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## **Recruiting frontstage entextualisation: Drafting, artefactuality and written-ness as resources in police-witness interviews**

Frances Rock

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the complex literacy event through which police witness statements are produced in England and Wales. Witness statements are constructed through interviews which archetypally consist of a trajectory from the witness of the crime, through a police officer and onto a written page with the officer taking most control of the writing. This paper examines how this ostensibly inevitable trajectory materialises in practice. It identifies a distinctive way of traversing the trajectory through which the inner workings of the trajectory itself are put on display by the interviewing officer and through this display recursively influence the trajectory. This display of the trajectory draws on four discursive means: writing aloud, proposing wordings, reading back text just written and referring explicitly to the artefactuality of writing, which I label, collectively, “Frontstage Entextualisation”. Through Frontstage Entextualisation, the writing process comes to be used as a resource for both producing text and involving the witness in text production. The paper identifies three forms of activity which are accomplished through Frontstage Entextualisation: First, frontstage drafting which allows words and phrases for possible inclusion to be weighed-up; secondly, frontstage scribing which foregrounds the technology of pen and paper which allows the witness to be appraised of writing processes; and finally frontstaging the

sequentiality of written-ness to textually resolve difficulties of witness memory. The paper concludes by suggesting that the analysis has shown how text trajectories can be made accessible to lay participants by institutional actors.

**Keywords:** frontstage entextualisation, police interview, witness, text trajectories, writing

## 1. Introduction

Writing is sometimes seen as an intensely private affair with solitary writers “struggling mainly with their thoughts” (Nystrand 2006: 20). Writing is frequently fully cloaked in the secrecy of solitude when it occurs in situations of power and control such as legal contexts (e.g. Eades 2008: 27ff). Indeed even when police officers write on behalf of suspects during interviews the process can be concealed from suspects with sometimes fatal consequences (Coulthard 2000). Yet does writing on someone’s behalf in an institutional context inevitably lead to a disconnect between the writer and written-for person? This paper examines police interviews with witnesses to address this question.

The investigation is organised around a novel analytic concept, Frontstage Entextualisation (FE). FE describes a particular form of what Ede and Lunsford (1990) call collaborative writing. *Frontstage* in this label flags that an activity which is usually shielded from view, being performed in the wings of social life, is made visible (Goffman 1956) and indeed audible. *Entextualisation* conveys that we are observing an activity which is socio-culturally and interactionally situated. FE necessitates that writing as an activity, which is normally predominantly silent becomes multimodal, happening simultaneously in and through talk, writing and visual cues. Moreover, FE demands that even in institutions, writing loses some of its potency to control because it is done *with* the witness rather than *to* them. The FE of the

officer whose work is examined here allows his interlocutor to enter what is usually a back region (Goffman 1956), inside the officer's head and body, where writing decisions are made and enacted. For the analyst it permits examination of "writing-as-activity rather than only as object-in-the-environment" (Prior and Hengst 2010: 22). This work is situated in a social practices approach to literacy which examines writing by combining interactional sociolinguistic micro-analysis of talk with fine-grained examination of writing activities permitted by a linguistic ethnographic orientation.

After introducing some relevant prior literature on text trajectories in institutions, particularly law, I introduce the notion of Frontstage Entextualisation through a focus on literacy events. I then briefly indicate the research and data collection methods before introducing the means of Frontstage Entextualisation through some illustrated examples. The main data analysis section then uses this characterisation to explore the affordances of Frontstage Entextualisation. The paper concludes by suggesting that the witness interview methods examined here might result in encounters which are more satisfactory for witnesses and statements which are more useful to police institutions.

## **2. Text trajectories in institutions and law**

In the early stages of most police interviews with witnesses to crimes, the witness will be encouraged to recount the crime. In the excerpt below, a police officer (P) follows up on the witness' initial telling to explain what will happen next in their encounter:

Excerpt 1: Introducing writing

P I think I've got the picture (.) I'll try and write it down now

[Interview 03]

The interviewer implies a linear process of hearing, understanding and, without further intervention from the witness, writing. He implies a position of power and control for himself as he, having heard the witness' words, will reproduce them however he sees fit. Yet this officer's practice was at odds with this description. In this paper I show how his interviews with witnesses granted them active involvement in the production of text. As the officer told me, "I just try to tell their story in the way they would do themselves ... I'm interested in people".

Text trajectories develop when texts are "remoulded, remodelled and re-narrated" repeatedly (Blommaert 2001: 438). They are a form of textual travel in that they concern texts moving "through and around institutional processes" (Rock, Heffer and Conley 2013: 4). Textual travel is intrinsic to law's epistemic culture which "create[s] and warrant[s] knowledge" (Knorr-Cetina 1999: 1). In police interviews, text trajectories are inevitable and influential (Hill 2003), shaping interactions (Gibbons 2001; Rock 2013) and socio-legal outcomes (e.g. Briggs 1997; Coulthard 2000).

Some scholars criticize the trajectory metaphor because it implies that once the travelling item departs, its path is fixed (MacGillchrist 2016: personal communication). Yet a trajectory can be "The path followed by ... an object moving under the action of given forces" (Oxford English Dictionary 2016). This captures well the *combination* of inevitability and intervention in the text trajectory of witness interviews which have a defined start point in talk and a defined end point in writing but which can progress between these points variously.

