International Doctoral Students Learning Academic Writing in English: A Multi-Case Study of Five Doctoral Students' Experiences in Canada

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Abstract

This study adds to the emerging body of research on the academic writing of international students at the doctoral level. It seeks to complement previous studies by providing a detailed account of the writing experiences of five international doctoral students in an attempt to expand this line of research and to reconfigure the role of writing development in doctoral education. The study, thus, explores how five participants learned to write in their disciplinary community. It also examines the nature of assistance they received from supervisors, professors, university, and peers on their writing. Finally, it identifies the participants' perception of themselves as academic writers and the subject positions that they took on during their doctoral journey.

The study employs the case study approach that draws on multiple interviews with the participants. It relies on the following theoretical frameworks to analyze the data: Rhetorical Genre Studies, (Miller, 1984), situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), theories of identity (Gee, 2001) and contrastive or intercultural rhetoric (Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1966).

The study participants reported on the methods they used to learn writing in their disciplines: reading and analyzing articles, imitating authors' writing styles, and using a variety of resources such as self-help guidebooks, private tutoring services, and peer advisors. Some of the students said that they looked at the specialized jargon, voice, and style used in academic texts and attempted to imitate them in their own writing. Despite this range of strategies, some of the study participants expressed frustration and anger at the lack of systematic support from their disciplinary community with their writing. The study also revealed that the students' understanding of assistance on their writing was primarily focused on the mechanical aspects of writing; i.e., organization, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. The participants expressed their wishes that their supervisors and professors provide them with language-related feedback to help them improve their writing. Finally, the study revealed that the students took on a variety of subject positions as students and writers in

their communities. These subject positions showed that some of the students viewed themselves not only as future scholars and confident writers but also as frustrated and struggling writers.

Résumé

Cette étude s'ajoute à la litérature existante portant sur l'écriture des doctorants internationaux. Elle viendra compléter des études de recherche précédentes en offrant un compte-rendu détaillé sur les expériences d'écriture de cinq doctorants internationaux, le but étamt d'élargir ce sujet de recherche ainsi que reconfigurer le rôle du développement de l'écriture dans les études doctorales. Cette etude explore donc comment cinq doctorants ont appris l'écriture dans leur communautés disciplinaires respectives. Elle examine aussi la nature de l'assistance en écriture dont ils ont bénéficié de la part de leurs superviseurs, professeurs et pairs. Finalement, cette etude identifie leur perception d'eux-mêmes en tant qu'écrivains académiques ainsi que les positions adoptées tout au long de leurs etudes doctorales.

L'étude emploie l'étude de cas, une approche qui se base sur des entrevues multiples avec les participants. Ele se base sur les fondements théoriques suivants afin d'analyzer les données: la théorie des genres rhétoriques (Miller, 1984), théorie de l'apprentissage situé (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), théorie de l'identité (Gee, 2001), et rhétorique contrastive ou intercultural (Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1966).

Les participants ont discuté des methodes utilisées pour l'apprentissage de l'écriture dans leur champ de spécialization: lecture et analyse d'articles, imitation des styles d'écriture d'auteurs et l'utilisation d'une multitude de resources telles que les guides d'auto-apprentissage, services de tutorat privé et tutorat entre collègues. Certains étudiants ont mentionné avoir essayé d'imiter, dans leur proper écriture, le jargon specializé, la ton, ainsi que le style utilize dans les texts académiques. Malgré ces stratégies, certains participants ont exprimé leur frustration face au manque de support systématique en écriture de la part de leur communauté disciplinaire. L'étude a aussi révélé que les étudiants voient l'assistance en écriture comme étant principalement basée sur les aspects mécaniques de l'écriture: l'organisation, l'orthographe, la grammaire et le vocabulaire. Les

participants ont exprimé leur souhait d'obtenir des réactions et commentaries de la part de leurs encadreurs quant à la langue afin de les aider à améliorer leur écriture. Finalement, l'étude a révélé que les étudiants ont adopté une variété de positionnements en tant qu'étudiants et écrivains dans leurs cercles. Ces positionnements ont démontré que certains des étudiants se voyaient non seulement comme de futurs intellectuels et écrivains confiants; mais aussi comme des écrivains frustrés qui font face a plusieurs obstacles.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This study explores the writing and educational experiences of five international doctoral students, the nature of assistance they received from members of their disciplinary communities, and how they constructed their scholarly identities as writers in English. The first chapter introduces the study by providing the relevant background on the topic. It presents previous research and contextualizes the current study. The chapter then outlines the focus of the study and presents the research questions which it addresses. It also identifies the ways in which the study contributes to existing research on doctoral students' academic writing. The final section of the chapter outlines the structure and organization of the dissertation.

English in Today's World

English nowadays is indisputably considered the world's *lingua franca* for business, entertainment, internet, and scientific publications (e.g., Berns, 2005; Block, 2004; Crystal, 2003; European Commission, 2010; Graddol, 1997, 2006; Hyland, 2004, 2006; Jenkins, 2007; Portelli, 2012; Rajagopalan, 2009; Rogerson-Revell, 2007; Sano, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2001, Tardy, 2004a; van Weijen, 2012). English as lingua franca means that it is the language that is frequently used between speakers whose first language is not English (Firth, 1996; Seidlhofer, 2001). The dominance of English as an international language, as Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) noted, is not attributed to the number of people who speak the language (more people speak Mandarin, Hindi, and Spanish than English), but to its ability to facilitate access to trade, economic resources and capital (e.g., education, technology, research grants).

In terms of scientific research, English has manifested its privileged status among other world languages by dominating the scientific publications in many disciplines. English has been "considered by prestigious institutions to be the global 'language of Science' and by many

participants in text production—including scholars, reviewers, translators, editors—as the default language of Science and academic research and dissemination" (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 1). Databases like the *Science Citation Index* (SCI) estimated that up to 95% of publications in 1995 were published in English, whereas publications in French, German, and Russian made up only 0.5 to 0.7% of the world's scientific publications (van Leeuwen, Moed, Visser, & van Raan, 2001). The Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) indicated that 95% of natural science journals and 90% of social science journals were published fully or partially in English (Reuters, 2008). Similarly, UNESCO'S DARE Database (2009) noted that more than 50% of its 4,654 indexed social sciences journals were published in English. And the *Ulrich's Periodical Directory* (2009) estimated that 67% of its 66,166 indexed periodicals included were published in English. More recently, van Weijen (2012) pointed out that 80% of all scientific journals indexed in the Scopus database were published in English. This growth in scientific publications in English is not restricted to countries where English is considered the first language of the country (Canada, U.S.A, UK, New Zealand, Australia) but occurs as well in countries where English is taught as an additional language (e.g., France, Japan, Sweden). Swales (2004), for example, observed that many prestigious European and Japanese journals were driven by the worldwide wave of Anglicization and began publishing their articles in English. Curry and Lillis (2013) pointed out that to the familiar academic mantra "publish or perish" we should add "in English" (p. 1) because scholars are now under continuous pressure to publish in English. They noted that in addition to the scholar's personal preferences to publish in English, many universities and governments around the world are urging scholars to publish their scientific contributions in prestigious international journals. An important consequence of this fact is that publishing in English has become a major criterion used by academic institutions in non-English speaking countries for promoting university professors (Canagarajah, 1996; Flowerdew, 2000; Yakhontova, 1997). Despite the fact that many scholars continue to publish in their national

languages (Belcher & Connor, 2001; Canagarajah, 2002a; Columbia Global Centers, 2011; van Weijen, 2012), publishing in English represents a constant pressure for multilingual writers to get recognized in the very competitive scholarly world (Curry & Lillis, 2004). Thus, the dominance of English in research and education is now "well-attested" (Lillis & Curry, 2006). One of the most obvious manifestations of the significance of English as the language of science and education is the influx of international students, including doctoral students, from different corners of the globe to pursue their education in Anglophone universities in order to increase their chance of contributing to the production of knowledge in various areas of specialization.

Doctoral Writing in the Age of Globalization

Doctoral education worldwide has witnessed considerable growth and change bolstered by a significant globalization of doctoral programs (Engebretson, Smith, McLaughlin, Seibold, Terrett, & Ryan, 2008; Nerad & Heggelund, 2008). These developments included an enormous surge in the enrolment of international doctoral students in Western institutions of higher education (Boud & Lee, 2009; De Wit, 2002; McNamara & Harris, 1997) and changes in institutional and government policies to accommodate these students. This interest is justified because the doctorate is unanimously acknowledged as the "pinnacle of scholarship" (Gilbert, 2004), based on the fact that the PhD holder, after a long journey of courses, writing, and research, is considered a licensed scholar expected to advance disciplinary knowledge through intellectual production (Golde & Walker, 2006; Parry, 2007). As a result of accumulating substantial human capital (i.e., knowledge), a PhD holder is identified as "one of the key actors behind the creation of knowledge-based economic growth" (Auriol, 2010, p.13). Because of the important role that PhD holders play both intellectually and economically (Advisory Council for Science, Technology & Innovation, 2009; Council of Ontario Universities, 2012), they became the focus of attention for policy-makers, who questioned the kind of doctoral programs that their societies and economies need in a competitive world. What

different private and public sector stakeholders are pushing for is university graduates whose skills and abilities allow them to participate in the "knowledge-based economy" (Brinkley, 2006; Leadbeater, 1999) as "knowledge workers" (Starke-Meyerring, 2011; Usher, 2002) or "self-managing learners" (Stephenson, Malloch, & Cairns, 2006). Consequently, developing such researchers in various areas of specialization has been proclaimed one of the most critical educational and economic goals by governments and universities around the world (Aitchison, Kamler, & Lee, 2010; Boud & Lee, 2009; Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, 2005; Council of Graduate Schools, 2007, 2008; European University Association, 2005, 2007; Golde & Walker, 2006; Innovative Research Universities Australia, 2008; VITAE, 2009). Thus, supporting these students could significantly enhance the production of future scholars and researchers who could advance a country's plans for educational and economic development (Commission on the Future of Graduate Education in the United States, 2010; Council of Ontario Universities, 2012).

Most international graduate students enrolled in Western universities are multilingual speakers who have already completed many years of English language study and have many years of experience in their fields. As newcomers to the host educational institutions, these students, as Hall and Burns (2009) argued, are situated between their past and present experiences, hopes, and feelings, which can help or constrain them in their new learning environment. As a result of entering into a new interpersonal, social, cultural, and academic experience in the host countries and universities, international graduate students may face several challenges that could affect their academic achievements. Some of these challenges could be interpersonal and socio-cultural, while others could be academic. Interpersonal and socio-cultural challenges could be related to establishing friendships and adjusting to a new society and a new culture in general. Some studies indicated that international students were not very satisfied with their social integration in the host countries (Lewthwaite, 1996) and had less social support than local students (Hechanova-Alampay,

Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). Moreover, their attempts at establishing relationships outside their cultural networks were not always successful (Parks & Raymond, 2004). They also reported feeling more lonely and homesick than domestic students (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). Furthermore, they felt excluded, ignored, marginalized, underestimated (Ryan & Viete, 2009) and stereotyped (e.g., looked at as lacking critical thinking skills, obedient, and silent) (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Despite the significance of these interpersonal and socio-cultural challenges for the personal, social and academic well-being of international students, one of the most often reported challenges that international graduate students may encounter in university is acquiring or learning the discourse conventions of their disciplinary communities in order to become competent academic writers. Since international students come from different socio-cultural and literacy backgrounds, many of them find themselves "helpless, incapable, and defeated" (Fu, 1995, p. 5) as they struggle to become proficient in academic English. Their ability to use the discourse conventions of their disciplines could be fraught with many challenges due to their unfamiliarity with their community's privileged writing practices. Rhetorical proficiency is essential for graduate students, since the "hallmark of success for any student at university is mastery of academic writing" (Jones, Turner, & Street, 1999, p. 38). Undeniably, academic writing embodies the language of academic scholarship and indicates the students' readiness for intellectual work in higher education (Giridharan & Robson, 2012). Poor academic writing has been considered one of the critical factors in the failure of international students to satisfy the demands of disciplinary scholarship (Bacha, 2002; Zhu, 2004). Consequently, many international students have been criticized because of their inability to write at levels and standards deemed acceptable by their disciplines (Horner & Min-Zhan, 1999; Rose, 1989). Unfortunately, writing development is not always well-supported at the graduate level (Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Paré, 2010), and second language students are doubly disadvantaged because they

have to strive to become competent participants in their disciplinary communities by attempting to familiarize themselves with "the context of culture, the socio-historically produced norms and conventions of a particular group of people who define themselves among other things, by their discourse practices" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 78). Most struggle, many fail.

For international doctoral students to become productive researchers, they need to be competent academic writers in English because, as Hyland (2004) remarked, researchers rely on their writing "as a means of funding, constructing, evaluating and negotiating knowledge" (p. 5). Rhetorical proficiency is a highly specialized and discipline-specific social practice that is needed for knowledge making (Green, 2005; Hyland, 2004; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Paré, 2011; Starke-Meyerring, 2011). It is also needed for establishing disciplinary membership and identity (Bazerman & Prior, 2005; Graves, 2005; Horne, 2007; Hyland, 2012; Ivanič, 1998; Prior, 1998). Membership in a particular scientific discipline (e.g., sociology, anthropology) is closely related to disciplinary identity construction (i.e., becoming like a sociologist or anthropologist). A disciplinary identity is formed as a result of interaction between persons and within social relations (Vygotsky, 1978). That is, by participating in interactions with other members, students learn the values, norms, beliefs, and practices of their discipline. They gradually construct an identity by taking on the discipline's discourses and ways of seeing the world (Gee, 1990; 1999; Hyland, 2004, 2012). Thus, developing productive researchers who master the disciplinary discourse becomes critically important. The problem, however, is that academic writing is not easily learned because its conventions are implicit (Hyland, 2009; Lillis, 2001; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Zamel & Spack, 1998), and appear to practitioners as common-sense (Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis, & Swann, 2003), self-evident, and non-contestable (Bazerman, Bonini, & Figueiredo, 2009; Hyland, 2009; Paré, 2011). To newcomers, the unspoken rules of academic writing are veiled behind a "cloak of normalcy" (Starke-Meyerring, 2011, see also Paré, 2002, p. 60), making it "one of the major sites of anxiety for students and …

their supervisors" (Kamler & Thomson, 2006, p. 3). The "institutional practice of mystery" (Lillis, 1999, p. 127) that characterizes academic communities often hampers students who are not familiar with their discipline's writing conventions from becoming fully engaged in their community's literacy practices. Students fear to ask questions about writing practices, lest they display ignorance, and ultimately internalize their failure as their own fault (Starke-Meyerring, 2011). The problem is compounded for international students, since they may sometimes be at a distinct linguistic and cultural disadvantage, but may receive little or no support from supervisors, professors, peers, or the wider university institutions. Consequently, some students attempt to learn academic writing on their own by using writing guidebooks (e.g., Swales & Feak, 2004) or through advice and feedback that their instructors may provide them (Lea & Street, 1998), with mixed results.

In addition to these challenges, many writing theorists and researchers suggested that many international students may experience the profound effects of language learning—particularly discipline-specific language learning—on their sense of themselves and on their belief systems (McKinney & Norton, 2008; Morgan & Clarke, 2011; Norton, 2000; Norton 2010; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton & Gao, 2008; Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2002, 2011; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, Ricento, 2005). As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, many scholars have argued that when students write in English, they are constructing their scholarly identity because writing and identity are closely interrelated (e.g., Bazerman, 2002; Hyland, 2004, 2012; Ivanič, 1998). To understand the relation between writing and identity construction as a social act in an academic context, it is appropriate to delineate the relation between literacy and identity. Ivanič (1998), for example, argued that the way written language is used is shaped or determined by the social context (e.g., membership in a disciplinary community) in which the writer is involved. She noted that becoming a member of a community involves the construction of an identity that is commensurate with the community's cultural patterns (i.e., values, beliefs, conventions, and world views).

Consequently, exploring the relation between academic writing and identity construction seems relevant to understanding the experiences of students in their respective communities (Ivanič, 1998).

Set against this background, this study seeks to explore how several international doctoral students learned writing in their disciplines, the kind of support they received from their communities on their writing, and how they constructed their writer identities in their disciplinary communities. My research focuses on three interrelated research questions:

I. How do international PhD students learn to write academically in English in a way that is acceptable to their academic disciplines?
II. What is the nature of institutional support they receive on their academic writing?
III. What kind of identities (or subject positions) do international PhD students take on as a result of the participation in their disciplinary communities?

Personal Interest in the Study

I started learning English in a private school in my home country when I was in kindergarten. During my years in primary, elementary, and secondary school, English was one of my favorite subjects. I was very fond of memorizing English words from the dictionary and reading novels, poems, and books on various scientific and literary topics. I also enjoyed composition classes and was considered a good writer. After high school, and because of my English proficiency, I was admitted to one of the best private English-speaking universities in my home country. As an undergraduate student, I did not seem to have any writing problems in English. I wrote several essays and research papers which were evaluated positively by my professors (who were both native and non-native speakers of English). Equipped with a very high English proficiency and a very high TOEFL score, I travelled to the U.S. to pursue my graduate studies in Applied Linguistics/TESOL. During my graduate years in the program, I was frequently told by my supervisor that my writing was very good and that I did not have any major issues in academic English.

As a graduate student in the U.S., I started to have a new experience with academic writing when I was employed as a teaching assistant (T.A.). As a T.A., I was a writing consultant at the university's writing center. I worked closely with local and international students from different language and cultural backgrounds and varying degrees of competency in academic writing. I noticed that many students struggled to write their essays and research papers. As a result, I became particularly interested in the topics related to academic writing, especially genre studies and contrastive rhetoric.

Upon moving to McGill University to pursue my doctoral studies, I took a class with my supervisor on the relationship between genre, ideology, and identity. I started to realize the importance of this topic and decided to further deepen my knowledge about it. I can say that my interest in the topic of academic writing development and identity construction was both intellectual and personal. At the intellectual level, I noticed that academic writing involved many socio-cultural and ideological factors. I started reading books and articles about writing and identity construction (e.g., Belcher & Braine, 1995; Belcher & Connor, 2001; Block, 2007a,b; Cadman, 1997; Casanave, 2004; Casanave & Li, 2008; Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000; Fox, 1994; Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Ivanič, & Simpson, 1992) to enhance my understanding of the topic. My personal interest in identity may be related to some questions I was asking myself. I came to Canada from the U.S. not only as an international doctoral student but as an immigrant and a future citizen of Canada. I started asking myself questions about my own identity in a new country, a new society, and a new university. I believe that, in my subconscious, I wanted to study the experiences of other international students and their scholarly identity construction in their disciplinary communities because of my own experience. Even though I did not initially recognize this fact, it became obvious to me that my interest in academic identity construction was simply a reflection of my own search for an academic identity. Thus, even though

my study explores the individual experiences of other international doctoral students, I can say that their narratives about being students in a new society and a new culture echoed my experiences in many respects.

Contribution of the Study

This study adds to the existing research on the experiences of international doctoral students in Western universities. It aims to provide insights into how doctoral students learn writing in their disciplines. Research has shown that learning the academic discourse of the disciplines involves becoming a member of the academic community and sharing its views, beliefs, and specialized discourse (Gee, 1990; Hyland, 2004, 2012; Ivanič, 1998). Due to the implicit nature of the rules of academic discourse (e.g., Lillis, 2001; Paré, 2002; Starke-Meyerring, 2011) and doubts about whether learning to write in the disciplines occurs through the use of implicit or explicit teaching methods (Devitt, 2004; Freedman, 1987), uncovering the learning experiences of students becomes critical. That is because writing is the main criteria that universities employ to assess the knowledge of graduate students of the subject matter and their contribution to knowledge as future scholars.

The study also seeks to explore the extent of institutional assistance that is afforded to students. Institutional assistance could include not only helping international students with their writing but also ensuring their personal and social well-being in a new country and a new university. Research on the experiences of international students abroad (e.g., Flug, 2010; Sarason, Sarason, & Gurung, 1997; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008; Trice, 2007) has shown that many of them suffer from loneliness, isolation, and the lack of a strong support network that could enhance their capabilities to succeed in the host countries. Exploring how and in what ways educational institutions assist their students in adjusting to their new educational environment to lessen the effect of loneliness and isolation could be very important to decrease students' attrition and increase completion rates. In addition, exploring how and in what ways the disciplinary

community members (e.g., supervisors, committee members, and peers) assist international doctoral students with learning academic writing is very important for the success of students as future researchers. This assistance includes providing an environment which allows students to become immersed in their disciplinary culture through participating in conferences, workshops, seminars, and writing group sessions. This socialization would help students absorb the dominant and privileged academic discourses in their disciplines and use them effectively and successfully.

Finally, the study explores the subject positions the participants formed and the strategies they employed as writers in their respective fields. Academic writing at the doctoral level involves not only contributing to the production of disciplinary knowledge but also the construction of a scholarly identity. While the ideas that doctoral students propose could be of utmost importance for advancing knowledge, the scholarly identity they form during their academic journey and the textual persona they project to their readers could be as important as their ideas. That is because the reader will form an image or an impression about the writer from the way a text is written (Ivanič, 1998). The readers could perceive the writer as sloppy, naïve, enthusiastic, objective, subjective, or authorial. Thus, understanding how international doctoral students project their subject positions in their writing is of essential for helping them in entering the scholarly conversation (Hyland, 2004).

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters organized conventionally according to the following sequence: Introduction, Literature and Theory Review, Methodology, Case studies, Discussion, and Conclusion.

The first chapter introduces the study by contextualizing it within current research on the topic. It also discusses the study's objectives and outlines its research questions.

The second chapter delineates the theoretical frameworks that the study adopts. It discusses theories of academic writing and their advantages and disadvantages as a framework suitable for the

study. Specifically, it focuses on the theories that prevail in North American writing studies, including rhetorical genre studies, situated learning theories, theories of identity, and contrastive rhetoric.

Chapter three explains the methodology that the study adopts. It describes the methodological rationale, the role of the researcher, the way the participants were recruited, the methods of data analysis, and the crystallization of data.

Chapter four explains in detail the experiences of the five participants in the study. It starts by exploring their literacy experiences in their home countries and abroad. It then summarizes how they learned writing in their disciplines and the subject positions they took as they encountered new academic discourse conventions. Finally, it sums up the narratives of the participants by highlighting the main features in their doctoral journey as writers in English.

Chapter five presents an overview of the study's findings by comparing and contrasting the narratives and experiences of the study participants.

Chapter six concludes the dissertation by considering the study's implications for research, pedagogy, and policy. It also acknowledges the limitations of the study and proposes suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE AND THEORY REVIEW

Overview

This chapter introduces the theoretical paradigms that guide the study. It outlines the conceptual and analytical frameworks used in interpreting the data and discusses the findings of related research. To understand how the participants in this study learned to write academic English and how they constructed their writer identities, this chapter draws upon the following theoretical frameworks: social constructionism, rhetorical genre studies (RGS), theories of community, theories of identity, and contrastive (or intercultural) rhetoric. The next section discusses each theoretical framework and its contribution to the study.

Social Constructionism

One of the main purposes of doctoral education is to produce scholars who can contribute to knowledge through their research. Unlike undergraduate students, whose main responsibilities as learners are to display their knowledge of the subject matter they study, doctoral students need not only display their knowledge but also conduct original research that can add to the body of knowledge specific to their disciplines. Differentiating between graduate and undergraduate writers, Paré (2014), for example, observed that graduate students

> must make a significant rhetorical shift as they move into their doctoral studies. Before the doctorate, the student writer's role is generally to report on some sub-section of the literature within a subject area discipline. (p. 24)

He added:

> What makes the transition into doctoral work so difficult rhetorically is that students are suddenly expected to enter their disciplinary conversations; not only must they speak *like us* [emphasis in the original] … but now they must speak to and with us. (p. 24)

Likewise, Delamont, Atkinson, and Parry (1994) pointed out that PhD students are situated in an intermediary position that requires them not only to learn new skills and knowledge, but also to contribute to the construction of knowledge in their disciplines. Ziman (1993) captured the essence of this transitory situation of PhD students: "the PhD experience is the psychological transition from a state of being instructed on what is already known to a state of personally discovering things that were not previously known" (p. 8). In other words, the ultimate purpose of doctoral education is the initiation of new scholars who could pass knowledge from one generation of students to the next. This initiation occurs through a process of socialization during which new students "acquire the behaviours, attitudes, norms and know-how's of their scientific community" (Larivière, 2011, p. 2).

Socializing students into their disciplinary communities is a complex endeavor that can take many forms, including discussing research with advisors, attending seminars and conferences, writing research articles, book chapters, grant proposals, and dissertations (Nettles & Millets, 2006). One of the critical means of socializing students into their disciplinary communities to contribute to knowledge is academic writing. The importance of this socializing component resides in the fact that a researcher's contribution to knowledge is either validated or rejected by community peers through the writing that is presented to them (Larivière, 2011). Thus, the act of writing lies at the center of doctoral students' construction of knowledge.

Understanding the nature of knowledge construction and its connection to language has been of great significance to scholars and philosophers of knowledge for a long time (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burke, 1966, 1969; Kuhn, 1962, 1970). One of the theoretical frameworks that has sought to understand the nature of knowledge and how it is constructed is social constructionism.

Prior to the emergence of social constructionism, *positivism* was the dominant philosophy of science since the beginning of the nineteenth century through the twentieth century. Etymologically,

positivism originated from the Latin word *positum*, which means to put, set, or place; thus, data is set or placed in front of a researcher, whose task is to gather and organize them (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2010). Positivism in general refers to

> philosophical positions that emphasize empirical data and scientific methods. This tradition holds that the world consists of regularities, that these regularities are detectable, and, thus, that the researcher can infer knowledge about the real world by observing it. The researcher should be more concerned with general rules than with explaining the particular (Jakobsen, 2013, n.p)

From the end of the 1960s, the positivist approach became the target of strong criticism, particularly from the Marxist left. Notable among the critics of the positivist approach were scholars like Kuhn (1962), Feyerabend (1975), Hanson (1958) and Toulmin (1953, 1961). These scholars were given the name "historical relativists" (Suppe, 1977) because they held anti-positivist views and believed that scientific knowledge is socially constructed, not absolute, but relative in nature. These views were more recently shared by Gergen (1996), who argued that knowledge is not abstract, objective and absolute. Rather, knowledge is concrete, relative, and closely connected to human experience. That is, there is no absolute Truth but only local and relative truths.

Social constructionism is a paradigm that has influenced how various disciplines in the natural and social sciences understand knowledge and reality. It posits that knowledge is socially constructed and negotiated by community members who share similar interests, values, and beliefs. Journet (1990) summed up the essence of social constructionism when she noted that "knowledge is made, not found, and … it is made by groups of people, not by individuals; that is, knowledge is socially constructed" (p. 162). The roots of social constructionism are multidisciplinary, as Petraglia (1991) observed:

> [t]he term [social constructionism] . . . is a rubric under which a number of theories of social knowledge are subsumed; almost as many variations of social construction exist as there are rhetoricians, philosophers, sociologists, and anthropologists to promote them. Different writers serve as the principal gurus behind particular versions of a social theory. Although Thomas Kuhn and Richard Rorty appear to be cited most often in composition scholarship, social construction's modern form has been variously attributed to sociologists Karl Mannheim, G.H. Mead and Emile Durkheim, anthropologists Franz Boas and Clifford Geertz, linguists Benjamin Lee Whorf and Edward Sapir, literary critic Michel Foucault, and Karl Marx, to name but a few. (p. 38)

Bruffee (1986) described the main principles of social constructionism as understood in various disciplines:

> A social constructionist position in any discipline assumes that entities we normally call reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on are constructs generated by communities of like-minded peers. Social construction understands reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on as community-generated and community-maintained linguistic entities—or more broadly speaking, symbolic entities—that define or constitute the communities that generate them. That is, social constructionism understands knowledge and the authority of knowledge as community-generated, community-maintaining symbolic artifacts. (p. 774)

As Bruffee's comment indicates, at the heart of social constructionism is the idea that knowledge is a rhetorical product that is socially negotiated. That is, knowledge is produced as a result of a consensus reached by the community's members and expressed through the community's discourse (Sullivan, 1995). A community's discourse encompasses its theories, values, beliefs, and preconceptions, or what Gee (1990) called its "Discourse" or "ways of being," and its various

symbol systems or "discourses" such as language, images, and numbers. Based on this perspective, knowledge is assumed to be built on a set of propositions or rhetorical claims that can be approved or rejected by the community or group members according to the group's purposes and ways of argumentation. The propositions that earn the group's approval become part of its stock of knowledge until they are changed or replaced by other propositions.

To further elaborate on the relevance of social constructionism to my study, I present below the work of a few scholars in various disciplines, beginning with the works of Kuhn (1962, 1970).

Kuhn's (1962) influential book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* played a major role in debunking positivism. Prior to Kuhn's work, philosophers of science "considered the scientific enterprise to be a rational endeavor in which progress and knowledge are achieved through the steady, day-to-day, painstaking accumulation of experimental data, accredited facts and new discoveries" (Goldstein, 2012, p. iii).

Kuhn (1962) called this traditional scientific approach "normal science" to refer to the process of slowly gathering details according to established theory and without questioning the assumptions of that theory. Kuhn (1962) challenged this route to knowledge construction and argued that real scientific development was not the result of "puzzle-solving" (p. 35) but occurs "when the discovery of anomalies leads scientists to question the paradigm, and this in turn leads to a scientific revolution" (Goldstein, 2012, p. iii). This route represented what Kuhn termed a "paradigm shift."

Kuhn (1962, 1970) pointed to the social nature of knowledge and triggered a discussion about the role of the scientific community in knowledge construction. He described the scientific community as a collection of specialists who share specialized language, beliefs, and practices because they have "similar educations and professional initiations," they have "absorbed the same technical literature and drawn many of the same lessons from it," and they share the same goals and

professional judgments (Kuhn, 1970, p. 176). Kuhn (1970) used the construct "paradigm" to refer to the values that are shared by the members of a scientific community. From Kuhn's (1970) perspective, "[a] paradigm is what the members of a scientific community share, *and*, conversely, a scientific community consist of men who share a paradigm" (italics in original) (p. 176). Pointing to the close connection between knowledge, language, and community, Kuhn (1970) mentioned that "[s]cientific knowledge, like language, is intrinsically the common property of a group or nothing at all. To understand it we shall need to know the special characteristics of the groups of that use and create it" (pp. 209-210). That is, Kuhn emphasized the fact that knowledge is socially constructed in accordance with a group's agreed upon norms and practices. In order for novice community members to become socialized, they need to learn a discipline's paradigm. As Kuhn (1970) put it:

> The study of paradigms … is what mainly prepares the student for membership in the particular scientific community with which he will later practice. Men [sic] whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice. That commitment and the apparent consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal science, i.e., for the genesis and continuation of a particular research tradition. (pp. 10-11)

The work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) has also been central to social constructionism. The authors provided their understanding of the nature of reality and construction of knowledge. Specifically, they theorized how knowledge emerges and how it gains significance in society. Berger and Luckmann (1966) were influenced by the thinking of other scholars who were active in the area of sociology of knowledge, such as Marx, Nietzsche, Scheler and Mannheim. These scholars were considered the forefathers of social constructionism because they questioned the existence of rational and objective knowledge and proposed instead that knowledge is greatly influenced by a group's ideology, interests and power structures (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2010).

At the center of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) argument is that the relationship between man and society is dialectical in nature. They argued that "[s]ociety is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product" (p. 61). That is, social reality does not exist apart from man and man is the product of that society (Berger, 1967). Berger and Luckmann (1966) pointed out that continuous interaction among humans in the society results in what they called *habitualization*. Habitualization refers to "any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be … performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 53). According to Beger and Luckmann (1966),

> [h]abitualization carries with it the important psychological gain that choices are narrowed… the background of habitualized activity opens up a foreground for deliberation and innovation … The most important gain is that each [member of society] will be able to predict the other's actions. Concomitantly, the interaction of both becomes predictable… Many actions are possible on a low level of attention. Each action of one is no longer a source of astonishment and potential danger to the other. (pp. 53-57)

The authors added that the habitualized actions "retain their meaningful character for the individual although the meanings involved become embedded as routines in his general stock of knowledge, taken for granted by him and at hand for his projects into the future" (p. 53).

The repetition of people's interactions would lead to the routinization of their actions; thus, creating a pattern that people can reproduce without effort. The patterning of actions leads people to become innovative in their actions rather than starting afresh every time they need to engage in a familiar action.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) noted that habitualizaion is the prerequisite of what they termed *institutionalization*, which they defined as "a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions. Put differently, any such typification is an institution" (p. 72). That is, institutionalization emanates from

the habituation of conventions that are gained by mutual agreement on how things should be done. This institutionalization, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued, would allow future generations to experience and store knowledge as memory layers until this knowledge becomes "sedimented." In other words, the accumulated knowledge "congeal into memorable entities" (p. 67).

From Berger and Luckmann's (1966) perspective, language plays a central role in the collective sedimentation of knowledge. The authors expressed the crucial role of language thus: "Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen" (p. 37). They added that language "constitutes the most important content and the most important instrument of socialization" (p. 133). That is, language is the medium through which experiences can be shared. It is the indispensible means for maintaining, changing, and recreating reality. They argued that due to its role as "an index of subjective meanings," language allows members of a community to exchange ideas and share experiences. As a result, language becomes "both the basis and the instrument of the collective stock of knowledge" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 68). Furthermore, language is the primary means for the socialization of community members. Socialization refers to the process by which people learn to become members of their community by means of acquiring and internalizing its customs, values, beliefs, and practices. Merton, Reader, and Kendall (1957) defined socialization as

> the processes by which people selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills, and knowledge—in short, the culture—current in the groups of which they are, or seek to become, a member. It refers to learning social roles. (p. 287)

Berger and Luckmann (1966) expressed a similar meaning:

> The individual… is not born a member of society. He… becomes a member of society. In the life of every individual… there is a temporal sequence, in the course of which he is inducted into participation in the social dialectic. (p. 129)

Berger and Luckmann (1966) differentiated between two types of socialization: primary and secondary. The former takes place when an individual is still a child. It involves the child's initiation into his/her native culture. The latter refers to socialization that takes place during one's lifetime. It comprises acquiring role-specific knowledge through training and interaction with others. In this study, I am interested in the secondary socialization of graduate students into their disciplinary communities. That is, I am interested in exploring the roles that the study participants played through interacting with "significant others" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) such as their supervisors, professors and peers, and how this interaction shaped or influenced their socialization into their communities and the construction of their scholarly identities. This socialization occurs primarily through the medium of language.

The importance of language for socialization purposes into a particular community has also been emphasized by the American literary theorist and philosopher Kenneth Burke. Burke asserted the primacy of language or rhetoric for understanding human behavior. In his book *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke (1969) used the concept of *identification* as a key term in his analysis of the rhetorical choices that characterize the actions of human beings. In his book *The Philosophy of literary form*, Burke (1974) explained what he meant by identification:

> By "identification" I have in mind this sort of thing: one's material and mental ways of placing oneself as a person in the groups and movements; one's way of sharing vicariously in the role of leader or spokesman; formation and change of allegiance; the rituals of suicide, parricide, and prolicide, the vesting and divesting of insignia, the modes of initiation and purification, that are involved in the response to allegiance and change of allegiance; the part necessarily played by groups in the expectancies of the individual …; clothes, uniforms, and their psychological equivalents; ones ways of seeing one's reflection in the social mirror. (p. 227)

Burke (1969) distinguished between identification and the traditional rhetorical perspective characterized by *persuasion*. Burke's concept of identification is considered a further dimension of Aristotle's persuasion concepts of *Ethos*, *Pathos*, and *Logos* (Legget, 2012). Ethos refers to the credibility or ethical appeal of the speaker (or writer). It is directly related to the speaker's trustworthiness and respect in the eyes of the audience. Pathos refers to the emotional appeals that the speaker employs to persuade the audience. Finally, Logos refers to persuading the audience through appeal to logic or reason. Persuasion by using appeals to logic or reason could be achieved inductively or deductively. The former refers to giving the audience a number of similar examples from which it can draw a general proposition. The latter refers to giving the audience a few general propositions from which it can draw a specific conclusion (Henning, 1998).

Burke (1969) carefully noted that his use of identification did not mean that he dismissed the importance of persuasion that was the focus of the traditional rhetorical school. He still believed in the value of persuasion but pointed out that in our contemporary world our interactions are more complicated and cannot be limited to viewing persuasion as the interactional messages that a rhetor employs to address a particular audience. Burke (1969) considered identification to be a process that is fundamental to being a human and a communicative agent. He argued that the need to identify stems from people's need to overcome division or separateness. That is because human beings are born as distinct biological entities that seek to identify with others to avoid separateness. This division, from Burke's perspective, is not only biological but also based on social class or position. He noted that human beings are aware of the need to be separate, yet identified with others. As he put it, we are "both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another" (p. 21). Burke (1969) asserted that "[i]dentification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division" (p. 22). He argued that this

ambiguous need to be separate from yet identified with others results from our need to share (or perceive to share) our interest, attitudes, values, experiences, and material gains with others.

Some scholars (e.g., Cheney, 1982, 1983; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987; Jablin, 1986) pointed out that Burke's concept of identification can be viewed as both a process and a product of socialization. Despite the fact that identification can be viewed as an outcome of socialization, it can be conceived of as a process related to division that is deeply-rooted in a community or organization (Jablin, 1986). Cheney (1982) argued that during the process of socialization, individuals identify with a collective or a community (e.g., a graduate department) to the extent that they feel similar to other members and have a sense of belonging to them.

To further understand Burke's concept of identification, one needs to view it within the context of his perspective of language as symbolic action. In his book *Language as Symbolic Action*, Burke (1966) made a connection between knowledge and language when he defined humankind as a "symbol using animal" (p. 3) and argued that "reality" has "been built up for us through nothing but our symbol system" (p. 5). He noted that knowledge is constructed, negotiated, and accepted within a group or a community of like-minded persons. As Burke (1969) pointed out, human beings are actors whose most defining characteristic is responding to symbols, including the use of language that is purposeful and coveys their beliefs and attitudes. Based on this understanding, Burke (1969) defined rhetoric as "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or induce actions in other human agents" (p. 41). Identification represents an essential aspect of this perspective and it involves three processes: 1) naming things or people, 2) affiliating with or disaffiliating from others who do not share ideas or other common qualities, and 3) achieving the end result of identifying, which is becoming identical to others by persuading them that they have common qualities. As Bullis and Bach (1989) put it: "Identification, then, as a fundamental process of relational

development and as a product involving feelings of similarity, belonging, and membership, is integrally related to the socialization process" (p. 275).

The prominent anthropologist Geertz (1973) emphasized the social nature of knowledge and the role of community in its construction. He argued that our understanding of the social world is achieved through what he called "local frames of awareness" (p. 6) that are characteristic of particular disciplinary communities. Likewise, Rorty (1979) contended that all human knowledge is socially produced and accepted within a local community. Furthermore, the social nature of reality and knowledge was discussed by the scholars of Soviet psychologists (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Wartofsky, 1979). These scholars argued that a community's socio-cultural factors, organization, interaction, and discourse affect ways of knowing and the knowledge that is produced by the community.

In France, Michel Foucault also pointed to the social nature of knowledge construction when he analyzed the discourse of institutions. Foucault (1972) noted that human understanding is influenced and shaped by what he called "discursive formations" or an institution's values, beliefs, and discourse. He added that the influence occurs at the unconscious level by normalizing the interpretation of the knowledge produced by the institutions. Likewise, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) noted that each institution had its own "logic of practice" or its unique ways of thinking, which greatly affects its members' way of perception and action.

The work of Foucault, Bourdieu (1977, 1984), and other scholars (Douglas, 1986; Smith, 1987) carried with it an underlying assumption that the discourse and knowledge-making practices of any community or institution will ultimately influence or shape its members' thinking and perceptions. This deterministic view suggested that the members of a community have severely limited agency because they have to conform to their community's practices. This view was opposed by many scholars such as Bakhtin (1986), Bazerman (1994) Giddens (1979, 1984) Miller (1994a,b),

and Sewell (1992). These scholars acknowledged the influence of the community on its members' worldview, perceptions, and practices, but noted that a community's members still enjoyed considerable freedom and agency. The conflict between the notions of conforming to the community's practices, conventions, values, and beliefs, and the member's agency is of relevance to this study. As will be shown later, conforming to or resisting the disciplinary community's practices and conventions represents an essential aspect of scholarly identity construction that could have critical consequences for the writer's attempts at becoming a member of a disciplinary community.

In sum, social constructionism stresses the importance of the community in constructing, negotiating and sanctioning knowledge. It also stresses that each community has its own values, beliefs, conventions, and discourse that distinguish it from other communities. The use of social constructionism as the umbrella framework for this study is based on the belief that the study participants' understanding of their disciplinary world —their very experience of the world —is shaped by their interactions with others. Doctoral students do not learn and write in isolation from others. They do not contribute to knowledge without interacting with their supervisors, committee members, and peers. Consequently, understanding the types of academic networks and socialization practices that they develop as graduate students could help us in drawing a clearer picture of their experiences during their doctoral journey.

