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Co-constructing academic literacy: Examining teacher-student discourse in a one-to-one consultation

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One-to-one consultations have become standard practice in university learning centres as they offer a "just-in-time" approach to developing individual students' academic literacy practices. However, they are arguably an expensive luxury. In order to obtain a clearer understanding of how student learning occurs in the interactive context of one-to-one academic literacy sessions, this paper presents a detailed analysis of one such session. The data provides evidence of the student's learning as the session unfolds, and identifies the discourse strategies used by the learning adviser which scaffold this development. On the basis of our analysis, we theorise that learning advisers need to be flexible in their use of discourse strategies in one-to-one sessions, depending on student need. We suggest on the basis of this case study that, while some students will benefit from a didactic approach including explicit explanation of literacy skills, they also need encouragement through collaborative discourse to take an increasingly autonomous and engaged approach to academic literacy.

Key Words: one-to-one, academic literacy, pedagogic discourse, academic writing, scaffolding

1. Introduction

One-to-one consultations have become an integral part of academic literacy development practices in many universities around the world. In Australia, for instance, in response to the influx of international students in the 1990s, all universities must now provide learning support in order to meet national standards under the ESOS (Education Services for Overseas Students) Act. In nearly all cases, Australian university learning centres offer, amongst other strategies, one-to-one consultations which aim to promote students' academic literacy development (Learning Development, UOW, 2007). Student evaluations of this kind of support tend to be overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Learning advisers, too, recognise the enormous potential of the one-to-one setting. As Weissberg (2006, p. 261) argues: "tutor feedback delivered in a one-to-one setting through scaffolded dialogue tailored to a particular student writer constitutes an unparalleled opportunity to provide targeted, individualized instruction". However, one-to-one consultations are arguably an expensive luxury, and in times of economic pressure, it is

important to ensure that the learning outcomes of such sessions are maximised. Recent literature has called for more evaluation of one-to-one consultations, and stressed the need to communicate the results of such research to the wider academic community (Chanock, 2007; Stevenson & Kokkinn, 2009; Woodward-Kron, 2007).

Learning advisers generally agree that the goal of one-to-one literacy sessions is not to "fix up" students' immediate written assignments, but to develop students' ability to meet the expectations of the academy: to develop their understanding of academic conventions and practices, to write in an academic voice, to develop the confidence to participate in the discourses of their disciplines, and to continue to develop such practices autonomously. One way to investigate the achievement of such goals is to examine in detail the interaction between adviser and student within a single one-to-one session, seeking for evidence of what Vygotksy (1978) has called "microgenetic" development. It was with this microgenetic view that our team of literacy advisers decided to ask the question: what are the discourse characteristics of one-to-one literacy sessions that contribute to student learning? To address this question, this paper presents a detailed analysis of the interaction between adviser and student in a one-to-one session.

2. Literature review

Our research is grounded in the relevant literature on developing student learning in sociocultural contexts, stemming from a Vygotskian view of social learning, and focussing particularly on the development of academic literacies through one-to-one consultations. The relevant research on the discourse characteristics of one-to-one literacy sessions addresses both the "how" and the "what" of such sessions: the "how" concerning the pedagogic positioning of the tutor towards the student, while the "what" concerns the content or field of discourse of the literacy session.

2.1. The "how" of discourse in one-to-one literacy sessions: Pedagogic positioning

Interest in the respective roles and positioning of teacher and student has been stimulated by Vygotsky's claims about learning as a social activity: we learn through interacting with others in social contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, learning takes place both ontogenetically (longitudinal development over time), and microgenetically (the moment-to-moment shifts in the student's understandings in the course of a particular dialogic exchange). Microgenetic development in language learning has been the subject of considerable research, for example, Donato's (1994) study of peer scaffolding in language learning; Platt and Brook's (2002) study of task engagement in adult language learning; Michell and Sharpe's (2005) study of scaffolding in ESL classrooms; and Guerrero and Villamil's (2000) study of peer revision between L2 writers. While ontogenetic studies, for example, using pre-and post-testing, or observing writers' incorporations of feedback into their writing, can give a broad indication of the efficacy of literacy sessions, microgenetic analysis affords a detailed insight into the development of students' cognition on a moment-to-moment basis.

Vygotsky's theories of social learning suggest a close relationship between dialogue and writing. For Vygotsky (1978), writing is a highly abstract and deliberate action, which presupposes the existence of inner speech. Furthermore, it is a product of collaborative work and imitation, which in Vygotsky's view forms the basis of cognitive development. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which specifically recognises the importance of assistance from others in working on tasks, and consequently of learning, seems particularly applicable to the kind of collaborative activity that occurs during one-to-one dialogues between teacher and student. Vygotsky (1978) describes the ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Working to extend the ZPD, teachers provide scaffolded assistance to students, which is gradually withdrawn as new ideas and knowledge become

internalised by means of inner speech, and the writing process becomes more self-regulated. From a Vygotskian perspective, the teacher's pedagogical use of language is crucial to facilitating student learning. However, as van Lier (2004, p. 149) writes, "Such moment-to-moment pedagogical action requires 'just-right' and 'just-in-time' responses, and must be seen as among the most complex and most demanding decisions experienced teachers make."