The trajectory metaphor also captures the longer sequence of events in which witness statement-taking interactions are embedded: the trajectory from crime to legal outcome. The label “text trajectories” as opposed to, say, textual chains (e.g. Bakhtin 1986: 93) implies a dynamism (Barrett 1999: 245-6), an impetus and a processual aspect (Lillis 2013: 114), even a volatility (Haberland and Mortensen 2016: 583) and it is these characteristics which drive this paper’s focus on interviewer practice as intervention.

### **3. Frontstage Entextualisation**

#### **3.1 Literacy events as Frontstage Entextualisation**

Police forces preserve records of interviews with suspects and witnesses in two main ways: by audio-/video-recording or in writing. Whilst audio-/video-recorded interviews gather information “for the tape” (e.g. Heydon 2005: 39) those recorded in writing, the focus of this paper, prompt dialogue in order to create written text which captures the witness’ talk as closely as deemed necessary.<sup>1</sup> These interviews, geared towards writing, are literacy events; occasions “in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive process” (Heath 1982: 50). Yet the writing is more than integral: its production is an explicit aim. Therefore these interviews are also what Barrett terms “record-speech events” in which participants’ interactions and production of a permanent record “reciprocally influence each other” (1999: 246). Barrett, studying psychiatry, points out that non-writing participants may be excluded from text production during record-speech events. I show in this paper, conversely, how they may be deliberately included and how their

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<sup>1</sup> The resulting writing can take the form of supposed ‘transcription’ or a mediated statement without traces of dialogue, depending on the jurisdiction.

inclusion operates and functions through literacy practices or “the general cultural ways of utilizing literacy” (Barton 1991: 5). Record-speech events comprise recontextualisation and entextualisation. Recontextualisation entails transfer-and-transformation across discourses or contexts (Linell 1998: 154) and entextualisation entails construction of a record (Jacquemet 2009: 526). Together, these processes make for repetitive shifting and fixing of text. This occurs in the interviews examined here as participants edge along a text trajectory using FE.

FE has not previously been noted in police interviews. However, Komter and Van Charldorp have observed a superficially similar process. They examine Dutch interviews between police officers and suspects, through which statements are constructed, in real-time, on computers operated by interviewers. Their work identifies the question-answer-typing (QAT) structure for gathering information (Komter 2002, 2006; Van Charldorp 2011, 2013, 2014). The QAT structure entails that cyclically throughout interview an officer will ask a *question* (Q), a suspect will provide an *answer* (A) and the officer will then *type* (T) on the basis of this talk, not necessarily duplicating it verbatim. Whilst typing tells suspects whether their response was of interest (if typing occurs) and how interesting it was (more or less typing) it provides no insight into what is being typed. They note that occasionally the officer would read aloud whilst typing.

Here, I examine interviews with witnesses rather than suspects which are recorded using pen-and-paper, not computer. Yet I identify a similar device, the Question-Answer-Writing structure. As in Komter and Van Chalrdorp’s suspect interviews, writing silently whilst the witness patiently listens was the norm in these data. Like them, I also found that some officers also spoke aloud whilst writing, occasionally. However, one officer, I will call him Pete, diverged from his colleagues and from the interviewers in Komter and Van Charldorp’s



data by talking during the writing (W) phase of the structure almost constantly in most of his interviews. He read back what he was writing, effectively writing-aloud. This drew my attention to four distinctive means in Pete's writing:

- (i) writing-aloud;
- (ii) proposing wordings for potential inclusion in the statement;
- (iii) reading back text which has just been written;
- (iv) referring explicitly to the artefactuality of writing (e.g. *right (.) on to the next page*).

This combination was, across the data-set I collected, unusual yet productive. It changed the interactional order in interviews (cf. Knorr-Cetina 1999: 44). I refer to the combination of means as FE. Witnesses told me that they found interviews featuring FE “enjoyable considering **what it was about**” and that they were “glad to get it down on paper”, a formulation which hints at their understanding of their involvement in writing. Closely examining the literacy events in which these means interweave demonstrates **that these events** are highly collaborative and participatory (Rock, forthcoming). Through FE, Pete, the interviewing officer constantly appraises the witness of writing activities and content, thus involving **the witness** in both. In this way, the very practices of writing themselves become resources to accomplish writing. Pete described having evolved this method of interviewing during nearly 30 years of police service, including 7 as a dedicated interviewer.

### **3.2 Methods and data collection**

This paper is part of a wider study of interactions between police and lay people. The data used are from a set of 25 interviews between police officers and witnesses to crimes in

England and Wales. I audio-recorded and attended the interviews – the latter allowed me to observe gestures, facial expressions and bodily orientations (e.g. Matoesian 2012) as well as officers' writing practices. I was able to discuss the interviews with participants and to undertake wider ethnographic work with some of the interviewers, observing and shadowing in police stations and their other workplaces and participating in work-related social environments. I transcribed the interview talk and those aspects of its relationship to writing activities which are relevant to the analysis (a key is appended). I compiled fieldnotes. Those taken during the interviews recorded some gestures and facial expressions, details of writing activities and contextual information according to Hymes' SPEAKING mnemonic (1974: 55ff) as well as my impressions of interpersonal and interactional aspects of the interviews.