Theories of Writing

To further extend the social constructionist framework that this study adopts, I will discuss the social view of writing. This view was preceded by a number of theoretical approaches to writing, namely, the product and the process approaches. Discussing these two approaches is important to understand the developments that lead to the emergence of the social view of writing and, in turn, rhetorical genre studies (RGS).

The Product Approach

The product or "current-traditional" approach to writing, which dominated composition studies in the 1950s, emphasized the formal features of writing. These features included sentence structure, paragraph structure, essay structure, the structure for term papers, and business letters (Coe, 1987). It focused on teaching students how to comply with the rules of composition and how to apply them correctly. It viewed language (and writing) as a logical system, the rules of which could be learned and mastered through memorization, imitation, and practice. It primarily focused on the text that the writer produced and did not consider the writer's experiences and attitudes in the writing process. It also did not consider the context of writing as a factor that could influence the written product. Dissatisfaction with this approach resulted in shifting attention from the produced text to the process of writing in which writers engage. This lead to the emergence of the process approach which dominated composition studies in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Process Approach

The process approach shifted the attention from the finished written product (text) to the individual writer and the writing process. It emphasized invention (or discovery) and saw writing as a creative and cognitive act that involves internal and invisible processes. It encouraged the search within as a way for writers to get in touch with their own ideas and thinking. Its movement away from the focus on the text into an interest in the writer's mind represented its most important essence (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975; Flower, 1979; Moffett, 1968).

The process approach held two views on writing: the expressive and the cognitive, each of which had its own advocates. The expressive view was a reaction against the pedagogical approaches to writing that focused on the text's grammatical correctness and form. The proponents of this view included prominent composition scholars, including Coles (1978), Elbow (1973), Macrorie (1970), and Murray (1968, 1980). These scholars stressed the heuristic power of writing or the ability of

writing to generate or discover ideas. They believed that the expression of meaning emerges during the process of writing itself. They argued that students should be the center of instruction and stressed the expression of students' "voice" or unique identity in writing.

The cognitive approach viewed writing as "the knowledge necessary for producing preconceived results by conscious, directed action" (Young, 1980). It initially posited that writing consisted of a variety of linear sub-processes: pre-writing, writing, re-writing. With developments in research, composing was seen as a more complex process than the three-stage model suggested. Re-writing, for example, was seen not simply as a step at the end of the writing process to fix the text's grammatical mistakes, but as an ongoing process of revision in response to a rhetorical problem. The response to the rhetorical problem requires writers to attend to an audience and to use their schema (previous experience, knowledge of the topic, and knowledge of similar writing tasks) in order to write effectively.

The cognitive approach was very important for composition teachers because it provided them with a process they could employ to help students acquire better writing abilities. As Lunsford (1985) put it: "[a]s the field with the most clearly defined and most generally accepted interdisciplinary base, cognitive studies offers those of us in the field of composition studies a community of scholars with whom to collaborate" (p. 160). Bracewell (1980) believed that cognitive psychology, a discipline that "tolerates the assumption of complex mental processes" (p. 401), seemed well-suited to answer the questions and issues being raised by people interested in writing.

The cognitive approach to writing, however, was criticized because it seemed to give the writer priority over the social context. This is manifested in its depiction of the writer as an independent entity than can set goals and produce a text suitable to his/her intentions and audience. Bizzell (1992), for example, argued that even if educators understood "how" the writing process occurs, they could not answer the question about "why" writers make particular cognitive choices in

particular writing situations because writing is situated within a discourse community. The cognitive approach became less influential than it once was (Berlin, 1987; Carter, 1988; Clifford, 1984; Cooper & Holzman, 1989). Even some of its ardent supporters came to the realization that the cognitive theory was in need of a thorough revision (Faigley, 1992; Flower, 1989; Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987).

The Social View of Writing

The inadequacy of the product-based and process-based approaches for understanding the writing activity resulted in the emergence of a writing approach that took a social view of writing (Bruffee, 1986, Cooper, 1989; Rorty, 1979). Instead of exclusively focusing on the finished product or the processes employed by writers to produce a text, the social approach acknowledged the significance of these aspects of writing but focused on the socio-cultural contexts that might influence writing, including the writer, the process, and the text. Specifically, this approach had a number of interrelated assumptions about the nature of knowledge, the writer and discourse. First, it assumed that knowledge is socially constructed in response to communal needs, goals, and contexts and that composing texts is part of the social process by which knowledge is constructed. It viewed language as a semiotic system used to discuss, explain, and exchange ideas. This epistemic (or knowledge-making) perspective on language represented a radical shift from previous conceptions, which assumed that reality is a measurable and knowable phenomenon that exists independent of the human experience and can be expressed in language. Adopting this perspective meant that knowledge, like language, is shaped by contextual forces. Second, it depicted the writer as interactively engaged in a variety of socially constituted systems and contexts. These contexts include: location, time and circumstances, academic or professional discipline, history, culture, individuals, and activities related to a particular text. This interaction with contexts requires an awareness of audience, purpose, the process and product of writing (Barabas, 1990; Faigley, 1985;

Freedman & Medway, 1994). Third, it viewed discourse as "social, situated and motivated, constructed, constrained and sanctioned" (Coe, Lingard, & Teslenko, 2002, p. 2).

In brief, the writing theories that were influential in composition studies gradually developed from viewing writing as a product and process dissociated from the context surrounding the text production to viewing it as a social activity that involves the writer's circumstances (attitude, beliefs, and community membership). One of the major approaches to writing that developed within the socio-cultural approach to writing and that focused on the relationship between writing, knowledge construction, and identity formation is rhetorical genre studies.

Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS)

Concomitant with the theoretical shift in composition studies from the product and process approaches towards the social view of writing was a reconceptualization and redefinition of genre as social action that was introduced by Miller (1984) in her widely cited article *Genre as social action*. RGS is an approach that adopted the social view of knowledge as its primary framework to explain how writers learn and use genres in various professional and educational fields and how they construct their professional and academic identity. RGS emerged from Miller's (1984) reconceptualization of genre, whereby she viewed genres as typified social actions and as ways of acting based on recurrent social situations.

RGS scholars argue that writing is a dynamic and complex activity that involves the context that surrounds text production. Unlike other contemporaneous genre schools (i.e., English for Specific Purposes and Systemic Functional Linguistics), RGS scholars did not primarily concern themselves with analyzing the linguistic and structural features of genres, but focused instead on the social contexts that affect writing (Devitt, 1996, 2000; Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Miller, 1984/1994a, 1994b). And while the traditional literary genre schools were concerned with classifying and categorizing literary genres such as the novel, poem, drama, and myths according to

common textual, thematic, and stylistic features "irrespective of the historical conditions under which the types come to exist and of the social values attached to them in a given context" (Hanks, 1987, p. 670), RGS scholars emphasized the various social, cultural, political, and ideological contexts that might facilitate or constrain the acquisition and use of genres (Artemeva & Freedman, 2006; Bazerman, 1988, 1994; Devitt, 1993; Dias & Paré, 2000; Miller, 1984, 1994a/b; Paré, 1993; Schryer, 1993; Slevin, 1988; Smart, 1993; Van Nostrand, 1994; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). This emphasis was manifested in Miller's (1984) reconceptualization and redefinition of genre as social action, in which genre is considered "a conventional category of discourse based in large-scale typification of rhetorical action … [which] acquires meaning from situation and from the social context in which the situation arose" (p. 163). Miller (1984) argued that "a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish" (p. 151). This definition represented a departure from the genre approaches that focused on the genre's textual and thematic features, and it established new guidelines for analysis that went beyond these features, without diminishing the importance of the textual features of a genre. In other words, the main interest of RGS is to study how and why "typified texts reflect and reproduce social situations and activities . . . how and why texts as cultural artifacts are produced; how they in turn reflect and help enact social actions; and how, finally, they can serve as sites for cultural critique and change" (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 336). Thus, what distinguishes RGS is that it reconceptualizes genres as social actions that develop as a result of a rhetorical situation (Miller, 1984/1994a; Paré & Smart, 1994), defined as a combination of purpose, audience, and occasion (Coe & Freedman, 1998). More specifically, the focus of RGS's analysis is on the action that the discourse achieves and not on its linguistic representation (the text), which is considered secondary (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Coe & Freedman, 1998; Coe, Lingard, & Teslenko, 2002).

Miller's (1984) reconceptualization of genre was further extended by the work of other genre scholars. Devitt (2004), for example, agreed with Miller's definition of genre and extended it by discussing three different types of contexts that she adopted from Malinowski's (1952) work on language. The three contexts are: context of culture, context of situation and context of other genres. The context of culture refers to "a shared set of material contexts and learned behaviors, values, beliefs, and templates" which "influences how situation is constructed and how it is seen as recurring in genres" (p. 25). This context includes "the ways that existing ideological and material contexts, contexts beyond the more immediate context of situation of a particular genre, partially construct what genres are and are in turn constructed (reproduced) by people performing genre actions" (p. 27). The context of situation includes "the people, languages, and purposes involved in every action" (p. 27). The context of genres refers to "the existing genres we have read or written or that others say we should read and write" (p. 28) and includes "all the existing genres in …society, the individual genres and sets of genres, the relatively stagnant and the changing genres, the genres commonly used and those not used" (p. 28). This interaction between various contexts is very important for writers or learners to know because it helps them understand the purpose of any genre, and the rhetorical choices that are suitable to the contexts. In other words, the three contexts are all important because they "all influence the actions of writers and readers, speakers and listeners, and they do it partly through genre" (p. 29).

Devitt's (2004) conceptualization of the three types of contexts draws attention to the fact that genre learning is a very complex and dynamic activity. In order for students to acquire and learn the genres of their disciplines, they need to comprehend their community's culture, including its norms, values, and beliefs. In other words, they need to become familiar with the community's worldview. They need to become acquainted with the context of situation that includes how to interact with their audience through the use of the proper discourse privileged by the community.

Furthermore, the students have to familiarize themselves with the context of genre that includes the genres they had acquired from previous literacy experiences in order to use them in new contexts. Knowing these three layers of genres is thus needed to attain the rhetorical proficiency required for the success of students as academic writers. International students are obviously at a disadvantage because they come from different socio-rhetorical cultures and are attempting to become proficient writers in another language. Achieving this proficiency may not be an easy endeavor for many of them. Some may succeed. Some others may fail.

Asserting that genres are not fixed and rigid texts, Schryer (1993, 1994) observed that genres are *stabilized-for-now* or *stabilized enough* sites of social and ideological action that are in a constant state of change in response to the changes in exigencies and rhetorical situations. Similarly, Devitt (2000) argued that "genres are never really stabilized. If each text always participates in multiple genres, then even in that text a genre is moving, shifting, and becoming destabilized. Even temporary stability is an illusion of genre theory rather than a reality of genre-in-action" (p. 713). Schryer (1995, 2000) went further in describing the dynamism, flexibility, and ever-changing nature of a genre by proposing to use genre as a verb. From her perspective, genre users could become *genred* into the rhetorical situations they encounter in various settings and they could *genre* their way to acquire the disciplinary values and beliefs (Schryer, 2002). Schryer's use of the word "genre" as a verb has complex theoretical implications: to say that writers become *genred* is to point to the ways in which participation in literate practices shapes human identity. To say student genre their way into "values and beliefs" suggests the taking-on of identity as a means of becoming socialized and affiliated as a member in a disciplinary community.

The above discussion is intended to show that writing is not simply the learning of a set of skills that are transferred from an expert to the student. It involves becoming socialized in the norms, values, beliefs, and culture of the community one is a member of. RGS provides an

important framework for understanding the complexity of academic writing in English because it views writing in a more comprehensive lens than that provided by the mere analysis of textual features.

RGS and Genre Learning and Teaching

Since this study seeks to know the methods the study participants used to learn how to write in their disciplines, exploring the position of RGS scholars on how learners acquire or learn genres is of utmost importance. Initially, RGS scholars did not advocate a particular instructional framework for teaching students the linguistic and rhetorical features of the genres used in their disciplinary communities. They left it up to instructors to infer their own teaching applications (Bazerman, 1988; Miller, 1984, 1994a; Paré & Smart, 1994; Schryer, 1993; Van Nostrand, 1994; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992) and did not provide them with concrete tasks and activities that can be used in teaching various genres. Freedman and Medway (1994) commented on this fact by noting that "[d]irect translations into teaching are almost entirely absent" (p. 10). In Miller's (1984) seminal article, for example, there is one paragraph which noted that genre theory "has implications . . . for rhetorical education" (p. 165). Bazerman (1988) suggested that a writing pedagogy should not aim to give students "the formal trappings of the genres they need to work in" but to raise their awareness about "life" embodied in texts" (p. 320). What is more helpful to students, in Bazerman's (1988) view, is knowledge of the social contexts surrounding the texts that is appropriate for a community's rhetorical situation. As he said: "[t]he more you understand the fundamental assumptions and aims of the community, the better able you will be . . . to evaluate whether the rhetorical habits you and your colleagues bring to the task are appropriate and effective" (p. 323). Similarly, Freedman and Medway (1994) pointed out that in learning a genre, "what has to be attended to . . . are features of the situation . . . . Knowing the gross surface features is the easy part, and insufficient on its own" (pp. 11–12). They also argued that if genres are not stable and fixed but fluid and dynamic, how can

they be taught or learned? As Flowredew (2005) observed: "These scholars thus view genres as dynamic, social texts, which are not static but ongoing processes of discourse production and reception shaped and influenced by other related texts and utterances (intertextuality) of the sociocultural context" (p. 323).

The debate among RGS scholars has focused on whether genre learning occurs by employing implicit or explicit teaching methods or the interaction between the two methods.

The genre theorist Freedman (1987) advocated the pedagogical assumption that students learn genres implicitly. In fact, she argued that genres cannot be taught because they are acquired by immersing students in the context where genres are used. Freedman (1993) doubted that the explicit teaching of genre features was necessary for enhancing the learning or the acquisition of genres. She explained what she meant by explicit teaching by saying that it is the "explicit discussions, specifying the (formal) features of the genres and/or articulating underlying rules" (p. 224). She posed two important sub-questions: 1) are textual features secondary with regard to their role in the communicative purpose of a genre? and 2) is there any value in teaching the textual features out of context? These questions lead her to formulate two hypotheses that stood against explicit teaching. The first one is the strong version which categorically stated that explicit teaching was unnecessary, impossible, useless, and runs the risk of over-learning or misapplication. The second is a restricted hypothesis which stated that "we cannot exclude the possibility that explicit guidance of some kind might enhance or accelerate the learning … It allows for certain limited conditions under which explicit teaching may enhance learning—at least for some learners" (p. 241). These conditions should take into consideration that "explicit teaching must always be done in the context of, or in very close proximity to, authentic tasks involving the relevant discourse" (Freedman, 1994, p. 205). Freedman (1987) pointed out that the usefulness of the explicit instruction is dependent on several

factors, including the accuracy of the instructor's genre knowledge, the students' learning styles, and the time lapse between exposing the students to the genre and performing it.

To test the strong hypothesis, Freedman (1987) conducted a large-scale study that examined the writing of narratives by students of grades 5, 8, and 12. She observed that the students were able to produce the narrative structure without receiving explicit instruction on how to write that genre. She argued that it was plausible that the students produced the narrative because they had previously read narratives and heard oral stories. As a result, Freedman (1987) concluded: "This schema was internalized, without evidence of any prior explicit teaching and was brought to bear as tacit, shaping knowledge in the course of their writing in the context of the elicited task" (p. 227).

To further bolster her findings, Freedman (1987) conducted an ethnographic case study of six students in an undergraduate class of law. Her methodology consisted of in-class observations, interviews with students and instructors, and analysis of students' logs, notes, and drafts. Data analysis indicated that the students were able to produce the genre without explicit instruction. In response to the question of how the students acquired the genre, Freedman (1987) said:

> Learners approach the task with a 'dimly felt sense' of the new genre they are attempting. They begin composing by focusing on the specific content to be embodied in this genre. In the course of the composing this 'dimly felt sense' of the genre is both given form and reshaped as a) this 'sense,' b) the composing processes, and c) the unfolding texts interrelate and modify one another. Then, on the basis of external feedback (the grade assigned), the learners either confirm or modify their map of the genre. (p. 101)

Thus, from Freedman's perspective, genre learning occurs "tacitly" through a process that starts with the students' "dimly felt sense" of the genres they want to write. This sense exists "below the conscious" levels and employs "creative powers that [are] neither verbal nor rational" (p. 104). That is, in the beginning of genre learning, students rely on their broad schema or knowledge of the

academic discourse they had previously encountered when writing school assignments. The students will not be given any explicit instructions on how to write a specific genre but they would "create the genre" when they produce it guided by the class assignments and feedback on the writing. Based on the external feedback (the grade assigned), students would either confirm or modify the way they write the genre. For students to acquire and learn a specific genre, Freedman (1994) pointed out that students need to do an actual writing of the genre. According to Freedman (1994), "full genre knowledge (in all of its subtlety and complexity) only becomes available *as a result of having written.* First comes the achievement or performance, with the tacit knowledge implied, and then, through that, the meta-awareness which can flower into conscious reflexive knowledge" (p. 205)

Freedman (1987) called upon genre researchers to conduct further research to explore the issue of implicit and explicit genre learning. In response to her call, genre researchers such as Williams and Colomb (1993), Fahnestock (1993) and Devitt (2004) wrote elaborate articles that addressed her argument and claims. Williams and Colomb (1993), who supported explicit writing instruction, argued that Freedman's "categorical claims are especially vulnerable, since they are disconfirmed by a single uncontested counter-example" (p. 252). They reasoned that "the question of explicit teaching is too consequential to be framed in a way that allows such easy disconfirmation" (p. 252). Both researchers provided cases where explicit teaching proved useful. They referred to a study conducted by Hillock (1986) who researched writing instruction extensively. According to Hillocks, the most effective way of teaching writing is the environmental, in which "the instructor offers specific criteria in the context of active problem solving" (pp. 122-123). On the other hand, the least effective method is the presentational in which "the instructor lectures in decontextualized criteria" (p. 123). According to Williams and Colombs (1993), when comparing the effectiveness of presentational teaching to the natural process teaching in which only input is provided to the learner (which is similar to what Freedman proposed), Hillocks found no significant

difference. The authors noted that Hillocks' results "consistently show that when learning is situated rather than decontexualized, the most effective teaching is explicit" (p. 257). Thus, instead of rejecting explicit writing instruction, the authors believed that "substantial bodies of research have found that effective teaching includes both explicit and inexplicit strategies" (p. 257).

Fahnestock (1993) did not agree with Freedman's rejection of the usefulness of explicit genre-based writing instruction. She premised her response on two arguments: the first is Freedman's belief that learning genre is like learning a craft. The second is Freedman's argument that "genre distinctions can be learned intuitively, primarily from context, in the manner that match first and second-language learning presumably occurs" (p. 269). To the first argument Fahnestock (1993) said that "there is no craft or 'art' without an explication of its principles so that they can be applied across situations" (p. 270). To the second, she noted that the intuition that Freedman observed in college students' writing (and which applies also to adult writers in their professions) is "likely to be the product of much earlier tuition" (p. 270) because students "are not going to recognize regularities in texts (and genres are only definable by regularities) if they do not expect regularities or do not know what counts as a significant regulating worth of imitation" (p. 270). She added that "the relevant test of explicit training may not come, then, from one set occasion or performance but from relative success over many different occasions" (p. 270).

Devitt (2004) agreed with Freedman on some aspects of her argument but also proposed her own view on the issue of explicit genre-based writing instruction. She pointed out that "[i]f we are to use genre theory effectively in our teaching, we must teach contextualized genres, situated within their contexts of culture, situation and other genres" (Devitt, 2004, p. 191). This is because genres must be situated within their social and rhetorical contexts. Devitt (2004) argued that "[g]enres must be taught as both constraint and choice so that individual awareness can lead to individual creativity" (p. 191). In addition, she asserted that "[e]xplicit genre teaching may not be necessary for people to

produce acceptable texts with appropriate generic forms, then, but it may be necessary for people to perceive the purposes of those forms and their potential ideological effects"(p. 195). Consequently, she proposed what she called "teaching genre awareness," defined as "a critical consciousness of both the purposes and ideological effects of generic forms" (p. 192). That is, the goal of Devitt's (2004) approach is to have students "understand the intricate connections between contexts and forms, to perceive potential ideological effects of genres, and to discern both constraints and choices that genres make possible" (p. 198). Thus, Devitt (2004) agreed with the pedagogical approaches that combine the implicit and explicit teaching methods that focus on developing in students a "meta-awareness of genres, as learning strategies rather than static features" (p. 197) in order for students to acquire "a critical consciousness of both rhetorical purposes and ideological effects of generic forms" (p. 192).

In a recent study that explored the effect of prior knowledge of genre (antecedent genre) on the engineering students' production of technical reports, Artemeva and Fox (2010) pointed out that the majority of their 11 study participants recognized the rhetorical and textual features of genres without explicit teaching. They agreed with Freedman's (1987, 1994, 2006) argument that the explicit teaching of genre may not be needed. They argued that the explicit teaching of the rhetorical and textual features of genres "may override the tacit, deeper, and therefore more meaningful processing that occurs when students make sense of what they read on their own terms and in relation to what they know and observe" (Artemeva & Fox, 2010, p. 502). That is because, as Gee (2010) observed, genres are conventional ways of doing that cannot be taught explicitly.

Other genre scholars recently took up the challenge to develop students' genre knowledge or genre awareness so that they could write in a variety of writing situations and contexts. In their book entitled *Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres,* Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi (2003) proposed a genre heuristic that consisted of several guidelines for analyzing genres. They outlined a

set of strategies that would allow students to function effectively in a communication context. The guidelines for analyzing genres engage the students in collecting samples of the genre, identifying and describing the situation in which a genre is used (e.g., identifying the issues that the genre addresses, the participants that use it, and clarifying the purposes of the genre), and identifying patterns in genre features (e.g., the type of sentences and lexicon employed, the writer's voice, appeal to ethos, pathos, and logos).

A similar approach for teaching genre awareness was proposed by Johns (1997, 2002, 2007). In her book entitled *Text, Role, and Con text: Developing Academic Literacies*, Johns (1997) called upon second language students to act as ethnographers in order to study and become aware of the academic context in which they write. The ethnographic study includes knowing the values associated with the genres they write and the role that these genres perform in an academic context. Likewise, in *Destabilizing and Enriching Novice Students' Genre Theories,* Johns (2002) encouraged second language students "to broaden their concepts of genre and their genre repertoire" (p. 244) while acquiring new academic genres. This approach, she argued, would allow students to become "aware of the interaction between process, intertextuality, and products, and the variation among texts even within what is assumed to be a single pedagogical genre such as the research paper or five-paragraph essay" (p. 246). And in her book *Genre Awareness for the Novice Academic Student: An On-going Quest,* Johns (2007) asked second language speaking students to analyze their discourse communities through interviewing the faculty in their disciplines. She pointed out that the purpose of this approach is to enhance students' genre awareness through learning its use in an authentic context.

Analyzing what constitutes genre knowledge, Tardy (2009) argued that this knowledge is multidimensional and that it comprises four dimensions: formal, rhetorical, process, and subject-matter knowledge. According to Tardy (2009), formal genre knowledge requires an understanding of a genre's linguistic forms. She pointed out that formal genre knowledge

> refers to the more structural elements of genre—the genre's prototypical form(s), discourse or lexico-grammatical conventions of the genre, the contents or structural moves that are common to the genre, and the various modes and media through which the genre may be communicated. This knowledge focuses on the textual instantiation of the genre, in either oral or written form. (p. 21)

Process knowledge refers to the knowledge of the procedure or the medium through which the genre is carried out. It focuses on the processes that help genre users perform their intended action. This includes the oral interactions with the audience or the composing processes that allow the writer to complete a text. It also includes an understanding of the targeted audience. For example, as Tardy (2012) argued, a genre user (student) writing the "personal statement" essay that accompany the university application

> might know to read the essay guidelines carefully, to locate and study samples of the genre, to work on several drafts and share those with different readers, and to proofread the final draft very carefully; this user will also have an understanding of how the essays will be read (i.e., how quickly, by whom, what readers might pay particular attention to). These are all examples of process knowledge. (p. 168)

According to Tardy (2009), rhetorical knowledge refers to "an understanding of the genre's intended purposes and an awareness of the dynamics of persuasion within a sociorhetorical context" (p. 21). That is, genre users are required to have an understanding of what the genre is intended to do (e.g., persuade, advise) and to have a grasp of the audience's values and expectations. In addition, rhetorical knowledge "includes the writer's understanding of his or her own positioning vis-à-vis the context and the specific readers" (Tardy, 2009, p. 21).

Finally, Tardy (2009) pointed out that subject-matter knowledge refers to the writer's knowledge of the relevant content. For example, in order to write an article for a sociology journal, a student needs to have an appropriate knowledge of the material to succeed in writing an article.

In Johns, Bawarshi, Coe, Hyland, Paltridge, Reiff, & Trady (2006), Tardy argued that when teaching genres to students, a distinction should be made between the expert (or advanced) and novice students. She pointed out that for expert students the four genre knowledge domains "interact and overlap, giving rise to the sophisticated knowledge that allows them to manipulate genres for very particular purposes" (p. 239). For novice second language students, they tend to compartmentalize these knowledge domains (Tardy, 2004b). In Johns et al. (2006), Tardy explained how this compartmentalization occurs:

> In their first encounters, learners may focus on one or two dimensions (such as generic moves or lexicogrammatical features) to the relative exclusion of others, or they may have difficulty seeing the interactions among the domains (for example, identifying how disciplinary values influence a text's form). As they become more familiar with some knowledge domains (formal, rhetorical, subject-matter, and/ or procedural), that knowledge becomes increasingly automatic and the learners concentrate on other generic elements. Over time, learners integrate these domains, building automaticity as well as the kind of tacit and rich knowledge characteristic of expert genre users. (p. 239)

In Johns at al. (2006), Tardy believed that the ethnographic approach to genre learning proposed by Johns (1997) and the multidimensional genre analysis proposed by Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi (2003) could help second language students analyze the interaction among the different genre domains. However, she cautioned that

> some of the advanced ESL writers I observed, for example, had difficulty analyzing genre from a linguistic *and* rhetorical perspective and then drawing links between these features

> and the rhetorical scene. They found little relevance in such analysis and at times saw the complexities of genre as too abstract to be of use. Perhaps at some stages and for some learners, more filtered or compartmentalized views of genre are also necessary. (p. 239)

Other RGS scholars proposed teaching what is called a "critical awareness of genre." This approach is intended to increase the students' understanding that genres carry with them the ideologies, beliefs, and values of the disciplinary community. In their book, *The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre* (2002), Coe, Lingard, and Teslenko include in their introduction a heuristic to critique genres and to increase students' awareness about how genres are ideological in nature:

1) What sorts of communication does the genre encourage, what sorts does it constrain against?
2) Who can—and who cannot—use this genre? Does it empower some people while silencing others?
3) Are its effects dysfunctional beyond their immediate context?
4) What values and beliefs are instantiated within this set of practices?
5) What are the political and ethical implications of the rhetorical situation constructed, persona embodied [cf., subject positioning], audience invoked and context of situation assumed by a particular genre? (pp. 6-7)

While the above heuristic develops a critical awareness of genre through critiquing and analyzing them, it would not be helpful if not accompanied by an approach that allows students to produce the genres. As Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) pointed out, one of the criticisms leveled against RGS is that it focused on genre critique and analysis without having writers produce genre or practice them. In order to deal with this issue, Coe (1994), for example, asked his students to choose a specific type of writing (e.g., articles for ski magazines) and to write a manual that could teach others how to write a particular genre. This exercise, he argued, is beneficial because it allows the students to gain

practical experience in writing a genre in addition to analyzing and identifying its features. Artemeva and Fox (2010), however, argued that of the 11 students who participated in their study, only seven participants wrote the technical report genre appropriately. Artemeva and Fox (2010) pointed out that even the production of the genre may "be a necessary but insufficient precondition for genre competence" and posed the question to researchers to discover what "genre ingredients" (Artemeva, 2005), or preconditions were required for attaining domain-specific genre competence.

Theories of Community

The notion of socialization, which is one of the central notions in social constructionism, goes hand in hand with the notion of community. The effect of social constructionism on our understanding of knowledge has been extended to composition studies. According to Faigley (1992), the most salient contribution of social constructionism to composition studies was the concept of *discourse community*. A related concept that has been used to explain the effect of community on constructing knowledge and forming an identity is the *community of practice* or CoP (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In the next sub-sections, I will explain the significance of both concepts and their contribution to this study. However, a brief explanation of the term *speech community* would be needed to better understand the concept of discourse community.

Speech Community

According to Swales (1990), the *speech community* concept was examined in sociolinguistics by several scholars, including Hudson (1980), Saville-Troike (1982) and Braithwaite (1984). He noted that a speech community was viewed as consisting of individuals who share similar *linguistic rules* (Bloomfield, 1933) or *shared norms* (Labov, 1966). Hymes (1974) argued that language reflects the social norms and relations among individuals who share the same culture, and that the appropriate use of language involves fitting into the group's culture. Hymes (1974) summed up this understanding by noting that

> [a] speech community is defined, then, tautologically but radically, as a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech, and knowledge also of its patterns of use. Both conditions are necessary. (p. 51)

Gumperz (1972) defined a speech community as "any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent human interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage" (p. 219). According to Gumperz (1972), any group (even gangs) can be considered a speech community if they "show linguistic peculiarities that warrant special study" (p. 219). He pointed out that studying a speech community means studying the language that it uses:

> Wherever the relationship between language choice and rules of social appropriateness can be formalized, they allow us to group relevant linguistic forms into distinct dialects, styles, and occupational or other special parlances. The sociolinguistic study of speech communities deals with the linguistic similarities and differences among these speech varieties. (p. 220)

Thus, when people use a special form of language, they indicate that they belong to a certain group with which they share social norms and patterns of interaction. From a sociolinguistic perspective, using a group's language and sharing its cultural norms and values represent the core of membership in a speech community.

Discourse Community

The term discourse community, according to Swales (1990), has been primarily employed by instructors and researchers who adopt the social view (Faigley, 1986) of the writing process. He pointed out that the original existence of the term could be traced to many social constructionist thinkers, including Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), Kuhn (1970), Foucault's (1972) analysis

of "discursive formations," Rorty (1979), Fish (1980), Geertz's (1983), and Wittgenstein (1958), especially his work on "language games," as Bruffee (1986) pointed out.

Regardless of its origin, the term discourse community began to gain salience in composition studies literature in the 1980s. A number of scholars, including Bizzell (1982) and Nystrand (1982), separately drew attention to the importance of linking writing to community. The sociolinguist Nystrand (1982) connected the notion of audience in rhetoric with the sociolinguistic notion of speech community, emphasizing the importance of studying both the ways writers address audiences and the ways they acquire the discourse community's ways of speaking. Bizzell (1982) expanded Nystrand's (1982) argument further:

> Discourse analysis goes beyond audience analysis because what is most significant about members of a discourse community is not their personal preferences, prejudices, and so on, but rather the expectations they share by virtue of belonging to that particular community. These expectations are embodied in the discourse conventions, which are in turn conditioned by the community's work. (p. 219)

The same argument was echoed by Cooper (1989), who noted that discourse communities are characterized by "certain underlying assumptions, knowledge, values, and interests that its members hold in common and by the use of certain language conventions-types of argument, genres, vocabulary" (p. 204). Likewise, Porter (1992) pointed out that a discourse community can be viewed as

> [a] local and temporary constraining system, defined by a body of texts (or more generally, practices) that are unified by a common focus. A discourse community is a textual system with stated and unstated conventions, a vital history, mechanisms for wielding power, institutional hierarchies, vested interests, and so on. (p. 106)

Berlin (1982) noted that the shared beliefs, values, and discourse of the community lead to construction of knowledge agreed on by its members:

> Meaning emerges ... from individuals engaging in rhetorical discourse in discourse communities-groups organized around the discussion of particular matters in particular ways. Knowledge, then, is a matter of mutual agreement appearing as a product of the rhetorical activity, the discussion, of a given discourse community. (pp. 165-166)

The concept of discourse community has been further developed by the applied linguist John Swales in his book *Genre Analysis* (1990). Drawing on the concept of speech community used by sociolinguists (e.g., Bloomfield, 1933; Braithwaite, 1984; Gee, 1990; Gumperz, 1961; Heath, 1983; Hudson, 1980; Hymes, 1974; Labov, 1966; Saville-Troike, 1982), Swales (1990) suggested that a discourse community is comprised of a group of people who share particular communicative tasks that allow its functioning. For Swales (1990), discourse communities represent "sociorhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals" (p. 9). He listed six criteria for defining a discourse community: (a) common goals, (b) participatory mechanisms, (c) information exchange, (d) community-specific genres, (e) a highly specialized terminology, and (f) a high general level of expertise. These criteria indicate that each discourse community has its own ways of advancing its goals, constructing knowledge, and admitting new members. His emphasis on goal-sharing and its effect on the community's membership mimics what Berlin (1987) had previously noted when he said: "[k]nowledge … is a matter of mutual agreement appearing as the product of the rhetorical activity, the discussion, of a given discourse community" (p. 166).

According to Swales (1990), there are three main differences between the concept of speech community and discourse community. First, the medium of communication in a speech community is different from that of the discourse community. While the former focuses on the group's oral speech, the latter focuses on writing. Swales (1990) argued that writing allows members of a

discourse community to communicate with distant members and to respond to their writing more than members of a speech community would do with oral speech from the past. Second, a speech community is a "sociolinguistic grouping" (p. 24), whereas a discourse community is a "sociorhetorical one" (p. 24). According to Swales (1990), in a sociolinguistic speech community "the communicative needs of the group, such as socialization or group solidarity, tend to predominate in the development and maintenance of its discoursal characteristics. The primary determinants of linguistic behavior are social" (p. 24). That is, a speech community uses language in order to socialize its members and preserve the group's solidarity. In a sociorhetorical discourse community; however, the main principle that guides the group's behavior is functional. In other words, members of a discourse community cooperate with each other to achieve the community's objectives. Third, a speech community differs from a discourse community in regards to the fabric of society. Swales (1990) argued that membership in a speech community occurs by "birth, accident or adoption" (p. 24), whereas membership in a discourse community occurs by recruiting members using "persuasion, training or relevant qualification" (p. 24). In other words, unlike a speech community, a discourse community could be called a "*Special Interest Group*" (p. 24), where membership is by invitation and not open to all individuals. Based on the previous criteria, Swales (1990) pointed out that speech communities are "centripetal," meaning that "they tend to absorb people into that general fabric" (p. 24), whereas discourse communities are "centrifugal," meaning that "they tend to separate people into occupational or specialty-interest groups" (p. 24).

To further complement the concept of discourse community, Paltridge (1995) developed what he called the concept of "institutional understanding" of the discourse community practices. These understandings, according to Paltridge (1995), include "the protocol of the particular discourse community, ideologies, shared understandings and the rule relationships" (p. 397). They also comprise "the supporting frameworks of common knowledge, experience, expectations,

attitudes, and beliefs shared by the discourse community" (p. 399). Paltridge (1995) did not provide further elaboration on the concept of institutional understanding and the protocols regulating the activities of the discourse community. However, Zhu (2005) pointed out that knowledge of the discourse community's protocols could be related to power relations within the community. She noted that these power-related protocols could include, for example, the degree of politeness and respect among the community members.

Finally, Hyland (2000) proposed the term "disciplinary cultures" to refer to the academic discourse community. From Hyland's perspective, a discipline resembles an academic tribe (see also, Becher, 1989; Becher & Trowler, 2001) that has shared norms, values, conventions, and modes of inquiry (Bartholomae, 1986; Swales, 1990).

Many scholars have argued that the lack of familiarity with the norms, values, beliefs, and conventions of a discourse community could cause numerous problems for new university students. Bizzell, (1982) Bartholomae (1985), and Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) called attention to the importance of having students learn their field's discourse conventions, or what Bazerman (1980) referred to as "the conversations of the discipline." Other scholars claimed that membership in a discourse community provides members with identity and group solidarity and socializes them into the worldview valued by the community (e.g., Canagarajah, 2002b; Hyland, 2004, 2012). As many scholars who adopt a socio-constructionist perspective have noted (e.g., Bruffee, 1986; Hyland, 2004; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990), membership in a discourse community involves the induction and socialization into a discourse community's wide range of norms and conventions. This socialization, as McCarthy (1987) pointed out, means that "writers, like speakers, must use the communication means considered appropriate by members of a particular speech or discourse communities" (p. 234) to facilitate communication.

In brief, most scholars believe that the discourse community concept provides researchers with insight into how knowledge is negotiated and constructed among like-minded peers. It also helps explain how writers' rhetorical choices depend on knowing the values, goals, and writing conventions deemed valued in the community (Bruffee, 1986; Hyland, 2004, 2012; Paltridge, 1995, 2012; Porter, 1986; Starfield, 2002). Furthermore, many advocates of the discourse community concept claim that this kind of knowledge could greatly facilitate novices' attempts at being socialized into their communities and at forming an accepted scholarly identity (Hyland, 2006).

The concept of discourse community was not without its critics. Faigley (1992), for example, pointed out:

> In the 1980s much of composition theory came to assume that knowledge is socially constructed and rhetorical in nature. … But [eventually] this "social" conception of knowledge came to be contested. By the end of the 1980s, critiques of notions of community and "normal discourse" [cf. Bruffee] raised issues of politics and attacked beliefs that knowledge and language are neutral. Representation of any kind came to be viewed as implicated in social and political relations. (p. 14)

Williams (1976) noted that the term *community* assumed the existence of harmony that was not present in the actual world. He cautioned that *community*—a "warmly persuasive word" (p. 76)—prevented researchers from seeing that a community is characterized by multiplicity and diversity and not uniformity. Bazerman and Prior (2005) pointed out that the term discourse community was criticized for being inaccurate, for emphasizing uniformity, harmony, and cooperation between its members. Beaufort (1997) noted that the literature on discourse communities pointed to two problems with the concept: one is definitional and the other pragmatic. The definitional problem concerns what Elbow (1991) and Harris (1989) referred to as the "boundary issue" or the difficulty of delineating the borders for membership between one discourse community and another. This

problem was evident in Swales' conceptualization of a discourse community, which he regarded as a homogenous, static, self-contained, closed system that does not accommodate any changes. This conceptualization, however, created a number of difficulties because members are always in flux and could belong to more than one discourse community (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988). The pragmatic problem concerned the depiction of the discourse community as open, tensionless and a conflict-free entity. Many scholars argued that this was not the case (Bazerman & Prior, 2005; Cooper, 1989; Harris, 1989; Paré, 1993; Swales, 1993). Swales (1993) subsequently noted that he had been "too easily seduced by the concept of discourse community" (p. 694). He observed that any individual could assume membership in more than one community and use its distinctive genres. Because of the limitations of the discourse community concept, Swales (1993) noted that a new view of community was needed. Miller (1994b) took up Swales' call and introduced the notion that a community should be looked at as a group of people that come together not according to demography or geography (e.g., classroom, conference) but as a rhetorical community. She argued that a rhetorical community is not homogeneous as described in Swales' conceptualization of discourse community, but it is viewed "as fundamentally heterogeneous and contentious" (p. 74). Miller (1994b) placed genre at the center of the rhetorical community by noting that such a community "works in part through genre . . . as the operational site of joint, reproducible social actions, the nexus between private and public, singular and recurrent, micro and macro" (p. 73). She also noted that the rhetorical community is inclusive and "that makes a community rhetorical, for rhetoric in essence requires both agreement and dissent, shared understanding and novelty . . . . In a paradoxical way, a rhetorical community includes 'the other'" (p. 74).

In sum, the discourse community concept is useful because it emphasizes the importance of learning and acquiring a discourse community's values, norms, conventions, and discourse. It underscores the fact that in order for students to become competent academic writers, they need to

acquire the privileged writing norms and conventions of their disciplinary communities lest they should be considered incompetent and outsiders. It is important to note that despite the differences in opinion about the notion of discourse community, the main difference between the various scholars previously mentioned is the fact that some scholars represent community as unproblematic (static, monolithic, and value-free), while some others point to the inequalities, power struggles, and constant change present in all communities.

Community of Practice

Scholars adopting the social theories of learning and practice (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) introduced the concepts of *communities of practice* and *learning communities*. Later, these theories were employed to complement RGS in order to develop a better comprehension of the learning experiences of newcomers to a community (Artemeva & Freedman, 2001; Freedman & Adam, 2000; Freedman & Smart, 1997; Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Le Maistre & Paré, 2004; Schryer, 2000, 2002; Winsor, 2001). One of the theoretical frameworks that has been successfully combined with RGS is situated learning.

Situated learning theorists (e.g, Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Wenger, 1998) view all learning as social and firmly rooted in everyday life experiences. Lave and Wenger (1991), for example, based their arguments on the view that learning should not be regarded as merely the transmission of abstract and decontextualized knowledge from one person to another. Rather, they argued that learning should be viewed as a process that is socially co-constructed, context-specific, and achieved through cooperation between an experienced instructor and a learner within a specific social and physical environment. They noted that in order for learners to develop their abilities, they need to become participants in what they called a community of practice (CoP).