One of the most common topics of research in teachers' use of language has been the endemic IRE (initiate-respond-evaluate) pattern of teacher talk. In their work on scaffolding, Hammond and Gibbons (2005) demonstrate the potential benefits of the IRE pattern. In particular, Hammond and Gibbons demonstrate the way in which IRE exchanges can be used to "increase prospectiveness", that is, to push students to extend their thinking or language use. A well-chosen question in the "Initiate" phase prompts students to think more critically, pushing them forward into their zone of proximal development. The benefits of this type of question or prompt can be enhanced by allowing adequate wait-time for students to consider and formulate their answer in the "Respond" stage. Then, teachers can use the "Evaluate" phase to pick up or appropriate the student response to formulate a follow-up provocative question to further increase prospectiveness. Other discourse strategies identified by Hammond and Gibbons (2005) include: linking to prior experience / pointing forward to new experiences; recapping; appropriating and recasting student contributions; and providing cued elicitation (that is, questions which give strong hints as to the expected answer).

On the negative side, however, many authors have criticised the IRE pattern as a tool used by teachers to assert their authority, potentially disempowering students and decreasing the potential for autonomy. Kamberelis (2001), for example, in his research on teacher talk, applied the Bakhtinian notions of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse (Bakhtin, 1994). Kamberelis maintains that authoritative discourse – the privileged discourses of academia – remains mysterious and distant to students, as opposed to their own internally persuasive discourse. In order to scaffold students into new discourses, Kamberelis encouraged a "hybrid discourse", freeing up the traditional IRE pattern, and allowing space for students to talk about content in their own internally persuasive voices. Leveraging off students' familiar discourses, Kamberelis was able to scaffold the students' development of new discoursal identities in unfamiliar territory. Citing Bhabha (1994), he claims that hybrid discourse is a fertile "third space" for learning in which students can construct and reconstruct new identities by fusing authoritative and internally persuasive discourses (Kamberelis, 2001, p. 120). Through the use of hybrid discourse, teachers can overcome, at least to some extent, the potentially alienating power structure of traditional classrooms.

Kamberelis' work on classroom discourse echoes some of the early work on one-to-one academic literacy settings, in particular, a seminal paper by Kate Chanock (1995), in which she advocates a sharing of power between the learning adviser and student. Chanock adopts Carl Rogers' work on therapeutic counselling as an analogy for the one-to-one academic consultation; in particular, Rogers' concept of "unconditional positive regard". The learning adviser has certain privileged knowledge (understandings of academic literacy) while the student has insider knowledge of the discipline in which he/she is working. By acknowledging and respecting the student's knowledge within the "safe", non-judgmental discourse of the one-to-one session, students are encouraged to construct their own understanding of an assignment question and how they might answer it. By showing regard for students and encouraging them to articulate their knowledge of the discipline through strategic questioning, summarising, and active listening, the learning adviser is able to extend the student's ZPD, enhancing their knowledge and confidence, and to shift the balance of power in the consultation towards the student. Like Chanock (1995), Clerehan (1996) stressed that the most important aspect of the teacher's pedagogical use of language is in stimulating dialogue. She demonstrated how students develop skills and gain knowledge not *from* talk but *through* talk. Clerehan's analysis of interactions in one-to-one sessions showed how meaning is created through shared understandings, and how students can be led towards identifying for themselves how to strengthen their academic work.

The interactive, dialogic nature of the discourse of one-to-one consultations has also been highlighted by Woodward-Kron (2007). In a systemic-functional linguistic analysis of a tutor-student academic literacy session, Woodward-Kron showed that the session was both interactive and instructive. While both the tutor and student asked questions for clarification and for information, the tutor also made suggestions and gave directions. Together, tutor and student negotiated changes, constructed text and established logical relations.

Also stressing the dialogic nature of such sessions, Weissberg (2006), in his study of four one-to-one consultations between advanced L2 writers and their tutors, identified the importance of the tutor making "explicit linkages to the learner's side of the conversation", picking up and extending on the learner's words through questioning, extending, summarising and paraphrasing, and using these as "a springboard to making instructional points" (Weissberg, 2006, p. 262). Tardy (2006) takes this notion a little further by pointing out the mutual appropriation between tutor and student, as the tutor appropriates and extends on the student's words, while the student appropriates the tutor's feedback, gradually gaining a greater sense of agency through dialogic interaction.

Like Weissberg (2006) and Tardy (2006), Collins, Shrensky and Wilson (1998) investigated teaching strategies in one-to-one consultations that would lead to increased student autonomy. These researchers video-taped one-to-one academic consultations with non-English speaking background students in a university learning centre. They identified a number of strategies that could help learning advisers to shift students towards autonomous learning, and categorised these on a continuum from didactic to collaborative to autonomous strategies with, for example, "modelling", "telling" and "explaining" at the didactic end; the "two-pencil strategy" in which student and teacher collaborate in editing a student's writing; and self-evaluation by the student at the autonomous end (See Figure 1).
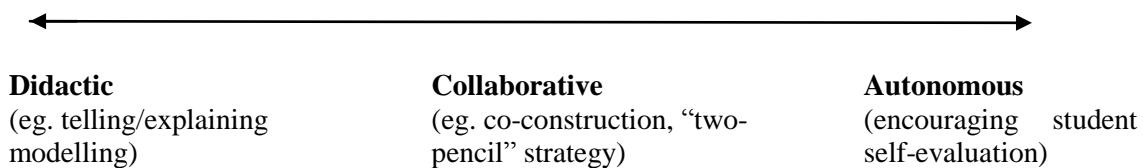

| **Didactic** | **Collaborative** | **Autonomous** |
| (eg. telling/explaining modelling) | (eg. co-construction, "two-pencil" strategy) | (encouraging student self-evaluation) |

Figure 1. Discoursal relationship between learning adviser and student (adapted from: Collins, Shrensky, & Wilson, 1998, p. 3).

