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Researching 'ideological becoming' in lectures: challenges for knowing differently

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Abstract: This article is a response to Haggis's injunction to 'know differently' if we are to grow our understandings of student learning. It identifies concerns that have arisen in the course of research into engagement (conceived of as 'ideological becoming') in first year lectures in the humanities at a South African university. These issues include: (a) how the co-presence of students and lecturer challenges conventional notions of 'student learning' as other; (b) the theoretical and practical challenges related to identifying fleeting 'liminal moments' in situations in which students and lecturers are co-present; and (c) what we can learn from a view of academic engagement as distributed across time and place. The tool of entextualisation is used to track participants' 'interest' across sites. The article offers a view of learning as embodied, emergent and contested, rather than neatly packaged and predictable.

This article reflects on issues arising from an extended research project on engagement in first-year lectures in the humanities in a South African university. The issues I have chosen to focus on are a response to Tamsin Haggis's injunction to 'know differently' if we are to grow our understandings of student learning in higher education. She critiques the dominance of theories of learning that attempt to 'shore up certainties in relation to knowledge of students as "other"' (2008, 2). These views (for example, Marton and Säljö's 1984 distinction between deep and surface approaches to learning) are concerned with classification of learner styles, levels and approaches that can be shown to result in 'quality outcomes', as if these outcomes were self-evident and not contested. Haggis commends (among others) the 'academic literacies' tradition as offering new insights into learning that privilege the contradictory and contested. Lea and Street, for example, have taken issue with the deep/surface approach, which they call an 'academic socialisation' perspective on knowing (1998, 157) which imagines the university as a homogeneous space. The academic literacies approach to theory and practice that they posit as an alternative recognises that academic conventions emerge from struggles over meaning. My work is located in this tradition, which is particularly productive for the analysis of student writing (Ballard and Clanchy 1988; Lea and Street 1998; Angelil-Carter 2000; Lillis 2001; Bangeni and Kapp 2006). However, in researching engagement in lectures – sites of intense co-presence – I have had to extend theory in new directions. This paper takes

up the challenge that Haggis (citing Law and Urry 2003) sets: how do we explore the 'fleeting' and 'distributed' aspects of learning?

Engaging in the contact zone

The first step is to temporarily set 'learning' (with its connotations of neat alignments between means and ends) aside, and to think instead of engagement. This is a more open-ended term, less directional and less subject to the narrow definitions of learning in the shadow of assessment that occupy much of the higher education literature. Very briefly, the study I have been involved in asks the following central question: what are the communicative practices in lectures in the first year in the humanities in a South African university, and how do participants engage with these practices in their 'ideological becoming'? Communicative practices are approached through social semiotics and the notion of interest (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996), while ideological becoming is a Bakhtinian concept. I will elaborate briefly on these two terms.

The notion of interest is central to the field of social semiotics, which is above all a 'form of enquiry' (Van Leeuwen 2005) that is derived from the work of Halliday (1978), a linguist in the critical tradition. It stresses language not as a grammar, or code, but as a 'resource for meaning' located in the interest of social actors. Social semiotics seeks lines of enquiry that are located in what people do (and how they make do) with the resources available to them in particular situations. It also expands the communicative repertoire beyond the verbal (the usual domain of the academic literacies tradition), to include other modes such as the visual, gestural and spatial, which work together in ensembles (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996; Kress et al. 2001, Stein 2004; Archer 2006).

Ideological becoming (Bakhtin 1981, 342–45) refers to the process of engagement through which ideological stance, or world view, develops. This takes place through a process of 'selectively assimilating the words of others' (341). Thus, both interest and ideological becoming draw attention to emergent meaning – to process and becoming, but these processes are not seen as neutral. Both Bakhtin and Pratt use the idea of the 'contact zone' to conceptualise spaces in which struggles between competing, historically constituted, discourses 'meet, clash and grapple with each other often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths' (Pratt 1999, 584). The contact zone provides an alternative to the metaphor of community, which implies a relatively benign, conflict-free zone. It is also useful for linking particular events, such as the lecture, to larger and more abstract entities such as the university (in this case Entabeni, a relatively elite, historically white, English-medium institution in post-apartheid South Africa), and to the complexity of contemporary South Africa, as it deals with its post-apartheid challenges, while at the same time entering a globalising world.