Many scholars use the CoP concept to explain the socialization and identity construction of newcomers in their communities (e.g., Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992a,b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2005a,b). A CoP is defined as a group of people who "share a concern or a passion for something they do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better" (Wenger, 2005a).

Lave and Wenger (1991) also defined the CoP as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98). Resulting from people's shared interest are "[w]ays of doing things, ways of thinking, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations- in short practices" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992b, p. 464).

Wenger (2005a) noted that the members of a CoP should meet the following requirements: a) having a history of mutual engagement, b) negotiating with one another about their activities, behavior, and relation to the community, c) developing routine practices in order to support each other, d) knowing who to seek assistance from, and e) introducing novices who want to become proficient in the practice to the community.

According to situated learning theorists (e.g., Lave, 1996a,b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), the most effective way that novice learners develop their abilities as members in a CoP is through the process of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is defined as a process in which novices in a CoP learn the practices of the community through taking "an active part in authentic but ancillary community tasks, under the guidance of more experienced 'oldtimers' and with only limited responsibility for the outcome" (Smart & Brown, 2002, p. 119).

The focus of the situated learning theory as a social activity was based on Vygotsky's (1978) perception that an individual's higher mental functions are rooted in social life (Wertsch, 1991). Vygotsky (1978) asserted that the individual's intellectual development of higher mental processes cannot be understood without taking the individuals' social milieu into consideration. Because

learning should be studied in a social context, the unit of analysis that was adopted in Lave and Wenger's version of the situated learning theory is referred to as the community of practice (Lave, 1991, 1996a,b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Smith, 2003; Wenger, 1998) and its central dynamic is *legitimate peripheral participation* or LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 34).

Membership in a CoP occurs through a process called LPP, which is the concept that Lave and Wenger (1991) introduced to describe a range of social practices that newcomers to a community of practice engage in to gradually develop their knowledge and abilities and move up within the community from being inexperienced members to eventually becoming experts in their field of specialization (Lave & Wenger, 1991). LPP is premised on the assumption that learning in a CoP occurs through a process of coparticipation (e.g, Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). Coparticipation refers not only to engaging with other community members in particular activities but also constructing identities (Wenger, 1998). It is achieved via exposure to "mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and their negotiation of the enterprise, and to their repertoire in use" (Wenger, 1998, p. 100).

Membership in a CoP is obtained when newcomers engage in authentic but non-critical activities as they move towards full membership. In order for newcomers to be allowed to join the community, they must have acquired enough educational resources, or what Bourdieu (1977, 1984) called "cultural capital," to actively engage in the community's activities. The newcomers' participation needs to be approved by the experts in the community and this approval is very important for newcomers, according to Wenger (1998), because "[i]n order to be on an inbound trajectory, newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members" (p. 101). Wenger (1998) believed that new learners need to be given enough opportunities and access to the community's knowledge and practices. They should be treated as "potential members" so that all their "inevitable stumblings and violations become opportunities for learning rather than cause for

dismissal, neglect, or exclusion" (Wenger, 1998, p. 101). It is necessary to realize that the context described here is an idealized one.

Membership in a CoP starts on the periphery with legitimate (or real) participation in actual community work and becomes strengthened by gradual movement towards full participation. This legitimate peripherality period is not merely observational but involves active participation that leads newcomers to "absorbing and being absorbed" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95) by the community's culture. This immersion in the community's culture and the osmosis of its practices eventually grants newcomers more "understanding of how, when, and about what old-timers collaborate, collude, and collide, and what they enjoy, dislike, respect, and admire" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95). In other words, the purpose of participation "is not to learn *from* talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn *to* talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation" (p. 109). Progressively, and after committing more time and effort to the community's practices, and engaging in more difficult tasks, newcomers would gain enough knowledge and experience to become old-timers whose contribution to the CoP becomes essential to the functioning of the community. This yields them the identity of expert practitioners who can completely engage in their community's activities.

The CoP has been credited for illuminating some important aspects of the doctoral learning process. First, it emphasizes that learning is a social activity that requires collaboration among novice students and other actors, including the supervisor, professors, and peers to do particular tasks. As Wenger (1998) mentioned, for communities of practice, "learning is not a separate activity. It is not something we do when we do nothing else or stop doing when we do something else" (p. 8). Second, it emphasizes the centrality of the community's shared goals, beliefs, and practices. In an educational setting, for example, students do not only learn in formal class settings but also from participating in the "invisible practices of the PhD" (McAlpine & Asghar, 2010, p. 169). Identifying

these practices could be essential for helping newcomers succeed as participants in their disciplinary communities. Third, membership in the CoP underscores the fact that the construction of scholarly identity lies at the heart of the learning process. Wenger (1998) asserted the transformational role of members' identities by arguing that learning changes "all at once who we are, our practices, and our communities" (p. 227). Thus, the notion of communities of practice allows us to view learning "that is most personally transformative … to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 6).

The CoP framework has a number of disadvantages in explaining the learning practices of students in their disciplines. First, it fails to acknowledge and fully theorize the power relations that exist between the novice learners and the experts of the community. Some scholars (e.g., Duff, 2007; Kanno, 1999; Lea, 2005) have criticized CoP as a benign concept. As a result of the potential power struggle between newcomers and old-timers, new members may find it difficult to access resources, may not receive proper channels for participation in the CoP, may find their participation rejected (Miller, 1999), or may find the CoP hostile or unappealing. Second, it fails to acknowledge the role of the newcomers' personal agency in the learning process. It depicts novices as individuals who seek unconditional participation in the CoP's practices. McAlpine, Jazvac-Martek, & Gonzalez (2008) have argued that the CoP framework is "insufficient in explaining the relation between structure and personal agency, the dialectical —competing and complementary—experiences of individuals with different roles within multiple embedded overlapping structures" (p. 118). Third, it fails to indicate what aspects of learning the newcomers acquire as a result of the socialization process. Haneda (2006) believed that the difficulty of pinpointing what is learnt during the socialization process risks turning learning into a black box. Despite these limitations, Lea (2005), for example, considered the CoP framework is still useful for exploring the learning practiced by members of the community.

To sum up, the community of practice concept is useful for this study because it underscores the fact that learning is a social activity that requires students' interaction with advisors, professors, and peers in accordance with the community's literacy and discourse conventions. Learning in a CoP occurs gradually through a process of apprenticeship among newcomers and oldtimers. During this process, newcomers not only learn the factual knowledge of their disciplines but also learn how to construct their identity as members. Applying the situated learning perspective to the university context, we can say that PhD students, like the learners described by Lave and Wenger (1991), are working under the supervision of an old-timer and that they, too, follow a trajectory of tasks that takes them from peripheral—or non-critical—work to more central tasks, as they gradually move from course papers to comprehensive exams to grant applications and dissertations.

Academic Discourse

The notion of community brings to the forefront the idea that a community's members use a specialized language or discourse to communicate their ideas to other group members who share with them the same language, beliefs, values, worldview, and ways of doing things. In other words, socialization within a community occurs through becoming familiar with its discourse norms and conventions. Bazerman, Little, Bethel, Chavkin, Fouquette, and Garufis (2005) expressed this meaning by pointing out that

> [a]cademic language socialization is the process by which individuals learn to enter into the discussions and gain access to the resources of academic disciplines through learning specialized language use and participating in academic activity settings. Learning to read and write in academic settings occurs through extended experiences in those settings, by meeting the expectations of those situations, and gaining from the opportunities for participation they offer. (p. 8)

Defining discourse varies depending on the theoretical and disciplinary perspective in which it is used (see van Dijk, 1985; MacDonnell, 1986, for various definitions). In linguistics, for example, discourse refers to an extended sample of spoken or written words that is the result of an interaction between a speaker and a listener or a writer and a reader. It is also used to refer to the type of language that is used in a particular social interaction (e.g., legal discourse, medical discourse, academic discourse, and so on). In social theory, such as in the work of Foucault (1972), discourse refers to different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice. It is manifested in the particular ways of using language and other symbolic forms, such as visual images (see Thompson, 1990).

For this study, I find that Fairclough and Gee's definitions of discourse capture the essence of what discourse is from a social constructionist perspective. Fairclough (2003) viewed "discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world —the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world" (p. 124). From his perspective, "[d]iscourses constitute part of the resources which people deploy in relating to one another—keeping separate from one another, cooperating, competing, dominating—and in seeking to change the ways in which they relate to one another" (p. 124). Likewise, Gee (1990) defined discourse as a "socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network' or to signal [that one is playing] a socially meaningful 'role'"(p. 143). He viewed discourse as an "identity kit" which "comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act and talk so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize" (p. 142). He made a distinction between what he called a "discourse" with a "lower-case d" and a "Discourse" with a "capital D." The former refers to language that is used "on site" whereas the

latter refers to "ways of being in the world" and "forms of life" that are "always and everywhere social and products of social histories" (p. 3).

Academic discourse is language used within the academic world. It refers to the ways of reasoning and using language in an academic setting (Hyland, 2009). According to the social constructionist perspective, academic discourse is the product of a complex set of social, cognitive, material, and rhetorical activities. This perspective assumes that academic discourse is influenced by the writer's life history, learning communities, power relations, and various writing genres specific to each discipline. Academic discourse has the following characteristics:

Academic Discourse Rules are Implicit

Many scholars agree that the rules for deploying academic discourse are basically implicit (e.g., Hyland, 2009; Lillis, 2001; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Zamel & Spack, 1998), common-sense, self-evident, non-contestable (Hyland, 2009), veiled behind a "cloak of normalcy" (Starke-Meyerring, 2011), or hiding behind what Paré (2002) calls "a façade of normalcy" (p. 60). Starke-Meyerring (2011) noted that the implicit nature of discourse makes new students fearful to ask questions about writing practices as they consider it to be a risky endeavor, and this reluctance leads them to internalize the failure as their own. She argued that in order to facilitate the learning of academic discourse/writing, the cloak of normalcy, universality, and invisibility of writing should be lifted. Unveiling the cloak of normalcy leads to two important results: first, clarifying to students what can be said, or not said, for what purpose, and in which context, means uncovering the epistemic nature of writing or the role of discourse in the producing and regulating knowledge (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Dias & Paré, 2000; Kamler & Thomson, 2006); second, it helps learners become aware that academic discourse deeply affects identities because of its transformative and transforming nature and because subject positions are shaped by discourses (Bawarshi, 2003; Bawarshi & Reif, 2010; Green, 2005; Ivanič, 1998; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Paré, 2002).

Academic Discourse Affects Worldview

Academic discourse affects students' ideology or worldview. Schroeder (2001), for example, argued that academic discourses are "the sanctioned versions of literacy—not only certain ways of writing and reading but also, through these practices, versions of who to be and how to see the world" (p. 6). This important effect has raised the concerns of many writing scholars who have argued that new students might find that they have lost their own voices in the process of learning the discourse of their discipline. Shaughnessay (1977), one of the pioneers of composition studies, expressed this concern by saying that college both "beckons and threatens" new students by providing them with the means to improve the quality of their lives while taking from them "their distinctive ways of interpreting the world, … assimilate[ing] them into the culture of academia without acknowledging their experiences as outsiders" (p. 292). Belcher and Braine (1995) believed that novice academic writers learn how to construct meaning for like-minded community members and by doing so they combine their old worldview with a new one. Likewise, Harris (1989) pointed out that joining a discourse community is not a matter of leaving one community for another, but rather a "reposition[ing] … in relation to several continuous and conflicting discourses" (p. 19). Belcher & Braine (1995) believed that for nonnative speakers this repositioning can be an extremely painful process that could lead to loss even if it seems like a gain for them.

Academic Discourse is Exclusionary

Academic discourse also prevents students from participating in the academic conversation in the way they prefer. Lillis (1997) pointed to this characteristic: "the dominant conventions underlying the production of texts in academia work towards constraining" novices students' attempts to "take a more active control over their meaning making, and, hence, the voices they wish to make heard" (p. 185). She added that exclusion occurs at two levels: students' lack of knowledge of the rules of the game, and students' feelings of being outsiders. In Lillis' (1997) study, for

example, students did not know what the 'rules of the game' were. This lack of knowledge led to students' frustration and amazement because they felt that they did not have the right to ask for help from their department or instructor. Lillis explained this situation by arguing that such institutional practice is considered normal and commonsensical because even though universities have certain expectations from students, they fail to teach them to their students (see also Gee, 1990, p. 66). A similar explanation was provided by Starke-Meyerring, Paré, Yan Sun, and El-Bezre (2014) in a recent article which addressed the perception of 11 Canadian educational institutions (i.e., universities and academic departments) of academic writing and its relation to the assistance they offer to graduate students with the dissertation writing. By examining the graduate schools' discourse about dissertation writing through browsing their websites, the authors found that the advice given to students was decontexualized, contradictory, and uninformed by research. This situation makes students attempt to remediate their deficient writing skills or to work on their writing with fear to ask questions about an activity that is considered normalized and commonsensical.

A deeper level of exclusion occurs when students feel that they are outsiders and have no right to be in higher education. For example, one of the students in Lillis' (1997) study felt that her social class, her level of English proficiency, and her religious background set her outside the traditional boundaries of academia. In such circumstances, according to Lillis, it is difficult for students to consider that they have the right to ask about the rules of academic writing conventions, to take control over the writing process, or to resist academic conventions. This results in silencing the students' voice. Likewise, in their study, Lin, Wang, Akamatsu and Riazi (2002) revealed that their ability to show their confident skills in English were eclipsed because the new learning context placed them as inferior and otherized.

Academic Discourse is Sometimes Resisted by International Students

An important issue that has been raised about socialization into academic discourse is whether students are utterly constrained by the academic discourse without having the ability to change its outcomes or disregard the values and beliefs associated with it. Paré (2002) pointed out that the resistance or the subversion of discourse is not an easy task, especially for the new student who is still in the shadow of very powerful disciplines. Canagarajah (1993) argued that many second language college students are faced with the dilemma of becoming members in a discourse community and incurring costs for using its discourses. As Canagarajah (1993) put it:

> Even if they [i.e., students] gain membership in the academic community, at whatever psychological or social costs, the chances are that they will be provided only negative subject positions by its discourse, such as being cognitively deficient, deviant, or even pathological. (p. 303)

However, other scholars believed that international students' fear of adopting their disciplinary discourse is not common to all of them. Raimes (1993), for example, observed that there has been no real evidence that "*all* ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] students face conflicts when writing for the academy" (p. 309). She argued that many international students come from totalitarian regimes where they "have spent their lives resisting domination" (p. 301). Consequently, as Raimes claimed, those students would not need to be pushed by teachers to resist the academic Western ideology because they could do that if they desired to do so. Swales (1990) believed that the seeming lack of resistance resulted from the academic culture of reverence for learning, fear of failure, and a desire to be a participant in the Western discourse community. Likewise, Belcher and Braine (1995) pointed out many second language students appeared not discouraged by the Western academic discourse.

Narratives of international students themselves have shown the effects of academic discourse on them. The Chinese student Shen (1989), for example, observed that when he was told "be yourself" in his academic writing, the effect was enormous on his worldview and identity. He expressed his ideas about the change that was requested of him:

> By such a redefinition I mean not only the change in how I envisioned myself, but also the change in how I perceived the world. The old "I" used to embody only one set of values, but now it had to embody multiple sets of values. To be truly "myself," which I knew was a key to my success in learning English composition, meant not to be my Chinese self at all. That is to say, when I write in English I have to wrestle with and abandon (at least temporarily) the whole system of ideology which previously defined me in myself. I had to forget Marxist doctrines (even though I do not see myself as a Marxist by choice) and the Party lines imprinted in my mind and familiarize myself with a system of capitalist/bourgeois values. I had to put aside an ideology of collectivism and adopt the values of individualism. (p. 461)

As Shen's words indicate, academic discourse had a great impact on the way he viewed the world as he knew it. Likewise, Lu (1987) had to struggle with two approaches to literacy as a child. The first was her parents' individualistic, liberal literary preferences, and the second was her communist teacher's rejection of "bourgeois individualism." This struggle, as Lu argued, provided her with opportunities for self-development manifested by her greater tolerance of different worldviews.

As the previous discussion indicates, students' membership in a discourse community could make them very influenced by its ideologies, norms and values. The question that arises here is: what would the reaction of new students be? Are they going to "become agents of academic discourses and spread those values in their own communities" (p. 170), as Canagarajah (2002b) argued. Are they going to construct mixed discourses and identities that take their own interests into consideration? This reaction, according to Canagarajah (2002b), may serve to broaden academic

discourses and make them more democratic. His argument is similar to Zamel's (1996, 1997) proposed *transculturation* model in L2 writing studies. Zamel (1996, 1997) argued that the movement of students with multilingual backgrounds between communities is a normal process for them. Using terms like "transcending boundaries" and "transcultural model," and citing minority scholars like bell hooks, Min-Zhan Lu and Gloria Anzaldus, she believed that it is possible for students to assert their agency. Canagarajah (2002b) welcomed Zamel's consideration of students' resources as a positive contribution when learning in a new community. However, he questioned her view of the students' movement between communities, because "[i]t is made to appear that this involvement between communities is unrestricted and unhindered (p. 172).

Identity

The discussion of community as one of the pillar notions characterizing RGS would not be exhaustive without discussing the notion of *identity* formation for novices joining communities of practice. In fact, being a doctoral student entails more than just engaging in the academic literacy practices of the discipline, acquiring competence in research skills, attending conferences, and publishing articles in scholarly journals. One of the outcomes of engaging in all these activities is the construction of a scholarly identity. While doctoral students may not be cognizant of this dimension of their doctoral experience, many researchers have argued that identity construction is a critical aspect of doctoral education (e.g., Green, 2005; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Lee & Boud, 2003; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009, 2011). Thus, exploring this concept is very important for understanding the doctoral students' experiences as participants and writers in their communities.

From the perspective of RGS scholars, genres play an important role in shaping students' identities because, as Bawarshi (2000) argued, genre "is largely constitutive of the identities we assume within and in relation to discourse" (p. 343). Bazerman (2002) pointed out that several studies have demonstrated that the construction of identity is mediated by genres because genres

provide social norms by which interlocutors abide in a dialogic interaction (Bawarshi, 2000; Voloshinov, 1930/1983). Many composition studies have also suggested that writing and identity construction are closely interrelated (e.g., Bazerman, 2002; Cherry, 1988; Hatch, Hill, & Hayes, 1993; Ivanič, 1998). This is especially true for doctoral writing. These studies indicated that the various academic activities (e.g., learning, thinking, researching) that doctoral students undertake during their studies are inextricably linked to their sense of identity as participants in their disciplinary communities (Baker & Lattuca, 2010; Green, 2005; Hall & Burns, 2009; Holley, 2009; Jazvac-Martek, 2009a,b; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Lee & Boud, 2003; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009, 2011). They also pointed out that as individuals appropriate "social discourses" (Bakhtin, 1986; Kress, 1989, 1993) they tend to construct specific social identities that may or may not be preferred by their disciplinary communities. They also noted that identities are constructed through the way writers position themselves in their texts (Costley & Doncaster, 2001). That is, scholarly identities are constructed by the way writers adopt a specific authorial identity or voice that is particularly privileged by the discourse community. Based on this view, it would be essential to understand the relation between identity formation and the disciplinary discourses that students attempt to appropriate as their own.

Identity and Disciplinary Discourses

In their book *Tribes and Territories*, Becher and Trowler (2001) considered academic cultures to be *tribes* and disciplinary knowledge as their *territories*. They maintained that "[t]he changing nature of knowledge domains over time has its impact on the identities and cultural characteristics of disciplines" (p. 43). The identities of disciplines, as the authors argued, were influenced by the globalization process taking place in the academic world. They pointed out that despite national traits and traditions, "we may appropriately conceive of disciplines as having recognizable identities and particular cultural attributes" (p. 44). For example, in the natural sciences, which depend on

reporting objective facts, "[s]scientists act as if they see themselves as discovering the truth, not making it" (Hyland, 2000, p. 33). The social sciences are positioned between the physical sciences and the humanities. Social scientists may use the argumentation style of the natural sciences but also include subjective opinions as well. A good example of this middle position and the struggle for the identity of the field can be seen in economics. Ekelund and Hébert (1997) argued that "[m]any 'mainstream' economists argue … that increased respect for economics as a separate, scientific discipline will only ensue from the steady application of rigorous mathematical and statistical tools" (p. 576). The humanities' subjective interpretation is considered to be its prominent feature. However, making claims based on subjective interpretations is not always standard practice. Researchers in the humanities may create new knowledge through making connections between facts and notions. Hence, the "results" of research in the humanities may take the shape of the actual argumentation presented in text (Breivega, Dahl, & Flottum, 2002, p. 36).

In order for students to acquire the identity of their disciplines, they need to go through a process of disciplinary enculturation (Prior, 1998) or apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that involves mastering the rhetoric of a discipline (Prelli, 1989) and appropriating its discourses (Ivanič, 1998). Irrespective of the name given to the membership process, there is a common agreement among scholars that mastering a discipline's discourses has implications for the individual's identity and it is reflected in his/her ways of writing. Acquiring that identity is not an easy task for new students because each discipline has its own way of constructing knowledge, argumentation methods, and presenting claims. As Bartholomae (1985) noted:

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion—invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like history or anthropology or economics or English. The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing

> that define the discourse of our community. Or perhaps I should say the various discourses of our community. (p. 134)

In order for students to construct an academic identity, they need to become familiar with how community members exchange information, forge alliances, and debate ideas in accordance with their disciplinary conventions. Wells (1992) succinctly summarized these ideas:

> Each subject discipline constitutes a way of making sense of human experience that has evolved over generations and each is dependent on its own particular practice: its instrumental procedures, its criteria for judging relevance and validity, and its conventions of acceptable forms of argument. In a word each has developed its own modes of discourse. (p. 290)

Knowing how to use the discipline's discourse entails not merely the presentation of the content or the ideational meaning of a text but also conveying to others the impression of a scholarly writer. That is, knowing the disciplinary discourses allow students to write as "philosophers," "sociologists," or "economists."

In sum, academic writing is inextricably linked to identity because writing is about the portrayal of the self to other community members and the acquisition of the community's beliefs, values, norms, and worldview.

Definition of Identity Used in the Study

The term *identity* has taken on different meanings in the literature of various disciplines. My own use of identity is based on Gee's (2001) explanation of the term. Gee (2001) viewed identity from four different perspectives: identity derived from the forces of nature (e.g., being an identical twin), identity authorized by an institution (being a student), identity created by interacting with others through discourse (e.g., being smart), and identity based on affinity or sharing of experiences (being a fan). Gee (2001) believed that individuals do not have a single identity but multiple

identities (or positions), which they can use in ways that are convenient for them when presenting themselves to others in order to be recognized. Based on this understanding, an individual may recognize him/herself, and may be recognized by others, as a "certain kind of person" (Gee, 2001), such as an "isolated student," a "frustrated learner," a "confident writer," or a "powerless doctoral student," and so on.

Gee's (2001) view of identity is suitable for this study because it helps to interpret the various subject positions that students may take when writing in their disciplines. It also helps to interpret the resistance that doctoral students may exhibit when their identities are in conflict with institutional discourses. For example, doctoral students may be considered novices and institutions may impose certain identities (roles or positions) on them that they do not welcome. They may be considered deficient in academic discourse or lack proficiency in English. Consequently, students could reject and resist the assigned identities and attempt to replace them with more comfortable ones.

Identity in this study is intended to mean the *subject positions* that participants took on as a result of participation in their disciplinary communities. The doctoral journey that international doctoral students engage in as participants in their CoP can be seen as a process that stretches along a continuum of subject positions. During this journey, they might experience challenges and setbacks that can either bring them closer to the goal of achieving full membership in the CoP or draw them away from it. Thus, the doctoral journey represents a process of development, transformation, and movement from being novice international doctoral students to full participants in the discipline. At some times during this journey, the participants may move forward towards achieving that goal, thus increasing their sense of belonging to the community and their self-image as competent participants. At other times, however, the participants may have certain setbacks, such as being undermined by their community, making them feel further away from achieving their goal.

That is, a subject position represents a location in the participants' struggle to become members in their CoP. It is temporally occupied, and it is constantly altered relative to the circumstances that the participants encounter.

One way in which an academic identity is constructed and negotiated is by positioning oneself in writing. The term positioning is defined in this study as "the discursive process whereby people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines" (Davies & Harré, 1999, p. 37). It is the process by which identities are constructed by the socially available discourses (Davies and Harré, 1990; Fairclough, 1995).

Positioning in academic writing is practiced when students take specific stances or express particular opinions toward the ideas, readers, and the specialized disciplinary culture (e.g., Hyland, 1996, 1998, 2001a,b, 2004, 2005a,b; Ivanič, 1998). In order to be considered participants in their community, students need to develop the "peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding and arguing that define the discourse of the community" (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 4). They may align themselves with their discipline's knowledge-making practices or they may challenge or resist its ways of using discourses and constructing knowledge (e.g., Ivanič & Simpson, 1992). They must learn how to become authoritative in their writing and adopt the voice of their community's discourses, leading them to acquire the values of their community at the expense of their previous literacy affiliations (Johns, 1997). Thus, students may find that their old experiences are unappreciated and marginalized, especially when they fail to adopt the dominant discourses (Ivanič, 1998).

One example of this difficulty is when writers are asked to clearly state a position in writing. Expressing an individualistic identity in writing could be problematic for students who come from what is called the collectivist cultures where the self is more collectively constructed (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). Cadman (1997), for example, described the case of one Chinese student who felt

"very confused" and "very terrified" when she realized that she had to take a position in her writing. This fear and confusion is not due to her struggle to represent herself textually but due to the fact that she does not share the Western epistemological orientation (Connor 1996; Fox 1994) which emphasizes individuality, independence and marketing oneself. In order to reach a level of comfort with the Western epistemological orientation in writing, Shen (1989) noted that he had to undergo a phase of "mental struggle" (p. 460) and a "prolonged, uphill battle to recapture myself" and the need to "wrestle with ... the whole system of ideology which previously defined me in myself" (p. 460).

Despite the difficulty that new students could encounter if they chose not to conform to specific aspects of their discipline's norms and conventions, some of them may practice their agency in academic writing. They could negotiate with the preferred disciplinary discourse conventions in order to find a balance between their pre-established values and beliefs and the values of the communities. As Fairclough (1992) pointed out: "[s]ubjects are ideologically positioned, but they are also capable of acting creatively to make their own connections between the diverse practices and ideologies to which they are exposed, and to restructure positioning practices and structures" (p. 91) Fairclough's words were echoed by Hyland (2010) who pointed out that individual agency will not be totally eclipsed by the power of disciplinary conventions and their gatekeepers. However, there is a possibility of a conflict between students' self-chosen identities and the identities ascribed to them by others.

Practicing one's agency is usually achieved through a process of negotiation with the disciplinary community. Canagarajah (2002b) argued that when multilingual students are faced with a writing situation in English, they could use one or more of the following strategies to negotiate subjective conflicts: accommodation, avoidance, opposition, appropriation, and transposition. Accommodation occurs when students accept the literacy practices and the discourse of their disciplinary community. It signals the students' confirmation and acceptance of established

discourses. Avoidance occurs when students decide not to engage in their discipline's privileged discourses. Writers adopting this strategy may be considered illogical, sloppy, immature, or not proficient. Opposition occurs when students reject their disciplinary community's established discourses. Adopting an opposition strategy, from Canagarajah's (2002b) perspective may deviate from the discourse expectations of the disciplinary community's audience, and it carries with it the danger that the students' writing may be considered irrelevant by the audience. The result would be that the audience may ascribe pejorative roles and identities to the writers, thus, denying them entry into the disciplinary community and rejecting their text by silencing it.

Appropriation occurs when the writers are knowledgeable about their disciplinary discourses but resist them by referring to their own rhetorical values. Appropriation is different from opposition because it represents "a more synthetic and dialogical strategy of negotiating a space for one's vernacular-based voice in the established mainstream discourses" (p. 114). Appropriation was used by hooks (1989) to demonstrate how a more dialogical voice of "talking back" would sound. She used street speech, vernacular idioms, and pushed the conventions of citations and documentation to the endnote so that the vernacular voice would receive greater prominence. According to Canagarajah (2002b), appropriation takes over the dominant/alien discourse and shapes it for achieving one's own purposes.

Transposition refers to the strategy of "adopting a voice that defines itself dialectically by working against the conflicting discourses" (Canagarajah, 2002b, p. 113). This strategy creates a "thirdness" that is different from either language (see Kramsch & Lam, 1999).

From Canagarajah (2002b) perspective, transposition and appropriation give writers more freedom and communicative potential. Despite the fact that both strategies represent a writer's position against the dominant discourse conventions, adopting these strategies does not signify a boycott of the established conventions. Rather, writers who adopt transposition or appropriation are

still in connection with the established and privileged genre conventions. This connection would allow the audience to find commonality between the discipline's established conventions and the new oppositional discourse. As Canagarajah (2002b) put it:

> Writers using these strategies are negotiating with the established rhetoric to construct a more positive voice for themselves. These strategies have greater chances of challenging the dominant discourses and inserting the alternate values and ideologies represented by the writers. The writers themselves are empowered as they work out an independent voice for themselves rather than being silenced, accommodated, or rejected by the dominant discourses. (p. 116)

Canagarajah's (2002b) ideas in regards to the students' formation of an independent voice that escapes the constraints of the dominant discourses resemble the ideas expressed by situated learning theorist. From the situated learning perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991), a learner's autonomy becomes a reality once the learner becomes a full participant in the community of practice. In other words, acquiring an independent voice occurs when the learner acquires agency and moves to fuller participation and final mastery that allows him/her to become an independent and contributing voice in the community.

Asking why multilingual writers adopt the above-mentioned strategies to represent themselves in their writing, Canagarajah (2002b) mentioned that this occurs because of *motivation* and/or *investment*. Motivation is defined as the force that drives us to achieve things (Tileston, 2010). Christiana (2009) perceived motivation to be the vehicle that plays an essential role in advancing students' academic goals. It is one of the factors that could distinguish the success of one student and not the other. In other words, and as Ortega (2009) stated,

> motivation is usually understood to refer to the desire to initiate L2 learning and the effort employed to sustain it, and in lay terms we all understand it to be a matter of quantity, as in

> the everyday observation that some learners are highly motivated and others have little or no motivation. (p. 168)

The construct of motivation was introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner (1985) when studying second language learners' attempts at learning English. Gardner and Lambert (1972) differentiated between integrative and instrumental motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner (1985) stressed that instrumentally-motivated learners are driven by utilitarian reasons such as getting good positions with good salaries through the use of language. Dornyei, Csizer, and Nemeth (2006) summed up the meaning of instrumental motivation:

> Instrumental motivation refers to the perceived pragmatic benefits of L2 proficiency and reflects the recognition that for many language learners it is the usefulness of L2 proficiency that provides the greatest driving force to learn language. It subsumes such utilitarian goals as receiving a better job or a higher salary as a consequence of mastering L2. (p. 12)

Integratively-motivated students are internally-inspired to learn and are eager to join their communities (Dorneyei et. al., 2006; Gardner, 1985, Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Qashoa, 2006). That is, these types of students are not motivated to join a community for the sole purpose of obtaining certain benefits but to become an integral member of that community.

Despite the advantages of the traditional construct of motivation in interpreting the success or failure of language learners, Canagarajah (2002b) believed that the construct failed to take into account the power relations involved in attaining the students' communicative objectives. That is, the proponents of the motivation construct assumed that acquiring the communicative objectives was a unilateral process that depended solely on the students' motivation without considering the socio-economic constraints that could facilitate or hinder the students' desire to learn a language. Canagarajah (2002b) added that the proponents of motivation did not take into account the impact of one's motivation on one's sense of identity.

In order to include the identity factor in students' motivation to learn a language, Peirce (1995) introduced the construct of *investment*. Influenced by the work of Bourdieu's (1977) metaphors on language learning and use, Peirce (1995) explored how adult immigrant students could invest in learning English to achieve better opportunities for themselves and their families. Realizing the difficulty of accessing the advantages of symbolic and material power (Bourdieu, 1977) available to the target community, learners attempt to take action to have more access to these powers. Due to the fact that the newcomers have a different set of values and practices, they could be positioned as ignorant or inferior. As a result of this negative characterization, they attempt to construct a stronger identity. For example, in Norton's (2000) case studies, an immigrant to Canada called Martina projected the strong identity of a mother and care-giver that was able to speak English and not that of a struggling immigrant. She invested in learning English in order to enhance her future opportunities.

Using the investment metaphor, Canagarajah (2002b) gave examples of multilingual writers who accommodated to the disciplinary discourses and examples of those who resisted them. Some of the writers were well-established scholars "who were under less institutional pressure to conform" (p. 110), while others were students. The former included Connor, Li, hooks, while the latter included Irina and Sri.

According to Canagarajah (2002b), Connor accommodated to the dominant disciplinary discourses to acquire the scholarly identity she desired. Connor was an established American-Finnish professor at an American university. In an article she wrote in 1999 in which she reflected on her bilingual writing experience, Connor (1999) pointed out that she had consciously and intentionally moved from the Finnish writing identity to an American writing identity. She noted that while the former is characterized by being restraint and reserved, the latter is seen as aggressive, assertive, and individualistic. After a period of struggling to gain an American voice, and with help from her

American husband, Connor (1999) said that during her visit to her home country, her Finnish colleagues realized the drastic change in her writing identity (i.e., becoming more Americanized). This experience, as Connor (1999) mentioned, prompted her to apply for the American citizenship. Canagarajah (2002b) commented on Connor's experience:

> Rather than national identity shaping voice, the newly acquired voice imputes a nationality. This is a testament to the power of discourses in shaping social identities. Connor's experience is important for another reason. We see an ESOL [English Speakers of Other Languages] scholar accommodating the "nonnative" identity quite willingly, without displaying much tension or conflict. (p. 112)

He added:

> Being married to an American and having a son born here in the United States, Connor has greater motivation in adapting to life in the United States. Coming from a European nation that shares other cultural/historical connections with the United States, and sharing the skin color of the country's dominant group, her transition is relatively smooth. (p. 112)

Canagarajah (2002b) told the story of Irina who also accommodated to the dominant discourses. Irina was a new graduate Ukrainian student who immigrated to the U.S. and was married to an American citizen. According to Canagarajah (2002b), in her writing, "she represents herself as a student who is highly motivated for learning English and writing—someone who is prepared to do hard work, appreciates the course, and benefits from the instructor and her fellow students" (p. 108). He added that because Irina was eager to finish her studies and find employment,

> [s]he has an investment in accommodating (rather than resisting) the dominant discourses for the new identity she desires. Her ethnic identity doesn't cause many problems in making this process of accommodation possible. Since she doesn't have the linguistic resources to

> display her new voice, she prefers to avoid negotiating the discursive conflicts in her writing practice. (pp. 117-118)

Canagarajah (2002b) also reported the story of Li who adopted the position of resistance to the dominant discourses. In her writing, Li (1999) pointed out that she consistently struggled with her status as an EAL outsider throughout her educational life. Despite establishing herself as a published researcher in English, she considered herself "nonnative" in English literacy. Nonetheless, she considered the combination of her Chinese language and culture and her English educational background advantageous to her because it allowed her to negotiate her voice in academia. Canagarajah (2002b) explained Li's resistance strategy:

> One might interpret the negotiation of her selves in the following way: though she has conflicting identities (Chinese and English), the role she has had to play in American educational institutions as a successful and persevering student has motivated her to develop an alternate voice. In the process, she has also developed a critically informed subjectivity—one that is mutually detached from both Chinese ideologies and American discourses. (p. 110)

bell hooks (1989), an African American scholar, used the appropriation strategy to express her identity. In her book entitled "talking back" she used street speech, vernacular expressions, and narratives in addressing her mainstream disciplinary community. Canagarajah (2002b) analyzed hooks' appropriation strategy:

> Motivated by the desire to present an African American ethnic identity and oppositional ideological subjectivity, inspired by the need to expand the academic discourse and ensure a democratic inclusion of other knowledge-making practices, she adopts a double voice. While being distinctively Black, the voice shows modifications deriving from a negotiation of the established discourses for this academic genre. (p. 115)

That is, as a well-established and knowledgeable scholar of the privileged academic discourses, she opted to resist these discourses by appropriating and infusing them with her vernacular rhetoric. As a result, hooks took over the dominant discourses and framed them to achieve her rhetorical purposes.

Finally, Sri, a Sri Lankan postgraduate student in Sri Lanka, adopted a direct resistance strategy to the dominant discourses in order to create a vernacular voice in his writing. Sri was a Tamil with strong Hindu religious background and a sense of pride in his ethnic identity. According to Canagarajah (2002b), who had analyzed Sri's thesis writing, Sri "adopted the role of a "radical student"—a person who questions the institution and defines himself as different" (p. 113) through the use of vernacular discourse in his academic writing. This was manifested in Sri's "relaxed conversational tone as Sri narrates his classroom experience" (p. 114) and in his "little attempt to document his observations or to authenticate their veracity" (p. 114). Sri's writing style, Canagarajah (2002b) argued, represented the strategy of opposition to the established mainstream discourses.

Thus, Li, Sri, and hooks expressed a variety of opposition strategies to the dominant academic discourses. Canagarajah (2002b) explained their reasons for not accommodating to the dominant discourses:

> They face greater resistance from the target language community for acculturation and integration. They also face deeper claims of solidarity from their native discourses and communities, deriving from their long histories of struggle against domination. They therefore have an investment in seeking ways of developing a critical voice that is informed by the struggles they face. (p. 118)

Thus, the theory of identity that this study adopts is intended to explain the fact that taking on specific subject positions in a disciplinary community is not a simple task. Positioning oneself vis-à-vis the community's privileged discourse conventions and practices represents one of the most

essential tasks in doctoral education since this level of education is intended to produce independent thinkers who can challenge and question the discourses and practices of the discipline.

Contrastive or Intercultural Rhetoric

The last theoretical approach adopted by this study is contrastive rhetoric (CR) or intercultural rhetoric. Contrastive rhetoric is defined as an area in the field of applied linguistics "that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers and, by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them" (Connor, 1996, p. 5). Initiated by Kaplan in 1966, CR asked provocative questions about the relationship between the modes of international students' argumentation styles in writing and their national and cultural backgrounds. It investigated the preferred patterns of writing across various languages, genres, and academic disciplines that are characteristic of non-native speakers of English (e.g., Carson & Leki, 1993; Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1966; Kroll, 1990). Kaplan (1966) argued that "rhetoric varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture" (p. 2), meaning that each culture has its unique rhetorical conventions. Thus, the major theoretical assumption of CR is that different cultural groups have different ways of organizing ideas in writing. These groups have their own way of writing expository prose that is different from that used in English. Whereas native speakers of English develop expository prose by using the Aristotelian proofs (a sequence of related claims), nonnative speakers of English write their texts according to ways that do not meet the expectations of the Anglo-American audience (Kaplan, 1972; Reid, 1989; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). Kaplan (1966), for example, claimed that Arabic, Semitic, Asian, European and Russian students had their own writing styles and conventions that deviated from the linear organization of the five paragraph essays written by American students. He claimed that the development of paragraphs in Arabic and Semitic languages was characterized by having a series of parallel constructions. Asian texts were marked by their indirect paragraph development or by "turning and turning in a widening gyre"

(Kaplan, 1966, p.10). The Romance and Russian languages were characterized by digressiveness that made it difficult for native speakers of English to understand. Because of this deviation from the expectations of Anglo-American readers, the writing of nonnative speakers of English was often described as "basic," "inexperienced," or "developmental," and the writers themselves were labeled "unskilled" (Johnston & Roen, 1989, p. 6).

Contrastive rhetoric has become an established area of inquiry that has inspired research on writing across cultures and on the pedagogy of writing in English to speakers of other languages (Leki, 1991a). Unlike its beginnings, when it focused solely on the analysis of ESL writers' composition, contrastive rhetoric today covers a range of undergraduate and graduate genres and examines the writing conventions in various disciplines. Thus, we can find contrastive rhetorical studies of English writing in biology (Samraj, 2002, 2005), medicine (Salager-Meyer, 1992), educational psychology (Martin, 2003), in addition to many other disciplines. We can also find studies of textual comparisons that cover a range of languages: Bulgarian (Vassileva, 2001) Czech (C˘mejrkova´ & Danes˘, 1997), Polish (Duszak, 1997a,b; Golebiowski, 1998, 2006), Ukrainian (Yakhontova, 1997, 2002, 2006), Finnish (Mauranen, 1993a,b; Ventola, 1992), Italian (Giannoni, 2002), Swedish (Gunnarsson, 1997) and Korean (Eggington, 1987).