2.2. The "what" of discourse in one-to-one literacy sessions: towards a literacies model

In terms of the "what", or content focus, of academic literacy sessions, the work of Lea and Street (1998, 2000, 2006) has been particularly influential in recent years (see Figure 2). Lea and Street have argued that approaches to student literacy can be "conceptualised through the use of three overlapping perspectives … a study skills model, an academic socialisation model, and an academic literacies model" (Lea & Street, 2000, p. 368). Lea and Street pointed out that the teaching of academic writing has traditionally taken a "skills-based" or technicist approach in which students are taught generic, atomised writing skills. The study skills approach sees literacy as an individual and cognitive skill and focuses on surface features of language, such as grammar, spelling and generic essay structure, that may be "fixed" so that students can transfer their learned knowledge unproblematically from one context to another.

This approach was challenged in the 1990s as a result of the increasing interest in sociolinguistic understandings of literacy, which highlighted the discoursal differences between disciplines. The academic socialisation model, according to Lea and Street (2000), is concerned with the acculturation of students into these disciplinary and subject-based discourses. Again,

this approach assumes that disciplinary discourses and genres are relatively stable and that students will be able to easily transfer their learning to similar contexts.

Lea and Street (2000), however, suggested that academic literacy pedagogy should increasingly adopt a "literacies" perspective. They maintained that students need to not just acquire the basic skills of academic literacy, and to recognise and emulate the characteristic features of prototypical genres, but also to develop a growing personal identity as legitimate participants in academic discourse.
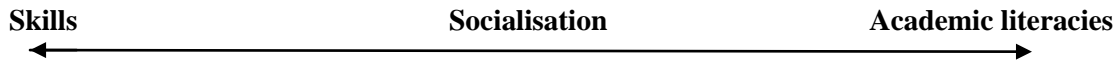
Skills   **Socialisation**   **Academic literacies**

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Figure 2. Lea and Street's model of academic literacy (Source: Lea & Street, 2000, p. 34).

Thus, from a literacies perspective, as suggested by Lea and Street (2000), the "what" of academic literacy sessions – the skills, genres and discourse features of academic writing – is intertwined with the "how" of fostering in students a new academic identity as a writer within their discourse community.

2.3. Integrating the "what" and the "how' in one-to-one literacy sessions

In one of the most comprehensive studies of pedagogic discourse in academic literacy consultations conducted so far, Theresa Lillis (2001) brought together the work of Lea and Street with an analysis of her own interactions with individual students about their writing. Like Collins, Shrensky and Wilson (1998), Lillis contrasted didactic and collaborative discourse. She identified four categories of pedagogic discourse, fusing the "what" and the "how" of discourse in one-to-one literacy sessions (Lillis, 2001, p. 158) ("how" and "what" inserted):

- *tutor-directive dialogue* (how) *aimed at talking the student-writer into essayist literacy practice* (what);
- *collaborative dialogue* (how) *aimed at populating the student-writer's text with her own intentions* (what);
- *tutor-directive dialogue* (how) *aimed at making language visible* (what); and
- *dialogue which facilitates student "talkback" as part of a long conversation* (how).

Intrigued by this interaction between "what" we are helping students to learn and "how" we use discourse strategies to foster this learning, our team of learning advisers decided to investigate more closely the discourse of our one-to-one learning sessions in order to identify whether and to what extent our pedagogical use of language contributes to student learning in a one-to-one interactive context.

3. Methods

The one-to-one literacy session which is presented as a naturalistic case study in this paper took place between a mature-age international student, whom we have given the pseudonym, Mahni, and her male academic literacy adviser who was also one of the researchers. In order to limit potential investigator/participant bias, all four researchers collaborated in the construction of the research design and interpretation of the data. The session was one of several recorded and transcribed with students' written permission as part of a research project approved by the University's Ethics Committee, and was selected for detailed analysis as the researchers agreed that it was most typical of those one-to-one consultations in which the advisor and the student work together to tackle an essay assignment. Mahni, who comes from Bangladesh, had come to ask for advice about how to tackle an essay topic on key performance indicators (KPI's) in

program evaluation, to be written as an assignment in a subject called, "Accounting for Managers", in the Master of Professional Accountancy course.

The data analysis involved three steps. The first step was to map the stages of the session using Christie's (2002) tools of classroom discourse analysis. Next, we looked for indications of student development, or microgenesis, across these stages by analysing the student's discourse. As Platt and Brooks (2002, p. 374) argue, microgenetic analysis of discourse allows researchers to capture development as it is taking place: "to grasp the process in flight" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.68).