Our first thought about lectures is that they are sites for the production of an unquestioning authority. This is a widely held view: the lecture is seen as a rigid space that 'freezes the hierarchy between lecturer and students, removing any responsibility on the students to respond' (Barnett 2000, 159). It is acknowledged that the lecture does have its uses, but only for imparting information, rather than fostering critical thinking (Bligh 1971). This study suggests a different view of lectures, as neglected and rich in the potentials of the contact zone. However, for these meanings to become visible, we need to see them through different lenses, as argued above.

Next I focus on aspects of the study that have led to my looking differently at engagement in lectures. First, the live co-presence of students and lecturers points to learning that is co-constituted. I have not been able to separate students' interest from the presence, impact and intentions of lecturers. This has led me to Bakhtin (1981), Goffman (1981) and Bauman and Briggs (1990), all of whom theorise engagement as dialogic and performance-oriented, and argue that central to meaning is the anticipation of a response – a judging, feeling, audience, whether this audience is present or not. With this view of learning as co-constituted, we can begin to see how lecturers are also in a process of becoming, in response to their changing constructions of their student audience. We see this dialogue in the interaction between lecturer and students that follows a critical moment identified in the lecture analysed later in this article.

Second, an interest in co-presence and performance brings the body to the fore. Inevitably, I had to look beyond language and texts, and to consider bodies in space. A productive strand of theorising was opened up through the interdisciplinary field of ritual studies (Turner 1969; Bell 1992; McLaren 1993; Quantz 1999; Rampton 2002; Thesen 2007). From this field the construct of liminal moments (Turner 1969) is borrowed. For Turner, liminality is a temporary state in a process of becoming. Liminal moments are fleeting periods of flux and ambiguity in which conventional practices are turned 'upside down' and through them we can trace emergent meaning.

Third, the focus on performance, co-presence and liminality also brings to our attention those moments of engagement that cannot be held still, that are fugitive and flickering, and that cannot readily be tied down for analysis in terms of rational outcomes. This raises major questions about research and representation: how does one hold down the stab of recognition, shock, pleasure or anger that registers when we are engaged in a frame for meaning that favours the modes and media of performance? Are these moments significant, or do they die in the instance? I am also interested in how moments in an event have a life beyond a particular time and place, to be spoken or written about elsewhere, in different events, with different roles and possibilities. The tool of entextualisation (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Blommaert 2005) is used in this article to understand how meaning is distributed across time and space.

The research process

The methodology in this study brought ethnographic framing to discourse analysis (Blommaert 2005) in a blend of sociolinguistic and anthropological traditions. Fine-grained analysis of emergent texts and meanings in specific contexts is in dialogue with theory, mutually inflecting each other. I was also in the role of participant-observer as the research was in my own backyard. This required critical reflexivity that the ethnographic method foregrounds.

I worked with 17 first-year students – all southern Africans – between the ages of 18 and 22. Most have recently left home and school, or begun their studies after work and travel experiences. They are in a threshold space in their process of ideological becoming, in which they 'elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space' (Turner 1969, 95). They are between the givens of home and schooling and the imagined, more open adult world of university, particularly in the humanities, where few students are on a clear career path. While sharing certain similarities, they have also taken widely divergent socio-cultural, educational and linguistic routes to university through the unequal terrain of the southern African sub-region.

In interviews with each student, we explored their frames of reference for lectures, and they pointed me to the engaging lecturers they 'would not want to miss'. I decided to focus on these lecturers, in order to understand the distinctions that students were creating among lecturers. I worked with a group of lecturers the students described using terms like 'lively', 'makes us feel at home', 'passionate about what she does', 'entertaining' as opposed to the 'boring' lecturers, with whom they were likely to 'fall asleep'. These engaging lecturers were able to use the lecture as a contact zone, where multiple meanings were brought together, 'to the point of combustion' (in the words of one of the lecturers in the study). Lectures were videotaped (if my colleagues were comfortable with this practice), and followed by focus group interviews with students. In the data explored in this article, Isobel, the lecturer, did not want to be videotaped, so the lecture is reconstructed from the notes that I took in the lecture.

In the next section of the article, I explore a data sequence that raises the issues foregrounded. I begin by describing a liminal moment in one of the lectures. The data sequence begins where Isobel (not her real name), who is a lecturer in a first year Introduction to Media Studies course, inverts the expectations of students and, instead of asking them to analyse a text of some kind 'out there', she asks them to analyse her. This performativity draws attention to what she is doing, and sets up a moment that several people refer to downstream of the event.