Despite the fact that the field of contrastive rhetoric has been steadily growing (Connor, 1996; Leki, 1991a), it is still a contested area. Many scholars criticized CR and raised many concerns about its assumptions and premises (e.g., Cahill, 2003; Casanave, 2004; Hyland, 2004; Kubota & Lehner, 2004; Leki, 1992, 1997; Matsuda, 1997; Panetta, 2001; Yakhontova, 2006). Some of these criticisms concerned the lack of interest in the identity of the student, the role of culture in students' writing, and power relations and ideology in affecting students' rhetorical choices. Matsuda (1997), for example, noted that CR considered writers to have neither agency nor autonomy to make any decisions concerning their writing choices, and it presented students as machines that need to be

programmed in order to write like native speakers of English. Moreover, he argued that CR ignored all other factors that influence writing in English, such as the writer's past experiences with a genre and membership in particular discourse community. Leki (1997) warned against drawing generalizations about the linguistic, cognitive, or cultural norms of the students' national cultures based on their rhetorical practices in classrooms. She argued that the danger of explaining students' writing differences by attributing them to their cultural background carried with it the risk of turning international students into "cardboard characters whose behavior is determined by these cultural norms" (Leki, 1997, p. 238). This practice, she noted "has a distancing and exoticizing effect" (p. 242) because students' rhetorical choices are not linked to thought patterns but "are made in response to social, political, and rhetorical contexts and histories" (p. 236). Both Leki (1997) and Matsuda (1997) emphasized the importance of considering pedagogical, cultural, and rhetorical contexts when evaluating the writing of international students.

Arguing against CR's lack of interest in dealing with students as individuals, Spack (1997) suggested that contrastive rhetoric needed to "view students as individuals, not as members of a cultural group" (p.772). This perspective, she argued, would help teachers deal with students as unique agentive subjectivities that have control over their own identity. Zamel (1997) believed that taking the nonnative English speakers' linguistic and cultural backgrounds into consideration could help contrastive rhetoric in understanding the writing problems students have in a second language. However, she cautioned that this approach could be deterministic and reductive and could lead to categorizing, generalizing, and othering of students. She also cautioned against creating cultural images and stereotypes of students. She noted that teachers need to deal with international students as individuals and not as members of a cultural group.

Contrastive rhetoric has also been criticized for its definition of culture and the extent of the effect of culture on students' writing. Atkinson (1999, 2003, 2004) criticized contrastive rhetoric for

its perception of culture as "received." Contrary to the postmodern perspective, which views the world as one of fragmentation, multiplicity, fluidity, plurality, and intensity (Faigley, 1992, p. 15), Atkinson (1999) noted that CR perceived culture as homogenous, fixed, geographically and nationally delineated, with a set of rules and conventions that dictated its members' actions. According to Atkinson (1999), CR's "received" notion of culture was very problematic and "it seems that the concept needs to be straightforwardly examined, and to the degree necessary modified or even radically reformed, if TESOL [Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages] is to remain vital and current in the 21st century" (p. 626). As an alternative, Atkinson (1999) believed that "culture should continue to occupy a central place in TESOL, but that the concept needs to be substantially revised and updated" (p. 636). Likewise, Canagarajah (2002b) believed that what made CR simplistic was the monolithic and distinct way in which it defined cultures and texts. He argued that defining, classifying, and labeling cultures was not a neutral activity but a politically-motivated colonizing project that aims at globalizing the appreciation of the Western culture. He pointed out that in today's globalized world, where there is a considerable overlap and interaction among cultures, students' identities and experiences were not pure but heterogeneous. He argued that even though international students may have their preferred rhetorical traditions, they can still adopt and learn new writing norms and conventions when they are introduced to them. He added that students should not be taken hostage by language or culture. Instead, they can be taught to negotiate conflicting rhetorical structures in a way that serves their purposes. As a result, Canagarajah (2002b) argued, the national culture should not be identified as the sole cause of writing differences. That is, researchers should also consider the educational and social background of students as possible factors in writing differences. Canagarajah (2002b) cited a study in which a comparison of Chinese students from Canada and Hong Kong found that each group wrote

differently because each received different writing instruction in their school (see Mohan and Lo, 1985).

Finally, CR has been criticized for ignoring the ideological aspects of writing in another language. Traditional contrastive rhetoric has been an area that emphasized form over content: analyzing the surface linguistic features of a text irrespective of questions regarding the social, political, and ideological contexts of its creation. As a result, its stance has been criticized for its philosophical, political, and ideological neutrality or naiveté (see Pennycook, 1994). This position seemed inexplicable, according to Leki (1997), since CR is defined as the study of writing differences, and the study of differences should acknowledge that rhetorical differences are politically and ideologically-laden.

Santos (1992) was one of the early scholars to point out the lack of ideology in CR assumptions. He described CR as a pragmatic approach concerned only with equipping L2 students with the tools to succeed academically in an English speaking country. The rationale behind requiring conformity to English mainstream rhetorical norms has rarely been challenged. Unlike the issues of agency, representation and respect for nonstandard dialects that are often discussed in English (or L1) composition literature, contrastive rhetoric is depicted as free of the guilt and self-doubt first-language writing professionals encounter. The prevailing attribute among L2 writing professionals appears to be based on an assumption that world rhetorics are separate but equal and that to succeed in the English rhetorical environment, ESL students need to learn and reproduce English norms. That is, CR attempted to preserve the status-quo by simply offering students advice for adaptation to Western writing norms. Leki (1997) pointed out that the contribution of CR to writing instruction in English as second language has been that writing differences among cultures exist, and that has not changed since its inception forty years ago. Canagarajah (2002b) argued that analyzing students' writing based on their cultural background was no longer fruitful because texts

are not just cultural but also ideological. He added that CR needed to be sensitive to the values that shape text production and their effect on students' identities and worldview. He pointed out that CR overlooked the issues of power in writing and attributed this attitude to the fact that CR defined culture as an autonomous social domain. He noted that to understand how students move from their first culture (C1) to a second culture (C2) in their writing, researchers need to be sensitive to the subject positions they are asked to create in the new textual tradition. He argued in favor of accepting alternative forms of writing because "[d]ifferences in culture may be transcended, but impositions of ideology have to be resisted" (p. 66).

In addressing these criticisms, Connor (2008) drew attention to the fact that the scope of CR has broadened and that it needed to develop itself in order to survive. To accomplish this goal, she argued that CR should focus on "describ[ing] the vast complexities of cultural, social, and educational factors affecting a writing situation" (p. 304). That is, CR should not be restricted to the analysis of surface textual features but should view L2 writing as a more complex activity that involves personal, social, cultural, ideological, and political factors.

To reflect her new orientation, Connor (2008) proposed a new framework for CR and a new name for the field. The new framework comprised the works of Sullivan and Porter (1993), Fairclough's (1992) discourse analysis, Holliday's (1994, 1999) and Atkinson's (2004) conceptualization of culture, Sarangi's (1995) intercultural versus cross-cultural communication, and Gidden's (1979) structuration theory.

Connor (2008) agreed with Sullivan and Porter's (1993) definition that rhetoric is "defined by its focus on 'situation' and by its concerns about how rhetorical situation guides production" (p. 25). The focus on situation represented a departure from the initial focus of contrastive rhetoric on analyzing the textual features.

Connor also agreed with Fairclough's (1992) view that writing is a socially constructed activity and process. Its study should go beyond analyzing the textual features to consider the discursive and social practices around it. Fairclough (1992) provided a three-dimensional conception of discourse to show the interrelatedness of text, discursive practice and social practice. According to Fairclough,

> [d]rawing together language analysis and social theory centres upon a combination of this more social-theoretical sense of "discourse" with the "text-and-interaction" sense in linguistically-oriented discourse analysis. This concept of discourse and discourse analysis is three-dimensional. Any discursive "event" (i.e. any instance of discourse) is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice. The "text" dimension attends to language analysis of texts. The "discursive practice" dimension, like "interaction" in "text-and-interaction" view of discourse, specifies the nature of the process of text production and interpretation, for example, which types of discourse (including "discourses" in the more social-theoretical sense) are drawn upon and how they are combined. The "social practice" dimension attends to issues of concern in social analysis such as the institutional and organizational circumstances of the discursive event and how that shapes the nature of the discursive practice, and the constitutive/constructive effects of discourse referred to above. (p. 4)

Connor (2008) argued that Holliday's (1994, 1999) and Atkinson's (2004) conceptualization of culture were very important for introducing a new concept of culture into CR instead of the largely criticized received notion of culture. Holliday (1994, 1999) and Atkinson (2004) argued that in any classroom, there are different interrelated social institutions and practices such as national culture, academic culture and student culture that need to be taken into account when we research writing in L2. Thus, according to Connor (2008), unlike the traditional notion of culture in CR (which focuses

on the influence of the learner's national culture on writing in English), the new model emphasizes the complexity of culture in English as a second language classrooms.

Connor (2008) noted that Sarangi's (1995) intercultural versus cross-cultural model is also very important for the new CR perspective. She argued that the former is much more relevant because it deals with the analysis of real interaction between two participants who belong to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The latter, however, focuses on large and abstract entities across borders.

Finally, Connor (2008) pointed out that Gidden's (1979) structuration theory could provide a useful insight that helps in understanding the relations between pre-existing cultural phenomena and individual behaviors. This could be achieved when the learner understands the society's laws, rules and norms which impose constraints on the individual's behavior. According to Connor (2008), despite the abstractness of Gidden's model, it is helpful for her new approach because it could explain the continuously changing norms and genres across cultures.

These frameworks convinced Connor of the need to change the name of CR in order to demonstrate its new orientation and outlook. Instead of the term contrastive rhetoric, she suggested the term "intercultural rhetoric" (2002, 2004, 2008). She pointed out that the new name is intended to describe the range of cultural influences in English as second language writing. She noted that intercultural rhetoric "stresses the connections rather than the cultural and rhetorical differences" (Connor, 2008, p. 312).

Summary

The various theoretical approaches introduced in this chapter should not be looked at as independent from each other. Rather, social constructionism, RGS, theories of community, theories of identity, and intercultural rhetoric complement each other to help us understand that learning to write in the university and constructing a scholarly identity go hand in hand. Social constructionism

represents the umbrella framework under which RGS, theories of community, and identity theories make sense. The main assumption of social constructionism is that knowledge is primarily constructed, negotiated, sanctioned, or rejected by like-minded peers within some form of community or collective. These peers share similar beliefs, values, convictions, and ways of communication. That is, they share a similar Discourse or outlook on their world. The assumptions laid out by social constructionism are also found in the notions of discourse community and community of practice. Despite some differences between the notions of discourse community and community of practice outlined above, both concepts underscore the importance of learners' acquisition of their community's values and practices. While some have seen the discourse community as a homogenous entity, the idea of communities of practice allowed researchers to view membership in communities as more dynamic, diverse, and heterogeneous.

Closely connected to the idea that community membership allows novices to learn the values and practices of a community is the idea that community membership may shape and influence their identity. As members of a disciplinary community, learners may exhibit some degree of accommodation and resistance to various aspects of the identity–ways of thinking, saying, and being –that their community expects of them. Accommodating to the disciplinary community's privileged practices usually results in various types of rewards and recognition by the community. Resistance to the community's practices may result in shunning the newcomer and treating him/her as an outsider to the community's culture. Finally, introducing CR to the study was intended to show that the writing that international students did in their native language and according to their home country's literacy practices may or may not influence the way they write in another language. Despite the fact that discussions of CR never explicitly mention the role of the discourse community in influencing the way international students write in another language, the assumptions of CR implicitly

acknowledge the fact that writing differs from one culture to another or from one national community to another.

In conclusion, by drawing on the theories outlined in this chapter, a picture of the challenge facing international doctoral students emerges. As newcomers to North American academic rhetoric, and as second language users, they must deal with the cultural variations described by studies in intercultural rhetoric. As newcomers to specific academic disciplines, they have to become acculturated to the community's privileged discourse conventions whose rules cannot be uncovered with ease due to their implicit and commonsensical nature.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter outlines the methodology used for this study. I first present the rationale for the methodological decisions taken. Specifically, I discuss the logic of adopting a qualitative, multi-case study approach for highlighting the varied educational experiences of the study participants. Second, I describe the research context, including the participants, the role of the researcher, and the ethical issues that face qualitative researchers. I also explain the methods of data collection, namely, the interviews that I conducted with the study participants. The final section describes the principles guiding the approach to data analysis.

Methodological Rationale

In this section, I discuss the logic of adopting a qualitative, multi-case study approach for illuminating the educational experiences of the study participants. I present the characteristics of these research approaches in addition to their limitations.

Qualitative Research Approach

Since my study aims to uncover insights into five international graduate students' learning experiences, a qualitative and multi-case research approach is used. As many scholars have indicated, the qualitative approach is well-suited for providing an in-depth perspective on human experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 1998, 2003, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2003; Glesne, 1999; Holliday, 2002; Lichtman, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Qualitative researchers (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004) mentioned that the central objective of qualitative research is describing and understanding human experience. This central objective has been explicitly stated in Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) definition of qualitative research:

> Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives. (p. 2)

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) pointed out that qualitative research is characterized by enabling the researcher to study the phenomena under investigation in its natural setting and explaining it through the meanings that people ascribe to them. In other words, qualitative research gives special attention to the particulars of the human experience and focuses on the participants' perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Eisner, 1991; Merriam, 1988, 1998, 2002). Merriam (1988) corroborated this understanding by arguing that "[r]esearch focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p. 3). Importantly for this study, qualitative researchers are very keen on exploring the human experience by focusing on "understanding the particular context within which the participants act and the influence that this context has on their actions" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 17).

What distinguishes the qualitative approach from the quantitative approach is that it does not seek to control variables or attempt to generalize its findings to a broader population. Quantitative research is more appropriate for research that aims to examine the relationship among the research variables in order to generalize from the data. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) captured this meaning: "[q]uantitative researchers seek explanations and predictions that will generate to other

persons and places. The intent is to establish, confirm, or validate relationships and to develop generalizations that contribute to theory" (p. 102).

Creswell (2003) pointed out that quantitative researchers "employ strategies of inquiry such as … surveys, and collect data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data" (p. 18). The findings from this type of research are intended to be predictive, explanatory, and confirming (Williams, 2007).

Unlike quantitative research, a qualitative approach employs a diversity of sources to uncover the intricacies of various experiences that affect the human experience (Holliday, 2002). Qualitative inquiry, as Grills (1998a,b) observed, helps us understand the human experience by having a better grasp of the participants' challenges, frustrations, and everyday relationships. These characteristics of qualitative research make it a useful approach to explore the strategies that the five international doctoral students employed to learn academic English and to construct a writer identity in their texts. That is because learning academic writing and constructing a writer identity are very complex phenomena that cannot be understood simply by analyzing texts, conducting surveys, and calculating frequencies. Rather, a deep understanding of all the factors and circumstances that could affect the participants' experiences can be reached by listening to the voices of the participants through their narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008) and by allowing the researcher to explore the meanings that the participants attributed to their experiences (Bruner, 1990).

The Case Study Approach

The case study is one method for conducting qualitative research. It has been used to explore the writing experiences of students in various fields, such as social work (Paré, 1991), engineering (Artemeva, 2006), L1 composition (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988), and second language writing (Camp, 2007; Fernsten, 2002; Hartmann, 2002; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2007,

2008; Takagaki, 1999). Casanave (2004) emphasized the importance of case studies in L2 writing research in order to examine writing from a sociopolitical perspective. Consequently, I conducted several case studies in order to have "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomena, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 16).

Yin (2003) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Merriam (1988) pointed out that case studies are "particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reason in handling multiple sources" (p. 16). A case study, as Yin (2003) pointed out, is the preferred empirical method used when the research is designed to answer "how" or "why" questions. Case studies are used when the investigator has little control over events, and the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. Stake (1978) explained the suitability of case studies to illuminating human experiences in depth as follows: "case studies will often be the preferred method of research because they may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalization" (p. 5). That is, the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena because they allow the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.

With regard to this study, the case study approach was chosen to offer a detailed account of the social and educational experiences of five international doctoral students' and their attempts at constructing an academic writer identity. A case study provided me with the means by which I could learn about the participants' doctoral experiences "through the discussion of actual situations and circumstances, by following the actions and analyzing the … decision process of real people, faced with real problems, in real settings" (Naumes & Naumes, 1999, p. 36). Each of the case studies I explored was part of a multiple-case study design.

The Multiple-Case Study

Yin (2003) argued that the rationale for using multiple case studies rests with its potential to provide significant evidence from multiple sources, making the study stronger. Donmoyer (1990), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Stake (2000) pointed to the importance of multiple case studies by stating that they add trustworthiness and credibility to the research findings. While each case in this study highlights the peculiarities of the participant's experiences as international doctoral students, comparing and contrasting cases has been one of the aims of this study. That is, there was a need to study more than one case to get a better picture of the experiences of the participants with regard to the similarities and differences across cases.

The Limitations of the Case Study Approach

Despite the widespread use of case studies in qualitative research, the method has been criticized for being non-objective, lacking rigor and lacking the power of generalizability (Yin, 2003; Widmer, Hirschi, Serdült, & Vögeli, 2008) which characterize quantitative research methods.

With regard to the case study's lack of objectivity, Diamond (1996), for example, noted that a case study has a bias toward verification, meaning that it allows researchers to affirm their preconceptions leading to findings that have precarious scientific value. He criticized the methodology of case studies for suffering from a "crippling drawback" resulting from not applying "scientific methods," whose application ensures "curbing one's tendencies to stamp one's pre-existing interpretations on data as they accumulate" (p. 6). In addition, a case study is allegedly more lenient in regards to allowing the researcher's subjective and discretionary reasoning than other methods. It is seen as less rigorous than quantitative research methods. Flyvbjerg (2006) refuted such claims:

> The case study contains no greater bias toward verification of the researcher's preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry. On the contrary, experience indicates that the case

study contains a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification.

Lack of rigor is of one of the charges against a case study method. Yin (2003) explained that this criticism emerged from the methods and instrumentation case study researchers adopt. He argued that researchers often fail to employ systematic procedures, which may result in ambiguous evidence or biased views. Yin (2003) advised that it is important that case study researchers overcome any bias of their strategies by producing relevant evidence to support their claims. Researchers should engage in critical self-scrutiny or active reflexivity that requires them to constantly document their actions in the implementation of their studies and to subject these processes to critical scrutiny (Mason, 2002). Guided by these tips and admonitions, I constantly reported to my supervisor who helped me with research scrutiny and provided feedback on designing a valid and reliable study.

Providing little basis for scientific generalization is another charge against case study. Stake and Easley (1978) succinctly responded to this criticism by stating that "[i]n the case study, there may or may not be an ultimate interest in the generalizable. For the time being, the search is for an understanding of the particular case, in its idiosynscracy, its complexity" (p. 30). Similarly, Widmer et al. (2008) argued that case study researchers should not be concerned with generalizing their findings to other populations because "the worth of a research contribution is context-bound and not transferable to other entities" (p. 152). Additionally, Yin (2003) confirmed that case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations. That is, the purpose of a case study is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). However, in order for generalization to happen, Stake (1978) pointed out that readers must be supplied with "descriptions that are complex, holistic, and involving a myriad of not highly isolated variables" (p. 7). In other words, the researcher has to provide "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) to give readers as complete a picture as possible of the case under

investigation. In this regard, Stake (1978) added, "[a]s readers recognize essential similarities to cases of interest to them, they establish the basis for naturalistic generalization" (p. 7). In response to these requirements, this study did not seek to generalize the research findings to other populations. Rather, it sought to provide a thorough and particularistic exploration of the personal, social, ideological and institutional factors that might have affected the participants' learning of academic writing in English and their construction of academic writer identities in their respective disciplines. I needed to comprehend the "nested contexts" (Maguire, 1994) that influenced each participant's experience without claiming that these experiences are necessarily applicable to other students.

In brief, a qualitative, multi-case study allows researchers to produce an in-depth insight into the participants' experiences with an emphasis on how they learn writing in their disciplines and how they construct their scholarly identity as members of their disciplinary communities.

Ethical Issues

When conducting qualitative case study research, a number of ethical issues require the researcher's careful consideration. These issues were addressed in my application for approval from the Research Ethics Board at McGill University and included: 1) allowing participants to leave the study when they wanted, and 2) protecting the participants' confidentiality.

With regard to the right of the participants to leave the study, I made sure that before the participants signed the consent form to participate in my study, they were fully aware of the purpose of the study and their rights and responsibilities. I especially told them that they had the right to leave the study at any time they felt uncomfortable to continue their participation (see Appendix "A"). That is, I did not deal with the participants as a captive population (Ferguson, Yonge, & Myrick, 2004).

As for protecting the personal identity of the participants, scholars of qualitative research advise researchers to hide any references to their participants and make them unidentifiable because

for each participant there are a number of recognizable attributes. In order to make sure that each participant's confidentiality was protected, I used pseudonyms instead of their actual names and I did not specify the name of the universities in which they were pursuing their studies.

Recruiting Participants

In recruiting participants for the study, I sought to find international doctoral students from a variety of cultural, linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds. Initially, I decided to recruit at least eight participants in order to make sure that, in case of attrition, I would still have enough participants to provide me with "multiple examples of the phenomenon under investigation" (Duff, 2008, p. 124). My precautions proved to be useful. I started the study with eight participants but only five participants continued in the study. Since this study adopts the social constructionism framework, I am not interested in universal and absolute Truths or the generalizability of the research findings. Rather, I am interested in understanding particular questions about the writing of each of the study participants. It is quite common in Writing Studies research to study even one case study (e.g., Berkenkotter, Huckin & Ackerman, 1988). That is because each case study has its own intrinsic value (Stake, 1995, 2000).

To recruit participants, I contacted the administrative employee in charge of the graduate students' listserv in the departments of sociology, anthropology, political science and education (see Appendix "B"). I chose to study the experiences of international doctoral students in these disciplines since it is well-documented that students in those fields take longer to complete their degrees and the rate of student attrition is higher than for students in the applied and natural sciences (e.g., engineering biology, chemistry, and so on) (Council of Graduate Schools, 2008; Ehrenberg, Zuckerman, Groen, & Brucker, 2009; Gessner, Jaggars, Rutner, & Tancheva, 2011). In addition, graduate students in the humanities, social sciences, and education tend to do their research and write their dissertations individually under guidance from their supervisor (Austin,

2002). As a result, graduate students in these fields may experience more challenges such as loneliness and isolation during their doctoral journey (Corts & Tatum, 2012).

Upon posting my invitation letter on the graduate students' listserv, I received responses from one PhD student in sociology, two PhD students in anthropology, two PhD students in film studies, and four from the faculty of education. Three students decided to withdraw from the study for different reasons. One student was excluded from the study because her educational background and experience did not match the description of an ESL student. She lived in Canada and studied in its schools since she was an early elementary school student. Thus, she had native-like fluency in English. The five study participants who continued in my study came from the following countries: Japan (two students), Italy (one student), Peru (one student), and Saudi Arabia (one student).

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research which employs interviews as a research tool depends significantly on the relationship that the researcher and participants establish. Being an international doctoral student myself, I shared with the study participants many of the educational and interpersonal challenges that they encountered as students pursuing their graduate studies in a foreign country. Since the participants and I left our home countries to pursue our graduate studies in Canada, there was a sense of solidarity, confidence, and rapport reflected in the willingness of the participants to share various aspects of their doctoral experiences in their home countries and abroad. This was especially true with regard to the participants who were in their first year of graduate school. As a result, the relationship between the researcher and the students was characterized by mutual feelings of friendship, respect, and understanding.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected by employing semi-structured interviews. In addition to the face-to-face meetings, I kept contact with the participants via email whenever I needed more clarification about

the responses they had offered in the interviews. Using emails to ask students follow up questions is considered an aspect of virtual ethnography (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Hine, 2000; Lillis & Curry, 2006).

Interviews: Rationale

The interview is one of the tools that a researcher uses to have a deeper understanding of the participants' "views, attitudes and the meanings that underpin their lives and behaviours" (Gray 2004, p. 213). It has become one of the most frequently used tools for both academic and non-academic information-gathering. This trend has lead researchers to label the society that we live in today as an "interview society" (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 1993). In the social sciences, interviews are used in 90% of the studies (Briggs, 1986), especially in research that involves case studies (Yin, 2003).

An interview is defined as a directed conversation (Lofland & Lofland, 1984) that allows researchers to have an in-depth exploration of a particular human experience. It is characterized by being a dialogic and interactive elicitation tool where meanings, interpretations, and narratives are co-constructed by the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2003). Holstein and Gubrium (1995) commented on the dialogic and interactive nature of the interview by saying that the participants' "meanings are not only conveyed, but cooperatively built up, received, interpreted and recorded by the interviewer" (p. 118). This argument has also been made by Kvale (2007) when he stated that the "interview is a construction site for knowledge" (p. 7) used to enable interviewers to examine how the interviewees interpret their world of experience. Thus, the purpose of the interview, as Seidman (2006) pointed out, is not just to get answers to questions or to test hypotheses but to have a deep and subjective understanding of the participants' experiences. That is, the use of interviews is intended to help the researcher to delve into the participants' insights by focusing "on meaning in context" (Merriam, 1998, p. 1) through providing an authentic insight into the participants' perceptions of their experiences (Silverman 2000, 2001).

Limitations of Interviews

Qualitative researchers have cautioned that interviews have certain limitations that could affect their validity and reliability. One of the criticisms directed against interviews is the role of the researcher and his/her possible effect on the interview's validity and reliability. Despite every effort to minimize the role and effect of the researcher, and despite every effort to make the interviews genuinely reflect the meanings intended by the participants, the truth of the matter is that the researcher always has a prominent role in the interviewing process (Ferrarotti, 1981; Kvale, 1996; Mishler, 1986; Seidman, 2006). One of the ways that researchers could affect the validity or credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the interview is by being biased and selective in their questions (Seidman, 2006). At the same time, the validity of the interview could be compromised when the interviewees mislead the researcher by letting their feelings or preconceptions influence their statements.

Despite these limitations, the participants' accounts of their experiences are very important for the researcher because "the accounts they give of themselves and others should heavily inform the researcher's account of those processes" (Gardner 2001, p. 196). That is because participants' narratives "provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds" (Miller & Glassner, 1997, p. 100).

Interviews with Participants

I conducted two or three interviews with each participant and continued my contact with the participants via email whenever a need for further questions and elaborations arouse. The variation in the number of interviews that I conducted with the study participants resulted from scheduling difficulties. While some study participants were able to meet with me for three times, some others were available for only two interviews. As an alternative to the third face-to-face interview, I sent them the questions by email, to which they promptly responded.

The interviews, each of which lasted approximately 60-70 minutes, were scheduled by email and conducted in a quiet office to ensure a high quality of digital recording. In the first interview, I focused on the "autobiographic aspect of writer identity" (Ivanič, 1998) that allows the researcher to explore the students' educational history in their home countries and abroad. Understanding the students' past and present literacy practices is very important for interpreting how they viewed themselves as writers (Kanno, 2003). In the second and third interviews, I focused more on the writing that the students had done or were currently doing in order to explore the challenges they had with academic writing (see Appendix "C").

Data Analysis and Reporting

This study aimed to examine the following three research questions:

I. How do international PhD students learn to write academically in English in a way that is acceptable to their academic disciplines?
II. What is the nature of institutional support they receive on their academic writing?
III. What kind of identities (or subject positions) do international PhD students take on as a result of the participation in their disciplinary communities?

In order to answer this study's research questions, I used thematic analysis to illuminate how the participants learned how to write according to their disciplinary conventions, the kind of assistance they received on their writing, and how they constructed their identities as academic writers in their disciplines.

Thematic analysis is "a process for encoding qualitative information" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. vi) that researchers frequently use to identify themes within the data. Its aim is to examine how the participants understood and interpreted their experiences. A theme is "a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. vii). It may be recognized at the manifest or latent levels.

A manifest theme is a theme that can be directly observable in the data, whereas the latent theme is usually deduced from the underlying phenomenon. A theme may be discovered inductively from the existing data or generated deductively from previous theory and research (Boyatzis, 1998, p. vii). In order to use thematic analysis successfully, the researcher should be able to perform "pattern recognition," which is "the ability to see patterns in seemingly random information (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 7). As Strauss and Corbin (1990) indicated, the researcher must also have an openness and flexibility (i.e., conceptual flexibility) to perceive the patterns.

The process of theme identification began as soon as I began interviewing the participants. Using the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2000, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I created a file for each participant to allow me to draw an individual portrait and to compare and contrast the participants' experiences. To achieve that, I adopted an open coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) for thematic analysis. The open coding approach is defined as "[t]he process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). I read the entire interview transcript of each participant several times to get a sense of the narrative. I then started looking for the participants' common characteristics, concerns and issues and put them in a separate file. For example, I created a file for the participants' English writing history and experiences in their home countries and abroad. Another file focused on the kind of writing support they received from their supervisors, peers, and university. Writing the case studies based on the created portraits helped me with identifying the similarities and differences in the participants' experiences.

When coding the interview transcripts, I did not use any coding software. I preferred to categorize and code my data by creating a file for each code that emerged from the participants' transcripts. As a result, several themes emerged through several levels of coding (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2003). As for reporting about data, I have reproduced lengthy excerpts from the interviews

to allow the participants to speak for themselves in an attempt to capture their experiences. There were several reasons for using the participants' spoken words verbatim, including: 1) presenting the participants' own words as evidence for their interpretation of ideas and actions, 2) deepening the readers' understanding of the participants' thoughts and perceptions by showing the depth of their feelings about certain issues. Despite the fact that the researcher could paraphrase the participants' feelings of anger, frustration, confidence, the spoken words are more powerful in depicting their actual feelings, and 3) empowering the participants and enabling their voices. Presenting verbatim quotations is very important because it provides "opportunities for people to give their own views about policy or practices which affected them directly, and to express their feelings or beliefs in the way they themselves perceived these. Giving people a voice by using their spoken words was also a way of demonstrating the value of what they said" (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006, p.13).

Crystallization of Data

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, social constructionism represents the umbrella framework for this study. Social constructionism considers knowledge and reality to be socially constructed and negotiated by community members who share similar interests, values, and beliefs. Researchers adopting social constructionism "abandoned claims of objectivity in favor of focusing on the situated researcher and the social construction of meaning" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 2). Social constructionism was a reaction against the positivist approaches, which assume that reality is universal and that there is a single and absolute Truth that can be observed and inferred by researchers.

One of the methodological approaches that fit within social constructionism (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008) to interpreting rich data in qualitative research is *crystallization* (e.g., Richardson, 1994, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Sociologist Laurel Richardson (1994, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) introduced the concept of crystallization to qualitative methodologies in her

widely-cited essay *Writing as a Method of Inquiry*. Richardson (1994) rejected the valorization of "triangulation" in which a researcher employs different methods such as interviews and document-checking to "validate" his/her findings. That's because these methods assume that "there is a "fixed point" or "object" that can be triangulated" (Richardson, 1994, p. 522). Richardson explained the relevance of crystallization to post-modern qualitative research:

> The scholar draws freely on his or her productions from literary, artistic, and scientific genres, often breaking the boundaries of each of those as well. In these productions, the scholar might have different "takes" on the same topic, what I think of as a postmodernist deconstruction of triangulation. . . . In postmodernist mixed-genre texts, we do not triangulate, we *crystallize*. . . . I propose that the central image for "validity" for postmodern texts is not the triangle—a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. . . . Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know. (Richardson, 2000, p. 934, original emphasis)

According to Ellingson (2009),

> [s]cholars who embrace a wide range of methods, practices, and perspectives can adapt crystallization to their needs and goals. The only position crystallization does not complement is positivism; researchers who truly believe in objectivity and the discovery of ahistorical, unbiased, universal truth will not find crystallization amenable. (p. 4)

Despite the fact that Richardson (2000) introduced the concept of crystallization in her seminal essay, she did not elaborate on crystallization as a methodological framework or process (Ellingson, 2009). Ellingson (2009) proposed several principles for crystallization, which include the following:

First, crystallization is used in qualitative research projects that "[o]ffer deep, thickly described, complexly rendered interpretations of meanings about a phenomenon or group" (p. 10). In my qualitative case study, I employed crystallization to produce knowledge about the experiences of five international graduate students by generating a deep and multi-layered interpretation (Richardson, 2000). This was specifically achieved by providing an in-depth understanding of the topic or what Geertz (1973) called a "thick description," which is considered a hallmark for qualitative research. In addition, I provided a deepened interpretation through compiling many themes or patterns about each case study and supported these themes with specific examples from the data in order to have a wide angle view of the phenomena. Compiling a variety of themes allowed me "to cover more ground, incorporating the researchers' positionality, contrasting or conflicting points of view, patterns, and exceptions" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 11). Second, crystallization is used to produce and interpret data by employing a variety of analytical approaches (Ellingson, 2009). In this study, I employed crystallization through the use of a variety of analytical lenses, including, RGS, situated learning theories, identity theory, and intercultural rhetoric. That is, I encountered and made sense of my data through multiple ways of knowing. According to Ellingson (2009), employing multiple ways of knowing can be likened to viewing an object through a crystal. That is because juxtaposing different lenses of knowing can reveal subtleties and nuances in the data that could be masked had the researcher used one analytical lens only. And as Richardson (2000) remarked: "Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions" (p. 934). Third, crystallization is used in qualitative research that utilizes more than one type of data. In this study, I used interviews to get a deeper perspective of the participants' experiences in addition to textual and rhetorical analysis of the participants' writing, which I used when the context of analysis was warranted. Fourth, crystallization is used in qualitative research projects that

> "[i]nclude a significant degree of reflexive consideration of the researcher's self and roles in the process of research design, data collection, and Eschew positivist claims to objectivity and a singular, discoverable Truth in favor of embracing knowledge as situated, partial, constructed, multiple, embodied, and enmeshed in power relations. (Ellingson, 2009, p. 12)

That is, crystallization allows the researcher to reflect on his/her role in designing the research, collecting, sorting, analyzing data and representing it. This reflexivity is essential in qualitative research because it involves "thoughtful, conscious self-awareness" (Finlay, 2002, p. 532). Macbeth (2001) pointed out that qualitative researchers understand reflexivity as "a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text, and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself" (Macbeth, 2001, p. 35). This reflexivity could be of two types, according to Macbeth (2001), positional and textual. The former focuses on the researcher's identity and context of writing, whereas the latter focuses on the construction of representation. Reflexivity, thus, demonstrates the researcher's integrity and awareness that "through the use of reflexivity, subjectivity in research can be transformed from a problem to an opportunity" for dialogue (Finlay, 2002, p. 531). In this study, reflexivity was incorporated in various ways, such as when I described my interactions with the participants and revealed aspects of our relationships through the dialogical interviews. Fifth, crystallization avoids "positivist claims to objectivity and a singular, discoverable truth and embraces, reveals, and even *celebrates* knowledge as inevitably situated, partial, constructed, multiple, and embodied" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 13). It uses multiple methods and multiple theoretical frameworks "to enrich findings *and* to demonstrate the inherent limitations of all knowledge; each partial account complements the others, providing pieces of the meaning puzzle but never completing it, marking the absence of the completed image" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 13). Crystallization does not aim to provide definite and absolute claims of truth from "nowhere" (Haraway, 1988) because forming an objective and neutral stance is not one of its objectives. That is to say, as

Ellingson (2009) noted, crystallization "provides a framework in which to balance claims of truth with recognition of the intersubjective nature of all knowledge claims" (p. 13). This principle can be achieved by respecting the participants' voices, considering their valid accounts of their experiences, and incorporating them in the researcher's analysis and interpretation of data (Ellingson, 2009).

In sum, these principles of crystallization are very useful to researchers because they ensure that "[w]hile acknowledging that there is always more to know about our topics, we nonetheless produce extremely rich, evocative, useful accounts through crystallization" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 14).

Summary

In this chapter, I have described the methodology that I used to design the case studies of five international doctoral students. I discussed the rationale for the methodological decisions that guided the methodology. Specifically, I explained the reasons for using a qualitative case study approach. I also explained the characteristics of interviews, their merits and limits. I discussed my role as a researcher, and how I recruited the research participants. I explained how I conducted initial and follow-up interviews about various aspects of the participants' personal, social, and educational experiences. Finally, I explained how I identified themes and patterns, and the crystallization of data to get a deeper understanding of the case studies.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE FIVE INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL STUDENTS' LITERACY EXPERIENCES

This chapter offers answers to the three research questions which were posed in the dissertation's introductory chapter:

I. How do international PhD students learn to write academically in English in a way that is acceptable to their academic disciplines?

II. What is the nature of the institutional support they received for their academic writing?

III. What kind of identities (subject positions) do international PhD students take on as a result of their participation in their disciplinary communities?

The chapter consists of five case studies, one per each study participant. Each case study includes three sections. The first section addresses the first research question by presenting the biography and the educational experiences of each participant in the study. It highlights the participants' literacy experiences in their home countries and abroad. It specifically focuses on the participants' writing experiences at various stages of their educational journey, including their attempts to learn writing in English and their attitude toward writing in their mother tongue and in English.

The second section answers the second research question by exploring the institutional assistance that participants received for their academic writing. Specifically, it discusses the nature of assistance that the students received from their supervisors, professors, committee members, peers, and the university.

The third section answers the third question by discussing the subject positions the participants adopted. As discussed in Chapter Two, a subject position represents the participants' struggle to become members in their CoP. It is temporally occupied, and is constantly altered relative to the context and circumstances that the participants encounter. Based on this

understanding, a participant may recognize him/herself, and may be recognized by others, as a "certain kind of person" (Gee, 2001), or a "persona" (Cherry, 1988) such as an *isolated student*, a *frustrated learner*, a *confident writer*, or a *powerless ESL student*, and so on.

Following a consideration of the data relevant to the three research questions, I conclude each case with an overall analysis that draws on and connects the findings specific to each question.

Case One: Ricardo's Story

Ricardo, a first-year PhD sociology student in a Canadian university when this study began, sent me an email to express his interest in participating in my study in response to an invitation letter that was circulated through his department's graduate email listserv. I replied to his email by thanking him for accepting to become a participant, and we agreed to schedule our first meeting within a few weeks. I interviewed Ricardo three times and sent him one email with several follow up questions to which he quickly responded.

Ricardo was born in Peru where he spent all of his life until 2003 when, at the age of 21, he left Peru to come to Canada to begin his undergraduate studies in sociology. His studies in Canada were interrupted for three years because of family reasons, but he returned to Canada in 2009 and finished his B.A. in sociology. After earning his B.A., Ricardo applied to the PhD program in another Canadian university and was admitted directly from the B.A.

Ricardo mentioned that he has always wanted to have a PhD in sociology because he knew that unless he earned an advanced degree in the field, the chances of getting a job would not be significant. Ricardo explained his interest in pursuing doctoral studies in sociology:

> Well, I had this idea [of pursuing a PhD] from the very beginning that I took sociology because I knew it's a degree that unless you do graduate studies and get really advanced it's not going to help you much with getting any kind of job, basically. So, I always had [the] idea

> of doing graduate school, and I tried to do well [in the university] for that reason, and luckily I got here.

Ricardo's words reveal that he was an ambitious student with an insight about the need for deeper specialization if he wanted to have better employment opportunities in sociology.

Having had his mind already set on pursuing a PhD, Ricardo envisioned two scenarios for his future professional career, which he explained as follows:

> My goal is to be a researcher hopefully in a university and also in the private [sector]. Maybe [I could] work [at] some kind of consultation company or some kind of research company that's not necessarily academic. But I feel that my topic will allow me to move between these two [career options] because I'm looking forward to learn about organization, structure and forms of authority, things like that.

That is, Ricardo opened up his career options by choosing a research topic that qualified him to become either an academic or a researcher in the private sector.

Before starting his educational journey in Canada, Ricardo went through an interesting educational experience in his home country that paved the way to becoming a student in a new country and a new university.

Ricardo's Educational and Writing Experience in Peru

Ricardo was a student at a private school in Peru until he graduated from high school. His family enrolled him in a private school because in the Peruvian public schools English is not taught at all. Students in public schools usually start learning English when they go to university, and students who want to study English earlier have to register at a private English language institute. As Ricardo explained: "They [students] don't learn English at all. Many students learn English in private institutes, usually when they're already in university. You see flocks of students in private English schools. It's a big business."

Ricardo recalled that during all his schooling years, writing in Spanish was not considered important. In elementary school, for example, he did not write any compositions. He pointed out that once a student passed the Spanish orthography and calligraphy tests, the Peruvian educational system did not usually emphasize assignments that required writing. The writing assignments that Ricardo did in elementary school were very specific in nature (e.g., what were the causes of World War I) and required short answers of 2-3 lines only. The only course in which Ricardo wrote compositions was in the English class. The tasks in the English class included writing a letter to an imaginary friend about the vacation, for example. Ricardo remembered the types of English assignments he wrote as follows:

> They [teachers] always had these homeworks about answering questions or repeating some kind of verb use or tense use. There was a big notebook that we had to fill with exercises. I always had a problem with that. I would always get the repeat grade. I had a private English teacher at home to help me get through. The writing part I also struggled with.

Ricardo recalled that his private English teacher used to give him exercises in comprehension and grammar. He remarked that he always had difficulties with his class assignments, and that was the reason why his family hired a private English language teacher to give him lessons in English.

Like the situation in elementary school, middle school offered Ricardo few opportunities to write compositions in Spanish. As a middle school student, he became more interested in English and started to develop good English proficiency outside the classroom. He recalled this period:

> When I was 12 or 13, I started listening to rock music and metal music. I started buying CDs with booklets of lyrics. So, my vocabulary improved tremendously. It got so good because [I was able to learn] the pronunciation [of words] even if they [the singers were] yelling … you [can] read and see the word. So, I started getting good at writing in English and speaking in

> English, and I started being more confident [because of] having big vocabulary. From then on, I did really well in English.