To further investigate the pedagogical discourse of the session, we used an iterative process of analysis, gradually developing an analytical framework based on Lea and Street's (2000) academic literacies model, shown in Figure 2, and Collins, Shrensky, and Wilson's (1998) continuum of interaction in the one-to-one learning session, shown in Figure 1. This analytical framework, which highlights the interaction between the "what" (the literacy focus) and the "how" (the pedagogic positioning) of the one-to-one literacy sessions, provided us with a focused approach to examining these two dimensions of the discourse characteristics of this particular type of interactive pedagogic context (see Figure 3).
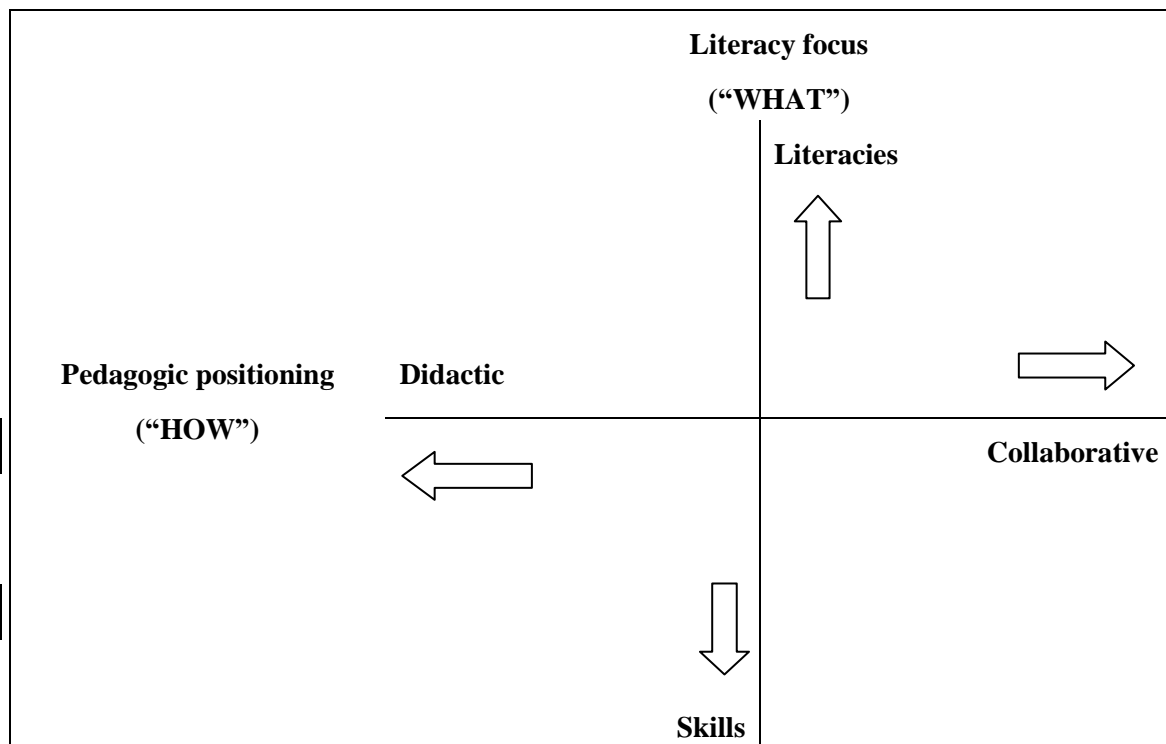

Figure 3. Two dimensions of discourse characteristics in one-to-one academic literacy sessions.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Evidence of student learning through one-to-one interaction

Three distinct stages were identified across the session: Orientation, Co-construction and Resolution. In the Orientation stage the academic learning adviser (LA) and the student established rapport, set up goals, and developed a mutual understanding of the task in hand. In the Co-construction stage, the adviser and the student worked together to generate ideas, approaches and language for tackling the task. In the Resolution stage, the session was summarised and concluded.

Analysis of the student's discourse revealed clear evidence of learning across these three stages, evidenced through Mahni's (M) developing use and appropriation of academic language, greater engagement, and increasingly confident, self-regulated participation within the session.

In the Orientation stage, Mahni's anxiety and confusion about the task were evident, as she burst out with the questions:

M:	So how can I find? How can I write? Because finance company use different KPI and other company, they have different KPI's so I have to write about the KPI's not the finance, I'm not clear about that. So how can I write? Like an overall thing?

Transcripts Key

==	latched utterances
Bold	highlighted to demonstrate our point
?	intonation indicates a question
[abc]	our comments on the transcript

She was also unsure about her lecturer's injunction to use critical evaluation and in the following extract relies on support from the learning adviser to complete her utterances:

LA:	Ah, OK, was there anything in particular that the lecturer said you needed to improve?
M:	Um, grammar mistake, and um, some like, um, critical eval, critical…
LA:	Evaluation, or==
M:	==Yeah.
LA:	Analysis.
M:	Yeah.

During the Co-construction stage, Mahni's anxiety was gradually reduced as she developed a clearer understanding of the task requirements until, by the Resolution stage, she was able to talk with increasing confidence about how she intended to structure the essay. This confidence is apparent in her use of the modal "will", and her use of the sequencer "and then", and her statement responding to the essay question, "I think this is the advantages of KPI". Importantly, she had also gained an understanding of how to introduce her own position into the essay in relation to the literature, and support it with examples:

M:	When I start the essay, **the first part I will write** is what is the performance evaluation, but provide the company will do that. And write about these things, **and then** KPI and some examples of different company, and look at finance company and other manufacturing company.
LA:	That sounds good.
M:	**And then** I have to write about do these KPI capture the true performance. **I think this is the advantages of KPI.**
LA:	Yes, and that also gives you the opportunity to use that so called "critical analysis".
M:	Yeah, and, if not, **then I can write, after research, how can I say, analysing, there are some disadvantages of KPI**.
LA:	Yes, and give some==
M:	==**examples**.