Tracking meaning: bodies on (the) line

Isobel is lecturing on an introductory course in Media Studies, a relatively new discipline, in a department that has recently split from English. The course is offered in the second semester. Isobel is a young, 'cool' lecturer, who goes to great lengths to bring interesting material to students. Her frames of reference for lecturing involve a dual energy. On the one hand, she is committed to strong framing and accountability in her lectures. On the other, she wants to 'entertain' students, and says when I interview her about her frames of reference for lectures:

I really believe that people learn better if they're having fun ... The fact that I'm having fun playing with costumes and clips and images and music that I enjoy makes it easier for me to bring the material to life for the students, and to maintain my own interest.

This lecture is the second in a series on celebrity and the media, with the title *Celebrity: making a spectacle of oneself*. She is exploring how media stars typify and individuate dominant ideologies that shift over time. Students have seen screenings of Marilyn Monroe in the film *Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend*, and a reworking of the meaning of stardom in Madonna's more recent film, *Material Girl*.

There is an overhead projector screen announcing the showings of 'Shotties' (student-made films). Isobel, in a thick black coat, writes some notices on the board, and chats to students at the front of the lecture theatre. Then she makes some announcements, including a tribute to students' creativity in the short films: 'I take some credit, but they arrived with creativity in their blood'. She unpacks a bag, sheds her coat, to reveal a slinky red dress. She dons a blonde wig, and asks how many have seen *Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend*. In my notes, I sketch her default gesture: her left hand (to our right) is raised (and for this performance, gloved), and her head is tilted to one side. She asks what Marilyn Monroe typifies. She gives the students a few moments to 'buzz' their ideas, then takes their contributions. They respond with

'beautiful', 'sexy', 'ditsy' (which gets a playful 'no-no' from Isobel), 'materialism' and 'heterosexuality'. Then she shows them a clip from Madonna's film, *Material Girl*, and asks, 'how have dominant ideologies changed over time?' Next, she says, 'OK, analyse me'. What follows this instruction to 'analyse me' is the liminal moment in the lecture that I will focus on.

I interrupt the description of her lecture with a brief explanation of the term entextualisation, introduced earlier. Blommaert defines entextualisation as

the process by means of which discourse is successively decontextualised and recontextualised, and thus made into a 'new' discourse. In every phase of the process, discourse is provided with new metapragmatic frames. (2005, 252)

Bauman and Briggs (1990) note that, while entextualisation occurs in any situation, 'performance as a frame intensifies entextualisation' (74). They draw attention to the changing footing that may be adopted in this recontextualisation, and ask whether it is 'linked to prior renderings as a repetition or quotation?' (75) They write:

To decontextualise and recontextualise a text is thus an act of control, and in regard to the differential exercise of such control the issue of social power arises. More specifically, we may recognize differential access to texts, differential legitimacy in claims to and use of texts, differential competence in the use of texts, and differential values attaching to various types of text. (76)

Blommaert also alerts us to the potential for a focus on entextualisation to make us aware of the processes by which a sample, or unit, of text is taken out of its richly embedded 'original' context, and re-inserted into a new discursive context, in which it takes on new meanings. As Blommaert and others point out, entextualisation also draws attention to the reflexive nature of language: 'Every utterance not only says something in itself (i.e. about the world, about an extralinguistic referent of some kind), but it also says something about itself' (48). In this process, 'participants actively examine the discourse as it is emerging, embedding assessments of its structure and significance in the speech itself' (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 69).

To return to Isobel's lecture with this construct in mind: she has already done a skillful entextualisation of Marilyn Monroe and Madonna as 'star-texts', moving them from the realm of entertainment to an educational setting.

Strip 1: 'Analyse me!': the lecturer 'live'

Just before she says 'analyse me', she has been doing conventional lecture work. She has put up an overhead transparency, and I hear pens scratching. She covers the lower part of the transparency, old-style. Then there is a dramatic shift in attention from the overhead projector, and in turn 1, she asks students to analyse her. Turns 1, 8 and 12 stand out. (In the reconstruction below, students' contributions are indented).

Isobel says:

- 1 OK, analyse me: what tells you that I'm not a star? I've adopted the signifiers of stardom. Now go one step further, what sort of identity norms are being celebrated?
- 2 Your intelligence [a student flirts].
- 3 Oh thank you!
- 4 Not dressed for the times.
- 5 Perhaps it's retro.