Thus, as a teenage student, Ricardo relied on alternative methods (listening to music and reading lyrics) to improve his proficiency in English. As a result of using these methods, he believed that his competence in English improved considerably.

The English writing that Ricardo did in middle school was basically compositions on topics such as, Do you prefer dogs or cats, and topics of a similar nature. Ricardo admitted that he did not pay very much attention to writing English compositions in middle school, but he had to take the English language seriously because, in high school, the school administration required all its students to take the Cambridge Certificates of English examinations, which he passed at the first attempt.

In high school, Ricardo did not consider himself to be a good student. He was mainly interested in music and was a rebel, as he called himself. However, his proficiency in English was one of the remarkable achievements in high school. As he explained:

> When I was in high school, I took a couple of tests from Cambridge University: the first certificate in English and the advanced certificate in English, and I passed them both. That was when I was 16. Before coming here [to Canada], I took the TOEFL and did pretty well.

Ricardo's so-called rebellious attitude did not prevent him from graduating high school and enrolling in the Faculty of Law. As in his previous school years, Law school did not consider writing in Spanish or English a priority. During the interview, Ricardo reflected on the lack of serious academic writing in Peruvian schools:

> Now, I'm impressed to look back and say: what happened? Like, how come there was no writing anywhere? No, I mean, people [the Peruvian students] are not good at laying out an argument or a letter, you know. That is why, basically, the educational system doesn't really pay much attention to it. I don't know why.

As an undergraduate law school student, Ricardo liked the courses in philosophy and constitutional theory, but when the coursework started to become very specialized (e.g., what the judge does in the court and other procedural activities), he became bored and wanted to change his major despite having spent two years in the program. One of the professors who taught him constitutional theory suggested that he look at sociology, and Ricardo ended up applying to the sociology program. As a sociology student, Ricardo said that he became a distinguished student and was awarded the title of best student in the sociology program. His success prompted one of his sociology professors to suggest that he should consider studying abroad. As a result, he stopped his undergraduate studies in Peru and decided to travel abroad to start his B.A. in sociology. After some search for the most appropriate university given his financial means, he chose to study in Canada.

One of the most important reasons, according to Ricardo, for his success in sociology and the decision to pursue his studies abroad was his reliance on reading about sociological topics in English. Ricardo explained this episode of his academic life, and the link between his proficiency in English and the motivation to study abroad:

> Well, I got good in Law and then Sociology in Peru because I was buying [English] books from internet. …There was a lot of learning to be done, and I had tremendous advantage over my peers in the Peruvian university. So, I felt that I could study elsewhere because I did not feel that the education in sociology was as good as it could be. So, definitely [my English proficiency] encouraged me to pursue [my] studies [abroad]. The fact that I was able to read English and understand it [was one of the main reasons for deciding to study abroad].

As an undergraduate student in Peru, Ricardo did not write research papers or essays that required him to form his own research questions or use references as is the case in some courses in American or Canadian universities. Responding to my question about the writing that he did as an undergraduate student, Ricardo mentioned that

> [i]n the Law school we would have, I guess, a bit more complicated questions but they were questions anyway. They were not essays. You just have to … give the correct answer to the question even if the question is complicated and sophisticated.

In sum, from Ricardo's perspective, his experience with writing in Spanish during his different school years and as an undergraduate student in Peru was very limited. There were no research papers that required creating one's own research questions and forming one's own arguments. There was no training to do research or use references to write research papers. In addition, Ricardo did not have any experience writing in English at the school and university levels. He started to face the realities of academic writing in English when he arrived in Canada to pursue his undergraduate degree in sociology.

Ricardo's Educational and Writing Experience in Canada

Five major themes were apparent in Ricardo's experience in Canada: first, Ricardo's struggle with loneliness and isolation; second, Ricardo's self-awareness as an academic writer and his efforts to improve his English writing; third, the institutional assistance that Ricardo received on his writing; fourth, Ricardo's struggle with the academic style/identity and his desire to achieve his own style; and finally, Ricardo's growing sense of confidence as a student and an academic writer. These issues will be discussed in the next sections respectively.

Ricardo's Struggle with Loneliness and Isolation

Upon arrival in Canada to pursue a B.A. in sociology, Ricardo noticed very stark differences in the academic environment between Peru and Canada, which he explained as follows:

> In Canada there were more resources, libraries, lots of books, journals, these things [which] I was very interested in. I was impressed with the size of the classes: Very large and the system in which you take different classes in different rooms. In Peru you have one main room, basically, where you take all the courses and professors come to that room. What [struck] me

about that is that even though the classroom was very large, when the classroom was finished, nobody stays around to talk or make friends. Everybody just leaves, talk on phones, etc. etc. It was difficult for me to make any friends because of that.

Ricardo's last sentence in regards to the difficulty of establishing connections and friendships with classmates draws attention to a situation that many international students experience when studying abroad, as I indicated in chapter Two.

As a new student, Ricardo mentioned that he had many challenges in fulfilling his class requirements. He partly attributed these challenges to the lack of a support network. Ricardo recalled these challenges:

> There was a lot of reading and I was not used to that. That was a bit challenging. I didn't know what to expect from the courses. The courses weren't as enriching as I thought they would be, and I feel that a great degree of my [dis]satisfaction in coursework [was] the lack of integration with all people. [In other words], the lack of [the] feeling [of] being part of group or a community … because as an international student, I live alone.

Thus, in addition to the academic difficulties that Ricardo experienced as a new student, he had other difficulties manifested in the feelings of loneliness and not having a support network of friends.

Ricardo evaluated his overall experience at the interpersonal and academic levels by saying that it was "bad":

> When I was studying, I used to think it was good. From my perspective now, I think it [was] bad … Professors [were] not very committed to helping out [students] or to exploring their interests or even to talking to them [or] meeting them. One professor told me: "When you talk to me, you have to talk to me like you're paying by the minute." Basically, he kicked me out of his office, and I was there like for four minutes. The professors were not making an

> effort to explain the issue[s] clearly, what the point of the course [was]. I also was upset because the feeling of competition that I have had … [was] something that I [was] not used to. Back home I could always feel that I can call someone to ask for some help or get together and study. In [the university here] nobody would get together to study even if I was one of the best students in the class. No reading group. [It was] difficult to get together with classmates.

Ricardo's dissatisfaction with his experience as an undergraduate student was partly related to the lack of support not only from his professors but also from his classmates. While he could always cooperate with his classmates in Peru, he could not rely on any cooperation with his classmates in Canada.

Ricardo experienced the same interpersonal challenges when he started his doctoral studies. As a new PhD student in a new university, Ricardo faced some difficulties in integrating with other students in his department, most of whom were Canadian students. In our first interview, Ricardo did not hesitate to express his feelings of isolation and the lack of a support network:

> I don't know anyone in [the city], literally. No friends or family. Everybody who lives here, who is Canadian, has a network of friends. As an international student, I feel isolated. I'm looking forward to go home because I'm feeling isolated, alone, and that is discouraging because it impacts my work, I think.

Thus, Ricardo felt lonely and isolated. That is why he was very eager to go back home to be among his family and friends. It also shows that Ricardo seemed discouraged because of the possible impact that these difficulties could have on his studies. In fact, at the end of the academic year, I contacted Ricardo just a few days before his return to his home country, and he was very happy to take a break from his studies after a long and challenging year. We exchanged a few emails upon his arrival in Peru, and he sounded very relaxed to be among his support network.

Ricardo's experience as an undergraduate and graduate student was characterized by difficulty at the interpersonal levels. Unlike the support network that he relied on in his home country, he could not establish a comparable network in Canada.

Ricardo's Struggles with Academic Writing and His Methods for Improving it

Ricardo pointed out that when he started his studies in Canada, he did not have a thorough understanding of what academic writing entailed. He explained that understanding as follows:

> Back then, good writing was four line sentences, wordy, lots of commas and phrases in between like an essay … not concrete to-the-point essay but very like free flowing French style I would guess or just a literary sense of essay style.

However, Ricardo's understanding of what constitutes good academic writing has changed considerably from his earlier understanding:

> Well, I think academic writing is writing in a clear, organized, concise way and it's a writing that has to have an argument or a case to make and that usually includes some kind of data or evidence and that the argument is closely relat[ed] to data and transforming it into some kind of statements that are proven by this data and corroborated. I think academic writing is just basically making an argument and writing clearly… [in an] organized [manner].

As a PhD student, Ricardo was very aware of the importance of academic writing in his program:

> I think [that] writing in our program is extremely important because [writing is] the product to deliver your work. It does not matter if you read on the bed or if you read in the shower, you use a pencil, if you use a good lamp, everything comes down to a piece of paper with writing [on] it. And I think the one thing that ultimately matters is what you can get on paper. That's it. That's you. You are worth as much as the quality of that piece of paper is worth. You are that piece of paper. That's it.

Thus, Ricardo equated writing with his own sense of worth. This understanding shows his deep insight of the link between the quality of the text and the identity of the writer composing it.

Ricardo's thorough comprehension of the demands of academic writing in English was accompanied by a thorough self-assessment of his strengths and weaknesses in academic English:

> Well … I think I have a good sense of how to organize an argument or how to present something that seems logical and coherent [and] has unity to it. My problem is really with, sometimes, issues of production or grammar or [phrasal verbs] … basically grammar issues, I think.

From Ricardo's point of view, he did not experience difficulty with structure, logic, or coherence in written English, and that his main challenge is primarily grammar-related.

Since self-analysis of one's strengths and weaknesses is considered the first step to self-improvement (Black & William, 1998; Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002; Rolheiser & Ross, 2001; White & Frederiksen, 1998), Ricardo seemed to know what he needed to do to become a better academic writer. Responding to my question about the first thing he would want to improve in his academic writing, Ricardo said:

> [I would like to use] more vocabulary and … to use formulations. I mean, the thing is [that] I write short, lean sentences because it's easy to write short and lean sentences. If you think about it, you can play it safe. You don't have many transitions to make. There's just one main clause or two clauses and it's very easy to create a nice sentence that sounds correct. But, sometimes, I wish I could write a slightly longer sentence … That is the thing I would like to learn to do so well … to sound better … [and] more natural. I think I sound … like a robot [that] is trying to get things right and not make any mistakes … however … I can't do that. I don't feel comfortable. I don't feel like I can do it right. I would run into many problems.

Ricardo's statement draws attention to his attempts to improve the quality of the sentences he writes in English. It also allows us to see the close connection he made between his writing and his sense of himself. As he said, when he writes in English he sounds like a robot that tries not to make any mistakes.

Ricardo perceived himself to be a diligent student who did not hesitate to seek information to make himself a better sociology writer. He explained what he usually did in order to improve his writing:

> I googled [certain writing guidelines] from prestigious universities or prestigious professors. Sometimes, I google syllabus of courses where professors would say: "You know, this is how you analyze the argument." I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm very active … and I'm very active looking for information, [and] looking for very explicit guidelines about how to become a member of this [program].

Ricardo added that his main strategy for learning how to write academic English was reading journal articles and emulating the style of expert sociology writers. He explained the method that he had been using to absorb the writing style of expert sociology scholars:

> I'm basically trying to capture [the experts' writing style] and appropriate it myself and talk like them and sound like them. And, sometimes, I even try to write down little phrases that I don't know how they work but they seem to work well. So, for example, I was reading an article … someone was using "otherwise" at the end of the sentence. It sounded good and it came across as professional.

Ricardo continued to comment on his attempts to internalize and appropriate the experts' writing style:

> I try to emulate writers that I consider to be clear and forceful, and I am really interested in developing a writing style that is very clear and very lean. I think that my writing style right

> now is not my own. I'm just really mimicking other peoples' writing style. For example, I read a philosophy book by a philosopher called Michael Williams [who] has extremely lean sentences. He never uses commas. Bla, bla, bla, stop. Bla, bla, bla, stop. And, so, I try to emulate him pretty much. When I find an article that uses a word that I think … is worth using or would make me sound better, more professional, more fluent in English, I try to write it down sometimes and use it.

As Ricardo's statement succinctly indicates, he believes that his writing style is just an imitation of other writers. He closely equates the written text with himself. By adopting other expert writers' style, he is attempting to refashion himself and to create a writer's identity.

As an undergraduate student-writer in Canada, Ricardo started to write academic English for the first time in his life. Talking about the first paper that Ricardo wrote as an undergraduate student, he said that it was a memorable paper for him because he did not know how to write it:

> My first essay … was about Descartes and because I [had] just arrived … from Peru, I couldn't understand what the professor was saying. He was talking very fast. There weren't many international students in my class. I couldn't know the kind of essay the professor wanted and I remember I got a C-. It [the essay] was bad: A bunch of quotes [and] completely disconnected. I didn't know what I was really doing.

From Ricardo's perspective, there was a lack of assistance from his professors. As a new student, who did not have previous experience with academic writing in English, Ricardo could not know what type of essay he was supposed to write, resulting in a C- grade on the essay.

Ricardo mentioned that his experience as an undergraduate writer in Canada was not satisfactory to him and motivated him to seek help from the university's writing centre and a Peruvian PhD student who was studying in the same university. It also motivated him to make a commitment to himself to learn how to write better research papers and to improve his academic

writing skills in English. During the next few years that he spent in the B.A. sociology program, Ricardo mentioned that his academic writing and grades improved significantly. Ricardo attributed the improvement in his essay writing to the assistance he received from the tutors in the university's writing centre:

> Well, I remember I went to the "essay clinic" at the university and I [gave the tutors] my papers and they … correct[ed] them and show[ed] me [how to make my sentences better]. I remember I would get a big sentence cut to … a third … and they [tutors] started to [tell me to] just say it very quickly, to the point, very simply, very lean … I remember at some point I read someone saying that, "good artists do something well and then they copy themselves." … I remember I got … A+… and I was like okay: "This works. This is really working." So … I started copying myself … and it was successful.

Thus, Ricardo perceived himself as a proactive student who looked for various ways to improve his writing. Learning from the tutors how to make his sentences short and to the point, he was able to improve his writing and earn better grades on his essays. He employed the strategy of repeating the same writing practices that earned him the good grade in order to continue receiving good grades in the future.

To sum up, Ricardo seemed cognizant of the importance of academic written English. While he assumed that he did not have serious issues with writing (e.g., being organized, logical, and coherent), he identified his main weakness to be grammar-related (e.g., use of phrasal verbs). Ricardo's main strategy for learning and improving his academic English was primarily by reading the material in his field and imitating the writing style of the expert writers. In addition, he was very active in seeking the help from others to make his writing better than it was.

Assistance Ricardo Received from Community Members

As a PhD student, Ricardo wrote various types of papers, including essays, research papers, and book reviews. He mentioned that the writing expectations of his professors were not made explicit. Responding to my question about whether the professors had similar or different expectations, Ricardo said:

> I think the similarity [was] in that they [didn't] make [their] expectations explicit. So, I mean in my courses, they would say something like: "Okay. Read this book by the end of the week and criticize it in one page and send it to me or email [it] by Sunday 5 pm or something like that." In another course, for example, I was asked to … "submit [a] three-page assessment of the theory or the issue … by Thursday." It's so open, right? All I [could] think of was … just [to] do what I always [did]: try to write short lean sentences that I'm comfortable with and then that's it.

Ricardo added:

> But I haven't really received any or seen any explicit expectations about what the writing should be like. What I've learned so far in my courses seem[s] to work fairly well because I got decent grades so far. So, I think I'm basically on the right track.

Ricardo's statement shows the implicit nature of academic discourse as is represented by the general and inexplicit writing expectations of the professors.

Commenting on whether his interpretation and understanding of the two professors' inexplicit writing expectations satisfied them, Ricardo said:

> I think it was not getting me in trouble. I [was] not getting criticized for my writing. I got one comment a couple of weeks ago from one professor. I wrote a book review, he said: "Clear, organized, very good." So, that made me happy. I feel very happy when someone says that my writing is clear or organized even. Like, that [comment] impresses me the most.

> I don't see myself to be very organized, really! When someone tells me your writing [is] clear and organized, [my reaction would be]: 'Wow! It really worked." So, it enforces the style [I am using], you know.

With the understanding that the writing expectations were implicit in nature, Ricardo mentioned that he received feedback on the content of papers but not on the writing itself. In response to my question about the kind of assistance he received from instructors on his writing, Ricardo's response indicated that he received a general advice from one of his professors to read a specific book on academic writing and that he did not receive feedback on his writing itself. As for the general advice, Ricardo said:

> The one time a professor gave me advice about writing, he told me to get a book *The reader above your shoulder*, an old book. I found a book [called] *Essay writing for graduate student*, [and] *College guide to writing papers*. I found it helpful and there're a couple of books that I own about writing sociology papers.

And regarding the lack of writing-related feedback from his professors, Ricardo said:

> With regard to writing, I did not get any feedback, really. I wrote a paper that was not very good and I got criticized on the content not for the writing itself. They [professors] did not really mention the writing. Even in [the] weekly response to reading[s], they never mentioned anything about writing. Only content. I have not really received so far any help with regards to writing.

Ricardo added that the professors "usually don't give a lot of feedback in regards to grammar, those issues, not even organization or structure. So, I mean, usually, I look for feedback on the substance."

Ricardo's statement distinguishes between feedback on the content of his text and on grammar and punctuation. Thus, it could be said that he was being shaped as a writer by attention to what he said, even if not much was mentioned about how he said it.

Responding to my question about the assistance that the department afforded him to improve his writing, Ricardo said:

> I've been here for one year, two semesters, I don't think that [the] department itself or the program itself has done [or] has had a role in making me a better writer. I think I have forced myself to try to be a better writer just intuitively or just by the sense of it.

Thus, as Ricardo mentioned, there was little institutional support afforded to him. Because of the perceived lack of support, he forced himself and depended on his own efforts to improve his academic writing.

Ricardo wished that he had received more language-related feedback from his instructors and supervisor:

> I wish I had more feedback and I wish it was an explicit requirement of professors to give more specific feedback on writing. I got an essay back not long ago over December, I think, and the professor said that the paper was mostly well-written. He just said that. He just pointed to a paragraph that he said you should have written this before this other paragraph. You should have said this first and then let the other thing come. That was pretty much it, but I wish I had a lot more input about writing.

Ricardo's professor provided a passing comment on his writing even though it was not as extensive as Ricardo would have wanted. This led him to express his worries about the lack of resources for supporting writing at his university:

> One of the things that in a way worries me about [the university] is that there's no [assistance with writing] … [When] I went to [the first university] I was used to this thing called the learning centre, and they help you out even with time-management, how to take notes from books, how to study for multiple choice. I didn't use much of that but they are there to help you. I went a couple of times and the writing centre was very helpful. Here, I don't think

there is a writing centre at all. So, that worries me and I had been collecting piece[s] of papers [i.e., advertisements for editors] on the streets where they say: "Editing and things like that." Ideally, I would like to have a writing [centre] at some point or someone who could really help me to shape my writing style and how I sound.

Ricardo's Struggle with Academic Style/Identity

As a first-year PhD student, Ricardo struggled with various aspects of academic writing, including, finding his own academic style and satisfying his disciplinary community's expectations.

Ricardo mentioned that when he writes in English, he feels that he is like an actor and a robot, which is programmed to write according to an established template. Responding to my question about how mimicking the style of expert writers makes him feel, Ricardo said:

> Well, I feel bad. I would like to have my own style. I'd like to sound like myself and I sound like a persona, like, I don't know, like a actor, you know what I mean? But the actor sounds better than the way I would do it in a sense I'm trying to appropriate it. It's hard to say. I'm not sure how to go about that but I definitely try to sound like [Michael] Williams or like some of the people that I really like … And … I would be so happy if someone would tell me: "Oh! You sound just like Michael Williams." I'd say: "That's excellent." But at the same time I feel bad because it's not a style that I have developed myself. It's not me.

Ricardo's statement points to the struggles between accommodating the writing style of the experts and preserving his own identity as a writer. His comment about being like an actor imitating others is similar to Goffman's (1969) conception of a performer. Just as a performer provides an impression of a character in a theatrical performance, Ricardo perceives himself as a performer who is imitating the writing style of others. This fact makes him feel "bad" because he wants to have his own style. His inability to use his own writing style due to the necessity of adapting to his community's conventions speaks to the constraints that participating in a CoP imposes on members.

As RGS scholars argued, participating in the collectives' writing strategies could have serious effects on the members' agency, as is the case with Ricardo.

While Ricardo emulated the writing style of some expert writers and scholars and mimicked his professors' way of speaking and thinking, he was also keen on preserving his own sense of identity. During the interview, I mentioned to Ricardo that many international students like to imitate the accent of native speakers of English when speaking. Comparing speaking to writing, I asked Ricardo whether he would like to acquire the writing style of native speakers of English. His response was:

> I'm not sure what would be the equivalent to the accent in the writing but, I mean, I think, I would like to emulate everything, basically. I mean, the accent may be there in the writing as well but everything about this writer is, with regards to vocabulary and the beauty of the language, the nice sound of the sentences and the cohesiveness of paragraphs, I would like to do that but, yeah, I think I would like to do that. However, I would like to have a sense at some point of identity in my writing and that may include not using the style exactly as they use it but pretty close. I mean, if I can make a parallel to my speaking, I try to pronounce English words just good enough for people to understand the word I'm using but I don't really worry about accent or people, like, identifying, like, "Oh! You have a thick accent." I don't really care. I mean, I think it even enforces my identity, my sense of self.

While Ricardo was keen on imitating the English academic writing style, he did not want to become completely assimilated. He made an interesting point by saying that as long as his spoken English was understood, he was not concerned if others considered that he had a foreign accent. In fact, he said that he prefers to have some accent because it enforces his sense of identity. Ricardo uses the same reasoning when discussing academic writing. He said that he is satisfied with his academic writing style as long as it is understood by others.

As an example of the struggles Ricardo encountered in academic style, he talked about the last paper he wrote for one of the sociology classes. The paper was a comparison among various socio-political organizations in Latin America and Peru. In that paper, Ricardo mentioned *Shining Path* as one of the organizations in the country. At the personal level, Ricardo considered *Shining Path* a terrorist organization. However, as an academic writer, Ricardo was aware that he needed to express his ideas in a balanced and objective way and to avoid his personal biases when discussing a particular sociological phenomenon. He mentioned that he wished he could express his true opinion and beliefs, but the audience required him to be balanced. In Ricardo's words:

> I wish I didn't have to be balanced but … the audience requires me … to be more … neutral [and] to have, like, a small softened position and a more, traditional position [i.e.,] the way many people would write about these things.

Ricardo's acknowledgment of the need to satisfy the expectations of his audience shows that he engaged in a complicated negotiating process to share his knowledge with them in accordance with the common ground of neutrality and objectivity required in sociological writing. Ricardo ascertained the constraints that the audience and community pose on his writing by saying that he would be more politically opinionated if the audience was his close friends on Facebook, for example. In Ricardo's words:

> I guess with people I trust more, with audiences I trust more, my Facebook or something like that … I would say something, like: "Terrorist assassins provoked the Peruvian state which represents us all to defend society." You know what I mean? Because the audience is people that I know and people that I can openly fight, discuss, even if I have to, right? Even if someone calls on me on that and I would like just totally entering to a debate with, I love it. I don't have a problem. But with the kinds of academic audiences, you have to make it sound more in line with the general context and sound like you are one of them, right? …

> There're many channels, many lines of alignments so to speak and that kind of language is one of them.

Ricardo's words indicate his awareness of how to address a specific audience. He can be very opinionated when talking with his friends, but he needs to be cautious when writing academically.

Ricardo's Growing Sense of Confidence as a Student and Academic Writer

Ricardo's experience as a sociology student and writer revealed a growing sense of confidence in some aspects and the lack of confidence in some others.

Ricardo's emulation of one of his sociology professors was one of the early signs of the development of his sense of himself as a future sociology scholar and participant in his CoP. This is revealed in his response to my question about whether he felt that he had started to develop an academic identity in his program:

> It's a difficult question. I mean, I took a course that benefitted me because the professor had a way of thinking that I like. I am also trying to emulate [him.] His way of thinking is very down to earth. He brings down any big concept or any big problem or theory into very day-to-day terms. [He has] very down to earth thinking. So, I am trying to emulate that. I would like to think like him. I am a TA and it is funny because I delivered this conference and sometimes I try to sound like him or to say things that he would say to make students feel the way I felt when he was speaking. So, that has changed me in a way, that professor.

Ricardo believed that his budding scholarly identity was taking shape. His mimicking of one of his professor's way of thinking and talking appears to be an example of such shaping.

Ricardo's growing sense of himself as a future scholar gave him the perception that he had some status and power in his disciplinary community. This sense of status and power developed as a result of using the discourse of his community, as he explained:

> Well, with [regard to] the language [of sociology] itself, I think it's a bit of learning this upper level, super-advanced, high-status way of writing in English. I think [that] will give you an extra bit of resources to gain status. You are familiar with these words [and] you have this broad vocabulary. I think it will give you status. It will be a resource for your life. I mean, you would be an academic writer; you would be an academic speaker in a way as well because the writing will impregnate all your language skills, and I think that is one of the advantages that you are into this select group of people that have excelled at using a language in a sort of different way. It [is] sort [of] like you are becoming a member of [a] chess club beyond 2000 points. You are really getting into a world [which] only [a] selected few can reach this level of writing like this. It's like an exclusive club. It is hard to get there but once you are there you can go and enjoy some exclusivity. You know that people would appreciate that [and] will be impressed by that. You know that you send a book chapter like this … to all places and to all writers and people would respect you and know that this is something serious, this is something else.

Thus, according to Ricardo, being a student in the sociology community gave him the awareness that in order to enjoy the status and power of his disciplinary community—"an exclusive club"—he needed to share its discourse, objectives, and worldviews.

Despite the growing sense of confidence, Ricardo considered himself to be a beginner in the field. Ricardo gave this evaluation in response to my question about the role he imagined for himself when he wrote his last research paper:

> The role that … I had in mind … was that of the growing student, of the developing mind, not in any grand sense but just in the sense that … I was trying to show that I've gone through all [the] articles and books, and I am starting to become a thinker of my own by showing that I can look at these different things, fit them and make them all come and

> contrast with history … So … my role … was … like [a] rookie, one of the independent thinkers that has done the homework of looking at these questions and thinking about them in relation to more … current situations and he's showing awareness of historical determinants, he's showing awareness of political factors. My role was that of the … thinker, growing mind that is getting sharper at looking at these things. I hope it worked.

Ricardo perceived himself as a rookie or novice thinker who was trying to make connections among the various ideas that he had read about in sociology. This aspect of his self-perception was in harmony with the status of first-year PhD students who are in a stage of testing various theoretical perspectives without aligning themselves with one or more of them.

As for Ricardo's perceived confidence in his ability as an academic writer in English, he mentioned that he viewed himself to be an insecure English writer:

> I am not a confident writer because I am not a confident thinker. Yet, I am very confused about things. I have a lot of questions with no answers. I am trying to get better at writing. I wouldn't say I am a confident writer. I wouldn't say I write terrible but I wouldn't say I write really well as I would like to write. My only confidence right now is that I can spot really big problems in … [the[writing of others and I can avoid it, I think. But … I am at a stage where I can avoid big mistakes, but I can't really go about it in a really professional way yet. I still need help. I still need … advice.

Adding to the same characterization of himself as an unconfident writer in English, and elaborating on my question on how the comments from his professors make him feel, Ricardo said:

> Sometimes, especially with the minor details, [such as when the professor adds a] comma, I get a bit annoyed because I am aware [of this mistake]. It's like … I know [that], [and] you [i.e., professor is] giving me petty … advice. So … I would be thankful if someone gives me advice on the structure of the paper or something more meaningful even if it is grammar but

> those little … corrections, it's, like, you think [that] I'm an idiot. It's just that I wrote this sentence in [a] hurry or something. So, I would have a bit of that attitude which is not that bad … But I usually don't take it … too personally. … [Nonetheless] that would make me a bit insecure … [when I] see something I wrote that doesn't come across clearly.

Ricardo's statements indicate that he feels unconfident and insecure about his academic writing. Despite acknowledging that his writing is not considered bad, he believes that he still needs help and advice.

Ricardo's insecurity as a writer was revealed in the way he used the personal pronouns *I* and *we*. One of the markers that writers use to claim and establish an authorial presence in writing is explicit references to the self, whether in the singular *I* or the plural form *we* (e.g., Hyland, 2001a,b, 2012). The use of *I* has been considered one way to be authoritative and assertive whereas the use of *we* reveals harmony and solidarity with the group that one belongs to (Hyland, 2002). The way that Ricardo used the personal pronoun was very distinctive and worth considering. He used the first-person plural pronoun *we* 30 times and did not use *I* in his paper. In response to my question about his use of *we* and not *I* in his paper, Ricardo said:

> I get a sense that you put too much pressure on yourself if you say "I" or you come across as being too cocky or too confident in your [writing]. So, by saying "we" it is like a way of hiding yourself. [It is] like [saying to the reader]: Don't blame me. It is both of us who are talking. I do not feel confident enough to say "I" would say this. I only use that when I am making an introduction in which I am pretty sure that I have something explicit to argue for; I have something definitive to argue for. Definitive in the sense it is like clear that I want to go for that and I will say: "In what follows, I will argue." I do not say "it will be argued" or "we will argue that this is the case." First, I will show this. Second, I will show that. But in this paper I do not really do that.

Based on this response, I asked Ricardo two questions about the reasons for using "we." In the first question, I asked him if the use of "we" was preferred in Spanish over "I." His response was:

> Yeah. I think it is more prevalent in Spanish to use "we." I think it is even … rare in Spanish to see the "I." A lot of people in Spanish use the "we" as opposed to the "I." There is this humility approach to writing these things in Spanish. I think that people do not try to come across as "I am saying this. I am so good!"

Elaborating on my question whether avoiding "I" was cultural, Ricardo said:

> Yes. Like I mentioned, it is much easier to find people talking about themselves in a big way and using "I" and these things in English, I would say. I am not even sure if French/German authors do it. But for English, I would say yes and you can find that. It would be … rare to find that in sociology. In sociology, people may talk about that in an introduction or in the prologue where you just talk about your circumstances [and] what lead you to do this research. But then it is more humble.

In the second question, I asked Ricardo if using "we" was preferred in sociology regardless of the fact that the writer was writing in English or Spanish. His response was:

> No. I think there are some sociologists that would write a paper in the "I" in a way that does not use "we." Particularly… this paper … does not have strong ideas that are my own. I do not really rely on that, but people do it sometimes. It sounds good as well.

In sum, and as Ricardo's responses clearly indicate, his use of the plural personal pronoun *we* portrays him as a writer who prefers community and harmony over individuality and authoritativeness.

Finally, and despite expressing his insecurity as an academic writer in English, Ricardo's response to my question about whether he prefers to write in English or Spanish was as follows:

> I think I'm more used to write academically in English, and I think that I have a better sense of how English writers organize and talk and how they, like I said, if you try to come up with very short, lean, sentences in Spanish, it doesn't sound well but in English it's what many people think looks nice and clear and organized. So, I think I'm actually more comfortable writing in English.

Despite expressing his preference for writing in English, Ricardo considered himself to be an outsider ESL writer. Ricardo pointed to his ESL status by specifically delineating the problems he still faced as an academic writer in English:

> I think [that one main writing problem is] just sounding professional. I don't think I make grammatical mistakes at this point. Maybe to avoid making grammatical mistakes, I would use language that I am more familiar with but that language is more domestic. It may not be as nice-sounding. [That is] the way it is structured [and] the way it is shaped. So, I don't think I am doing very well.

In addition to using language that may be considered "domestic," by which he appears to mean informal, or non-academic, Ricardo admitted that there were traces of Spanish writing styles transferred to his writing of academic English. He said that when he started writing academic English he did not have a specific writing style. His writing was influenced by Spanish writing style, which is mainly characterized by its wordiness, as he described it. In order to acquire an academic writing style that did not resemble the verbose Spanish writing style, Ricardo practiced writing in a concise manner. He confirmed that his visits to the writing centre as an undergraduate student in Canada had greatly helped him in that regard. He specifically recalled that the writing centre tutors showed him how to make his sentences shorter. Realizing that writing in a concise manner allowed him to get better grades, he said that he continued to imitate himself every time he wrote a research paper. As mentioned previously, Ricardo followed a simple piece of advice: "Good artists do

something well and then they copy themselves." He believed that following this advice was very helpful in improving his academic English.

Discussion of Ricardo's Case Study

The questions that I asked Ricardo during the interviews aimed at exploring the three main research questions of this study. His responses illuminated various aspects of his educational and academic writing experience in Peru and Canada.

With regard to the first research question, which focused on how international PhD students learn to write academic English in a way acceptable to their disciplinary communities, I have a number of observations about Ricardo's method of learning English in general and academic writing in particular. These observations focus on the fact that Ricardo was a learner who was dedicated, goal-oriented, proactive, and independent.

From the beginning of Ricardo's academic journey as an undergraduate student in Peru and Canada, he described himself as a very dedicated and goal-oriented learner, completely aware of the importance of earning a PhD in sociology for his future career. He showed his determination by seeking out international universities where he might test his academic abilities. He moved to a foreign country to pursue his doctoral studies in a second language and showed considerable persistence in those studies despite early educational and social difficulties with the new academic culture. My assumption is that Ricardo's determination and clarity in specifying his academic goals played an important role in driving him toward improving his knowledge about sociology in general and academic writing in particular.

Because of the clear academic goals that Ricardo had set for his academic future, his learning attitude throughout his school and university years may be described as proactive. As a middle school student, he made a clear effort to improve his English language skills by listening to music and learning the lyrics of songs. When he was a B.A student in Peru, he distinguished himself

academically by buying books in English on law and sociology from the internet in order to have a better understanding of his field. And as a PhD student, he sought information that would make him a better PhD sociology student. For example, he searched the web for sociology syllabi from other universities' websites to inform himself about the argumentation skills needed in sociology writing. He also bought books such as Swales and Feak's (2004) *English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide* to improve his academic writing skills. All these examples signal the proactive attitude of Ricardo as a learner.

Ricardo was also an independent learner, especially with respect to learning academic writing in his field. As he mentioned, he learnt academic writing in English by reading journal articles. He specifically paid close attention to the organization of an article and looked for specific phrases, words, and adjectives that were characteristic of sociological academic writing in English so that he could use them in his writing. According to Ricardo, his dependence on his own efforts for learning academic writing was not augmented by significant assistance from his supervisor, professors, the sociology department, and the university. In all the classes that he attended as a PhD student, he never received any language-related feedback (i.e., feedback on grammar, vocabulary, style) from his professors. The only type of feedback that he received was content-related. In addition, as Ricardo mentioned, neither the sociology department nor the university provided him with the resources, such as a writing centre, where he could go and seek advice on his academic writing. This lack of assistance may explain why Ricardo depended mainly on self-assessment to evaluate his academic writing ability in English. It is important to note that the danger of self-assessment—without challenge or confirmation from other, more expert sources—is that it might be wrong, thus making improvement difficult.

While Ricardo's statements about the perceived lack of support were primarily focused on the very limited feedback from his professors and the lack of institutional support, I believe that

there were other avenues of support afforded to Ricardo throughout his PhD journey. The university has created an environment that is supportive but not from Ricardo's perception. The courses and seminars that he attended offered him models of discourse to imitate. The department hired professors to be role models, and it appears that Ricardo had taken good advantage of that. While these forms of support are not explicitly and directly related to fixing some writing problems that Ricardo might have had, it is evident that the indirect forms of support were advantageous to Ricardo.

With regard to Ricardo's perception of himself as a student and academic writer, it can be noted that Ricardo's experience involved several stages of developments and transformations of his sense of himself as a future scholar and academic writer. One of the distinctive developments was his emulation of one of his sociology professors and other experts in his field. He emulated the professor's style of teaching, speaking, and mode of interaction with students. He also emulated a philosopher's style—that is, the style of a professional scholar. Imitation of the expert writers and scholars could be one of the most powerful developments that Ricardo spoke about. This emulation is similar to the one that Althusser (1993) declared:

> I identified myself completely with [my professor]…. I readily imitated his writing, took up in succession his pet phrases, adopted his tastes, his judgments, even imitated his voice … and in my papers presented him with an exact image of himself. (p. 80)

In other words, by using his professor's way of doing and speaking, Ricardo was involved in a process of ventriloquation to achieve his own social and interactional positioning (Wertsch, 1991; Wortham, 2001) within the sociology community. Bakhtin (1981) explained how ventriloquation occurs and what it means by saying:

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word,

> adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (pp. 293-294)

Thus, Ricardo's use of his professor's voice provides evidence of the effect of the institutional context on appropriating its discourse, values, beliefs, and worldview. Through this process, Ricardo is building and maintaining a social identity in his disciplinary community.

Another distinguished aspect of Ricardo's perception of himself is the way he equated academic writing with his sense of his own self. His expression that "you are what you write' reveals an insightful understanding of the effect of writing on ones perception of self. It is one of the very direct and powerful expressions that connect academic writing with identity.

Ricardo's growing sense of confidence as an academic writer did not involve his perception of himself as a confident academic writer in English. On one hand, he perceived himself to be an EAL academic writer who preferred to use English when writing academically about sociology. On the other hand, he presented himself as an EAL writer who still needed guidance to avoid making mistakes when writing in English. In addition, and possibly due to the influence of his native literacy experience, Ricardo's writing is characterized by the preference to show an humble and harmony-seeking and not a showy and assertive identity. This aspect of his identity resembles what many second language writing scholars have reported about (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). These scholars mentioned that many international students prefer to achieve harmony with the community rather than stressing their authority and individuality in their writing.

Thus, Ricardo's academic identity was incrementally developing to become the identity of a member of his disciplinary community. This developing academic identity was being shaped in a

process of implicit negotiation between Ricardo and his disciplinary community in a way that added to and modified his identity without, fundamentally, replacing him with some new persona. In brief, Ricardo's experience as a new doctoral student can be seen as a process of growing and incremental development towards establishing his identity as a future sociology scholar.

Case Two: Maurizio's Story

Maurizio, a first-year anthropology doctoral student in a Canadian university, responded to the invitation letter that was circulated through his department's graduate email listserv to participate in my study by sending me an enthusiastic email expressing his interest in becoming a participant. In his email he explained that he personally experienced the shock brought by the cultural changes associated with being a new student in a new country. Maurizio was in Italy when he sent me his email, and he mentioned that he would be back in Canada in a month. We agreed to resume our communication later. Upon his arrival in Canada, we exchanged emails and scheduled our first meeting. I interviewed Maurizio three times, and I sent him one email with several follow up questions to which he quickly responded.

Maurizio had a B.A. and M.A. in philosophy from an Italian university. In addition to Italian, Maurizio spoke comprehensible but not very fluent English. Responding to my question about his aspirations in life, Maurizio said:

> I don't want really [to] think [about] these things right now. I don't know, I don't know [in] five years what will come up. I mean, [if I were asked this question] just a year ago, I would have said that I want[ed] to be a professor. That [was] my goal, more or less. [That's] not because I'm fascinate[ed] by the career itself. It's just because I love what I do. But, right now … I don't know if I want [to] do it for life. But, for the moment, it doesn't matter. I'm fully committed [to] working on my research and all that matters now is my thesis [and] the quality of my thesis. And so that's it.

Maurizio's Educational and Writing Experience in Italy

Maurizio lived in Italy and studied in its schools and universities until he finished his M.A. in philosophy. During all his school years (elementary, middle, high school, and university), he said that he enjoyed writing in Italian and was considered a good writer. In elementary school, for example, he wrote several poems when he was in the fourth grade. In middle school, he wrote compositions about various topics such as vacations. In high school, Maurizio wrote compositions as home assignments and took a test once a month to write an essay in class. As an adolescent, Maurizio's love of writing was not limited to school assignments and exams but extended to writing short stories too. During all his school years, Maurizio said that he did not have any problems with writing in Italian.

After graduating from high school, Maurizio continued his education and enrolled directly in the university. He pointed out that going to university was a major step in his life. His experience as a university student allowed him to move away from his parent's home to live independently at the age of 19. Leaving his parent's home at this age to attend university in another city was considered uncommon from an Italian perspective because the established social norm was that students usually lived with their parents until they graduated from university.

During his university years, Maurizio recalled that he enjoyed a lot of academic freedom and independence in regards to choosing his research projects. However, he was not impressed with the Italian academic culture:

> [T]he only thing that I didn't like [about my academic experience in Italy] was [that] the academic culture in Italy was pretty rigid, especially in humanities, and especially [in] philosophy. So, we mainly studied Eastern philosophy and [we were] kind of not allowed to say anything new. All that [we could do was to] study [for the] test to pass… And I think … professors … [were] not interested in believing [the students]… [We were] usually

> considered as somebody who [could not] know anything [because we were] still young. So, [the professors wanted us to just] shut up and wait!

Maurizio said that there were other issues that, in his view, plagued the Italian educational system:

> And we [were] really facing a bad crisis. There [was] no money that [went] through the educational system. Positions [were] really rare. [There was] nepotism … more or less. So, that [was] another bad thing but that was not part of my experience as a student.