Informed consent was obtained from all interviewers and witnesses whose interviews were audio-recorded for this study. This was achieved through spoken and written procedures at the beginning and end of each interview. Additionally the research was approved by the police forces involved and the relevant University Ethics panels and legal advisors.

The data have been analysed through a broadly discourse analytic and social interactionist stance which has incorporated focus on literacy practices informed by a social practices approach to reading and writing and attention to processes of textual transformation. This has afforded examination of talk, writing and other sense-making activities in combination. This paper presents naturally occurring data from police interviews in combination with short excerpts from research interviews with officers and witnesses.

Initially, I present data, below, from two interviewers, to illustrate FE and contrast it to the more dominant interview mode, silent writing in order to clarify the FE concept.

### 3.3 Frontstage Entextualisation exemplified

Excerpt 2, below, illustrates FE through the interplay of the four means, introduced above.

The means are indicated typographically throughout this paper. Writing-aloud is indicated in *italics*, Proposing wording appears in SMALL CAPITALS, reading back text just written inside “quotation marks” and invocation of the artefactuality of text production appears inside <angled brackets>. A full transcription key is appended.

In excerpt 2, the officer, Pete, is interviewing a witness to a criminal incident of disorder in which a drunken man was being violent and aggressive in a hospital’s emergency department. The witness is a hospital security-guard, hence directly involved. Pete seeks to write a text which describes the suspect’s activities, as the witness experienced them. Note that it is not productive to see Pete as eliciting information. Elicitation, whilst important, was broadly accomplished at the beginning of the interview when the witness summarised the incident. At this point, instead, Pete’s questions are, I argue, not primarily about elicitation in itself, but rather a means to text-construction. This distinction between elicitation and elicitation-for-text-construction is absolutely fundamental to this officer’s activities during interview:

Excerpt 2: Introducing the four means of FE

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 41 | P | what was he doing                             |
| 42 | W | being abusive                                 |
| 43 | P | <i>Mathews was being abusive</i> threatening? |
| 44 | W | threatening (.) ((to staff))                  |

- 45 P *and <threat (.) en (.) ing> to the staff and the patients*  
 (.) or does he- does he direct his a- (.) anger //to the//
- 46 W //mostly// at  
 the staff
- 47 P “ing” *to staff* (.) “to staff” okay

[Interview 13]

The excerpt opens with what the policing literature describes as an open or *wh*- question (College of Policing 2017). The interviewee provides a short response which could be noted down as his entire answer “being abusive” (turn 42). For this officer, however, these words are not merely response for inclusion. They are additionally a resource for further text construction. Therefore as Pete takes this material into the text, he makes its incorporation explicit for/to the witness by reading aloud whilst writing “*Mathews was being abusive*” (turn 43). Entextualisation is governed by access to contextualisation spaces and resources (Blommaert 2005: 62). Pete’s strategy opens up the contextualisation space, the interview, and the resources for entextualisation, the writing technology. Through these italicised words, which Pete says slowly in real-time, as he writes, looking at his page but glancing now-and-then at the witness, he uses the activity of writing to re-present the text as one in whose production they are both involved.

Pete develops this approach next by suggesting a word which might further characterise the witness’ understanding of the incident, “threatening”. The status of this suggestion is ambiguous. “Threatening” could be a formulation (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970: 351) of talk earlier in the interview. “Threatening” might instead be an intertextual reference to crime definitions (e.g. Calligan 2010) which the officer deliberately introduces in order to classify

the incident felicitously (Rock 2013: 84). Alternatively “threatening” may simply have come to the officer’s mind. In any case, “threatening” is offered as a feasible addition to the co-authored text and, potentially, a way of generating further material for that text. Apparently the witness sees both functions. He repeats Pete’s word “threatening” and adds, somewhat more quietly, “to staff”, thus both accepting and extending Pete’s suggestion. Pete now does textual work to capitalise on this talk. That is, he recontextualises “threatening” by inserting it into the text, writing-aloud, “*threat (.) en (.) ing*”. In this instance his writing-aloud references not only the word he is writing as a semantic unit but also its morphology and the physical experience of scribing. This invites the witness not only into what gets written but also how.

Pete next moves to developing the witness’ addition to “threatening” “to staff” (turn 44). He does not write these words but explores them as a textual suggestion in turn 45. Once he establishes that the witness’ original suggestion “to staff” is exactly what he intended, he incorporates those words. He does this, in turn 47, once more in ways which draw in the witness to his writing activities. Specifically, he first reads back the “ing” inflection of “threatening” which potentially reminds both of them of where they are within the sentence under-construction before writing-aloud “to staff”. Finally, he reads back the words “to staff”, just written. After the interview, Pete remarked to me that his question in line 45 was an attempt to avoid specifying the attack too narrowly or overlooking potential new witnesses, which shows the wider intertextuality of interview talk (discussed in relation to other data in Rock 2013: 84).

This highly participatory way of arriving at a written statement contrasts starkly with the QAT/W format of text production which Komter and Van Charldorp identify in Dutch suspect interviews and which I found predominated from other Anglo-Welsh officers in my

small sample. Below, for comparison, is an excerpt of this mode, concerning a car accident.