- 6 Be bold, be brave [after a silence].
- 7 The way you carry yourself.
- 8 Invite the gaze! Mere mortals slouch. What about my breasts? Don't they sag a bit?
- 9 Cute.
- 10 Crazy [inaudible].
- 11 You can be rude! [mock outrage].
- 12 I haven't shaved my armpits [long pause, awkward giggles]. Do you think that's funny?
What does it signify?
- 13 French
- 14 Feminism
- 15 Good!

Isobel has turned the tables on students here and asked them to analyse her rather than a text or idea 'out there'. She engages in flirtatious trading of insults. The students are (legitimately) in what McLaren (1993) calls 'streetcorner' (as opposed to 'student') mode, as Isobel has invited them to engage in this way, and they give outrageous responses to her questions. But Isobel quickly changes the terms again, and several times in the lecture, reads aloud from emphasised main points on the overhead. These notes are also made available on the comprehensive and well-used course website.

In the next section, a chain of meaning is traced away from this liminal moment in one of her lectures, reverberating from her injunction: 'analyse me!' Responses to this moment are traced through several discursive spaces with different metapragmatic framing in each case. We move from the lecture to spaces created by the research process, in a student's written response to my research questions. The analysis then shifts to an online discussion forum parallel to the lectures, where Isobel picks up on their lack of response to her instruction to 'analyse her' in the lecture. Traces of this liminal moment are followed years downstream, when a group of young adult bloggers discover common experiences as they create an imagined community, in which they recall Isobel's performance and baring of her unshaven armpits.

Strip 2: Leah's notes about the lecture (written for researcher)

This is an extract from the handwritten notes that Leah gave me on the day of the lecture, as she could not attend the focus group meetings that were held after each lecture. I always began focus groups by asking students what they recalled from the lecture. She follows this pattern, and the first thing she mentions is Isobel's dressing up.

Isobel's dressing up.

I really loved this. ... She's so into it, that you are happy to dive right in too. I admire the way Isobel put herself at the mercy of her audience and asked us to deconstruct her image to explain why she didn't look like a star. She took all the blows about unshaved armpits and slouching ... When she mentioned her 'sagging boobs and pot belly' you realize how comfortable she is with herself. She's not just a lecturer who presents you with material, she integrates herself into her subject so she too can be studied.

The point in the lecture that I had identified as a liminal moment, when Isobel asks the students to analyse her, and in particular her 'saggy boobs', is also picked up on by Leah in this handwritten note to me. She notes how Isobel is not separate from the subject matter, but an integral part of it. The most striking thing about this is the intensely positive evaluation of Isobel. Leah's usually cautious, slightly sceptical, angle on the world seems to have disappeared. This can be seen in phrases like

'really loved', 'happy to dive right in', and 'I admire the way'. Leah has put 'saggy boobs and pot belly' in inverted commas, offsetting the phrase from her own speech, retaining the boundaries of the original speech and indicating a conscious refraction of her lecturer's words in her ideological becoming. Her phrase 'took all the blows' gives students an interesting agency, as if their role is to evaluate the lecturer, rather than the other way round. The performance, particularly the 'saggy boobs and pot belly' moment, can be written about in this relatively low-stakes space offered by the ethnographic research process. But she does demarcate those words by means of quotation. In spite of the informality of her written text, there is a polish to the text, as if she is supporting her observations with evidence, and is aware of my evaluation. She has taken control of the making of the new text, but is careful to indicate the source of the words.

Strip 3: Isobel's online posting to students (on the day of the lecture)

This online posting was made on the same day as the lecture, and in it Isobel shows her responsiveness to students, and also provokes an answer to the question on which they were silent in the lecture. Isobel sets up a reading frame by calling her entry 'celebrity-me'. She fuses 'celebrity' (the subject matter of the course at that point) with 'me', underscoring her integration with the subject matter. Students are informally greeted (hi), thanked and praised for their analytical skills. Two silences are mentioned: one on the part of students ('nobody pointed out ... that my pot belly and saggy boobs are signifiers of ... motherhood' and 'it's a shame' that it is not celebrated in 'our' culture). The second silence is 'we didn't discuss race'. The responsibility for this silence is jointly owned. Then, in teacherly discourse, she alerts them to additional images of celebrity included in her email, and invites their analyses.

Celebrity-me hits: 225

Hi everyone, thanks for being so responsive today. You are excellent analysts! One thing that nobody pointed out is that my pot belly and saggy boobs are signifiers of non-stardom. They are signifiers of motherhood and I think it's a shame it isn't something that our culture celebrates more.