As for the academic writing in the university and the importance given to academic writing in the philosophy department, Maurizio said that the Italian higher educational system suffered from a major flaw because it did not focus on this aspect of students' education:

> University [writing was] really bad. It is really rare that [we] have… a written assignment, and … ninety percent of the exams are oral. So, I think it [was] bad because [we] basically [did not] have the chance to write any paper [even] if [we] want[ed] to till the end of [the] program. And at the end [we had] a thesis, usually long thesis. So, [students did not] write for years and then suddenly they ha[d] to write a book and that [was] bad.

Maurizio pointed out that he had never received any explicit instructions on how to write in the university. He recalled that the feedback that he received from his supervisor on his writing was more content-related and not language-related. Even though Maurizio did not receive specific instructions on his academic writing, he said that the B.A. and M.A. theses that he wrote impressed his advisor and were evaluated very positively. In fact, his M.A. thesis was considered good enough to be published as a book. In addition to publishing his thesis, Maurizio also published two academic articles in Italian in a non-peer-review journal.

As for learning English, Maurizio started learning the language in middle school for just a few hours per week. The English courses that he took included practicing spoken English through conversation exercises. The classes did not, however, concentrate at all on the skills of writing in

English. Because, according to Maurizio, the school system in Italy did not give the English language sufficient consideration, he attempted to improve his proficiency outside the school. As a teenager, he was influenced by American movies and music. In response to my question about his main method for improving his English, Maurizio said:

> I think the major role was played by music. At that time, I was playing keyboards. We had a band. We played rock music from the 60s and 70s. I really liked the lyrics. I read them and tried to translate them.

Maurizio's real effort in improving his English started after he finished his M.A. and decided to travel abroad to pursue a PhD in anthropology. He took a year off and registered at a private English language institute in the U.S. Learning English abroad was one step in Maurizio's journey towards achieving his academic goals, as the next section will show.

Maurizio's Educational and Writing Experience in the U.S. and Canada

Maurizio mentioned that he had always wanted to travel abroad to pursue a PhD in anthropology, but he could not recall an exact date for that idea. He guessed that the seed for that idea started to germinate after he finished his B.A. However, the idea changed into a persistent goal after he finished his M.A. Because his M.A. was in philosophy, it was forbidden for him to change his major and pursue a PhD in anthropology in Italy. That was one of the main reasons for his decision to pursue his PhD abroad.

Knowing that he needed to significantly improve his English competence before applying to graduate school abroad, Maurizio travelled to the U.S. and registered in a private English institute. In the institute, Maurizio's courses focused more on speaking skills rather than on writing. Nonetheless, he mentioned that in that institute he learned the structure of the English five-paragraph essay for the first time in his educational life.

After finishing his language studies in the U.S., Maurizio decided to travel to Canada to pursue his PhD. He applied and was admitted to the anthropology graduate program. Upon arrival in Canada, Maurizio mentioned that he immediately felt the difference between his experience in the U.S. and Canada. He said that when he was in the U.S., he knew that his stay was temporary and aimed at vacationing and learning English. So, while focusing on his English classes, he also enjoyed his time as a tourist. However, this feeling drastically changed when he arrived in Canada. He knew that as a PhD student he needed to commit four to five years of his life to do serious study and research.

Maurizio's Struggles with Loneliness and Isolation

When I first met Maurizio, I asked him about the shock and troubles he encountered as a new student in Canada that he mentioned in his email to me. He said that the experience of being in a foreign country was overwhelming for him. As he explained, the most difficult experience he faced upon arrival in Canada was forming "social relationships. [In Italy], we have different way[s] to deal with people, to deal with each other. It takes time to get used [to forming social relationships] here because at the beginning you find the people here kind of cold." In response to my question about whether he felt any shock, Maurizio's response was:

> I think so … [I] don't know anybody [here]. I mean, I had a lot of friends in Italy. I was esteemed by my friends … [I had my] world, and in two weeks it doesn't exist anymore or at least, you feel that you're in a place where nobody know[s] you and [you] don't really have good command of the language. So, at the beginning at least, it [was] really difficult to get across. … So, at the beginning … I [felt] that this [was] not my place. I guess it's kind of normal. It takes some months to recover [and] to absorb this shock. And especially … as a graduate [student] … my first mean[s] to communicate with people was … my use of language [and] the way I used to present myself to … other people. … Here, I feel that gap.

> I feel that I can't do it and [it is] tough to … find out … ways to communicate my personality.

So, as Maurizio mentioned, he experienced real difficulty in adjusting to people in a new country. He lamented that while he was esteemed by his friends in Italy, he could not show his personality to people in Canada. One of the obstacles that prevented him from communicating with others and presenting himself to them was the lack of true command of English.

To surround himself with a support network, Maurizio mentioned that he started contacting the Italian community on campus. Unfortunately, however, when I interviewed him for the third time, he told me that he had decided to discontinue his studies in Canada and go back to Italy. I asked Maurizio about the reasons for this surprising decision, and he mentioned that there were a number of interrelated factors. First, he was still suffering from loneliness, isolation and the lack of a support network that could help him cope with the difficulties of living in a new country. Second, he complained that he did not get along with his supervisor and that he had serious conflicts with him over the topic of the dissertation that he had planned to research. Maurizio explained his conflict with the supervisor:

> I presented him my outline for my bibliographic essay that he was about to supervise and it was [a] very detailed outline plus bibliography, like 270 papers of bibliography. And he was like: "I don't see [or] I can't see my [i.e., supervisor's] research here." And I was, I don't know, [I told him] this is what I know, [this is] what I am researching at the moment. And he was like: "Well, if you still want to write this paper with me as a supervisor or even be a PhD student with me … you should split this paper in two halves. And [in] the first half you're going [to] discuss … [the] things that you like and the second half you're going [to] discuss things that [you can] find in the bibliography of my last book and then you compare." And I found that really annoying, [and] … absurd. I haven't heard anything like [that before] from

> any supervisor. I think that's definitely not constructive. This actually was one of the reasons why I decided to drop.

When I asked Maurizio if there was any chance to reach a compromise with his supervisor, he said:

> That was the compromise: you synthesize that [i.e., the supervisor's ideas with mine]. I didn't expect him to do that. He [could have asked me to] read more [or] read less, etc. [but] not to devise it [my project] the way he like[d] it. What's interesting to you [i.e., supervisor] is not interesting to me and [you] should do what I [i.e., supervisor] like [was his rationale].

Maurizio said that the difficult experience with his supervisor caused a major change in his professional plans. Instead of pursuing his doctoral studies in anthropology elsewhere, he decided to go back to Italy and pursue a graduate degree in Italian language studies to teach the immigrants in Italy.

Despite this difficult and saddening episode in his life, Maurizio reasoned that there were many positive lessons he learned from his doctoral experience. He said that living and studying abroad allowed him to have an international outlook on life and to improve his proficiency in English.

To sum up, Maurizio's experience in Canada was a difficult one at the social and educational levels. The feelings of isolation and the lack of a support network were great challenges that affected his personal and social well-being. At the educational level, Maurizio had a major conflict with his supervisor with regard to the research project he wanted to pursue. This conflict has eventually lead him to discontinue his studies, change his career plans, and go back to Italy.

Having known Maurizio for a period of time, I was very surprised about the abrupt ending of his academic journey. In our last meeting, I wished him the best of luck in his future endeavors and that was the last time I heard from him.

Maurizio's Struggles with Academic Writing and His Methods of Improving It

During the year that Maurizio spent in the anthropology department, he attended several seminars and wrote various types of papers, including response papers and bibliographic essays. He mentioned that he had many problems in English academic writing, including the English academic style, vocabulary and grammar. In response to my question about his strengths and weaknesses in English writing, Maurizio said:

> There're a lot of obstacles. There're no strengths … The academic style is different. Here, I'm talking about, let's say, the way we [Italians] use quotes. Yeah. We're different. We use much more quotes and that's just an example but there're several others. Yeah. Word choice of course, especially, you know, like, formal or informal, that's something. Sometimes, I use informal language and I don't realize it and of course grammar. In grammar, the main problem [is] prepositions because there's no way to learn it. Idioms, or, you know, several problems.

Maurizio specifically mentioned that he had problems with the formality and informality of the phrases he frequently used in his writing:

> [I had some difficulties using] … colloquial expressions … I do not realize whether it's formal [and] whether it's not, especially expressions like this: "I cannot help but being astonished." I don't know if this is formal or not. So, [what I usually do is to] throw it there and then I ask [a] proofreader [to check if it is correct to use].

Elaborating on the problems he encountered when he wrote one of the recent research papers, Maurizio said:

> I had a lot of problems. I actually thought that writing would not be that difficult. Actually, it's the most difficult thing you can do in a foreign language. The first time I was impressed by how many mistakes I had in this paper.

Maurizio's main method for learning academic writing was by reading articles in anthropology. He said that there was a certain standard of writing in English that he wanted to reach. As he put it: "The style I'm looking for … is that of the papers I read, basically. They're scientific papers. So, they're pretty standardized. They're pretty cold, I would say."

Assistance Maurizio Received from Community Members

In regards to the importance of feedback for improving academic writing, Maurizio mentioned that the professor's feedback was essential because

> [a] teacher should be like a mirror … [or] somebody that do[es] not tell [you] what to write, but should tell you how to write better what you want to write. Do you know what I mean? In a sense … I don't want to hear something like: "I think this is wrong." I want to hear something like: "For the sake of your argument, this passage is not useful."

That is, the feedback that Maurizio looked for was of the type that pinpointed the specific writing problem and that clarified why it was a problem. In addition, he was asking for feedback that helps him understand the rhetoric of his disciplines, i.e., the way in which an argument works.

Maurizio said that he did not receive any language-related feedback from his professors or supervisor. When he asked one of his professors about some issues related to his academic writing, the professor said: "if you're not confident, ask for an editor." Maurizio said that most of the feedback that he received on his papers was: "your point is valid." This kind of comment from a professor, Maurizio complained, did not help him at all in improving his writing. Maurizio attributed the lack of writing-related feedback to what he called "political correctness," which he defined as his professors' assumption that international students should be treated like Canadian students. In Maurizio's opinion, being treated like Canadian students put him at a disadvantage because of his status as an EAL student. As Maurizio put it: "They [professors] had never told me anything about

style or grammar but I guess that refers to the politically correctness, like they pretend, you know, like, I'm not an international student in that respect." Maurizio added:

> They were expecting from me exactly what they were expecting from a Canadian student from the very first day, and I think that's impossible. There's no way you can do it at least in the first six months. I understand that this is one of the culture aspects, [which is] actually different, compared to my country, where even the academic evaluation is more, I would say, personal, which [has] pro and cons. The cons is that it's more nepotistic … but the pros is that everybody is evaluated even … at the personal level … If you're an international student, I don't expect you to write as an Italian, whereas here it's not like that. They expect you try write as a Canadian. For them, it's part of fairness. They're being fair because they don't want to discriminate and that's the cultural part. It's different. I guess there're pros and cons. The first thing that struck me was that they were expecting from me something I wasn't able to do at that point.

Thus, while acknowledging that equal treatment of students represents the fairness of the evaluation process, Maurizio seemed to be pleading with the professors to consider the fact that he could be disadvantaged if treated on the same footing as the Canadian students.

Because of the lack of language-related feedback from his professors and supervisor, Maurizio said that he resorted to the services of a paid proofreader to fix any linguistic and grammatical mistakes in his papers. In addition, he attempted to improve his writing by using resources such as a dictionary and copying sentences from the articles that he read. This is similar to the method that Ricardo used to improve his academic writing. Despite these efforts, Maurizio was not sure whether he wanted to spend more time on improving his writing. He said that he did not want to take any writing courses because it was time-consuming. He also said that his best option would be to hire an editor to help him with his papers.

Since Maurizio said that he did not receive any assistance from his supervisor and professors, I wanted to know if he depended on other sources to help him with improving his academic English. I asked Maurizio whether he was a member of any writing group. He responded that he was not and that he could not join any because he still did not know anyone in the department.

Maurizio's Perceived Sense of Declining Confidence as a Student and Academic Writer

During the time that Maurizio spent as a PhD student of anthropology, his sense of confidence as a student and academic writer seemed to be declining. As a first-year PhD student, Maurizio went through a very challenging social and educational experience that greatly affected his self-esteem as an individual and a future scholar. He was very frustrated by the social isolation that he kept struggling with. This struggle was one of the main reasons for his decision to discontinue his doctoral journey. Moving from one country to another with no support network, Maurizio felt that he was not esteemed as he used to be in Italy. As he said, when he was in Italy, he knew how to present himself to others and how to project his personality. It was easy for him to do that because he was confident about using his native language. Upon arrival in Canada, and lacking good command of English, he said that he was not able to project the personality that gave him self-esteem in his home country. This has lead to his feelings of frustration and isolation that eventually lead him to discontinue his studies and go back to his home country.

Because of his difficulty in English, Maurizio also began to see himself as a struggling writer—a perception that contrasted his view of himself as a competent writer in Italian. As a result, writing in Italian was more preferable to him:

> Right now, [I] definitely [prefer to write in] Italian. It's like, English for me is like … I need to pass through something which is much smaller than I am. I … definitely prefer Italian. I hope it's going to change. I don't think I'll never prefer [English].

For Maurizio, writing in English diminished him and showed him as an incompetent writer. This was completely opposite to the competent and confident writer he was in Italy. Explaining what it meant to be a confident writer, Maurizio said:

> You ascertain yourself. You are in charge. You feel free to express your individuality 100%. When you get tuned into your personality like your sense of freedom of what you're doing is tuned with the supposed rules that academic community expect you to follow. At that point you are confident. But I think that's true everywhere. You deal with institutions and you can be in a sense intimidated and you try to adjust your personality to the institution and usually the result is not really good.

Maurizio was fully aware what it meant to be confident: being assertive, being free to express one's individuality, and being in harmony with the community's expectations. In English, however, Maurizio was not confident because he lacked these requirements. Not only that, but he was intimated by the institution and obligated to adjust his personality, which he considered not good. As alluded to previously, Maurizio's declining sense of confidence as an academic writer had lead him to consider himself a disadvantaged student whose writing should not have been evaluated in the same way as the writing of Canadian students.

Discussion of Maurizio's Case Study

Maurizio's case study revealed a number of interesting points related to his educational experience in general and writing experience in English in particular. The first point relates to Maurizio's method of learning writing in his discipline. The second relates to the effects of being a new student in his disciplinary community on Maurizio's view of himself.

With regard to the first point, I observed that Maurizio's method was characterized by relative proactivity, attentiveness, and lack of assistance on his writing. Maurizio can be described as a proactive learner. As a middle school student, he took the initiative to learn English by reading the

lyrics of the songs he played with his band. In addition, he displayed the same trait when he decided to improve his English language competence by enrolling at a private English language institute in the United States. Finally, Maurizio's relative proactivity was manifested by his alertness to how his editor corrected his linguistic and grammatical mistakes. Thus, Maurizio was not a passive leaner, despite the fact that he lost an important opportunity to improve his academic English by enrolling in the costly English writing class that the university offered. Rather, he was a student with some eagerness to improve his writing in English and not just have his papers corrected by others. It would seem that Maurizio's main problem with regard to academic writing was the lack of writing-related assistance from his professors and supervisor. As a new doctoral student with no previous experience with academic writing in English, he may have expected that he would receive assistance from his professors and supervisor. The response from one of the professors to Maurizio's request for assistance was that Maurizio should hire an editor to help him with his academic writing. Needless to say, this type of claimed behavior from the professor may have increased the sense of challenge and isolation for Maurizio in the department.

With regard to the effect of being a new student in a new disciplinary community, Maurizio's feelings of loneliness in a new country and university and his insufficient proficiency in English may have significantly contributed to the decline of his self-esteem and confidence. Being lonely and without support network was in stark contrast to his experience in Italy when he was surrounded by colleagues and friends that supported and respected him. Contributing to this challenge was his perceived low proficiency in English that prevented him from portraying the persona of not only a socially-confident person but also a confident academic writing. As he said, when he was in Italy, he knew how to present his true persona or character to others aided by a good command of Italian. He was very alert to the close connection between the command of language and projecting a character characterized by confidence. Unable to project his confident identity, he felt that he was

not the student that he wanted to be in Canada. His main goal was to be the best student he could, as he said. Unable to achieve this aspired-to persona, he may have felt helpless, and decided to discontinue his studies in Canada.

In sum, it can be noted that Maurizio had many challenges in his attempts to move forward in the program. Socially, he was isolated without any support network. Academically, while he was esteemed as a B.A. and M.A. student and as an academic writer in Italy, he felt that this respect and competence in academic English was dissipated by his experience in Canada. He found himself in an environment where he was considered less competent than he had thought himself to be. This setback, in addition to the conflict with his supervisor, seemed to have significantly contributed to Maurizio's self-image as a frustrated and isolated student. Eventually, he could not move forward in the program, leading to the decision to abandon his studies altogether.

Case Three: Masahiro's Story

At the time I met Masahiro, he was a fourth-year Japanese PhD student in the field of second language acquisition at a Canadian university. In addition to Japanese, he demonstrated fluency in English and claimed fluency in Bulgarian; he read Chinese and was learning Spanish and French. Masahiro had a B.A. in cultural studies from a Japanese university. When he was still in his third year as a B.A. student in Japan, he travelled to the U.S. to pursue a certificate in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). He was able to finish his studies in Japan and the U.S. and graduate with two degrees in the same year. He then came to Canada to pursue an M.A. in second language acquisition. After finishing his M.A. in Canada, he went back to Japan where he taught courses in ecology, economics, and anthropology for two years in a high school. He then decided to come back again to Canada to pursue a PhD in the same field. When I interviewed Masahiro, he had finished all required graduate courses and passed his comprehensive exam. He had also finished collecting the data for his dissertation and was expecting to defend it in a few months.

Masahiro's job experience was very diverse. As an undergraduate and graduate student, he worked in part-time jobs to support himself and pay his tuition fees. Some of his part-time jobs included working as a librarian, a research assistant, a tutor. He also worked in pizza delivery and construction. Masahiro explained his priorities in life:

> Well, I'm [a] goal-oriented person and [I'm] competitive. So, [my] career … would come first but I'm workaholic too. So, I want to avoid this. I don't want to be a person who would say: My hobby is my work. I don't want to be like that. So, I want to balance it more but still my career goals would be the first in the list of my motivation or something that drives more forward.

After finishing his PhD in Canada, Masahiro said that he would be considering a number of career options. He envisioned two scenarios for his future career:

> [The] ideal scenario: I have friends there [in Japan], and I want to spend my time and life with them, actually. So, that is very important for me. The ideal situation is [to] go back there, get a job, [and] contribute to education and become [a] researcher. That is the ideal case. [In] reality that does not happen because once I go back there, I'll be an English teacher again even if I get [a] university professor['s] job. Let's say, I'll get ten English courses: speaking, writing, reading, [and] whatever. There's not [a] chance for me to teach second language acquisition courses … [or] content courses. Never! And that [situation] lasts for the first ten years. And if you're still motivated after ten years, you can do research. Maybe [some people can do this] but most likely people's motivation after ten years [of] being [an] English teacher [may not be the same]. So, that's the reality. Therefore, I'm looking at positions outside Japan, where I can do research and teaching at the same time.

Before Masahiro's journey to the doctorate in Canada began, he had an interesting educational experience in Japan, which I will discuss next.

Masahiro's Educational and Writing Experience in Japan

Masahiro lived in Japan and studied in its schools and universities till he finished his B.A. As an undergraduate student, Masahiro was enrolled in the field of cultural studies. In response to my question about the reason for choosing this area of study, he said:

> This is an interesting question because of the way you asked [it]. I was not interested in anything, which is a typical attitude of Japanese university students. We get in and out. That's it. Many of us choose majors to get in to a good university. That is, we don't go to university because we are interested in studying something.

Masahiro evaluated his experience as a B.A. student in Japan:

> I did not like my experience as a B.A. student in Japan. If I had to say, I guess I liked the fact that I did not have to study. I did not go to classes, yet, I could graduate easily. I was not aware that this is a Japanese educational culture until I had a chance to be a student outside. Then, I started to think that [the] Japanese university education is terrible. Now, I believe that university should be a place where people who want to study should go, which is not the case even remotely in Japan.

Masahiro mentioned that he did not write any research papers because academic writing was not an essential requirement in the Japanese educational system. He recalled that he only sat for exams in which he answered questions in writing. The only long piece of writing he wrote was a thesis, which he considered to be an immature version of an M.A. thesis. That is, he mainly collected the relevant literature for his B.A. thesis and wrote it in an "unprofessional way," as he described it.

In addition to writing a B.A. thesis, Masahiro submitted an article for publication in a Japanese peer-reviewed journal. The feedback that he received from the journal editor and reviewers required him to make significant revisions to the paper. Masahiro pointed out that the editor's feedback made him realize how bad his Japanese academic writing was.

When I asked Masahiro what aspects of academic writing in Japanese he found most difficult, he said:

> I would say organization … Japanese discourse types are like you start from [a] vague idea and you narrow [it] down to the main idea in the paragraph. [In] English you have [a] thesis statement, and you add [and] elaborate your ideas, and you relate it in the conclusion sentence, basically.

Masahiro's journey with learning English started in junior high school when he was 13 years old. English was taught using the traditional grammar-translation method that focused on grammar and translation exercises and not on writing compositions or essays. According to Masahiro, the focus of the English classes he was enrolled in was "very typical: memorizing grammar and vocabulary. No focus on writing itself. Even in writing courses, what we were doing [was] to translate from Japanese to English. [There was] [n]o writing of English essays."

An alternative way for learning and improving English that Masahiro used was watching American movies and listening to music. Responding to my question about whether this method helped him to learn English, Masahiro said:

> Yes. I watched a lot of movies in English with Japanese subtitles. Also, I used to love and still do listen to English music. It is hard to assess myself if these things [movies and songs] helped me learn English, but I am certain that I had a lot of exposure to the language through those media.

As for writing academic English, I asked Masahiro whether he was given any instruction on how to write English essays or research papers in the university. His response was:

> No. I was not trained to write academic English in Japan. The types of English education I had in Japan [was] … grammar-translation. I wrote my B.A. thesis in Japanese … I did not have to learn how to write papers in English.

Responding to my question about evaluating himself as an English learner compared to classmates in Japan, Masahiro said that he probably was better than other classmates. He attributed this assessment to the fact that "at university in Japan, I had foreign friends. [I used to] hang out with them. I think I had interest in different languages and different cultures, maybe because my communication, conversation skills were slightly better than others."

Thus, Masahiro's educational experience in Japan, especially with regard to writing, was characterized by a lack of importance given to writing, whether in Japanese or in English. He attributed his fluency in English to watching movies, listening to music, and communicating with native speakers of English. Masahiro's experience with spoken and written English began in earnest when he travelled to the U.S. to pursue a degree in TESOL, as the next section will show.

Masahiro's Educational and Writing Experience in the U.S.

As mentioned above, Masahiro travelled to the U.S. and earned a certificate in TESOL. He explained the reasons for his interest in pursuing a degree in TESOL instead of a graduate degree in cultural studies:

> First, I was not interested in cultural studies at all. Second, [my] motivation … to pursue second language-related studies was the English education system and [the English teaching] methodology in Japan. When I was being taught English, I had a big question as to what I was studying because English [was] taught as if it [was like any] other subject matters (e.g., geology). It [was] always taught through the grammar-translation method, and I did not see the link between a language and memorization of grammatical structures or vocabulary. I wanted to know how a language [was] taught in other countries.

That is, there was a strong link between Masahiro's perceived unsatisfactory English learning experience (the grammar-translation method) in Japan's schools and his desire to specialize in the

teaching of English. He sought a better understanding of the pedagogical methods that could be used to improve English teaching.

Masahiro evaluated his overall educational experience in the U.S.:

> I think I enjoyed my studies in the States as a whole. [It was] [d]ifferent from [my experience in] Japan …. [The] students stud[ied] more … Also, students' ideas and personalities [were] more valued by instructors in the States than in Japan. I could feel that I was learning something. I could see that the amount of time I spent was reflected in my work and grades. Another thing I liked was the relationship between students and professors. It is not very hierarchical. So, I did not have to worry very much about how to approach my Profs.

Masahiro's educational experience in the U.S. was very useful for him. He seemed to appreciate the respect given to students' ideas and the easiness with which the professors could be approached.

The TESOL program that Masahiro was enrolled in was not a research-oriented program but a teaching-oriented one. Unlike the former, the latter program did not require its students to do a significant amount of writing. Masahiro's writing experience was thus relatively limited and did not include writing research papers, journal articles, or conference proposals.

Masahiro's Educational and Writing Experience in Canada

After finishing his B.A. in Japan and earning the TESOL certificate from the U.S., Masahiro was admitted to the M.A. program in second language acquisition in a Canadian university. Despite not gaining enough practice in academic writing in the U.S., Masahiro pointed out that his writing experience in the U.S. was very helpful in preparing him for the academic writing that he did afterwards in Canada:

> [T]here was a big difference between my American and Canadian academic experience. The university [in the U.S.] provided teaching-oriented courses, while [the university in Canada was] a research-oriented institution. Consequently, I adjusted my writing styles. Maybe, my

> writing back in the States was more essay-type, but I started to write more academically in Canada.

As a graduate student, Masahiro wrote various text types, including research papers, conference proposals, and grant proposals. He said that he did not have significant difficulties with writing these text types, but admitted that he struggled with writing other texts, such as acknowledgments and book reviews.

Despite the fact that Masahiro said that he did not generally have significant writing problems in English, he admitted that there were some difficult aspects of academic writing in English that he still struggled with. In response to my question about the difficulties that he had in academic English, Masahiro said: "That's an interesting question. For academic writing, I still make grammatical mistakes all the time, and again for academic writing, I think I lack vocabulary compared to native speakers."

Responding to my question on how he attempted to improve his academic writing, Masahiro mentioned that he relied on reading journal articles in his area of study. He explained: "I don't pick up specific sentences or grammatical structures, but I believe that just reading [articles] helps you and it will come out eventually. It takes time." In another interview, Masahiro was more specific about what features he usually looked at when reading journal articles:

> I look for findings that I can use in my research. I look for methodologies to evaluate the quality of a study. I look for citations to determine the depth of the author's knowledge and his or her theoretical background.

Thus, from Masahiro's perspective, reading journal articles was the method that he followed to learn how to write academic English. It was a process through which he absorbed the writing style used in the articles he read.

Because of the importance of the instructor's feedback in supporting students' learning (Bangert, 2004; Black & William, 1998; Carless, 2006; Chickering & Gamson, 1999; Hattie & Jager, 1998; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), I asked Masahiro about the kind of feedback he received on his academic writing. His response was:

> I haven't got much feedback from anybody. Of course … my supervisor has been helping me. His feedback [was] always helpful, but he hasn't given me … substantial feedback in terms of how I write or how I organize my ideas and stuff. Like, he hasn't told me your idea is not clear, or this idea should be introduced before this or something like that. No, he hasn't done that. So, I still say, reading good articles has helped me [in learning writing].

Masahiro added:

> [I received] feedback on stylistic issues … I expect[ed] feedback [on] the flow of logic, overlapping ideas, [and] wordy sentences … [and on] ideas that appear in different places and [feedback] that's related to logic and some elaboration that I should be making.

Responding to my question on what kind of writing-related feedback he wished he would have received, Masahiro said:

> I think if he [supervisor] could rephrase my sentences that would be very helpful so that I can see the different expressions. Not rewriting it, but I will be able to learn from his different ways of expressing the same ideas.

He added: "Sometimes my sentences are not clear in terms of ideas in it. So, if I were told, like, this sentence is unclear, that's very helpful."

Masahiro's Sense of Development as a Student and Academic Writer

Masahiro's doctoral experience showed that he made a steady progression from being a student to being a novice scholar and researcher and from being an unconfident writer to being a confident one.

Masahiro's Perceived Sense of Steady Progress as a Student and Academic Writer

As a fourth year PhD student with several years of experience in his program, Masahiro mentioned that his sense of himself had changed from being a novice student to being a scholar and a researcher. He explained this development:

> When I did my M.A, I was just a student, and I wasn't sure if I wanted to do my PhD at that point and that's why I went back to Japan for two years where I was teaching only … I would say [that as a PhD student], I am a student but I would identify myself more as [a] career-student, … [and] [a] researcher. I would identify myself as [a] researcher more now, which means I need to produce. I cannot claim myself as a researcher without presenting at conferences, without publishing, without a job. So … that's very different compared to … six, seven years ago. That's very different. I was just [a] student back then. I was young too. So, I was happy. I was just fine to be just a student but now thinking about my age as well I just cannot be just a student. Yeah.

Thus, after becoming a PhD student, Masahiro did not view himself as a student only. He was a "career student and researcher" who needed to publish in journals and attend conferences. This shifting attitude clearly indicates that Masahiro developed from being a recipient of knowledge (i.e., student) to a contributor to knowledge (i.e., researcher). Achieving the status of an autonomous researcher was manifested by his ability to submit an academic article for publication (which was accepted). That is, he had gradually moved through LPP to become a more advanced participant in his CoP.

Masahiro's Perceived Lack of Confidence as an Academic Writer

Despite the admitted progress, Masahiro considered himself to be an unconfident academic writer in English. He expressed this attitude when he said:

> I am not a confident writer at all. I always dislike my writing. I always feel (and know) that there are better ways of referring to literature, reporting results, and expressing myself. I wish I feel more confident so that I don't need to struggle as much when I write.

He added:

> [M]y personal opinion about my language ability, writing skills specifically, is that I'm still not good enough. More specifically, I do not have expressions. I do not have vocabulary. So, syntactically too, like, it's not native-like. So … whenever I write, I'm kinda hoping that people would understand: Okay. He's Japanese. It's kinda okay that he makes this kind of grammatical mistake, you know. Whereas when it comes to native speakers it's just carelessness, you know. But when it comes to me, it can be language errors. So, I'm kind of taking advantage of that, yeah, to be honest, like, please accept, I make mistakes. That's it. Sorry. Sorry about that. Please correct.

Because of Masahiro's lack of confidence in his academic writing ability, he wanted his professors to take the fact of his EAL status into consideration when evaluating his writing. He explicitly stated that he took advantage of his EAL status to seek his professors' understanding of this situation. This attitude is similar to Maurizio's who believed that he was disadvantaged by his professors because they treated him as if he was a Canadian student with native competency in English.

Masahiro perceived his academic writing as an M.A. student to be "embarrassing.' Responding to my question about the change in his writing proficiency since he was an M.A. student, Masahiro said: "That's a difficult question but what I can tell you is that my M.A writing embarrasses me. When I look at my M.A thesis, it's really bad. It has changed, for sure."He added:

> You know, I think that what I learned from my M.A writing … [was that] … I was trying to make my writing fancy … by adding unnecessary information or unnecessary elaboration. If I were reading my M.A thesis, it's just, like, I see [a] line but it's not like straight and it's not

like thick and straight. It's kind of weak, like, going somewhere else sometimes and I think that's what I try to avoid now.

Responding to my question about how he evaluated the development and change in his academic writing in English after many years of being a graduate student, Masahiro said:

> It's extremely difficult to see your own development, language development, you know, it's difficult for me too [because] I cannot feel it, I cannot see it. But, this happened actually yesterday, when I got feedback from my supervisor on my dissertation … So, although I cannot feel it by myself, I think, I'm seeing some evidence of my improvement and then, oh! yeah, yeah, [my supervisor] gave me the best comment on my writing ever a few days ago. He said, my writing "is quite phenomenal!" It's very positive.

He elaborated on this feeling:

> I was so happy because he doesn't give away good comments. He's strict and he just doesn't say good things. It's whenever he says something good, that's when he really means it. So, it meant a lot to me.

Despite Masahiro's perception of himself as a student whose writing as an M.A. student embarrassed him, his supervisor's testimony, according to Masahiro, that his writing was "phenomenal" could be viewed as a confirmation that his writing had reached a level that satisfied the supervisor. Despite this perceived development in Masahiro's academic English, he pointed out that writing in Japanese made him feel that he was "himself." When I asked Masahiro whether he preferred to write in English or Japanese, he said:

> That's a difficult question. I must say it depends on types of writing. For instance, if I'm communicating with my friends through email, probably, I prefer Japanese because I can be expressive and funny and like myself, basically. Whereas when it comes to more professional

> writing, I prefer [to write] in English because that defines me as a writer in that genre and I express [myself] better in English although it's my second language.

Masahiro is distinguishing here between what might be called his autobiographical identity (Ivanič, 1998) and a discoursal identity (Ivanič, 1998) that he exclusively associates with academic English.

Discussion of Masahiro's Case Study

As a PhD student who spent four years in the doctoral program, Masahiro was the most experienced writer among the five participants in this study. His case study illuminated various aspects of his educational and academic writing experience in Japan, U.S., and Canada.

Masahiro's method of learning academic English writing depended primarily on reading specialized articles in his field. Despite emphasizing the importance of reading in learning academic writing, Masahiro could not explain how reading helped him in learning how to write academically in English. His only explanation was that reading helped him with picking up the language of the articles. In other words, learning to write academic English seemed like a process of mimicking the style of the authors he read. In addition to reading articles, Masahiro received feedback from his supervisor that assisted him in his writing. Despite acknowledging the helpfulness of his supervisor, Masahiro wished that his supervisor could have been more helpful with regard to providing him with more language-related feedback.

Participation in a disciplinary community affected Masahiro's view of himself as an international graduate student. After having spent four years in the doctoral program, and after having written different types of papers (conference proposals, research grants, and so on), Masahiro appeared to be in control of his writing process. This sense of development was confirmed by his supervisor's opinion. His supervisor's attestation that Masahiro's academic writing had become "phenomenal" gave Masahiro the assurance that he needed to feel that he was really becoming a good writer in his field. This attestation greatly boosted his confidence about his academic writing,

especially because it was very unusual that his supervisor would give any positive comments on his writing. In addition, Masahiro was forming an independent scholarly identity. He was not satisfied with the role of being a student only. He described himself as a "career-student" who did not see his real value except if he participated in various academic activities, including, publishing articles and attending conferences. Thus, Masahiro experienced a steady transformation in his self-image during his doctoral journey, from being a novice student to being a future independent scholar.

Case Four: Akeno's Story

My first communication with Akeno was when he sent me an enthusiastic email expressing his interest in participating in my study. I responded to Akeno's email thanking him for his willingness to participate, and we scheduled an interview within a few weeks. I met with Akeno three times and sent him two emails with follow up questions to which he generously responded.

Akeno was a first-year Japanese PhD student in the field of Film Studies in a Canadian university when the study began. In addition to Japanese, he spoke relatively fluent English and read French. He had a B.A. and an M.A. in history from a prestigious Japanese university. He also has an M.A. in the same field from an American university.

Akeno's work experience in Japan was mainly in teaching English at a private school. The teaching experience was very useful for Akeno, as he explained:

> In the year 2006, I taught English in a private English school in Japan. I taught TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] and TOEIC [Test of English for International Communication], both of which are popular English exams for non-native speakers. I also taught how to translate English into Japanese, which is required [of] those who want to enter graduate school. This benefited me because I had to translate a wide variety of English sentences such as [those used in] scientific journals and articles, which I would never have read otherwise.

As a PhD student in Canada, Akeno was a T.A. in his department and taught a Japanese language course for students who wanted to learn Japanese as an additional language. In addition to teaching, he translated a DVD for a documentary movie and several newspaper articles from Japanese to English.

Akeno's professional aspirations in life were solely academic. He explained the primacy of this goal:

> All my family members are university people. My parents are university professors and both of my grandfathers are also professors. So, it felt like it was … [a] family business to enter graduate studies and to be a professor. And … I really like[d] teaching … when I was in Japan. I also like[d] communicating with people and learn[ing] English.

When I first interviewed Akeno, he mentioned that he had finished all required courses and was working on drafts for two conference presentations. He was also planning on taking the comprehensive exam in the next few months and would then write the proposal for his dissertation. For the dissertation, he would have to travel to the U.S. and Japan to collect the required data. His study would focus on the way Asian women, particularly Japanese women, were portrayed in Hollywood movies.

Akeno's Educational and Writing Experience in Japan

Akeno lived and studied in Japan until he finished his M.A. in history. During his years as an elementary, middle, high school, undergraduate, and graduate student, he was never taught how to write compositions, essays, or research papers in either Japanese or English. He recalled that during his years in elementary school, the main writing in Japanese he did was a one-page daily diary addressed to the teacher. The topics of the diary focused mainly on writing about an event that happened the day before. In addition, he wrote his impressions about a picture-book that he had

read. The task of writing such impressions was difficult for Akeno because of the limited vocabulary in Japanese that he had at that stage of his education.

In middle school, Akeno's Japanese writing was not restricted to writing about personal impressions on his readings. He remembered that during the school holidays, one of his school assignments was to read certain books and write a summary of them. Akeno pointed out that he did not really like writing these summaries and that he used to write them at the last minute before the resumption of classes in autumn.

In high school, Akeno's classes started to focus on writing essays because admission to college required that students show their skills by writing a short essay in Japanese. In his senior year, Akeno failed the writing part of the admission test for college. Thus, he had to spend one year in an intensive Japanese school where he started learning how to write a composition.

Akeno mentioned that he had some difficulties when writing in Japanese. He explained the easy and difficult aspects of writing in his mother tongue:

> The easiest [aspect of Japanese writing] is obviously I know a lot of expressions, and I don't have to look up words in a dictionary because I already knew the expressions. If I want[ed] to say [anything], I can say it this way [or] this way [or] this way because I have tons of idioms and expressions or techniques to say what I want to say. The most difficult part is, I guess, sometimes Japanese language is … too emotional or, sometimes I really want to write something in a really specific way or scientific way or objective way [but I can't because] [i]t's really difficult to choose which vocabulary I should use.

After finishing his B.A., Akeno pursued an M.A. in history in the same department. He focused on how Hollywood films depicted Japanese women during the 1950s. He wrote various types of papers, including an M.A. thesis that was positively evaluated by his supervisor and was

published as a book. Akeno mentioned that he did not receive any instruction on how to write his papers or thesis. He said that he primarily depended on his own efforts to write these papers.

In sum, from Akeno's perspective, his writing experience in Japanese was characterized by the lack of systematic guidance and instruction from school teachers and university professors. While he experienced some difficulties with writing essays as a high school student, he did not seem to have significant problems with writing in Japanese at the university level. This was manifested by his success in publishing his M.A. thesis as a book. This accomplishment reflects his perceived proficiency in Japanese writing.

With regard to learning English in Japan, Akeno mentioned that he took some English courses during his school years. However, according to him, there was an insufficient concentration in Japanese schools and universities on English writing. He said that he had a great interest in learning English because he had a strong desire to pursue his graduate studies abroad one day. Akeno talked about the link between his motivation to improve his English and pursuing graduate studies abroad:

> When I was … in the university, [the] English program was horrible. I mean … I went outside the university and chose the British Council and tried to improve [my English], especially my writing skills, in addition to my speaking skills. And I think … I set my goal, my final goal, someday I would be going … to the United States to study something related to films.

Having had his mind set on studying abroad, Akeno enrolled at a private English institute in Japan to increase his English proficiency. In the institute, he took several English courses, some of which focused on writing skills but most focused on more general English skills such as speaking or listening. When he took the TOEFL, he performed very well on the exam (260/300).

Akeno mentioned that he relied on reading in English in order to improve his general language competence. During his undergraduate years, for example, he used to read English newspapers published in Japan almost daily. Reading these newspapers was very useful because they primarily referred to incidents taking place in Japan, which made it easier for him to understand the meaning of unfamiliar English words. He also liked to read children's literature in English such as *The Hobbit* or *The Chronicles of Narnia* because he loved their translated versions, which he had previously read many times in Japanese.

As an undergraduate student, Akeno wrote only a few research papers in English. He believed that the teaching of academic English in Japan was not so professional and that there was no instruction on how to write a research paper. So, as Akeno said, most of the students just copied previous studies or previous texts.

Akeno's mentioned that his first paper in English was very memorable to him. He talked about this paper:

> The most memorable paper is the one I wrote in Japan in 2006, I guess. The reason why I found it really the most memorable is that back then I was working outside the university and I also had to balance my studies and working. So, it was really difficult for me to balance. That was my first paper in English. So, it took me so long to make my argument in English because I wrote … the original paper in Japanese … At first I thought I [should] simply translate the Japanese version into English but the fact is [that] I had to almost completely change the structure of my argument… If I simply follow the structure of my Japanese argument that would not make sense or that was not good enough. So, I had to completely change the structure of my argument and I have to, you know, change the location of the citation of the preceding studies… Strangely, I really enjoy[ed] that process.

> To be honest, I found it easier to make my argument in English than in Japanese. So, I think that was the most memorable paper. Yeah!

Generally speaking, Akeno perceived his writing proficiency in English to be far much better than other Japanese students whose writing he described as "horrible." He said that he sometimes checked or corrected his friends' English writing. Sometimes, he couldn't correct their writing because they didn't make sense at all. That was the moment he realized how good his English writing was compared to theirs. Akeno's real experience with academic writing seriously began when he travelled abroad to pursue his graduate studies in the U.S. and Canada.