In addition to a growing confidence, as the session progressed, Mahni's academic voice grew stronger as she talked through her topic with the support of the adviser. For example, Mahni had had particular problems understanding the concept of "gaming the system", but as she interacted with her learning adviser, she gradually built up an understanding of this concept; by the end of the resolution stage, she had confidently incorporated it into her own discourse:

M:	Firstly, I will write about the performance evaluators. Why we have to evaluate the companies. There are some reasons why companies collapsed, so [unclear]

> I have to write my own words about the companies' performance evaluation and then I have to write about the KPI's and **"gaming".**

To sum up, analysis of the data demonstrates Mahni's learning, not only in terms of increased confidence, but also in terms of her increased ability to control the language of her discipline, and to appropriate the metalanguage of academic literacy. Both of these factors indicate a distinct step forward in Mahni's developing identity as a participant in academic discourse.

4.2. The unique positioning of the learning adviser: the "how"

Analysis also revealed insights into the discourse strategies used by the learning adviser. As Chanock (1995) points out, the learning adviser stands outside the student's discipline without the power to allocate a grade. At the same time, the learning adviser is invested with authority as a member of the university staff, and as a recognised "knower" of academic literacies. This unique position of authority without power is clearly an important feature that contributes to the productive learning potential of one-to-one literacy consultations. We identified a number of strategies used by the adviser, as shown in Figure 4.
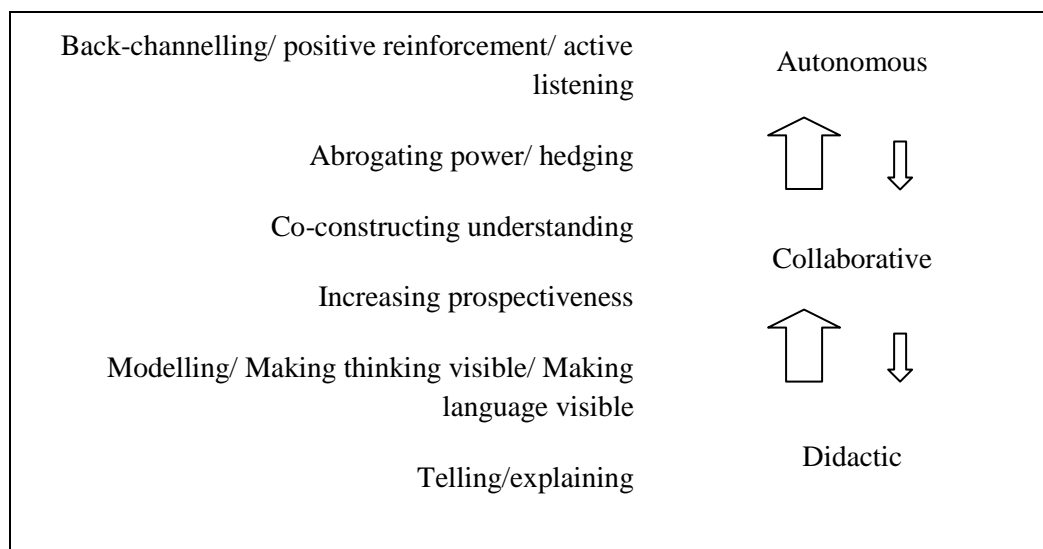

Figure 4. "How" strategies: the pedagogic positioning of tutor in one-to-one sessions shown against Collins, Shrensky and Wilson's (1998) continuum signifying the interpenetration of autonomous and didactic discourse strategies.

In the session with Mahni, the learning adviser sometimes took a didactic position, using Bakhtin's "authoritative voice" to give advice to the student: "telling" the students how to tackle the assignment. At times, he used imperatives such as "use", "critically evaluate", and strong modals such as "you need to" and "you have to". For example, in response to Mahni's anxious "How can I find? How can I write?" he took an authoritative approach:

> M: So how can I find? How can I write? Because finance company use different KPI and other company, they have different KPI's so I have to write about the KPI's not the finance, I'm not clear about that. So how can I write? Like an overall thing?
>
> LA: I think you **have to** look at a more broad picture in the overall idea of performance indicators And, maybe **use** two examples perhaps, even of industries, if you like, two types. **Use** a couple to illustrate the variations that might occur there. Because obviously there are variations, depending on the

type of industry that you're looking at and what particular indicators that you're actually trying to strive towards.

This didactic positioning was also obvious at times when the learning adviser modelled academic discourse for the student. We have called this "making thinking visible" in parallel with Lillis's (2001) category of "making language visible". For example, in the following extract, the learning adviser continued the discussion of "gaming" by posing a reflective question and then answering it himself – modelling as he did so the kind of critical reflection which the student herself was expected to use:

LA: So, I guess that's like "playing the game", or "gaming". In this case a corrupt game with the evaluation system. So, **are there ways in which you can corrupt this process of evaluation? Yes, there may be ways you can corrupt the figures and thus the evaluation process**. (…) So, as the industry authority watchdog, what would you actually do? Would you give the evaluation to an independent, unbiased authority? Get an auditor from outside the company who hopefully would provide an independent assessment?