Curly brackets and italics indicate points when the police officer writes silently:

Excerpt 3: Silent writing

- 206 P then what happened?
- 207 W (.) um:: (.) well we- we got out
- 208 P y- you got out of the car on your own?
- 209 W m- yeah I- (.) yeah got out the car
- 210 P *{writes 14.0}* your husband got out as well?
- 211 W yeh
- 212 P *{writes 3.0}* and what about your sister-in-law
- 213 W she:: had trouble getting the door open but she got out the  
car (.) she had a great big lump on her head where she'd  
hit her head
- 214 P *{writes 12.5}* so your sister-in-law had difficulty in  
opening the rear door?
- 215 W yeah
- 216 P that's the near- the left-hand side
- 217 W yeah
- 218 P *{writes 16.0}*

[Interview 03]

Here, the police officer repeatedly asks questions (Komter and Van Charldorp's Q), the witness responds (A) and some textual recording is done (W). The different orientations to

writing in excerpts 2 and 3 are clear. In excerpt 2, text is offered, negotiated, written and revisited in ways that the witness can at least observe and conceivably engage with. In Excerpt 3, text creation is obscured from the witness. For Komter and Van Charldorp, the QAT structure calls to mind Gumperz's (2000: 1508) notion of partial opaqueness. In other words, the "occult genres" produced this way are, during their construction, "hidden from view" (Berkenkotter and Hanganu-Bresch 2011: 221). Excerpt 3 smacks of the institutional tendency to keep individuals away from texts which concern them (Barrett 1999: 250-1).

Barton (1991: 3) points out that it "may not be very useful to think of writing as one activity which is the same across all situations". In the two examples above, writing is a very different activity despite the common start and end points for the writing trajectory. Goffman's notions of "backstage" and "frontstage" illuminate the difference. In Excerpt 3, writing is backstage, as far as the witness is concerned. In backstage regions, "ceremonial equipment ... can be hidden so that the audience will not be able to see the treatment accorded them" (Goffman 1956:69-70). Accordingly in silent writing, 'ceremonial' material from the witness is manipulated and encoded out of sight in the police officer's mind and on the concealed page. In backstage regions "devices such as the telephone are sequestered so that users will be able to use them privately" (Goffman 1956: 70). In silent writing, the device is the pen which lends itself to being sequestered due to its physical form and method of operation. Yet, as Goffman notes, frontstage and backstage are "adjacent" (1956: 70). In FE text creation is pushed frontstage. Goffman notes that in frontstage regions "potentially offensive behaviour" is disallowed (1956: 78) just as the transformation of the witness' account must occur agreeably when the officer airs it for the witness' ears. The witness interview itself can be seen as backstage to the legal process. However, the focus here is the ways in which the writing *activity* is made frontstage, not the wider literacy event.

I now focus on interviews conducted by the officer who featured in excerpts 1 and 2, Pete. The analytic sections below are illustrated by excerpts from three interviews by this officer. One concerns the male hospital security-guard who featured above discussing a drunken suspect. The other two involve women who both witnessed a single incident also involving an abusive, violent man, this time a customer in a pub where the witnesses both worked. After each excerpt a reference number indicates the source.

#### **4. Analysis**

The analysis examines how the officer, Pete, opens up portions of crimino-legal text trajectories within interviews with witnesses. He does this through the four means outlined above. However, there is more to the process than isolated occurrences of those means. Rather the means combine as Pete places different aspects of his writing activities “frontstage” and this enables Pete to create a distinctive, collaborative space for text construction. I use frontstage as a verb below because this precisely captures Pete’s taking of the backstage writing task and dragging it to the front, through display. The following three sections zoom in on different aspects of the writing activity each of which are brought frontstage:

Section 4.1 focusses on the creative process of drafting. It shows how Pete frontstages this process. He weighs words and phrases for possible inclusion in the witness’ earshot and, through that practice, facilitates her participation in drafting decisions which allow them to move, together, along the text trajectory.



Section 4.2 focusses on the physical, artefactual process of scribing. It shows how Pete frontstages his use of the technology of pen-and-paper. This enables the witness to understand the impact of slips of the pen or other forms of mis-writing on the temporality of Pete's writing rather than being excluded by them.

Section 4.3 focusses on the impact of the written product on the writing process. Specifically, it demonstrates the influence of the inevitable sequentiality of written narratives. This section shows how Pete frontstages sequentiality and constructs it as being helpful to the witness when needed.

Thus, these analytic sections below illustrate how four highly localised communicative means combine to create three frontstaging techniques each of which develop the trajectory from spoken account to written text.

