you get people making these broad general statements and you say, 'You'll have to back this up.' Other people that won't even say two words without quoting someone else. It's hard to get that balance between those two extremes.

Achieving 'that balance' with the use of quotations was clearly of major concern for Georgia in her own writing.

Concluding comments

Despite their uncertainties and feelings of entrapment in the language of others, Kirsty and Georgia found ways of working with and through these ambivalent processes of text/knowledge production in order to claim ownership (at least in-part) over the texts they wrote. In their different ways these students recognised that the language, ideas and

the texts they produced were intricately tied up with accenting and re-accenting the language, ideas and texts of others, or, as Kirsty put it: 'getting your voice in.'

Kirsty's comments and academic writing practices suggest that if staff and students could make effective use of class readings and lecture materials to establish a common epistemological frame of reference ('I *knew* it because I'd read it so many times'), then this could provide ways in which the processes of knowledge creation and textual authority could be explicitly and transparently co-constructed between lecturers and their students.

Georgia, who clearly saw the production of text/knowledge and language as an interactive and socially constructed process, was somewhat more successful in manipulating her source texts to secure a higher mark for her assignment than Kirsty. Although Georgia knew that she was not a poet who was able to transgress linguistic conventions ('the really famous poets, they are the ones who can go beyond these conventions … I'm just a student'), she believed that texts were multivocal ('you combined it from some people's findings so that it comes up with a slightly different one, but it's still not from scratch'), thus challenging the viability of the constructs of singular authorship and originality.

As scholars such as Angélil-Carter (2000), Currie (1998) and Howard (1999; Howard & Robillard 2008) have recognised, it is precisely by learning how to speak through the voices of others that we can begin to articulate an authoritative position of our own. By engaging with, rather than fearing, intertextual connections, we can create a dialogic pedagogy for academic writing that enables staff and students to transcend the notion of plagiarism as simply a lack of 'academic honesty,' and advance our understanding of the politics of text, knowledge and identity formation that characterises the complexities of the learning and teaching unfolding in today's university classrooms (see also Thompson 2005; Thompson & Pennycook 2008b).

Following the work of Storch and Tapper (1997) on the use of annotation in second language academic writing pedagogy, my study also indicates that students would benefit from early intervention and feedback prior to the final assessment of their academic writing. As Chandrasoma et al. (2004: 190) have already highlighted, exactly what constitutes 'common knowledge' is fundamental to the production and assessment

of academic writing. As educational practitioners, however, our understanding of what it encompasses is contingent upon specific learning contexts and needs to be negotiated and re-negotiated with each new student group. The drafting stage, I suggest, offers lecturers and students a critical opportunity to discuss such issues of commonality, since it is during this period of intertextual creativity that the struggle to transform disciplinary knowledge into shared or 'personal' knowledge will be at its most intense. Finally, as a researcher engaging in a 'dialogue' with the data of this study, I share some similarities with Levi-Strauss's *bricoleur* who 'always puts something of himself (*sic*)' into the process of 'continual reconstruction' of the materials he/she works with (1996: 21). It is important therefore to acknowledge the part I have played in selecting and interpreting particular phenomena ahead of others and to realise that I am limited by my own sociohistorically constructed and partial view of the world.[7] The research that is presented here is necessarily mediated (and restricted) by my belief that human understanding emerges through a process of sociohistorical struggle and that this understanding changes over time. This study has also been predicated on the assumption that there is a nexus between power and knowledge and that all forms of communication cannot be separated from the social and political contexts in which they occur. Working from within such a dialogic conceptual framework, the researcher becomes a self-reflexive advocate for change. I am suggesting therefore that as university educators, we need to look beyond the mechanics of referencing when dealing with problems of attribution and plagiarism in students' work and view academic writing as an intertextual and multivocal struggle for text/knowledge ownership, if we are to effectively assist students to become authoritative authors and contributors in their fields of disciplinary study.

Acknowledgements

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[7] Namely, that of an Anglo-Saxon, Western educated female university lecturer.

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