At times, the learning adviser also directly modelled the language of academic discourse, "making language visible" as Lillis put it:

LA: …all you would need to do would be to say something like: **"This paper will examine ..."**

The learning adviser also asked questions, not to elicit a specific response ("cued elicitation"), but to provoke extended reflection. This scaffolding strategy, explicitly designed to extend the knowledge of the student, fits comfortably within Vygotsky's ZPD in extending the student's Zone of Proximal Development. Hammond and Gibbons (2005) refer to this discourse strategy in classrooms as "increasing prospectiveness". For example:

LA: Yes. And you could take one or two companies. It doesn't matter generally how big each company is.
M: And I could write it down generally.
LA: But within that "general" you also need a couple of examples from other sources.
M: Yeah, yeah.
LA: So how are they generally selected. **Now, do you think that this is a good method you are actually identifying with those indicators, those performance criteria? Do you really think this? And what are the strengths and weaknesses of what they're doing in the selection process**?

Although at times, the learning adviser took a didactic, authoritative position, he more often positioned himself as a collaborator than as a lecturer. For example, the learning adviser clearly positioned himself as an outsider to the discipline, abrogating power, and at the same time empowering the student. For example, he reminded the student that he was not in a position to advise her on the stance she should take in her assignment:

LA: … Maybe in some cases, it's possible to improve the linkage between the two [KPI's and performance**]. I haven't read the literature so I can't advise you about whether this is true or not.**

Moreover, he constantly hedged his advice with low level modal verbs: "might", "could", "may", and modal adjuncts such as "maybe", "I guess" and "I think". Noticeably, the learning adviser constantly placed the student in a position of responsibility by his use of the pronoun "you", sometimes with a general sense, but more usually directed at the student herself, encouraging her to make her own choices:

LA: **I think you** have to look at a more broad picture in the overall idea of performance indicators And, *maybe* use two examples **perhaps**, even of

industries, **if you like**, two types. Use a couple to illustrate the variations that **might** occur there. Because obviously there are variations, depending on the type of industry that **you're** looking at and what particular indicators that **you're** actually trying to strive towards.

In addition, the learning adviser used active listening in the Rogerian sense (Chanock, 1995) to encourage the student to voice her ideas and gradually take more responsibility for her assignment. In the following extract, taken from the Resolution stage, he used backchannelling and positive reinforcement of the student's comments, and allowed space (wait time) for her to pick up and complete his turns, so that a mutual appropriation of language takes place (as pointed out by Tardy (2006)):

LA: **Yes**, one by one, as you go through the questions you have to try to, with an essay like this with so many parts, you try to make it as simple as possible. And, to me, the simplest thing to do is to **follow the ==**

M: == follow the questions.

LA: **Yes, follow the questions**. There is less chance of missing one. It is simpler than trying to combine three or four all together.

M: When I start the essay, the first part I will write is what is the performance evaluation, but provide(ing) the company will do that. And write about these things, and then KPI and some examples of different company, and look at finance company and other manufacturing company.

LA: **That sounds good.**

M: And then I have to write about do these KPI capture the true performance. I think this is the advantages of KPI.

LA: **Yes**, and that also gives you the opportunity to use that so called "critical analysis".

M: Yeah, and, if not, then I can write, after research, how can I say, analysing, there are some disadvantages of KPI

LA: **Yes,** and give some==

M: ==examples.

Through this pedagogic positioning, the learning adviser was able to set up a collaborative dialogue with the student, in which together they co-constructed understandings of how to tackle this assignment. Fundamental to the relationship was the adviser's ability to listen to and respond to the student's questions and concerns, using his knowledge of academic literacy (the voice of authority) to scaffold the student's learning, but also developing the student's owned understanding (the internally persuasive voice) (Bakhtin, 1994).

This interpenetration of authoritative and internally persuasive dialogue suggests that a certain flexibility is needed on the part of the adviser. Although collaborative discourse appeared to be most successful in opening up space for learning development and increasing autonomy, the session did not develop neatly along this continuum. Rather there appeared to be an interweaving of didactic and collaborative discourse as adviser and student worked together towards their goals. The flexibility to move along this continuum in response to the student's needs, as represented in Figure 4, appeared to be a critical feature of the one-to-one setting.

4.3. The shifting field of discourse: the "what"

The data in this study also gives insights into the content, or field, of discourse in the one-to-one setting, including the discourse of academic literacy, as well as the discourse of the student's discipline, Management Accounting. The data shows the interplay between the various levels of talk about academic literacy outlined by Lea and Street (1998): skills – socialisation – literacies (see Fig. 2).