## **4.1 Frontstaging drafting to move along the trajectory**

### **4.1.1 Layered drafting through frontstaging**

This section shows how FE provides for cumulative text-construction through layering textual suggestions from both parties. We will see that sometimes the process resulted in the witnesses' words being used whilst sometimes Pete's words took precedence. In excerpt 4, we return to the hospital security-guard:

Excerpt 4: Incorporating the witness' words into the trajectory

- 139 P “I warned Matthews about his behaviour” BUT HE TOOK  
NO NOTICE ((OF THAT))
- 140 W ((yes)) he carried on
- 141 P *but he carried on*

[Interview 13]

“HE TOOK NO NOTICE” is Pete’s formulation based on earlier talk. The witness takes these words as an opportunity to recast and provides “he carried on” (turn 140) (cf. Knorr-Cetina 1999: 43). It is these words that Pete incorporates into the statement (turn 141), not his original suggestion. Selecting this formulation is perhaps a move on Pete’s part to ratchet up the apparent severity of the incident by casting the suspect as not only someone who ignored an authority figure but furthermore, in the face of authority, continued lawbreaking. It might also reassure the witness who was initially unsure that he had anything legally relevant to say. Excerpt 4 illustrates Pete first drawing out the witness’ contribution by involving him in drafting (turn 139), and then treating the witness’ words as drafting resources for the text-under-construction (turn 141). Jones, Jones and Murk (1012: 91) note that in educational contexts working together can create insights, understanding of problems and increased solutions. This is what FE creates here as both participants navigate potential wordings.

In other interviews too, Pete elicits talk from witnesses by verbally suggesting text, and then giving the witness’ words precedence in drafting. This is illustrated in the excerpt below with one of the bar workers. Pete asks a question (turn 107) which the witness cannot answer because it concerns the suspect’s activities before they met, information that she cannot know:

Excerpt 5: Diverting the trajectory through witness intervention

107 P during ... the afternoon (.) ur:: (2.5) a fellow (.) ur had been  
drinking was it all afternoon do you reckon

108 W well they come in about (.) half two?

109 P okay

110 W //I would say//

111 P // okay // at about (.) 2.30//pm ur//

112 W // there // was two lads and  
two girls

113 P *two lads and two girls came into the pub* right? =

114 W = yep =

115 P = okay?

[Interview 16]

The witness responds to Pete's unanswerable question by indicating that it is problematic through "well" and giving information that she knows. Specifically she adds the time that the suspect arrived with her (turn 108). This causes Pete to take a moment to re-evaluate (turns 109, 111) whilst filling with "okay" twice. Instead of sticking with the duration he suggested in turn 107, "all afternoon", he diverts to a new textual route based around the witness' arrival time estimate "about 2.30pm". Thus he is not simply incorporating the witness' words but altering the trajectory of the text along lines initiated by the witness. By writing these words aloud (turn 111) Pete makes the witness aware of this "reevaluation" (Fabricio 2014: 11). As a consequence of her awareness, the witness can select further information to come



215 P *followed us still using (.) abusive (2.9) language* [reads]

“still using abusive language” okay

[Interview 13]

Pete opens with elicitation through the expansive *wh*- question in present continuous tense, “what happens next” (turn 209) and the continuer with rising intonation, “yeah?” (turn 211). The witness’ latching replies explain his movements. It is only now that Pete commences writing. By writing-aloud, he displays minor changes to the witness’ words, replacing “walked back” with “returned”, “site” with “premises” and “comes back on again” with “followed us”. In terms of meaning, these changes remove redundancy. For example, there is no need to say that the man came back onto hospital premises if his following the security-guard entails that. Syntactically, Pete accomplishes tense consistency (cf. Gibbons 2001: 28-9). He also shifts register, rendering the witness’ words arguably more formal (also seen in Jönsson and Linell 1991). These changes could be viewed as forms of domination (Van Praet 2010) through authority (Galegher and Kraut 1994: 113) which disempowers (Barrett 1999: 251) the witness by removing his autonomy to articulate his own story. Conversely, the relexicalisations could be heard as empowering the witness by ‘translating’ him to the law (Rock 2001: 65-8). In relation to text trajectories, it is less interesting that this officer makes these changes than how and to what ends.

Excerpt 6 does not reveal Pete interfering with the witness’ words whilst the witness nods along. Rather, its delivery supports the argument above that FE facilitates participation. Pete draws the witness into ongoing text construction when he breaks off from writing-aloud and proposes “HOSPITAL?” (turn 213) looking intently at the witness. He elicits a firm nod of agreement before incorporating this word, audibly. This is repeated with “FOLLOWED US?”

another alternative to the witness' wording. Pete offers the draft to the witness with rising intonation and awaits confirmation. The witness authorises the change by repeating "followed us". However, he also recognises that he can add to the draft, as in previous excerpts, adding "still using abusive language" (turn 214). Finally, Pete reads back the text, apparently satisfied by their work. We might see this as an "interpretative cycle" of speech and drafting (Barrett 1999: 264; see also Shipka 2010: 52) yet the integration of activities takes it beyond simply cycling.

These analyses take us far from the assumption that writing is inherently "solitary" (Ede and Lunsford 1990: 5; Gollin 1999: 278; Haberland and Mortensen 2016: 581-2). These interviews evidence "joint production" (Trinch and Berk-Seligson 2002: 412) in "co-operative transformation zones" where collaborators decompose and reuse resources to create something new (Goodwin 2013: 17). This is "social writing", involving coordination, negotiation and consensus about textual solutions (Galegher and Kraut 1994: 113).