Another thing we didn't discuss was race. It is an important aspect of identity, and therefore race is important in ideological terms.

The blue text below will take you to some images of celebrities. I'm interested to hear what you think they represent, what values and ideologies these star-texts embody.

xxx

isobel

The performance in the lecture has been relocated to an online discussion forum that affords a different kind of entextualisation. We see how Isobel is tuned to her students, keeping the dialogue she is building up with her students going. The 'hi', reference to 'our culture', lower case 'isobel' and the kisses indicate a flattening of hierarchy, and a desire to be read as buddy. However, this is embedded in an educational discourse. Typically this begins with praise, and then notes absences. The online discussion is also gently policed, and drawn into assessment practices. The website includes an

instruction: 'You must contribute to the online discussion at least five times over the semester. Ideally you should initiate a new thread in the online discussion at least once'. Perhaps what students wanted to say is that they were not comfortable with Isobel's play with the roles of teacher, seductress and mother. There are other questions raised by this interaction. In the humanities many courses deal with gender and theories of socialisation; very few deal systematically with race. I was not able to see students' responses to Isobel's injunction to comment on her signifiers of 'non-stardom', or to see whether students took her up on the interplay between gender and racial stereotyping, or whether they commented on her whiteness as a signifier.

The next strip takes place a long way downstream on a blog site far away from the university.

Strip 4: Ex-students to each other (online blog)

This extract is from a blog site that I came across while searching for the email address of Isobel, who has left the university to return to Canada. My search for her name led to the site of 'madamm', an ex-Entabeni student, who is in limbo, waiting to hear whether her papers for emigration to the USA have come through. The blog takes her through this liminal period. The entry is titled 'I'm brave but I'm chiggen shit', and covers various topics such as visits to restaurants, what she is reading, and current events such as South Africa's performance in the rugby World Cup. The topic that leads to Isobel is madamm's mention of a book by author Susan Mann, who was a lecturer at Entabeni. This leads to some debate on the blog site about the identities of their lecturers. They recall which lecturer 'did' which courses. Was it Isobel who lectured on soap operas? Three participants enter the discussion:

No man. Isobel did fearful fantasy – horror and science fiction films. She did a lot more feminist stuff and psychoanalysis. Can't picture her doing soapies!

A blogger called The Divine Miss M joins in, agreeing that Isobel did the 'horror lectures', and then identifies Isobel by referring to the 'analyse me' moment that we have been looking at. The shared recall leads her to say 'I still figure we know each other'.

No Isobel was from Canada and did the horror lectures etc The woman who'd dress up but didn't shave her arm pits, it was distressing!

I remember Susan Mann but I can't place her ...

I still figure we all know each other ...

Then Toby joins in, agreeing with The Divine Miss M, and he/she also recalls the 'pit hair'.

Must be. I'm pretty sure Susan Mann did soapies. I think Geneve was in her class. I did Fearful Fantasies with Isobel Stanford, that's why I know she didn't do soaps. And I remember that pit hair!!! She's back in Canada now. She was actually very, very cool.

Andre Whatshername was weird though. The features writing dude. Do you remember the whole 'fake it feature' debacle?

This extract gives us some insight into the resonance of this liminal moment in the meaning-making of ex-students downstream, a few years after leaving Entabeni. In the blog discussion, the lecturers have strong agency. Throughout, Susan Mann and Isobel are referred to as 'doers', like actors or producers. Toby begins by trying to identify Susan Mann in person: she 'did soapies'; 'She did fearful fantasy'. There are no inverted commas or capital letters to mark off the course names. 'Can't picture her doing soapies!' Similarly, the students 'did' courses (like Fearful Fantasies). It is the person who is at the centre of the topic. A system of contrasts is built up. These contrasts involve actors (or enactors) and their associated texts, and areas of expertise (soapies, horror). This pattern may be typical of textually oriented disciplines such as Media Studies, with a strong connection between lecturers and particular texts or text types. For The Divine Miss M, she is 'The woman who'd dress up but didn't shave her arm pits, it was distressing!'. However, Toby refers to the shared experience in a different way: 'actually very, very cool'. What they recall are the embodiments and styles of the lecturers, and the moments of controversy. We see here in the students' postings how they 'actively examine the discourse as it is emerging' and position themselves in the discussion (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 69).