The student herself was initially concerned with the technical practicalities (skills) of academic writing: how to find the right sources, how to get the essay structured and submitted on time. (Note that at this planning stage, questions about spelling and grammar were not at issue.) The adviser recognised this concern and gave useful suggestions at the level of skills, such as in the following extract taken from the beginning of the Co-construction stage:

LA: Okay, so you've got 2500 words to use, to play with. About five sections I guess.
M: I have to redo the outline==
LA: Yes, so each section will be about 400 to 500 words each. It might not be exactly like that, but you have to give yourself enough, at least one and a half pages for each one of those sections.
M: But, the complication thing is the introduction and conclusion.
LA: What I would suggest is that you don't worry about the introduction until you've finished==
M: ==the assignment.

Through his use of hedging, for example, "maybe", "you could", "I guess", he suggested that this advice is not in the form of hard and fast rules, but rather a suggested strategy for tackling the assignment. The student was able to appropriate this structural basis for her work, as we can hear in the Resolution stage when she confidently used thematic "firstly", "and then", and strong modality "I will" to proclaim:

M: **Firstly**, **I will** write about the performance evaluators. Why we have to evaluate the companies. These are some reasons why companies collapsed, so …[unclear] I have to write my own words about the companies' performance evaluation and then **I have to** write about the KPI's and "gaming".
LA: Yes, one by one, as you go through the questions you have to try to, with an essay like this with so many parts, you try to make it as simple as possible. And, to me, the simplest thing to do is to follow the==
M: ==**follow the questions**.

The learning adviser also talked about the social conventions of academic writing. In the example above, he linked this particular assignment into a broader genre of essay writing "in this type of essay", and in the extract below, he modelled the language of introductions for the student:

LA: You can sort of start off like that, and then all you would need to do would be to say something like: **"This paper will examine"** And (…) you would continue through, so "**it will evaluate performance criteria,** more specifically KPI's and look at the relationship between KPI's and performance measures". And "**it will argue"**, perhaps, "**that** KPI's do generally capture the primary attributes of performance, but there is room for better linkage of those two things, between KPI's and those measures".

However, the learning adviser also took many opportunities to push the student into a "literacies" orientation to her work, that is, to take a critical perspective and use her essay as a vehicle to voice her own understandings, derived from her research into the relevant literature. For example, the learning adviser pushed the student to take up an authorial stance with regard to the question:

LA: Now, do you think that this is a good method you are actually identifying with those indicators, those performance criteria? **Do you really think this**? And what are the strengths and weaknesses of what they're doing in the selection process?

Another feature of the field of discourse in this session was the interweaving of talk about academic literacy with talk about the student's own disciplinary field. Although learning advisers are not content experts, this does not preclude discussing the content of the student's discipline, and helping the student to "build the field" (Martin, nd., p.130). Indeed, as Chanock (1995) maintains, the safe forum of the one-to-one consultation is an ideal setting in which the student can learn to voice ideas and gain ownership of the disciplinary discourse with a less imposing discourse partner than their tutor or lecturer. Woodward-Kron and Jamieson (2007, p. 53) call this a relationship of "productive unfamiliarity". In Mahni's case, although the learning adviser clearly identified himself as an outsider to the discipline, he was able to engage in discussion about the topic, enabling Mahni to deepen her understanding and to develop greater ownership of the discourse:

LA: … and then of course you have to make that connection between KPI's and the measures used to attack those criteria.

M: "Gaming" an evaluation system?

LA: Umm, well I presume that this is like playing a game – manipulation is probably the right word there. So in other words, you're cheating the system somehow and it's not going to result in an accurate evaluation.

M: Sometimes it's not useful.

LA: Yes, not just "not useful", this is really somebody, or the organisation who is not playing by the rules. They are==

M: ==Cheating

LA: Cheating, basically, yes. Somehow, either by maybe setting performance indicators that are very easy to achieve perhaps, they might be setting standards that are very easy to achieve so they don't actually have to do anything. Or they might be interfering with the data so that the figures they get, the statistics they get are deliberately inaccurate or have been manipulated.

As mentioned above, by the Resolution stage of the consultation, Mahni had fully appropriated the notion of "gaming" into her own discourse.
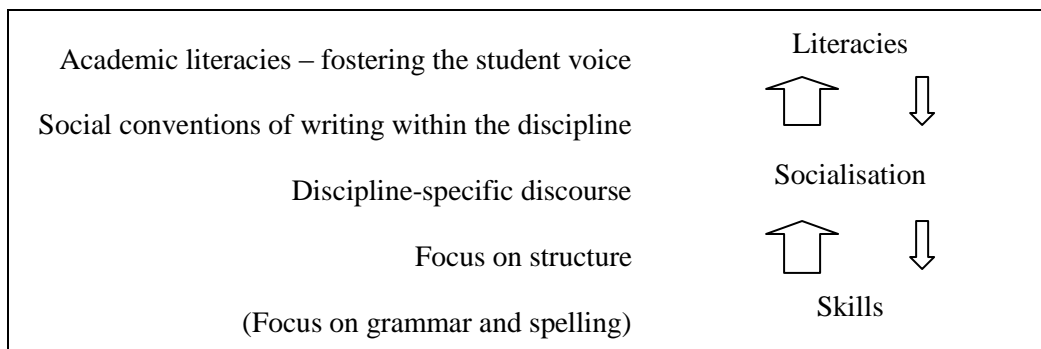

Figure 5. "What" strategies: the academic literacy content/ field of the one-to-one sessions, shown against Lea and Street's (2000) spectrum of "skills-socialisation-literacies", showing the interpenetration of talk about literacies and skills.