#### **4.1.2 Grammatical frontstaging**

Section 4.1.1 explored how Pete suggested wordings for the witness to take up, modify or reject. Section 4.1.2 shows how Pete instead lines up incomplete textual units for the witness to complete. In excerpt 7, below, Pete and one of the pub witnesses are drafting written text which describes how she mimed activating a security alarm in an attempt to deter her attacker. The excerpt begins with Pete writing the words that they previously negotiated:

Excerpt 7: Rising intonation, prepositions and conjunctive *but*

895 P *before I pressed the alarm* [W: nods] *Stevie had said to?* (.) *//((ME))?//*

896 W *//pretend//*

897 P *me TO PRETEND yeh? // to //*

898 W *//mm//*

899 P hh *pretend to call* the (5.2) ur *the* (.) *police* (.) ur [W: nods] *just to get the*  
*man to leave but*

900 W didn't work

901 P he- "but" IT DIDN'T WORK [W: nods] *it didn't work*

[Interview 16]

During turn 895, the witness nods enthusiastically as Pete relates what he writes. In turn 896, the witness, in overlap, exhibits what Sacks calls "collaborative completion" (1992: 144-9), finishing off Pete's proposed wording. Pete has invited this through rising intonation towards the end of turn 895 and through the grammatical incompleteness of that turn which breaks-off at the point where reported speech could begin. The witness suggests one word of reported speech in turn 896 "pretend" and Pete, during turns 897 and 899, incorporates this. He does not incorporate "*pretend*" as reported speech, which would potentially trip up the witness at court if she was asked to recount her words. Instead he adds it as general description of action. He checks this functional shift with her before incorporating it. He glances up at the witness whilst writing, to which she responds with nods. At the end of turn 899, he again breaks off from writing-aloud, this time at a conjunction. This invites the witness to add text which might follow, like the children's game "Finish-my-sentence". She supplies the words "didn't work" in turn 900, which potentially closes the sentence. He adopts this, in turn 901, first by echoing her wording as a suggestion, incorporated with the conjunction "but" which he wrote during turn 899, and then adding the new text that they have arrived at "*it didn't*

*work*". Thus "collaboration emerges" as each activity "is made sense of in relation to a prior" and "provides a foundation for the next" (Luff and Jirotko 1998: 265). This analysis has shown that Pete subtly invites contributions to the draft through rising intonation and pausing at points of grammatical incompleteness (*to*- infinitive phrases and *but*- conjunctions). This is a novel means of police interviewing which offers involvement at a close level of detail.

In excerpt 8, below, Pete again breaks at points ripe for syntactic completion:

Excerpt 8: Verb groups and conjunctive *and*

- 723 P the alarm had been ur  
724 W activated =  
725 P = ACTIVATED <ac (.) tiv (.) ated> and?  
726 W that they should go  
727 P and said that they should go

[Interview 16]

Here, breaking-off (line 723) is accomplished through the hesitation "ur". The witness does not take this as a filler through which Pete seeks to hold the floor; conversely, it is treated as elicitation. She suggests "activated" which completes the clause Pete began. Pete responds by repeating the word with a wry smile, nodding approvingly and momentarily pointing his pen towards her as if gesturing "spot on". This recalls Prior and Hengst's (2010: 19) observation that writing is the "simultaneous layered deployment of multiple semiotics". In this case we observe talk, gaze and use of the pen to both write and gesture. Pete then progresses by writing-aloud, "*and*" with rising intonation. After a very brief pause the witness provides a



completing coordinating clause “that they should go”. Again this is incorporated with Pete adding this time “*said*” to indicate how these words figured in the crime environment.

In excerpt 2, earlier, Pete slowed his writing-aloud in order to successfully scribe the word “*threat* (.) *en* (.) *ing*”, morpheme-by-morpheme. In this way he called attention to scribing’s artefactuality – the challenges of pens, letters and long words. This verbalising allowed Pete to humanise himself as a writer and to de-mystify what would otherwise have been an opaque delay for the witness. In writing “activated”, above, his in-word divisions are not quite morphologic, not quite syllabic but seemingly about constituency. Pete reported that dividing like this helped him to think through the spelling and “get the letters in the right order”. Yet the resulting delay also allows the witness to benefit from the planning time that Gibbons (2003: 166) notes is an affordance of writing. In this way, we see the grammatically incomplete “Finish-my-sentence” moves combine with references to the artefactuality of talk and Pete’s gestural encouragement through pointing his pen in FE.

Power lies in textual travel, specifically the ability to decide “how utterances can circulate between contexts” (Briggs 1997: 540). In institutions, entextualisation can be a privileged form of discursive practice “reserved to specific professional groups” (Blommaert 2001: 438) like police officers. They have “differential access” to “reformulating, ordering, structuring discourse” (Blommaert 2001: 443). We might expect people who give statements to police to be in the set of people who have little access to the contextualising space of the policing institution, to be victim to the asymmetry in potential to determine circulation, to have little skill in reformulating, ordering and structuring. Indeed, writing technologies can become the means to exclude or even harm lay people (e.g. Jönsson and Linell 1991; Bucholtz 2000). Yet through FE, Pete redistributes the privilege of entextualisation.