The fan club-type behaviour, with its drawing of distinctions, is taking place in a different discourse to the one in which Leah was so positive about Isobel. Here, they are engaged in the peer activity of blogging. Judging by some of the posts (many begin with the banalities of finding parking at work, what they did in their lunch breaks, how the day started) and by the times at which the postings are made, the bloggers seem to be multitasking, doing this at work, going under the radar, as an antidote to routine activities like work and thesis writing. But there are other metapragmatic functions too. They are constructing a different sort of imagined community. The design of the blog space is telling: it is framed by an image taken from the window of an aircraft, looking back across the wing of a South African Airways plane. There are lots of references to moving between London, the USA and South Africa, nostalgia and parting: 'Am I the last person here?' Snatches of the Afrikaans language are included in posts on topics showing support for the national rugby team, complaints about immigration, the government's Department of Home Affairs, George Bush, familiarity with Harry Potter and news stories such as the disappearance of Madeleine McCann – a cluster of local and global symbols that help bind a community together. This community is typically middle class, and the bloggers are racially diverse. The blog also has some status, as there are contributions from a well-known black journalist in a debate about the virtues of blogging. The moment has been recontextualised from the performance of the lecture, with its modes of co-presence, to the scattered space of the blog, where a sense of community is invented, perhaps more markedly than in the lecture itself.

Knowing differently: fleeting, embodied, distributed

I have used entextualisation as a tool for tracking meaning from its 'original' complex context in a large lecture theatre with a charismatic lecturer. A liminal moment is evoked, in which a taboo is broken and students are asked to analyse their lecturer, not as 'content' or mind, but as embodiment. This moment within its frame of performance has a life downstream as students recall the lecturer and her style, and, in several sequences analysed, they recall the actual liminal moment identified in the research process. We have seen how the fleeting moments, which turn on the body,

have been distributed across different discursive contexts. Each discursive context has different semiotic potentials for the expression of interest. In concluding this paper, I will return to Tamsin Haggis's challenge, and look briefly at three aspects of 'knowing differently' that are raised by this study.

The moment chosen here for analysis is brief, framed as performance, and cannot easily be duplicated by anyone else. In this moment, conventional frames of reference for learning are inverted, and thrown up for grabs. Different students do different things with this moment, indicating that it will be drawn in to their ideological becoming in different ways. Can we ignore these fleeting moments that duck underneath what a student might write in an essay, or in an examination, or repeat in an institutionally ratified space? These moments require different approaches to learning than those that hold sway in the higher education community, that only look at rational links between means and ends. New approaches must allow emotions, aesthetics, inversion, play and seduction to be seen as integral parts of what constitute learning. Theories that inform this study, drawn from critical sociolinguistics in which language is seen as essentially dialogic and performative (Bakhtin, Bauman and Briggs, Blommaert), and social semiotics (Kress and Van Leeuwen), in which this dialogic quality is extended to a range of semiotic modes, stress the emergent qualities of meaning, that it is unpredictable and unsettled, always in a process of becoming.

A second important thread in my argument is that these fleeting moments often turn on the body and co-presence. What students take away from the event is an image of embodied authority; in this case Isobel performing. A social semiotic perspective on meaning can be extended to read the body as a sign in a semiotic landscape. Body language is text, interpreted through the channel of the visual mode. In addition, the body is the mediator of social action. In this study, I did not explicitly focus on theories of the body (though familiar voices in research in higher education, such as Bourdieu, Foucault and Bakhtin, all acknowledge the body in their theorisation).

The third point to be made from this study is that meaning (and learning) is always distributed across semiotic sites, now more so than ever in contexts where information and communication technologies are significant resources to learning. Here, boundaries between face-to-face teaching and web-based learning weaken, as the result of technology change and global-local movements of cultural resources and information. These crossings afford different identities and possibilities for agency and interpretation (see Lea and Nichol 2002; Iedema 2003; Kell 2006). In these shifts across sites, authority is re-inflected with successive crossings. What started out as an analysis of meaning within lectures quickly moved beyond these confines to adjacent sites, whether through the research focus groups, or the efforts of the lecturer to continue conversations outside, or through a memory evoked in an online blogging community. Too often what takes place in a lecture theatre remains locked up, and is not encouraged to cross over for oxygen and debate beyond its borders.

Final comment: research as entextualisation

Stepping back from the narrow subject of this article, another issue related to knowing differently emerges from applying the notion of entextualisation to the research process. Participants have 'bent' their contributions in the direction of this study. And I have taken moments from their infinitely rich contexts, and turned them into texts

(data), creating a preferred reading for them. It is salutary to pause and think about how we represent student learning through the texts we make.

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