Akeno's Educational and Writing Experience in the U.S. and Canada

Having no financial resources to achieve his goal to study abroad, Akeno worked as an English language instructor for one year in Japan. In addition to the income he earned from this job, he said that he was fortunate to win a Rotary scholarship that allowed him to travel to the U.S. Akeno explained the circumstances of winning this scholarship:

> In [my] district, around 10 people could win a Rotary scholarship every year. I survived the preliminary process, which over a hundred people applied for. I think the biggest reason I won the scholarship was that I am good at leaving a strong impression in an interview.

The Rotary scholarship allowed Akeno to go to a public university in the U.S. Akeno explained the reasons for deciding to pursue a second M.A. in the U.S. rather than pursuing a PhD in Japan: "I found myself at odds with [the] professors. Plus, it was my dream to study abroad."

As a student in the U.S. and Canada, Akeno began his graduate journey with its various challenges both interpersonally and educationally.

Akeno's Struggles with Loneliness

In the U.S., Akeno faced the first experience of being a foreigner in a new country. In response to my question about whether he experienced any culture shock in the U.S.,

Akeno said: "Innumerable number of culture shock!! If I choose one, it was a big surprise to see there was seemingly no authority in professor-students relationship. This is impossible in Japanese education." That is, Akeno experienced the difference in the social interaction between professors and students. While he was used to the formality of the relationship between professors and students in Japan, there was a relative informality in this relationship in the U.S.

Despite some aspects of the culture shock which made him feel lonely at times, Akeno said that he felt that he was socially accepted. He talked about this episode of his life:

> Probably, the biggest part of my U.S.A life is that I happened to start teaching Japanese language as a T.A. It was a pure excitement to teach my mother tongue by using English, and it also gave me chances to make friends with a lot of undergrad students. Although I felt lonely, I also felt socially accepted thanks to my teaching experience.

After earning his M.A. in the U.S., Akeno decided to pursue his PhD in film studies in Canada. Moving to another country with its distinctive bilingual culture, Akeno felt a different type of culture shock. He spoke about it by saying: "Quebec bilingualism has been the biggest culture shock for me in Canada. I could not think about any similar situation taking place in Japan." Akeno is referring here to the fact that many people in Quebec can interact in English and French and switch the conversation between these two languages. Akeno was not used to this situation, and felt some culture shock as a result.

Despite these challenges, Akeno said that he was adjusting well to life in Canada. He was able to make new friends and create a social life for himself. He evaluated his overall adjustment experience in Canada positively: "I think I am [a] more social person here in Canada than anywhere else. [I had a] lot of interesting experiences such as attending dance parties. [This] made it easier for me [to] adjust myself to life in Canada."

Akeno's Struggles with Academic Writing and His Methods of Improving It

Akeno's journey with learning English in general and academic writing in particular began in Japan and continued when he travelled to the U.S. and Canada.

With regard to writing in his M.A. program in the U.S., Akeno said that he had many difficulties writing his papers. He specifically mentioned that he did not know how to incorporate, summarize, expand, and conclude his ideas. In order to cope with these writing difficulties and in an attempt to improve his writing, Akeno sought the assistance of the university's writing centre, which offered its services free of charge to all students. Working with the writing centre's tutors was very helpful for Akeno. He said that the tutors helped him recognize his grammatical mistakes and this helped him understand the problems he had in his writing. Akeno commented on the help he received from the writing centre: "I really appreciated their corrections. I think I always follow their suggestions."

As a first year PhD student in Canada, Akeno wrote various types of papers including essays, research papers and book reviews. He admitted that his academic English was much simpler compared to his Canadian classmates. In response to my question about the easy and difficult aspects of writing in English, Akeno said that writing in English can be both easy and difficult at the same time:

> The easiest aspect of using English is that I can be … irresponsible because I'm not [a] native speaker. [Being irresponsible means that] I can say [to the professor] that … my knowledge [of English] allows me to write only [in] this [limited] way.

That is, because of his status as an EAL student, Akeno seemed to plead with his professors to take into consideration that English was not his first language when they wanted to evaluate his writing. Akeno's words echo similar comments made by Masahiro and Maurizio.

When I asked Akeno what aspects of his academic writing in English he needed to improve, he said:

> I still … need to improve a lot of things but my top [priority] is how to organize my paper in English … I really want to improve how to organize my paper and that is related to which vocabulary I should choose [and] which style I should choose. I still have quite a limited number of styles.

From Akeno's perspective, his perceived difficulties in academic writing are summarized by the inability to organize his papers, his limited stock of English vocabulary, and the limited variation in his academic style.

In sum, Akeno's academic writing experience in English started seriously when he was an M.A. student in the U.S. and a PhD student in Canada. He pointed out that he had many difficulties, especially in summarizing his readings and adding his own ideas to his papers. His main method of improving his writing was by reading the articles in his field and seeking the assistance of the writing centre.

Assistance Akeno Received from Community Members

The writing difficulties that Akeno mentioned were accompanied by the lack of writing-related assistance from his professors. As Akeno put it: "Actually… I don't think I have ever received any advice or instruction about how to write or what not to write."As an M.A. student in Japan, Akeno said that he did not receive any instructions on English academic writing:

> I took some English courses in Japan. However, I don't think they [instructors] gave me any instruction on how to write English essays. The same was true of Japanese writing, actually. Throughout [the] Japanese educational system, you cannot find any practical instruction about how to write essays. All [that] my adviser told me … was "read essays and articles and learn how to write one by yourself."

With regard to the role of the professor's feedback in helping Akeno improve his writing, he mentioned that his professors in Canada had not given him feedback on writing itself. Their feedback was basically focused on the content of his writing. As he put it:

> Actually, in the department there was no one who can give feedback about my writing if I don't take their courses. If I take courses … they just give me feedback about my argument and not about my writing style.

Assessing the type of feedback that he received on one of the research papers that he had recently written, Akeno said:

> Well, on the one hand, I was really satisfied and I really appreciated his [the professor's] comments because it … was unbelievably long and detailed. [He gave] really helpful comments. On the other hand, I was really … kind of frustrated. I knew my writing was really … [not that] bad … but I knew my sentences were really awkward. So … I wished I could have had some kind of writing centre or something where I can regularly have native speakers check my writing … [such] as grammar, yeah!

Despite the fact that Akeno said that he did not receive language-related feedback, he explained some of the positive and negative comments he had received on his papers:

> The most positive comment [was] … the comment to encourage me to continue or keep on working … and sometimes some comments like: "This is really interesting and you should deepen [your] understanding of this part," comments like this. If the comment open[s] up some possibilities for me to keep on working on this topic, that [was] really a positive comment. The most negative comment … [was when the professor] just [wrote a]? or just … [wrote this was] unclear or something.

Akeno mentioned also that he did not receive any writing-related departmental and institutional support. Unlike the assistance that was easily available for international students in the U.S., Akeno

said that he was discouraged and confused about the lack of help at his current university. He explained the difference between his experience in the U.S. and Canada:

> Back in the U.S., they have a writing centre and [I used to] register twice a week, especially when I was writing my M.A. thesis. I went there twice a week and I always read my drafts loud and tried to ask some person to grammatically check my argument. But here … I guess there's something like a writing centre but the system is not so clear for international students… I wish I could go to the writing centre but I cannot [do that here.]

To sum up, the assistance that Akeno received in Canada was not satisfying to him. He wished that there was more institutional support similar to that afforded to him in the U.S.

Akeno's Perception of Himself as a Student and Academic Writer

Akeno's doctoral journey was characterized by a declining sense of confidence as a student and academic English writer. It was also characterized by the desire to preserve his Japanese identity.

Akeno's Perceived Sense of Declining Confidence as a Student and Academic Writer

As a PhD student, Akeno began to establish his academic identity in his role as a Japanese language instructor in the department. He exchanged emails with the new students to give them information about courses, professors, and applying to a teaching assistantship. Akeno said that this role has affected his self-image considerably in terms of giving him a feeling of becoming an active contributor in the department. However, this sense of contribution had been eclipsed by frustration from the lack of encouragement and even belittling from professors in his department. In response to my question about whether the department was preparing him to become a future scholar in the field, Akeno said:

> I don't think so. I don't think so … In my department, most of the professors … [were] idealistic … [They believed that] if the scholars [were] good enough in their research … they don't have to do language [courses]. So, I feel [that there was] some kind of [a]

> condescending view among the professors towards the language instructors, I guess. And sometimes [that] makes me feel so irritated because as a native Japanese speaker, I truly believe [in] the importance … [of] balance[ing] this teaching ability and [researching] ability.

In sum, Akeno's participation in his CoP gave him the sense that he was advancing his goals as a future scholar. However, he felt that the view of some professors towards his work as a teacher of the Japanese language was not appreciated.

In regards to his perception of his development as an academic writer in English, Akeno considered himself a non-confident EAL writer as manifested by his admission of weaknesses when writing in English (e.g., difficulty with summarizing arguments, vocabulary, and grammar). Another example was his need to go to the writing centre in order to find assistance with his academic writing. Even though going to the writing centre should not be looked upon as a sign of weakness, it signaled that Akeno had not reached a level of confidence in his academic English. Thus, Akeno seemed very cognizant of his weaknesses in academic English writing. He attempted to overcome the difficulties in his academic writing by seeking help that was not easily available at his current university.

Assessing the development and change in his English academic writing since he started his doctoral studies, Akeno said:

> Well, it may sound strange or unreasonable but I think there has been no such great change in my academic writing … [However], I think I have been greatly improving my writing of emails … [and] personal letters. I've been learning a lot of new expressions by experiencing chat conversations or exchanging so many emails. I've been learning a lot from … receiving the emails from native speakers … I guess my writing style in email has been evolving in a really interesting way … and, I think that is the biggest change in my writing.

Akeno added:

> [So, there has been] some really tiny, sophisticated changes … [in my academic writing]. So, [when I write something] … I used to need two or three more sentences. But, I think, now, I can write the same information [in] one sentence with almost perfect grammar.

Commenting on a note by one of his professors which said: "I appreciate your [writing] efforts … There's a long way to go," Akeno said:

> My … reaction back then [was] kind of yeah! I guess, my reaction is and was, he [the professor] felt [and] found my argument or my summary [of the readings to be]… at the beginner's level. So, I feel some kind of condescending view of the professor. I just … wanted to hide my eyes.

Akeno's Preference to Preserve the Japanese Writer Identity

Due to the difficulties that Akeno experienced in academic English writing and his lack of confidence in that regard, he mentioned that he still prefers to write in Japanese:

> [I] still I prefer writing in Japanese because … I can be more confident about what I'm writing and especially at this level of academia, I want to be more confident about what I'm saying or about what I'm writing, and I still have difficulty in being confident about what I mean in English. Even now, I'm not so sure about what I'm saying. I cannot control slight nuance of what I'm saying, but I can do this in Japanese. So, I still prefer writing in Japanese.

Despite Akeno's desire to improve his academic English and probably because of his lack of confidence, he mentioned that he wanted to keep his identity as a Japanese writer:

> Well, if it is possible, I want to keep some [of] my own characteristics as a native Japanese speaker no matter how good my English writing will become and I don't want simply [to] mimic or simply copy … the native speakers' English writing … I hope I can still keep something [of] the characteristics as a native Japanese speaker.

To sum up, Akeno's doctoral journey witnessed ebbs and flows in how he viewed himself as a future scholar and academic writer. While at certain times he seemed to be moving forward in the path toward his goal as an academic, at other times he felt frustrated, belittled, and moving far away from achieving that goal. Writing-wise, Akeno felt serious embarrassment and humiliation because of the difficulties he encountered as a writer in English.

Discussion of Akeno's Case Study

Akeno's responses to my interview questions illuminated various aspects of his educational and academic writing experience in Japan, the U.S., and Canada. These responses also gave me the opportunity to further explore the research questions of this study. With regard to the first research question, which focused on Akeno's method of learning to write academic English, the data indicated that Akeno saw himself as a learner who was motivated, proactive, and independent.

Akeno was a PhD student who was highly motivated to follow in the footsteps of his family's professional background. The fact that his parents and grandparents were university professors seemed to be a strong motivator for him to become a university professor. His motivation to become an academic might have been tightly connected to Akeno's proactive attitude toward learning English and improving his competence in the language. It may also have been connected to Akeno's own efforts to improve his English through reading newspapers and magazines to improve his English language competence in general.

While he did not seem to have any major problems writing in Japanese as a university student, his writing in English was not assessed by any Japanese instructor to attest to the quality of his academic writing. Akeno's evaluation of his competence in academic writing in English was basically a form of self-assessment since there was no one to provide him with a fair and objective assessment. Akeno's first chance at exploring the quality of his academic writing in English began when he travelled abroad to pursue his graduate degree in film studies.

As for Akeno's educational experience in the U.S. and Canada, it was characterized by many challenges at the educational and interpersonal levels. As a new M.A. student in the U.S., he overcame the interpersonal challenges (e.g., loneliness and culture shock) associated with being a foreigner in another country. Writing for his M.A. courses was a new and challenging experience for him since this was the first time he was in contact with an academic environment that required extensive writing. While he said that he did not receive writing-related assistance from his professors, the writing centre was the safe haven where he found the assistance that he needed during his M.A studies. It was in the writing centre that he started to become aware of the types of problems in his academic writing.

In Canada, Akeno had managed to finish the first year of the PhD when I interviewed him. His educational experience in Canada resembled the one in the U.S., especially in regards to the lack of writing-related support from his supervisor and department, as Akeno pointed out. The main difference was that, in the U.S., Akeno said that he could rely on the writing centre, but in Canada, he was totally dependent on himself and his commitment to improve his academic writing. Despite Akeno's argument that he did not receive writing-related help from the university, we should not forget that the departmental and institutional support to students is always available whether directly or indirectly. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most departments and universities provide students with an environment that is conducive to learning (libraries, seminars, conferences, and professors that play an important role in teaching their students the technical skills of the discipline and acculturating them into the disciplinary culture). However, clearly some students are in a better position to benefit from these potential sources of learning than others. EAL students might well be at a disadvantage here. Alternatively, they may not be conscious of tacit affordances they are provided.

With regard to Akeno's perception of himself as a student and writer, it can be noted that his status as a T.A. might have made him feel more comfortable in the academy and furthered his sense of forming an academic identity. Unfortunately, this sense of status was not satisfactory because Akeno realized that his role as a Japanese language instructor was not very much appreciated. The perceived "condescending" view that Akeno felt professors in the department had towards his Japanese teaching position seemed contrary to his own perception of the importance of being in academia that he inherited from his family. In addition, Akeno's attitude towards the quality of his academic writing was that of embarrassment and humiliation. He believed that there had been only little change or improvement in his academic English since he started his doctoral studies. That is why when his professor commented that Akeno still had a long way to go to become a competent academic writer, Akeno's comment was that he wanted to hide his eyes. Akeno's lack of confidence and feelings of embarrassment probably made him feel that he needed to preserve his identity as a Japanese writer regardless of whether he became a more competent academic writer in English or not.

To sum up, Akeno perceived that he was showing some signs of progress towards achieving his academic goals; however, he also experienced some setbacks in regards to his self-image as an academic English writer.

Case Five: Mustafa's Story

Mustafa contacted me to participate in my study after reading the invitation letter that was circulated on his department's graduate email listserv. I interviewed Mustafa twice and sent him four follow-up emails to which he responded in order to clarify certain issues that were raised during the interviews.

Mustafa is from Saudi Arabia. His father is Saudi and his mother is Turkish. In addition to his native Arabic, he is fluent in English and Turkish. He moved to the U.S. with his parents when

he was 13 years old and stayed there until he was 25. He has a B.Sc. and an M.Sc. in Information Technology (IT) from an American university. While pursuing his M.Sc., he worked as an intern for an NGO for two years. He helped in creating a web-based social platform that was intended to be used by teachers in developing countries to help them share their teaching experiences, lesson plans, and other curricular activities.

Mustafa was a second year PhD student in the field of education at a Canadian university when the study began. He had been in Canada with his family for three and a half years. He had finished all the required courses in his PhD program, and was writing the comprehensive exam papers. Mustafa mentioned that his priorities in life were mainly professional. He said that he was not interested in working in academia. Instead he wanted to benefit from his PhD to work as a consultant for a company or an institution.

Mustafa's Educational and Writing Experience in Saudi Arabia

Mustafa lived in Saudi Arabia and studied in its public schools until he finished elementary and middle school. Mustafa noted that in the school that he attended, all subjects were taught in Arabic and English was taught very poorly. Mustafa still had vivid memories about his school:

> My siblings and I, two of my older brothers and myself studied in [a] public school and this school was supposed to be very progressive; one of the first public schools in Saudi [Arabia] established in the 50s. My father had this nostalgia about this school. In the 70s we entered [this] school [till the] early 80s. By that time, its reputation was not as solid. [It] still kept a bit of its character as far as being progressive. It did not live up to its standards as thought by my father. It was very crowded (40-45/class). Everything was taught in Arabic. English was poorly taught. The way it was taught was very old school.

In elementary school, Mustafa did two types of writing in Arabic: dictation and expressive compositions. The dictation exercises were given to students to teach them how to write Arabic

correctly. The expressive composition, which is called *ta'beer* in Arabic, was given to help students express their ideas and feelings about certain topics, such as Mother's Day or other topics that were suitable to the students' level of education. Likewise, during his years in middle school, Mustafa wrote several expressive compositions.

Throughout his years in Saudi Arabia, Mustafa considered that he had poor writing ability in his native language. Reminiscing about the difficulties that he had in Arabic writing, Mustafa said:

> I always found difficultly writing in Arabic. Even though we were taught weekly how to compose an essay in Elementary and Middle school … [my writing] was fairly weak and never interactive. My grammar and spelling skills were not bad, but I was never good at formulating my thoughts in an organized fashion. And at home I never got any help since my mother is Turkish and [didn't] know how to write or read in Arabic. Consequently, my grades were not always consistent.

As for studying English, Mustafa started learning English when he was in grade seven. Because Mustafa's parents knew English, he was taught the basics of English at home even before attending school. That is why when he was first exposed to English in grade seven, he considered himself to be relatively ahead of other classmates. However, by the time Mustafa's parents decided to immigrate to the U.S., his language proficiency was still very basic. His real encounter with spoken and written English started when he arrived in the U.S.

Mustafa's Educational and Writing Experience in the U.S.

Mustafa's family immigrated to the U.S. when he finished middle school in Saudi Arabia. Immigrating to a new country that had a totally different educational, cultural and social life was not an easy experience, as Mustafa remarked:

> I was 13 when my family moved to the U.S., and I was very sad to have left behind the friends that I just started to get to know better in Saudi [Arabia]. I didn't feel the culture

> shock [in the U.S.] as much since I was in a Saudi school … But I was certainly struggling in subjects that were in English, for instance Biology. The teacher was an Arab and she used to translate all the lessons and exams into Arabic for those that weren't used to terminologies in English. I also wasn't considered "cool" among the majority of students since I was very disconnected from [the] American popular culture. The term FOB (fresh off the boat) was used to describe me and those that have moved to the U.S. over the past year or so. Consequently, I became close to "FOB" friends, which meant speaking predominantly in Arabic outside school throughout my high school years.

Upon arrival in the U.S., Mustafa was enrolled in the 9th grade in a Saudi Arabian school that applied a joint Saudi-American curriculum. Being a speaker of English as an additional language, and having weak proficiency in English, Mustafa had to take several English as a second language courses, as he pointed out:

> I started with ESL 2 but had to repeat it in [the] 10th grade. At the ESL 2 level, we were taught how to structure a paragraph but my vocabulary was quite limited and I barely passed ESL 2 even in the second time around in the 10th grade. I did get quite a bit of support from my ESL instructor … but I still struggled to do well in writing. In ESL 3 we were taught how to write a 3-paragraph essay and I was getting more comfortable with writing. I did manage to move on to ESL 4 for my senior year of high school (the minimum level to graduate) and was more comfortable in writing essays, but my grammar, spelling and reading skills were always on the weak side.

After graduating from high school, Mustafa began his undergraduate studies in IT. As an undergraduate student, he struggled at the educational and social levels:

> During the university years, I slowly got to know Arabs that were living in the States longer than me. Adapting to academic expectations was very tough. I wasn't doing well in university

> since I didn't have a solid English proficiency baseline. A lot of my new and more "Americanized" Arab friends were helping me with homework, papers, and preparing for exams. It was only until my M.Sc. program … that I started to become more independent in learning. The first book I ever read in English cover to cover was when I first started my first Master's degree. This was strange to me, but all of a sudden I became more interested in reading, writing, and learning in general.

Thus, Mustafa's undergraduate years represented a period of struggle at the social and academic levels that affected his academic achievement at the university.

In order for the university officials to determine whether Mustafa should attend the freshman composition class (a class for American students), or international freshman composition class (a class for non-native speakers of English), he was asked to take the English placement test. Surprisingly for him, he passed the test and was allowed to join the mainstream English composition class. Mustafa recalled in detail this crucial stage of his educational experience:

> I cannot really recall my experience with writing at the undergrad level. What I do recall is that there was a placement test that determined whether I would be allowed to take college level courses or be enrolled in a one year ESL program. My family and I thought that I wasn't going to pass the exam [placement test] since my older brother who knew better English than me took the exam the year prior and didn't pass. And I remember clearly that the essay part was decisive for passing and I enjoyed that part of the exam and actually went on to pass the placement exam.

The difficulties Mustafa encountered in English writing were one of the reasons for choosing a scientific major (IT), as his words reveal:

> One of the main reasons why I went into IT was because it involved the least amount of writing and reading. The English college courses I took were compulsory to graduate. It was

> quite intimidating to take English classes with native speakers, especially right after finishing from a school that predominantly had native Arabic students. Like I said above, I don't really recall my experiences with writing in English; all I remember is that I was avoiding it.

When I asked Mustafa what specific difficulty he had in writing as an undergraduate student, he said:

> Back then, [the difficulties were a] mixture of style, vocabulary, grammar and organization. I didn't have any defined style. I was never really taught to structure my writing. It was very, very primitive. [I was only told]: "This is how you write [a five] paragraph essay: Introduction is the first paragraph. Conclusion is the last and in the middle something is happening there." Beyond that it was very sophisticated. That's all I knew. That's all that I was taught. Beyond [the] five paragraphs my skills of formulating ideas and the transitions and so on, just going beyond that was beyond me. So, again, [the problems were] a mix of all: grammar, style, formulating my ideas.

Mustafa evaluated his general educational experience as an undergraduate student in the U.S. as follows:

> I can't say that I learned much from my B.Sc. experience. If anything, it made me realize how much I don't know and the need to further my knowledge in vast areas such as the humanities and social sciences. When I graduated I was anxious to start working because I felt that the university was not adding anything that I couldn't acquire by myself or through working.

Despite Mustafa's lack of enthusiasm to pursue further studies after the B.Sc., he applied for the M.Sc. degree in IT at an American university and was unexpectedly admitted to the program with a relatively low GPA and without the GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test).

As an M.Sc. student in IT, Mustafa's writing became less frequent, but he was doing very well as a writer, as he explained:

> There was barely any writing involved. The only writing that I remember clearly was a management class where the professor asked us to write an essay on leadership. His instructions were so fascinating to me and highly unusual for the M.Sc. program. Basically, he asked us to define leadership using whatever literature we like. So I went over and beyond to produce this 10 page essay. I … defined leadership using a translated work by a 12th century ruler from the Islamic world. The feedback I got from the professor, who is known for being a harsh grader, was greatly encouraging, stating that the essay is a well deserved A. But because I didn't follow the Turabian citation style he knocked it down to an A-.

Thus, Mustafa's writing as an M.Sc. student seemed to have developed significantly as attested by the positive feedback he received from his professor.

Responding to my question about whether he was taught how to write essays or research papers during his school and university years in the U.S., Mustafa said:

> I remember in more than one instance where I was expected to write essays and research papers without any clear instructions. Of course in high school we were taught how to write a basic essay with an intro/body/conclusion format. But it wasn't really geared towards writing a major essay beyond 5 paragraphs. During my B.Sc., I really can't recall being clearly taught how to write a research paper or a long essay. I realized how much I lack in writing skills when I started taking research methods courses during my second M.A [in Canada].

Mustafa's writing quality was evaluated differently at each schooling stage. This is what he said about that aspect of his writing experience:

> During the latter part of my high school I was considered an average writer for [an] ESL student. In my B.Sc. I barely had the chance to write, and when I did I really didn't know how to write extensively beyond 3-5 paragraphs. So I was considered quite poor in my writing. One of the major classes for my B.Sc. was to write a 10 page essay related to IT. I

> never got any real instructions on how to write a quantitative paper but was expected to somehow write one. Just because I wasn't a native speaker I was given a C. Otherwise, I would have for sure received an F. For my M.Sc., like I said, we barely wrote any papers, but when I did write I was considered a good writer.

In sum, Mustafa's educational journey progressed from being unfamiliar with the writing culture in the U.S. classrooms to becoming a student-writer in the U.S. mainstream composition classroom. He pointed out that his writing experience was characterized, first, by learning the basic information about a five-paragraph essay in high school and, second, by the lack of instruction about academic writing as a B.Sc. and M.Sc. student.

Mustafa's Educational and Writing Experience in Canada

After graduating with an M.Sc. in IT, Mustafa decided to change his career plans from IT to education. Thus, he applied to a Canadian university to pursue an M.A. in education. Responding to my question about the reasons for changing his educational goals and career plans, Mustafa said:

> I never felt that I was good at IT, nor was I interested in knowing about it. I always felt disengaged and couldn't relate to the field. I felt that with education I am more able to work with issues that interest me.

Mustafa explained the positive feelings and the challenges he had as an M.A. student:

> I felt very excited to learn. I felt that what I learned in one semester was comparable to the 5 year B.Sc. experience combined. I felt that I was actually learning to write, debate and properly formulate my thoughts. However, I also feel that my second year of the M.A. (writing the thesis) was a lot tougher since I was not around a support group as much and generally felt it was a lonely process. I rarely got concrete guidance to navigate through the thesis writing process. Plus, it was a daunting task to read so much and produce so much. I

was only used to short bursts of reading and writing, or just for enjoyment sake. Conforming to so many rules on how to write a thesis (without solid support) proved very challenging.

Since Mustafa already had some experience writing in the U.S., I asked him whether the previous writing experience had any effect on his writing in Canada. His response was:

> Not directly. My M.Sc. experience in the U.S. helped me realize that I wanted to be in a program where writing is more emphasized than taking exams. Like I said above, we barely wrote any papers in the program. But when I was assigned to write the short essay on leadership I realized how much I enjoyed writing.

Mustafa's Struggles with Academic Writing and His Methods for Improving It

Mustafa summarized the easy and difficult aspects of writing as an M.A. student in Canada as follows: "Presenting my arguments and thoughts, as well as writing reflective journals, were the easy parts. Citations, grammar, and connecting my arguments using the literature were probably the more difficult parts."

Despite Mustafa's general positive writing experience in North America, he mentioned that there were many difficult aspects of writing that he still struggled with as a PhD student:

> I would say grammar is up there, but organizing [my] ideas within the confines of citing others would certainly be one of the more difficult tasks. It's not necessarily the technical process of citation more than knowing who to cite as part of the conventional norms of discourse groups.

As for the method he planned to employ to improve his writing, Mustafa said:

> Well … I procrastinate, so I don't do what I preach. But, I do know from past experience that if I do write daily, even if it's daily journals and what not, I feel significant change in my writing style, the sharpness of what I'm trying to convey, expanding on my vocabulary and just being much more comfortable writing what I feel.

Mustafa's main strategy for learning how to write academic English was through reading journal articles, books, and previous dissertations. He explained the role of reading in helping him write according to his discipline's writing conventions:

> I think mostly I subconsciously emulate them [the scholars I read] and sometimes perhaps consciously. I find that my style of writing changes depending on the kinds of works I'm more intensely reading at that given period. For instance, I used to read the works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr a lot and I later found that I'm subconsciously emulating his style of writing; his work tends to be very eloquent and formal. I find that the past couple years though my style of writing has become much more informal (for instance, using the first person "I" a lot more). I was always taught not to use terms like "I" and begin sentences with "And." But the more I read articles that defy such rules, the more I find myself changing my way of writing and perhaps directly or indirectly emulating the styles of writing I find in articles that deal with my general field of study.

Thus, reading the materials in his field and emulating the writing style of the expert writers was Mustafa's way for learning academic writing.

Assistance Mustafa Received from Community Members

Responding to my question about the role of feedback in improving his academic writing, Mustafa said:

> I think feedback … should be more interactive and it shouldn't follow a very strict rubric and it shouldn't be about just simply grammar, although certainly it's quite acute, he/she [professor] must bring it to the students' attention. But in general, I don't think it's about spelling or sentence structure or very brief feedback saying: "Awkward sentence or vague." That is vague. That comment itself is vague … There should be some kind of engagement as

well. "Yes. Good point here. Elaborate more on this. I think you're on the right track." But also do show your disagreements.

When I asked Mustafa about the kind of language-related assistance he received from his PhD supervisor, he said:

> Well, I don't know … it might not be fair for me, given that it's still in the early stages, we didn't really get a chance to have this constant exchange of drafts and so on, but from the very little [feedback I received so far] it seems his approach is much more on the actual ideas as opposed to the nitty-gritty writing style. But, you know, in all honesty, with the little exchange of writing drafts and so on, he would point out a few, or would fix up some of it (grammar and wording of fragments).

As Mustafa's words indicate, despite the fact that his supervisor focused his feedback on the content, he said that he provided him with some language-related feedback (e.g., grammar and style). Talking about a personal experience with one of his previous professor, Mustafa said:

> I remember my old supervisor for my thesis, he would just say in the beginning of the paper, in the beginning of his comment: "My apologies for being very blunt but I had no time to sugar-coat things." And even though he would give this warning, it doesn't really help because, you know, you've been working on this paper, let's say, days if not weeks or months even and … you're looking forward to what are the points.

Mustafa explained that this kind of feedback could have serious effects on a student: "Of course, it messes with your confidence and when I revisit the paper again, I feel like I am dreading to go through it because everything about it is negative. And I don't feel like looking at it again."

Mustafa argued that the way the feedback should be given was also very important in the learning process:

> I think, for us, when we say in Arabic "*alosloob*" [or] the way that you convey certain things or hint on certain things as opposed to just being very blunt and frank about it. It could be very well cultural as well. Of course, I acknowledge that I'm not perfect and I wasn't expecting my paper to be perfect, but still there should be some kind of way of slowly working with the students as an instructor or as a person who is giving feedback. And for me, I think the way it influenced me is that I took my failure lightly or some of my mistakes lightly and very positively as well. I was able to see what she [the professor] is talking about and I was able to judge how to correct it from there.

Responding to my question about whether he received any feedback from his classmates or a writing group, Mustafa noted that he did not receive any feedback from classmates and that he was not a member of any writing group. In fact, he mentioned that he did not feel comfortable exchanging feedback with his classmates, especially students whose first language is English. He pointed out that he was even intimidated by the idea of critiquing somebody's paper. He admitted that he probably did not give himself enough credit, but his stance could be culturally-influenced. That is, when critiquing the works of others, he said that he prefered not to be aggressive and assertive but to present his criticism in a gentle and indirect way (which is preferred in Arabic). As he put it:

> Definitely the culture … has a lot to do with me refraining from critiquing. I think I do end up critiquing but it's after somewhat with a battle with what I've been used to and it's usually very sugar-coated and so on. And so, sometimes it might not be constructive or just too long, or as I'm trying to sugar-coat it, the whole message gets lost. So, definitely there's that element too. But, I think in general also, it's just my own, well, actually, to make it the point, if there's a difference, let's say, between a student who's a native versus an international student, maybe I'll be more comfortable.

In sum, as an M.A. and a PhD student, Mustafa received support and feedback from his supervisor but did not receive any feedback from his peers. He mentioned that the way the feedback should be given is very important for enhancing the students' confidence about their writing.

Mustafa's Perceived Sense of Development as an Academic Writer

Mustafa's educational journey consisted of a steady development from an unconfident ESL academic writer as an undergraduate student to a more confident one as a PhD student.

Mustafa's main strategy for learning how to write academic English was through reading journal articles, books, and previous dissertations. Through reading, Mustafa seemed to be gradually acquiring the discourse of his discipline through the process of emulation and ventriloquation (Bakhtin, 1981).

Despite being an ESL student-writer, Mustafa mentioned that he felt confident about his academic writing in another language. When I asked Mustafa whether he preferred to write in Arabic or English and which language helped him keep his style, voice and identity, he confidently said:

> I would say the latter also. I prefer to [write] in English because from my personal experience, even my upbringing and so on, it helps me go through my own ideas, my own identity and help me understand better who I am.

He further explained his preference to write in English:

> Since I'm heavily trained to write in English, I can't imagine writing in any of the two other languages I speak. I've always felt that many modern Arabic writers are very influenced by the English style of writing. This is especially noticeable when I read an Arabic news article. I can point out the English influence in expressing certain ideas or phrases. I imagine if I start writing in Arabic again I will have the same influence of carrying the rhetoric used in writing in English onto Arabic.

Because Mustafa has spent his adult life in the American and Canadian educational systems, he became much more confident in his ability to write academic English. While he acknowledged some influence from his mother tongue on his writing in English, he still considered that he was more comfortable writing in English.

Discussion of Mustafa's Case Study

Mustafa's academic journey as a learner who emigrated from a country with its peculiar socio-cultural and academic environment to two countries (U.S. and Canada) that have their own distinct socio-cultural and academic cultures revealed his ability to overcome many social, cultural, and educational difficulties.

Mustafa's case study includes a number of interesting points about his educational experience in general and academic writing experience in English in particular. The first point is related to Mustafa's method of learning writing in his discipline. The second is related to the effects of participation in his disciplinary community on Mustafa's perception of himself and his writing.

With regard to the first research question, there were two main issues to be noted about Mustafa's experience in learning writing in his discipline: reliance on reading articles, books, and dissertations, and the writing-related institutional support.

Mustafa's writing learning strategy was characterized by his reliance on reading books, dissertations, and specialized journals in his field. As Mustafa mentioned, reading helped him in emulating the writing style of certain scholars in his field. For example, he mentioned that he became very influenced by the writing style of Hossien Nasr [1989].

Mustafa's writing experience was also enhanced by receiving support from his supervisor. Despite this support, Mustafa mentioned that he did not want to have feedback that focused on grammatical and linguistic issues. Instead, he wanted to have feedback that was interactive in nature

and that provided him with positive reinforcement about his writing. He meant that he wanted rhetorical feedback and not merely the surface linguistic features.

Mustafa believed that the way the feedback would be given was very important. He felt embarrassed when one of the professors mentioned that his grammatical mistakes were understandable given the fact that he was an international student. The way the feedback was given was condescending and affected his confidence about his academic writing in English.

In sum, Mustafa's journey to the doctorate began with challenges and struggles at the interpersonal and educational levels in the U.S. However, his graduate journey was smooth and characterized by the development of his academic writing and emulation of the privileged discourse of his discipline.

CHAPTER FIVE
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

This chapter presents a cross-case analysis of the five case studies presented in the previous chapter. It focuses on the main issues that characterize the participants' experiences during their academic journey. In order to make sense of the students' experiences, I refer to the data collected and to relevant studies.

Despite the fact that each of the five case studies is unique and has its own intrinsic value (Stake, 1995, 2000), I realized that all cases shared certain commonalities. Upon re-reading the cases and comparing and contrasting them, I have identified the following common issues in the participants' doctoral experience: 1) the loneliness that the participants encountered, 2) the assistance the participants received from their disciplinary community on their writing, 3) the methods the participants used to learn writing in their disciplines, 4) the development in the participants' perception of themselves as students and academic writers, and 5) the strategies that the participants used to negotiate their self-presentation in their disciplinary communities. In what follows, I explore each issue.

Loneliness

The issue of international students' loneliness has been well-documented in the literature (e.g., Chen, 1999; Flug, 2010; Furnham, 1988; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Kaczmarek, Matlock, Merta, Ames, & Ross, 1994; Niekerk, 2012; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008; Trice, 2007). These studies pointed out that students migrating from their home countries to pursue their education could face several challenges resulting from loneliness and the lack of support networks. These challenges include, but are not restricted to, language difficulties, accommodation difficulties, day-to-day living problems, self-esteem problems, anxiety, depression, unfamiliar institutional rules, and a lack of support networks that could affect their personal, social, and educational well-being.

Students who suffer from loneliness and the lack of social support usually find themselves in "relational deficit" (Rokach, 1989) in a new socio-cultural environment—that is, relationships that end due to various reasons. That is because when migrating "one ceases to belong to the world one left behind, and does not yet belong to the world in which one has nearly arrived" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 23).

Moustakas (1961) and Rolheiser (1979) asserted that loneliness is an existential phenomenon because it lies at the center of being human. It is an experience that is tangibly felt, particularly when individuals experience significant changes in their worlds. It is characterized by being painful, distressing and that it is a subjective experience resulting from various causes and leading to various consequences.

Weiss (1973) suggested that loneliness results from the absence of needed relationships. He distinguished between emotional (or personal) and social loneliness. The former occurs as a result of losing ties with significant individuals (e.g., parents, spouse) leading to feelings of anxiety. The latter is caused by a lack of social engagement with peers who share one's concerns and worldview. Weiss (1973) observed that social loneliness could cause many problems, including boredom and a sense of exclusion or isolation. This observation was reiterated by Osterman (2001) when he reasoned that "being accepted, included or welcomed leads to positive emotions such as happiness, elation, commitment and calm" (p. 327). However, "being rejected, excluded or ignored leads to often intense negative feelings of anxiety, depression, grief, jealousy and loneliness" (Osterman, 2001, p. 327). Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, and Pisecco (2001) succinctly described the effect of loneliness on international students:

> An individual's self-concept and self-esteem are validated by significant others who, in culturally designed ways, provide emotional and social support. Moving to a different culture suddenly deprives the individual of this support system (Pedersen, 1991). Although every

> individual's response is different, there are common responses international students share when they experience this deprivation. Pedersen (1991) states that anxiety is a normal response in these situations and that it may range from mild annoyance to extreme pain. The deprivation of familial support and advice and the lack of self-confidence the students experience may, again, exacerbate their adjustment problems, leading to problems and feelings of homesickness. (p. 54)

The solution to social loneliness is to become integrated into social networks because, as Weiss (1973) stated,

> [s]ocial networks provide a base for social activities, for outings and parties and get-togethers with people with whom one has much in common; they provide a pool of others among whom one can find companions for an evening's conversation or for some portion of the daily round. Social isolation removes these gratifications; it very directly impoverishes life (p. 150)

Several studies have attempted to explore and understand the reasons of loneliness (Lunt, 1991; Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Rokach, 1988, 1989; Stuewe-Portnoff, 1988). One of the reasons is relocation that involves being separated from the person's support system, leading to what Rokach (1989) called "relational deficits." Relocation to another country with its distinctive socio-cultural, religious, and linguistic norms and traditions could affect students' successful adjustment to new situations. Another explanation of loneliness focused on the individuals' personal traits that prevent them from forming social bonds because they lack social and communicative skills and have fears of rejection. Peplau and Perlman (1982) pointed out that personal characteristics could exacerbate loneliness by inhibiting the individuals' desire to engage in social relationships. Loneliness could in turn lead to withdrawal from social relations in order to decrease the pain resulting from the inability to succeed in social engagement.

Findings from this study revealed that all the study participants with the exception of Masahiro faced some of the social loneliness reported in previous studies (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, & Pisecco, 2001). Despite having studied in Canada as an undergraduate student, Ricardo complained that he suffered greatly from the absence of a support network as a doctoral student. In his first interview, he complained that he did not know anyone in the city and the university and that he felt very isolated. When I interviewed him for the third time at the end of his first academic year in the PhD program, he hinted at his homesickness by saying that he was very eager to go back to his family and friends after a difficult and challenging year. Likewise, Maurizio went through a very serious social loneliness that greatly influenced his academic goals. During the interviews, he complained about his feeling of loneliness and the lack of a support network. Despite his attempts at establishing a network of friends on campus, he was still suffering from loneliness. These challenges had a detrimental effect on his personal and academic well-being. When Maurizio was in Italy, he had a strong support network, and was highly regarded among his peers and friends. However, when he arrived in Canada, he felt very isolated. This feeling continued throughout the whole academic year, resulting (among other factors) in his decision to discontinue his studies in Canada and go back to Italy.

Akeno's loneliness began when he arrived in the U.S. as a new student. Despite the feelings that he was socially accepted, he continued to feel lonely. When he arrived in Quebec—a province with its distinctive bilingualism and culture—he initially had difficulty adapting to the new situation. With time, however, he was able to make friends and surround himself with a support network. Similarly, Mustafa experienced the challenges of being a new student in the U.S. Immigrating to the U.S. as a teenager, he felt the socio-cultural differences in the new environment. Upon arrival in Canada with his family to pursue his graduate studies, Mustafa mentioned that he did not experience such type of socio-cultural challenges.

International students' loneliness and the lack of social support networks are troublesome and need particular attention because they could substantially affect students' opportunities for disciplinary socialization. Participating in the activities of their academic and research communities could be more effective when students become engaged with other individuals (Duff, 2010). Thus, creating a social environment that facilitates and welcomes the international students in the host countries will be advantageous to the students at the personal, social, and educational levels. I will return to this point in the final chapter.