5. Conclusion

This study has provided evidence of a particular student's microgenetic development of understandings about literacy across the span of a one-to-one consultation and her increasing ability to self-regulate. The study has also identified the discourse strategies that were used by the learning adviser and that were associated with the student's microgenetic development. At present, the link between student development and the discourse of one-to-one sessions is still indirect: it is not possible (or perhaps desirable) to claim that a particular discourse strategy leads directly to microgenesis, especially on the basis of a single case study. Nevertheless, the findings offer useful insights into the nature of microgenesis within the one-to-one literacy

setting. Importantly, the findings of this study provide evidence of learning within the one-to-one session which complements the positive results of student satisfaction surveys of one-to-one academic literacy sessions. The study also provides a potential model for much-needed further research into the impact of teacher student discourse in one-to-one literacy sessions.

Confirming the findings of Woodward-Kron (2007), the data suggests that pedagogic discourse in one-to-one academic literacy sessions tends to be both didactic and collaborative. The data also shows how the content of the session focused on both skills and academic literacies. It appears that Mahni benefitted from a skills-based approach: she needed to improve her competence in structuring her work, paragraphing and other "technical" literacy skills. Beyond this, however, she needed encouragement to appropriate the language of her discipline and to develop a confident academic voice in her target discourse community. While she benefitted from didactic, "telling" strategies, she also developed confidence as a result of the collaborative relationship which her adviser established.

As Weisberg (2006) emphasised, literacy advisers in the one-to-one setting are in a unique position to be able to tailor their teaching to individual students. Thus, as our data demonstrates, a contingent approach is called for, in which advisers adapt their discourse strategies to meet students' needs as they guide them towards an increasingly independent and critical approach to academic literacy. Figure 6 presents a reappraisal of our analytical framework of teacher discourse in one-to-one academic literacy sessions in the light of these findings.
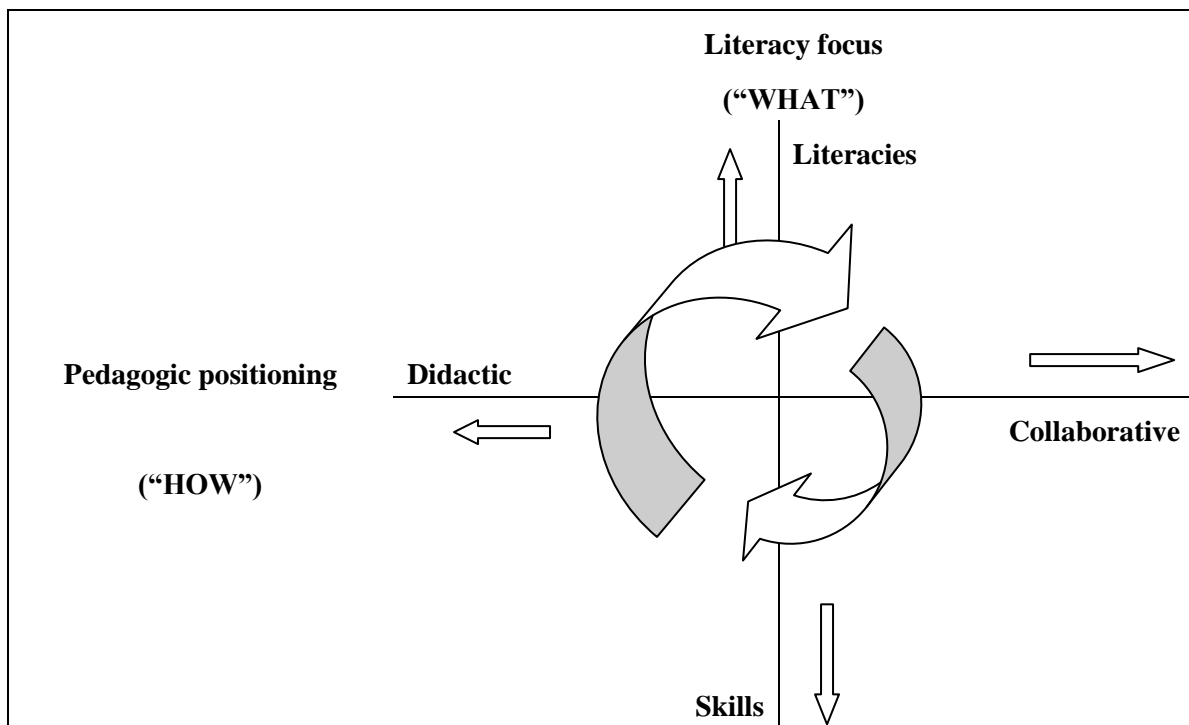

Figure 6. The shifting discourse of one-to-one academic literacy sessions.

Standing outside the discipline, yet with authoritative knowledge of academic literacy, the learning adviser is privileged to work alongside individual students to co-construct understandings of academic literacy and task requirements, and to foster students' autonomous participation in academic discourse. The one-to-one setting allows learning advisers to support students' development, working collaboratively wherever possible, but sharing their knowledge in a didactic manner when appropriate. In this way, advisers can respond to students' own urgent questions on a just-in-time basis, "scaffolding up" their development to reach through the skills-socialisation-literacies spectrum and so maximising the potential of this unique and powerful learning environment.

Acknowledgements

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