## 4.2 Frontstaging scribing's artefactuality to facilitate ownership of the trajectory

Scribing involves pens, papers, computers, i.e., technologies. Sometimes the artefactuality of those technologies interposes into their use causing us to mis-type, muddle our pages, cross-out words and so on. When these things afflict Pete, he does not simply dig in and quietly correct his mistake. Rather, he strips back the trajectory using metalanguage so that the witness sees the mistake. In other words, he orients explicitly to technologies in ways which turn their challenges and restrictions into affordances, fostering conviviality or “the capacity to live together” (Wise and Noble 2016: 423). This was exemplified in one of the bar-staff interviews where Pete, needing to turn his page, oriented to the artefact of the page itself by saying “page 2” out loud indexing his activity, rather than simply turning the page, which would have interposed into their interaction. Thus, in this section, we see the trajectory itself advancing only minutely but the witness-officer collaboration developing smoothly, in turn facilitating trajectory travel.

In the two examples below, from the same interview, Pete's foregrounding of the artefactuality of his scribing, at points when this artefactuality has tripped him up, also triggers participation from the witness:

### Excerpt 9: Spelling as a resource for participation in the trajectory

302 W [I was] making sure everything was sort of like tidy for  
when // Pattie come on //

303 P // yeh “I was now” // BEHIND THE BAR *behind the bar*

(4.3) <can’t spell “tidying” suddenly ‘T’ ‘I’ isn’t it *tidy* =>

304 W = yeah

[Interview 16]

Having been writing for over an hour, Pete indicates tiredness by illustrating that he finds himself unable to spell the simple word “tidying”. His text will, later in the extended trajectory, be typed up, so standard spelling is necessary to the extent that it facilitates that onward travel. Pete seemingly uses his slip to involve the witness in the mechanics of his scribing through a tag question about the spelling (“isn’t it”, turn 303). In the process he humanises himself and potentially creates humour and empathy. He did something similar in a different interview where he broke off from writing-aloud the phrase “*on this occasion*” to ask ““*occasion*’. Is it one ‘C’ two ‘S’es?’”. In response the witness laughed “I have to write that down myself” [Interview 13].

Below, Pete keeps the witness informed of almost every pen-stroke:

Excerpt 10: Lexical choice as a resource for participation in the trajectory

522 W by the s-

523 P cigarette kiosk =

524 W = yeah by the cigarette machine

525 P *which is by the cigarette machine* <oh [tut] *machine*

// *kiosk* //>

526 W <//machine// with a ‘K’> [laughs]

527 P yeah <I put 'kiosk' but it's 'machine' ((not)) 'kiosk'>

[Interview 16]

The excerpt begins with collaborative completion when Pete finishes the witness' turn, describing someone's location "by the" "cigarette kiosk". The witness immediately corrects "kiosk" to "machine" in turn 524 as British pubs had at the time of data collection automated dispensers rather than staffed kiosks. This was the case in this pub, as Pete knew, because he and the witness had already toured the pub viewing the case's main 'landmarks'. Pete evidently intends to take up her suggestion "machine" but, having set off with the word "kiosk" in mind, he cannot stop himself writing "k" after "cigarette" (cf. Gibbons 2001: 30-31). He could have simply crossed out this mistake and asked the witness to 'initial' his error at the end of the session to prove there had been no foul play. Instead he frontstages the error. In this way he heads off a potential problem when she sees his text as she will now expect a correction. The witness is sitting close enough to Pete that she can, with little effort, lean over and see what he is writing (cf. van Charldorp 2011: 73). Her involvement is such that she feels empowered to do so at this stage. This is very different from the institutional actors that Barrett (1999: 250-1) observed who deliberately positioned themselves to make the text impossible to see. She is also sufficiently comfortable that she can joke "machine with a K", nodding in mock approval at his unconventional spelling. Pete is quick to take the opportunity to stress that he had intended to take up the witness' formulation by explicitly referencing scribing once more, explaining "I put "kiosk" but it's "machine"" (turn 527). In conversation with me, Pete noted that "the ladies who do the typing" tease him about his "doctor's handwriting" and that including written words which could not be deciphered because of mis-spelling or unclear handwriting resulted in workflow delays and some degree

of writer's embarrassment. His thinking aloud, as well as being a device which frontstages scribing, also indicated his slight anxiety about the onward trajectory.

Scribing technologies can exclude lay people from text production (Van Charldorp 2011: 65). Obscuring institutional records from those they concern can even come to be flaunted, tantalisingly (Barrett 1999: 250-251). Van Charldorp (2011: 73) describes situations in which the police officer "not only sets the agenda but also "owns" the computer". In the excerpts above, the technology of pen-and-paper provides for the witness to know what is happening 'behind the scenes' of text production and to have some ownership of that process.

#### **4.3 Frontstaging written-ness to smooth the trajectory**

In interactions where one person recounts a narrative to another, the story-teller's forgetfulness can cause problems. Linguists do not have the means to examine memory but can investigate how interactants textually resolve narrative gaps which have been cast as memory failings. Excerpts in this section examine written-ness, or the properties texts have due to being written. Written-ness requires that ideas be ordered when inscribed. This requirement becomes a resource to resolve problems constructed as being about memory.

First, we turn to an example in which the witness presents herself as unable to remember something:

Excerpt 11: Repetition and written-ness

373 P *I looked up and I saw* now what did you see

374 W hhh (.) well I can't remember whether he shouted anything  
that made me look up to tell [P: mm] you the truth I just  
can't [P: no] remember

375 P I'm saying "you looked up" //mm yeh yeh//

376 W // I looked up // and he was...

[Interview 16]

In turn 373, Pete uses grammatical frontstaging (section 4.1.2) "I looked up and I saw" before explicitly asking the witness to complete that unit through his question "what did you see".

The witness does not attend to his question and instead considers why she looked up (turn 374). She seems to become stuck on this, noting both utterance-initially and finally that she "can't remember". Pete moves her out of this predicament by reminding her of the text which is already on the statement page, "I'm saying "you looked up"". At this point she echoes his writing (cf. Briggs 1997: 454-5), beginning her answer, "I looked up". It is this textual focus which resolves things.

As well as drawing on written-ness as a resource in dealing with forgetting, in excerpt 12, below, written-ness features when the witness remembers out of chronological sequence. Aware of the need for a fit between the sequence of events at the crime scene and that in the statement, she sheepishly introduces this as a problem:

#### Excerpt 12: Responsibility and written-ness

540 W [grimaces apologetically] I've remembered something from  
earlier as well

541 P w- yeah go on hh we'll get it into context (.) we can  
//always//  
542 // yeah //  
543 put it at the end and say it was ((me))

[Interview 16]

Pete's suggestion of a solution to this 'problem' is grounded in written-ness. He calls on writing's linearity but also its potential for anaphora by suggesting that they include her newly remembered point but "put it at the end". He also suggests that they "say it was me", opportunistically constructing an imaginary adversary, outside their collaborative task, to whom they might effect this pretence. In this way, he apparently distances himself from the police and aligns with her.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has shown that when writing witness statements, a sample police officer uses the four means of reading words back from statements, proposing wordings, writing-aloud and explicitly referring to writing's artefactuality. I call this combination Frontstage Entextualisation to capture first that it makes visible a set of practices which would normally be 'off-stage' and secondly that it involves more than simply writing down what has just been said. I have shown that the officer moves along text trajectories, in coordination with witnesses, by combining these means when drafting (section 4.1), scribing (section 4.2) and responding to witness' concerns (section 4.3). By frontstaging these processes, written text is produced in ways which involve the witness in the minutiae of writing and potentially create a sense of ownership of the trajectory.

Witness statements can come to stand in for witnesses or function in court as a measure of witnesses' accuracy because in law's "literary culture" the written word can take "precedence over the spoken" (Shuy 1993: 13). This happens in the context of the "modern literate" assumption that writing is "more reliable" than speech (Clanchy 1993: 294) and the legal imperative that written statements are "admissible as evidence to the like extent as oral evidence" (Section 9, Criminal Justice Act 1967). Therefore if witness statements do not agree, in the deepest sense, with the witnesses' talk, the witness is at risk. This paper suggests that involving witnesses in the trajectory through which their statement is created might avert such problems, leading to the production of statements which agree with the witness' account more closely than those produced in other ways.

Text trajectories entail that some participants have power to control texts' construction and circulation through contexts. Prior literature would predict that in the policing institution, control over the trajectory through interviews would rest with the police officer, with interviewees being distanced from the trajectories of their texts. In the analysis presented here, however, the technologies of writing are recruited to provide access to textual artefacts and machineries so that participation "emerges through the use of co-present interactional resources" (Luff and Jirotko 1998: 265). In these encounters, access to contextual space is thrown open. Van Charldorp's (2011: 73) notion of ownership is crucial here (see section 4.2) but not ownership of the finally produced text. Rather I have shown how text trajectories might be influenced by what Brock and Raphael call "ownership" of the "writing project" (2003: 486, 489). We might criticise the officer because he sometimes changes or excludes the witness' words (e.g. section 4.1). This reading is addressed, appropriately enough, through Goffman's thinking on the nature of "front". The officer's frontstage is, perhaps, an effort to give appearances (1956: 67), "only a 'front'" behind which he will "dissemble,



deceive, and defraud” (1956: 38). However, officers who write silently can and do change and even erase witness’ words, too. What is special about frontstage entextualisation is that it makes such editorialising apparent and in so doing brokers text production. This method of statement-production might produce more satisfaction to witnesses who are afforded a more active role in the production of texts about them than witnesses whose statements are taken in other ways.

Barrett (1999: 264) has proposed that record-speech events like this feature an “interpretative cycle” which “oscillates, *perpetuum mobile*, between written and oral discourse”. In the data examined here, however, the line between speaking and writing blurs because the officer and the witness do not merely cycle through describing-suggesting-exploring-writing but frequently accomplish them simultaneously. Thus, this paper contributes to our understanding of communication as multimodal.

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## **Appendix**

### **General Transcription Conventions**

- (.) A micropause of 0.9 seconds or less
- (1.2) A pause of 1.0 second or more, duration indicated inside the brackets
- // // Overlapping talk
- = Latching on
- Self-correction or speaker breaking-off
- (( )) Unclear speech (double brackets either contain deciphered speech or, where impossible, number of inaudible syllables)
- ? Rising intonation

### **Conventions specific to this article**

“Speech marks”	Words being read back from the statement
SMALL CAPITALS	Words being proposed
Italics	Writing-aloud
<Angled brackets>	Explicit reference to writing’s artefactuality

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