Assistance Afforded to the Study Participants

Academic writing is the most crucial means through which doctoral students communicate their ideas, contribute to scholarly knowledge, and get their degrees granted. In order to write competently and to show a scholarly identity in their writing, students need to familiarize themselves with their disciplines' writing norms and conventions. However, not all students become competent academic writers overnight. Many need substantive support and encouragement from their disciplinary community.

As discussed in Chapter Two, this study views doctoral writing as a process that entails participation in a community of practice. This participation allows students to develop their writing by interacting with their community members (supervisors, professors, and peers) and receiving feedback on their texts from them.

Feedback is defined as the information that is provided to learners about their performance in regards to a learning task (e.g., writing a particular text) with the purpose of improving their performance (Ur, 1996). Research on written feedback conducted over the past decades has asserted the centrality of feedback for enhancing students' learning (Bangert, 2004; Carless, 2006; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). It has specifically revealed that feedback was acknowledged to be pedagogically useful to students (e.g., Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994).

Chickering and Gamson (1999), for example, pointed out that feedback permits learners to evaluate their knowledge, contemplate what they already learned and what they still need to learn, and receive advice for ways to improve their work in the future (Carless, 2006; Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2002).

Research studies on feedback have indicated that students have a clear preference for instructors' written feedback over other forms such oral and peer feedback (Saito, 1994; Zhang, 1995). These studies indicated that students who come from cultures that view teachers as the only source of authority in the classroom greatly value their instructors' feedback because they have confidence in the instructors' accumulated knowledge and skills in English.

Written feedback researchers have identified two main types of feedback on students' texts: 1) feedback on grammatical issues, and 2) feedback on content and ideas. Regarding the former, researchers found that the feedback on grammar represented one of the most critical aspects of improving students' writing. Ferris (1997) pointed out that certain types of instructors' commentary were more helpful than others in assisting students with revising their texts. Findings from her research showed that marginal comments, requesting clarifications, and comments on students' grammatical mistakes greatly helped students with their textual revisions. Furthermore, research showed that English as a second language students placed significant emphasis on obtaining the teachers' comments on their grammatical mistakes, and they felt frustrated when they did not receive it (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Leki 1991b).

Despite the fact that most studies on written feedback showed that ESL students request commentary on grammar, some studies revealed that they also want their teachers to comment on the content of their writing. Sträub (1997), for example, found that ESL students requested feedback not only on local writing issues (e.g., grammar and vocabulary) but also on global writing issues (e.g., content and organization). In addition, these students mentioned that they appreciated instructors'

comments that were given in the form of advice and explanations that opened up possibilities for improving the text. That is because, as Chi (1999) pointed out, students appraise comments that indicate to them that their instructor is involving and engaging them in a conversation about their writing.

Other researchers identified what they considered the "best practices" for providing feedback and suggested that it should be prompt, timely, helpful, constructive and non-threatening to learners (Atack, 2003; Grandzol & Grandzol, 2006; Huckstadt & Hayes, 2005; Mancuso-Murphy, 2007; Seiler & Billings, 2004; Smith, 2005; Swan, 2004). Despite these exhortations, some studies showed that many students found it difficult to interpret the instructors' feedback partly because the terminologies they used were unfamiliar to students or ambiguous (Carless, 2006; Higgins, 2000; Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2001, 2002).

Findings from this study revealed that all the participants acknowledged that receiving feedback was very important in helping them improve their academic writing. When asked whether they received content-related or language-related feedback, the five participants mentioned that they only received the former from their supervisors and professors. That is, they received feedback on the subject matter but did not get feedback on the mechanics of their writing (e.g., grammar or organization) which they felt they needed to improve the quality of their academic writing. In the sections below, I will discuss the nature of assistance on writing (or lack thereof) that the participants received from their supervisors, peers, and the wider university institutions.

Assistance from Supervisors

The importance of receiving feedback from instructors has been well-documented (Casanave, 1995; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Hyland, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a,b; Hyland & Lo, 2006; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997; Prior, 1991; Riazi, 1997). Some research pointed to the usefulness of feedback on content. Bates, Lane and Lange (1993), for example, argued that feedback

on content could help students develop an awareness of audience, which could lead them in turn to improve subsequent drafts. The rationale behind providing feedback on the content is that it could help students concentrate on the changes they need to do on the content of the text before paying attention to the issues of form (Ferris, 2002). This argument has been debated among writing scholars. Some research indicated that students are not burdened when they receive feedback on content and form together (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997, 2002). In their study, which looked at feedback given to ESL composition students, Fathman and Whalley (1990) recommended that "grammar and content feedback can be provided separately or at the same time without overburdening the student" (p. 187). Likewise, in a study on feedback given to Japanese ESL students, Ashwell (2000) pointed out that there should be no preference whether the feedback on content is given before the feedback on form or vice versa.

Findings from this study indicated that some of the participants complained that they did not receive feedback on form. Especially notable in the participants' reactions on this issue was the response that Maurizio received from his supervisor when he asked him for his help with academic writing. The supervisor bluntly told Maurizio to seek the help of an editor if he was not confident about competence in English writing. Ricardo, Akeno, and Mustafa mentioned that they did not receive any feedback on stylistic issues. Ricardo mentioned that he wished that it was a requirement for supervisors to know how to help their students with their writing. Masahiro mentioned that he would have preferred that his supervisor showed him how to rephrase his statements so that he could learn from him.

In sum, the participants agreed that they would definitely have preferred that their supervisors were more helpful with the stylistic writing issues. It could be said that due to the fact that the participants were learners of English as an additional language, they struggled with the

linguistic issues in their writing (e.g., grammar, prepositions, articles, and so on) and that their writing problems were not specifically related to content.

Regardless of whether supervisors and professors should give their students feedback on the mechanical aspects of their writing, the assistance afforded to participants could be useful to students if it focuses on providing opportunities for students to improve their writing through interaction with other individuals. From the RGS (and situated learning) perspective, learning occurs through a process of apprenticeship between an expert and novice learner. Through apprenticeship, the expert (specifically the supervisor) introduces students to the privileged discourse practices. As Paré (2011) pointed out:

> They [supervisors] advise on how and where certain things should be said, on what must and must not be mentioned, and on who should or should not be cited or criticized. Through feedback, questions, suggestions, and instruction, they help students locate their written contribution within the historical, intellectual, and rhetorical trends and traditions of their field.

Thus, while most professors do not engage in providing feedback on form, they teach their students how to join the conversation and become active participants and contributors to knowledge.

Assistance from Peers

Studies on peer feedback and its effect on improving academic writing are common (e.g., Aitcheson, 2014; Bruffee, 1983; Calkins, 1982, 1983; Elbow, 1973; Graves, 1983, 1984; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Moffett, 1983; Murray, 1982; Zhang, 1995; Zhu, 2001). Writing theorists encouraged the use of peer feedback to help students write and revise. Elbow (1973), for example, advocated the use of teacherless writing groups in which students offer each other direct response to their writing. Murray (1982) and Moffett (1983) proposed that teachers should instruct their students how to respond to their classmates' writing. Bruffee (1983) claimed that students could learn more and

could become better writers as a result of peer feedback. He believed that peer feedback would result in collaborative learning between peers.

Findings from peer feedback studies provided contradictory results. While some studies argued that peer feedback could have positive effects on improving academic writing (e.g., Berg, 1999; Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, & Huang,1998; Keh, 1990; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Min, 2005; Muncie, 2000; Paulus, 1999; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Tuzi, 2004), other studies suggested that peer feedback did not usually address significant writing problems in a text (such as argumentation and organization), but was mainly restricted to the corrections of mechanical language issues (e.g, grammar, vocabulary) (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Leki 1990; Nelson & Carson, 1995, 1998, 2006; Zhang, 1995; Zhu, 2001). Despite these inconclusive results, some studies have suggested that one of the main advantages of peer feedback is that it can be specifically useful for ESL students, provided that the peers giving feedback are equipped with the needed training that allows them to give useful comments on their peers' texts (Berg, 1999; Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, & Huang, 1998; Min, 2005; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Stanley, 1992).

Findings from the present study suggest that most participants reported that they did not receive any assistance from classmates on their writing. Maurizio was the only participant who actively and intentionally sought the help of an editor or a proofreader. During the tutorial sessions with his tutor, Maurizio was not a passive learner. He did not sit idle while the editor fixed his grammatical and semantic mistakes. Rather, he attempted to learn why his editor was making the changes on his text in order to improve his own writing. Mustafa, on the other hand, did not work with any writing group because he believed that his status as a non-native speaker of English student did not qualify him to work with others and to provide them with feedback on their writing, especially if they were native speakers of English. He said that he felt embarrassed to put himself in the spotlight and thus avoided giving his opinion about his classmates' writing. When he did, he was

very careful to sugar-coat his comments on his peers' texts. Mustafa's problems with sharing feedback could be cultural, as some studies have suggested. In a qualitative study that looked at the experiences of Arab graduate students in the U.S. with exchanging ideas on online courses, Al-Harthi (2005) pointed out that these students expressed fear and anxiety about exchanging ideas with others. He noted that they intentionally participated less in class discussions compared to their American peers lest they be viewed as showing off or trying to appear smart. This finding reflects the importance of modesty in the Arab culture. The same type of reaction towards interaction with peers has been reported when studying Asian students. For example, talking about three Chinese students' attitude toward giving and receiving feedback, some scholars noted that these students provide feedback that helps the group in preserving its harmony and solidarity (Carson & Nelson 1996; Nelson & Murphy 1992). Nelson and Carson (2006) concluded that many Chinese students perceive peer feedback as incongruent with their norms and values. That is, the Chinese students expressed their hesitation to disagree with their peers' comments in order to maintain harmony within their group. Based on their shared cultural background, they preferred not to give negative feedback to their peers and to hold back criticism. More specifically, the Asian culture sustains social harmony and discourages public disagreement in order to avoid "losing face" (Wang & Wu, 2008) at all costs due to its detrimental effects on one's dignity and credibility (Wang & Wu, 2008). From a RGT perspective, this means that the person giving feedback should be immersed in the disciplinary culture in order to be able to understand what is acceptable and what's not.

Assistance from University Institutions

Some of the participants reported that they did not receive any assistance from their departments and university (e.g., writing centre). However, when responding to my question about institutional assistance they received on their writing, some of the participants (Ricardo, Akeno and Maurizio) mentioned that their respective departments advised them to enroll in an elective

academic writing course designed specifically for graduate students. These students had very strong reservations about enrolling in such courses because they did not see the benefits of enrolling in a course that addresses general writing issues. They also refrained from attending an elective writing course because of the high cost of such courses. Consequently, they opted out and depended on other means to improve their academic writing. The behavior of Ricardo, Akeno and Maurizio seems to contradict their claim that they did not receive any institutional assistance. Ricardo, for example, was skeptical about the value of enrolling in such general English courses. Maurizio shared Ricardo's opinion and added that the courses were costly (a writing course costs more than a thousand Canadian dollars for international students). Thus, it can be said that the opportunity to learn more about academic writing was indeed offered to the study participants but they chose not benefit from it.

The Participants' Methods of Learning to Write

The study participants reported on the methods they used to learn writing in their disciplines: reading and analyzing articles and imitating the authors' writing styles, using a variety of resources such as self-help guidebooks, and private tutoring services.

When reading and analyzing articles, some of the study participants said that they looked at the specialized jargon, voice, organization, and style used in academic texts and attempted to imitate them in their own writing. Ricardo and Mustafa, specifically, stated that they imitated the writing style of scholars whom they liked. For Ricardo, imitating the writing style of others was not without struggles. He mentioned that when he wrote in English, he felt like a robot or an actor and that he felt "bad" because he did not have the freedom to use his own writing style. Ricardo's perception of his inability to use his own writing style revealed the constraining power of the disciplinary discourses and their strong effect on the members of the CoP in exercising their agency. Likewise, Mustafa mentioned that through reading he subconsciously imitated the writing style of one of his

favorite scholars (Hossein Nasr). He added that the more reading he did, the more his writing style changed to mimic the style used in his field.

As for using self-help guidebooks, Ricardo explicitly stated that he relied on these guidebooks to improve his writing skills. He considered that these guidebooks helped him in understanding how to organize his essays and to use specialized lexicon preferred in sociology. Some scholars (e.g., Kamler & Thomson, 2008; Shay, 2008; Stierer, 2000) have criticized using these guidebooks because they usually adopt a technical approach to writing, and because they merely focus on grammar, punctuation, spelling, citation practices, and prohibitions against plagiarism. Kamler and Thomson (2008), for example, criticized the dissertation writing self-help guidebooks:

> Regardless of the utility of the advice given, the discourse of the novice and the expert through which these texts are written works to position the doctoral researcher as a diminished scholar and to constitute a transmission pedagogy that normalizes the power-saturated relations of protégé and master. (p. 2)

That is, these guidebooks assume that the relationship between the author giving the advice on writing and the graduate student is a relationship between the expert who knows all about disciplinary writing as a result of his/her academic experience and that of a novice student whose only role is to accept the advice unquestionably. Kamler and Thomson (2008) disagreed with the philosophy of these graduate writing guidebooks because

> rather than a set of rules and default structures, doctoral writing is best understood as text work/identity work. By this we mean that texts and identities are formed together, in, and through writing. The practices of doctoral writing simultaneously produce not only a dissertation but also a doctoral scholar. (p. 2)

Thus, as the above statement indicates, the authors understand academic writing to be an act of identity construction.

Likewise, Shay (2008) argued that these guidebooks were not helpful in educating students about the specific disciplinary knowledge required in student writing. Other scholars have suggested that the writing guidebooks do not help students to write in accordance with the requirements of their disciplines because of their monolithic nature (Catt & Gregory, 2006; Hermerschmidt, 1999; Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 1999; Stierer, 2000). They argued that relying solely on such books may not produce the desired outcomes.

Finally, Maurizio hired private tutors to fix his papers, hoping to learn from them how to become a better writer. When working with the tutor, Maurizio was not an idle student. He mentioned that he was attentive to the changes that the tutor made on his texts in order to learn the mistakes he did in order to avoid them.

Despite this range of strategies, some of the participants in my study struggled to master academic writing, and some expressed frustration and anger. While it is true that doctoral education necessarily involves the students' struggle to learn writing, institutional intervention could be needed to make learning more likely and timely.

The Participants' Development as Students and Academic Writers

Some of the participants (Ricardo, Masahiro, and Mustafa) said that they felt both confident and insecure as students and academic writers. Other participants (Maurizio and Akeno) felt unconfident about their academic English.

Ricardo's emulation of his sociology professor gave him the perception of a growing sense of confidence. He believed that his emulation of one of his sociology professors was a sign that his budding scholarly identity was taking shape. In addition, Ricardo's sense of confidence was enhanced by his significant awareness of the scholarly status and power associated with becoming a scholar. He noted that this sense of status and power developed as a result of using the discourses of his community and sharing its objectives and worldviews. Despite this growing sense of confidence,

Ricardo considered that he was still not confident enough in regards to his academic writing ability. He was particularly not confident about the linguistic aspects of his writing (e.g., grammar mistakes and vocabulary choice).

Masahiro's growing sense of confidence had developed gradually from his being a novice PhD student to being a researcher. He did not view himself as a student only but as a researcher who needed to become productive through publishing articles and attending conferences. This perceived shifting attitude indicated Masahiro's development from being a recipient of knowledge (i.e., student) to a contributor to knowledge (i.e., researcher). Masahiro's perceived status as a competent participant in his discipline became crystallized and confirmed by his supervisor's comment on his writing ability, which the supervisor described as "phenomenal." While Masahiro acknowledged the difficulty of self-assessing his writing, his supervisor's positive testimony about the quality of his writing represented the most conspicuous affirmation that Masahiro became a competent academic writer. Masahiro represented a good example of a student experiencing both confidence and insecurity as an academic writer in English. Despite his supervisors' approval of his ability as a writer, Masahiro considered himself unconfident due to the fact that he still made mistakes when writing in English.

Similarly, Mustafa's perceived sense of confidence as an academic writer had grown considerably. Mustafa started his educational and writing experience in the U.S. schools with limited knowledge of writing in English. He struggled with writing as an undergraduate student, but his writing gradually improved as a PhD student when he felt more comfortable with academic English. Despite saying that he was comfortable writing in English, he felt that he still made mistakes when writing academic English.

A completely opposite perception to that adopted by Ricardo, Masahiro, and Mustafa was manifested by Maurizio and Akeno, who perceived themselves to be unconfident writers when the

study ended. Both participants became very frustrated about not being able to achieve the competent academic status they once achieved as students in their home countries. Maurizio expressed his frustration about not being able to show the confident student persona that he used to have in Italy. He clearly mentioned that his writing in English belittled him because he still did not have competence in English. Likewise, Akeno was a frustrated budding scholar who, despite having a sense of scholarly status as a teaching assistant, felt deprecated by his perceived professors' condescending view of him as a language teacher of Japanese. In addition, he felt embarrassed and not confident about his academic English because he thought he had many problems in his writing, ranging from choosing the right vocabulary to summarizing the main ideas in the readings.

The variation in the participants' levels of confidence could be attributed to a number of factors, including their proactivity, language proficiency, and the time spent in the PhD. Ricardo, for example, was fluent in English. He had been actively and proactively improving his English proficiency since he was in Peru. As a PhD student, he was keen on reading books to help him become a better writer. Thus, his enthusiasm and proactivity could have significantly contributed to his general sense of confidence as an academic writer despite the mistakes he still made. Mustafa's ease with academic English as a PhD student could be attributed to the fact that he spent his school and university years in the U.S. In addition, he spent a few years as an M.A. student in a Canadian university and became more accustomed to the English academic writing practices. Masahiro's confidence could be due to his fluency in English and the length of time he spent as a graduate student. As mentioned previously, Masahiro started to become proficient in English when he was still in Japan. He attributed his fluency to listening to music and befriending native speakers of English. And as an undergraduate student, he spent time pursuing a certificate in teaching English to speakers of other languages in the U.S. In addition, he pursued an M.A. in a Canadian university for a few years. At the time of study, he was a fourth-year PhD student. Generally, Masahiro has been

immersed in an English-speaking environment for at least six years. This level of experience in English writing has increased Masahiro's perceived sense of confidence as an academic writer, even though he was still insecure because of the grammatical mistakes that still appeared in his writing.

The lack of confidence in academic English can be seen in the cases of Maurizio and Akeno. Both students mentioned that they were not comfortable when writing in English. Maurizio started improving his general English skills (speaking, listening and reading) just a few months before being admitted into the PhD program. As he mentioned, he was not in full control of the English language and, as a new student, he was still not experienced enough with his discipline's writing practices. Thus, he felt very insecure about his ability as an academic writer. Likewise, and despite having spent some time as an M.A. student in the U.S., Akeno struggled with English writing. He was unable to organize his ideas, use correct vocabulary, and summarize the main arguments in his papers. This has lead to his lack of confidence in his writing ability in English and his preference to write in Japanese.

The Participants' Strategies of Self-Presentation in the Disciplinary Community

As writers in their disciplines, the participants underwent a process of negotiating the disciplinary writing expectations privileged by their disciplines. This negotiation of disciplinary literacy practices is considered more than an intellectual challenge (Ivanič, 1998; Northedge, 2003) because it can result in deep affective and ideological conflicts between the roles and values that students had acquired during their previous literacy practices and the new literacy environment. This argument has been expressed by Canagarajah (2002b) who noted that multilingual students use several strategies to negotiate subjective conflicts when writing in English. As I discussed in Chapter Two, these strategies are: accommodation, opposition, avoidance, appropriation, and transposition.

With regard to the way the participants reacted to their disciplinary writing norms and conventions, findings from this study suggest that the most commonly used strategy was

accommodating to their disciplinary conventions. From Canagarajah's (2002b) perspective, accommodation occurs when students accept the literacy practices and the discourses of their disciplinary communities. It signals the students' confirmation and acceptance of the established dominant discourses. It is used by writers who have an investment in accepting the dominant discourses to further their educational and professional interests. In Canagarajah's (2002b) study, Connor, a well-established Finnish-American scholar, and Irina, a Ukrainian graduate student, employed the accommodation strategy in their writing. In my study, it has also been particularly employed by Ricardo. Despite his status as a novice student in sociology, he said that he completely understood that accommodating to the writing conventions of sociology was needed for earning academic prestige and power. He explained the importance of accommodating to his discipline's writing conventions and the reaction of his professors when he complied with the disciplinary writing conventions:

> I think they [professors] would, sort of, respect me or they would take me more seriously, or they would see me as a more proficient writer or even a proficient thinker. I think the language would give your thoughts a sort of false respectability because the respect does not really [or] should not really come from how you write or what words are you using… But if you write with this fancy way and it looks professional and the language is just fluid and nice and you have this smart and articulate, professional-sounding sentences and paragraph then you are praised. I think on the other hand if you do not write like that, it could hurt you very badly.

Ricardo elaborated on what he meant by "if you do not write like that, it could hurt you very badly":

> It [your writing] would be looked down upon so badly because it is going against the standard. It will be so obvious if you do not at least do your best to sound like that. I mean it is hard to describe it off the top of my head but to write in a way that doesn't sound like a

> journal article just pulled off the *British Journal of Sociology* or *Political Science Association Review*, to write in a way that deviates too much from that even in the way that you use verbs and adjectives, how they organize the sentence or how long they allow it to be or the kinds of things they would bring into, I think would hurt you a lot.

As Ricardo's statement indicates, a student who goes against the "standard" way of disciplinary writing will be "looked down upon." As a result, the student has no option but to accommodate the dominant disciplinary discourse.

Ricardo admitted that it was difficult not to comply with his discipline's writing conventions:

> So, basically, I do not think I can go against academic writing. I think I have to learn to like it, learn to enjoy it or learn that it is something that we all do…I think it [writing in accordance with your disciplinary community writing conventions] is just one last instance to show that you know the game. You show that you are a member of the group called academic community because you have read the books, you have understood the concepts, you know the dynamics, you know the themes, you know what matters, what is it about, you know the story. I mean you are socialized into all these things and one last piece of demonstration that you are in this group is that you can put it in this sort of language. It is like we are not using English, we are using academic English. [It is] like you are saying: "We have our own secret society where we use this and that's how we go about it." I don't know.

As Ricardo's explanation indicates, he believed that abiding by his discipline's discourse conventions was of utmost importance to becoming a successful and accepted writer in the discipline. Otherwise, he would be considered an outsider who does not belong to the community. Thus, and based on Canagarajah's (2002b) taxonomy of strategies to negotiate conflicting subjectivities in writing, Ricardo's accommodation could be considered an investment to achieve progress in his studies and status in his disciplinary community.

Likewise, Mustafa displayed a clear awareness of the importance of complying with and accepting the disciplinary writing conventions. Since Mustafa had been a student in American and Canadian universities as an undergraduate and M.A. student for the past few years, he might have developed an awareness of what it meant to accommodate to the dominant discourse conventions. His understanding of academic writing was evident in his own definition of the term:

> I would say it [academic writing] means writing to further particular thoughts or points by following particular sets of conventional wisdom established by various discourse groups. You can't fall outside that logic without fully explaining your positions. And if the explanations are not satisfactory based on the discourse group's conventional wisdom or principles, you risk losing your membership from the various discourse groups that find contradictory claims in your arguments.

Mustafa's statement about the relation between losing one's membership in his disciplinary community and using the community's discourse reveals his cognizance of such an important aspect of doctoral education.

Mustafa's awareness of complying with his disciplinary community's discourse conventions was also evident in his understanding of his discipline's general writing features:

> I notice that scholars drop in specific names when using particular ideas; not much quoting and more paraphrasing. It is as though there is an unwritten rule to cite particular works when stating a particular term or idea. And the works you cite determine which discourse groups you belong to.

Here Mustafa indicates that an important aspect of a community's practice is citing the authors who are considered important in the field.

Maurizio's accommodation to his discipline's writing conventions was revealed when he explained his understanding of the term academic writing:

> Academic writing in English for me means standardized language where … formal terms … I mean the term I would use is specifically standardized. So, in a way and this is related to sociology of science [the term] can be understood by the community of the specific scientific community, which from the American standpoint is the world. So, you have this level of language which has to be the same for everybody and there [are] a lot of people in the world who don't actually speak English or do even understand English, but they can read academic English.

Maurizio's statement seems to imply that academic writing means that it is a specialized writing that required the use of the discourse commonly approved by the disciplinary community. It is an exclusive discourse that is available only to the individuals who belong to that community.

Maurizio's accommodation to the dominant disciplinary discourse was manifested when he talked about the writing style that he attempted to imitate in his papers. As he said, the academic style he was looking for resembled the style that was used by the anthropology scholars.

Masahiro's accommodation to his discipline's writing conventions was manifested in his attempt to imitate the writing style of native speakers of English:

> The difference I see between writing and speaking is that there's a more agreed upon norms in writing whereas speaking it's just variation. There is a lot of variation in speaking. So, in terms of accent or the way I phrase myself, when I speak I don't care if I sound Canadian, American, British or whatever but for writing I think because there's grammatically wrong structure, yeah, I try to be, I don't know, native-speaker-like or good researcher-like, let's say.

Masahiro's statement reveals his understanding that academic writing is a practice that is characterized by having "agreed upon norms." He acknowledged that when he speaks English, it is not important if others consider his accent to be like a native speaker of English, but when he writes

in English, he tries to write like an English speaker. Thus, Masahiro's statement could be interpreted that he understood the importance of accommodating to the writing style of his discipline.

Finally, Akeno also adopted the accommodation strategy while negotiating with the discipline's writing conventions. In response to my question about whether he imitates a particular style, Akeno said:

> Well, if it is possible, I want to keep some [of] my own characteristics as a native Japanese speaker no matter how good my English writing will be, will become and I don't want simply mimic or simply copy, you know, English writing, I mean, the native speakers' English writing and I hope I can still keep something, something [of] the characteristics as a native Japanese speaker.

Akeno's statement that he did not want to "simply mimic or simply copy" the English writing style could be interpreted that accommodation was the strategy that he employed as a writer. However, Akeno's accommodation was not without limitations. As he said, he hoped that he could use aspects of his Japanese identity in his academic writing in English.

In my study, it is possible to say that the five participants accommodated to the disciplinary conventions because they understood the advantages of not resisting or opposing the dominant discourses. Ricardo was both integratively and instrumentally-motivated to become a better academic writer in sociology. He was very willing to join the sociology discourse community to enjoy the status and power that membership could afford its members. In other words, he invested in the academic English to achieve better results in the future. He emulated the writing style of the experts in the field. He also emulated one of his preferred professors to become a better teaching assistant. All these efforts suggest that Ricardo was strategic in the way he approached his role as a doctoral student in the sociology program. From the beginning of his studies in Canada as an undergraduate student, he said that he knew that unless he earned a PhD in sociology, his chances of

better employment opportunities would not be high. This could explain his persistence and perseverance in the program. Thus, it could be said that Ricardo had an investment in accommodating and not resisting the dominant and privileged disciplinary discourses.

As for Mustafa, I would argue that he was an instrumentally-motivated student. As he mentioned, he was not interested in pursuing a career in academia, and he just wanted to finish his degree and work for a consulting company. It could be possible that he had an interest in accommodating to the discipline's conventions in an attempt to achieve an easier fulfillment of his studies.

As for Masahiro, I would also argue that he accommodated to the dominant discourses because he had an investment in finishing his studies and earn his PhD. In addition, it could be possible that his Japanese cultural background, with its known characteristic of seeking harmony and solidarity with the community, could have affected and hindered any thought or attempts at disrupting the consensus with the community through resisting its privileged discourses. Likewise, Akeno, a new Japanese graduate student, could have accommodated to the dominant discourses of the discipline because he was motivated and had an investment in becoming a professor (like other family members). Like Masahiro, Akeno might have preferred to accommodate in order to avoid any conflict with his disciplinary community.

It is important to point out that despite the fact that the study participants did not employ the strategy of resistance to the dominant discourses, some of them expressed implicitly and explicitly their annoyance (not resistance) for not being able to represent their own true selves in their writing. Ricardo, for example, mentioned that he felt "bad" for not using his own writing style. He added that he felt like a robot and an actor who just imitates the writing style of the scholars in sociology. Maurizio expressed his frustration for not being able to show his true personality. And Akeno mentioned that he wanted to preserve his Japanese writer identity.

To conclude, it's hard to imagine that new students would employ the other strategies described by Canagarajah (2002b) (transposition, opposition, and avoidance). They could not utilize these strategies because they would be required to construct an independent voice that positions them counter to the privileged and established disciplinary discourses. Using these resistance strategies required students to be empowered enough to establish an autonomous identity and voice without the fear of being silenced or rejected by the powerful disciplinary discourses.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a summary of the key research findings of the study. It also considers the implications of the study for pedagogy, policy and practice. Finally, it acknowledges the strengths and limitations of this study and suggests several recommendations for future research.

This study explored the writing and educational experiences of five international doctoral students, the nature of assistance they received from members of their disciplinary communities, and how they constructed a scholarly identity as writers in English. This study focused on three interrelated research questions:

I. How do international PhD students learn to write academically in English in a way that is acceptable to their academic disciplines?

II. What is the nature of institutional support they receive on their academic writing?

III. What kind of identities (or subject positions) do international PhD students adopt as a result of the participation in their disciplinary communities?

This study sought to add to the existing research on the experiences of international students in Western universities. It aimed to provide insights into how doctoral students learn writing in their disciplines. Research has shown that learning the discourse of the academic disciplines involves becoming a member of the academic community and sharing its views, beliefs, and specialized discourse (e.g., Ivanič, 1998; Hyland, 2004).

The study also sought to explore the institutional assistance that was afforded to the five international graduate students. Institutional assistance could include not only helping international students with their writing but also assisting them to adjust to life in a new country and a new university. Research on the experiences of international students abroad (e.g., Niekerk, 2012; Sarason, Sarason, & Gurung, 1997; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008; Trice, 2007) has shown that many of them suffer from loneliness, isolation, and the lack of a strong

support network. Exploring how and in what ways educational institutions could assist their doctoral students could decrease attrition and increase completion rates. In addition, exploring how the disciplinary communities (e.g., supervisors, professors, committee members, and peers) assist international students with learning academic writing is very important for the success of students as future scholars and researchers. This assistance includes affording students with the opportunities to participate in their disciplinary culture through attending conferences, workshops, seminars, and writing group sessions. This socialization would help students acquire the disciplinary discourse conventions to use them appropriately.

Finally, the study explored the identities or subject positions the participants took on and the strategies they employed as writers in their disciplines. Doctoral academic writing involves not only the production of knowledge but also the construction of a scholarly identity. While the knowledge that doctoral students produce is central for advancing knowledge, the scholarly identity or persona that they convey in their writing could be as important as their ideas. The persona that the writer projects in the text allows readers to form various images about the writer, including being objective, subjective, empathetic, or authorial. Thus, raising the international graduate students' awareness about the persona they project in their writing could help them create a scholarly identity that takes into consideration the expectations of their intended audience.

Implications for Departmental and Institutional Support

As indicated in this study, some of the study participants mentioned that they suffered from loneliness and isolation and the lack of institutional support with their writing. In order to make the educational and social experiences of doctoral students easier, three types of departmental and institutional support could be needed: first, support to international doctoral students who suffer from loneliness and isolation; second, support to students who have problems with their academic

writing; and third, support to supervisors and professors to help their doctoral students with their academic writing.

There is no doubt that international students think that they experience significant challenges (linguistic, social, cultural, financial, identity, and so on) when they leave their home countries to pursue their education abroad. Several studies (e.g., Baloglu, 2000; Niekerk, 2012; Sarason, Sarason, & Gurung, 1997; Trice, 2007) pointed out that international students with strong support networks are better equipped to handle stress and life difficulties. Baloglu's (2000) study, for example, revealed that most international students relied on their immediate network of peers for assistance. Despite the importance of culturally-based support networks, some studies (e.g., Sawir et al., 2007) observed that these types of networks cannot provide every student with the necessary assistance, empathy, and confidence. That is because these networks might become ghettos that could prevent the rich interaction between international students and their local counterparts. As a viable and necessary alternative, Sawir et al. (2007) suggested that in order to alleviate the loneliness of international students, universities could provide resources and promote channels that enhance the international students' networking with local students and with people outside the university—at least in the early stages of the students' educational sojourn. Sawir et al. (2007) warned against solving the loneliness problem by asking students to simply "adjust" to the local culture because such a proposal could carry with it serious individual and cultural costs. They argued that the cost of learning English should not be associated with having the students change their socio-culturally-cherished practices (e.g., not drinking alcohol) for the sake of enhancing their credentials among local students.

In regards to providing institutional support on academic writing to international doctoral students, and as the findings from this study indicate, the study participants reported that they wished they had received more support from their supervisors, peers, department and university. Providing more support to students with their writing from supervisors could have important

implications for students. Doctoral supervisors, as Paré (2011) noted, are "writing teachers" (p. 59) who introduce their students and guide them to the specific discourse practices preferred by their disciplines. They practice that role by advising students on whom, how, and what to cite or criticize in their texts and how to organize their ideas. Supervisors' feedback on their students' writing, thus, plays a critical role in helping students become scholarly contributors in their fields. Added to this role is their role as the "arbiters of quality" (Paré, 2011, p. 59), since supervisors are in charge of determining whether their students' scholarly contribution is in accordance with the discipline's standards. That is because a doctoral supervisor "represents, or stands in for, the Discipline itself, and also the Academy" (Green, 2005, p. 162).

The fact that the study participants complained about the perceived lack of support for their writing from their supervisors raises questions. Paré (2011), for example, pointed out that many supervisors, many of whom could have a sympathetic attitude towards their students' writing difficulties and a willingness to help them with their writing, find that helping them could be a difficult task. Paré (2011) noted that supervisors acknowledge their concern about the quality of the students' writing and the scarcity or even lack of institutional discussion of the topic during faculty meetings. He argued that the problem that supervisors face in providing support to their students on their writing results from the fact that those supervisors struggle with articulating their implicit knowledge to their students. He noted the existence of two factors that hinder supervisors from providing support to students: invisibility of disciplinary culture and automaticity. Paré (2011) argued that the fact that supervisors have been fully immersed in their discipline's culture makes them implicitly and subconsciously adopt the identity, values, beliefs, attitudes, roles, and practices of their disciplinary communities. These practices become the norm and the ways things should be. Closely associated to the normalization of the academic culture practices is the fact that supervisors become more automatic in their practices. That is, the more expert they become in their fields, the less they

become able to articulate and explicitly transfer their knowledge to their students (Rosenbaum, Augustyn, Cohen, & Jax, 2006). That is, when supervisors look at students' texts to advise them on what needs to be revised and make the text acceptable, they struggle to articulate their knowledge to their students. In other words, supervisors may act in a way similar to what Polanyi (1966) pointed out when he said that, "we can know more than we can tell" (p. 4). Thus, when supervisors attempt to convey their knowledge about the writing that is preferred by their disciplines, they may struggle to articulate their knowledge to their students.

Unfortunately, supervisors do not receive any preparation or institutional support for helping their students (e.g., McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009, Paré, 2011). Asking how supervisors and universities could help their students with their writing, Paré (2011) suggested that supervisors can improve their ability to articulate their knowledge about disciplinary writing practices by looking at books that focus on academic writing. Paré (2011) noted that supervisors could gain a broader perspective about the history of academic writing by reading books authored by Berlin (1987), Prior (1998) and Russell (1991). They could also books by Bazerman and Prior (2005), Giltrow (2002a,b), Hyland (2004), and Gross (1990, 2006), provided that they have time. However, this could be difficult to achieve due to teaching loads and system demands on North American faculty. Paré (2011) cautioned that many books that claim to offer advice on writing are filled with "bland, generic prescriptions" (p. 71). He also suggested that supervisors and students might need to develop what Bazerman (2009) called a shared "linguistic and rhetorical vocabulary" when they read a work together. This would help both of them to use a shared knowledge of meta-language about writing conventions (Paré, 2011).

In addition to receiving feedback from their supervisors, doctoral students may need support from their departments and university. This could be achieved by having students participate in open discussions about their writing within organized writing groups where they can receive

feedback in an environment that is non-threatening. Creating a public environment that emphasizes the importance of writing for doctoral students could help students and faculty to be more reflective, analytic and critical of their writing. The students in my study were offered the opportunity to enroll in a writing course but some of them rejected to benefit from it.

Departmental resources and facilities could also influence the doctoral students' learning experiences. The presence of a writing centre is very important. This is especially important for students in the social sciences. While doctoral science students usually work in research groups, students in the humanities and social sciences tend to work individually and to interact primarily with their supervisor. This will likely make them feel isolated and thus become more demanding of their supervisors.

Finally, students could also receive support and feedback from their colleagues and peers. Research (Jazvac-Martel , Chen, & McAlpine, 2011) has shown that the students' relationship with their peers provides them with motivation and feedback. Students are more comfortable seeking advice and support from their peers than their supervisors because they are usually more supportive and less judgmental. The cooperative relationship between peers could be very conducive to learning because, as Boud and Lee (2005) noted, "[p]eers do not necessarily learn as a natural outcome of their being peers" (p. 515) but because the non-judgmental and equal power relationship between peers makes it more conducive to learning.

Implications for the Teaching of Writing in the Disciplines

The implicit nature of the rhetorical rules of academic writing in English has important implications for the teaching of academic writing. As I discussed in Chapter Two, while RGS scholars were not primarily concerned with providing a specific writing pedagogy, there was a significant controversy over the issue of whether teaching genres should be done implicitly or explicitly. Miller (1984) conceived genres as typified rhetorical responses to recurring situations that

cannot be acquired through explicit teaching due to their implicit social, cultural, and discursive features. RGS scholars (e.g., Artemeva & Fox, 2010; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Devitt, 2004; Freedman, 1993, 1994, 1999, 2006) argued against the explicit teaching of the textual features of genres except in very limited situations.

As the statements of the five study participants indicated, they primarily learned academic writing through reading journal articles in their disciplines. As the research findings by some RGS scholars suggested (e.g., Freedman, 1987), reading is one of the ways that allows students to produce a particular genre. However, and especially for students who speak English as an additional language, writing instructors and language specialists may be able to help them learn to write in their disciplines by raising their awareness of certain grammatical, rhetorical, and social aspects of academic written English. This could be achieved by using various pedagogical approaches (e.g., Devitt, 2004; Johns, 2007; Tardy, 2009) to socialize students into the genres of their disciplines. I here agree with Gentil (2003), who said:

> Rather than debating about whether explicit writing instruction may have any role in facilitating the academic literacy development of university students in their discipline, it may be more useful to research what kind of instruction may be useful or not useful, how, and in what contexts. For instance, what aspects of written language use may it be possible and useful to teach explicitly? At what levels of specificity may genre features be best taught? What sort of explications may be more illuminating and for which kinds of students? Are explications of social language uses and language forms most effective ahead of, in the context of, or after engagement in meaningful written language practices? (pp. 419-420)

Implications for Research and Instruction in Intercultural Rhetoric

As I discussed in Chapter Two, contrastive rhetoric is an area in applied linguistics

that investigates the preferred patterns of writing across various languages, genres, and academic disciplines that are characteristic of non-native speakers of English (Carson & Leki, 1993; Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1966; Kroll, 1990). Connor (1996) argued that CR is useful for both students and teachers because it allows them to identify the writing problems and the differences in the writing patterns that are privileged in the students' first language and the target language. Other scholars argued that knowledge of CR could be helpful for pedagogy because it allows English instructors to design curricular material that can be used to socialize students into the preferred writing patterns in the target language (Fox, 1994; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Canagarajah (2002b) credited CR for treating the students' discursive variations with tolerance, openness, and appreciation. He pointed out that contrastive rhetoric's democratic attitude of relativism "would prevent teachers from criticizing students for using different conventions or thinking of academic discourses as a neutral construct that any intelligent person should be able to adopt" (p. 34).

Contrastive rhetoric has been criticized for several reasons: 1) for lacking interest in the identity of students and its assumption that they have no agency over their writing (Matsuda, 1997), 2) for essentializing students (Leki, 1997) and for failing to treat them as independent individuals and not as representatives of their cultures (Spack, 1997), 3) for being deterministic, reductive, and stereotypical (Zamel, 1997), 4) for assuming that the cultural background of students' was the sole determinant of their writing practices without taking into consideration the students' educational and social background as possible factors in explaining the writing differences, and 5) for prescribing the need of students to conform to the Western writing norms (Canagarajah, 2002b).

Despite the fact that over the last three decades CR has revised its extreme version of determinism, which assumed that multilingual students are conditioned by their first language in a way that prevents them from writing in other styles (Kaplan, 1966), its original premise still hold (Canagarajah, 2002b). Kaplan (1996) still maintained that

> different cultures have different rhetorical preferences for the organization of written text... Contrastive rhetoric preferences not only shape written text in distinct languages and cultures, but tend to manifest themselves consistently, if subtly, in the writing of students learning a second language. (p. 197)

Kaplan's statement, as Canagarajah (2002b) pointed out, assumes that "human agency cannot transcend cultural biases" (p. 34), that "[c]ulture expresses itself beyond one's control when a writer is composing in a second language" (p. 34), and that "if features of another culture appear in the writing of a language, it's a case of interference rather than a creative case of appropriation or negotiation" (p. 34).

Despite the criticisms leveled at CR, I agree with Gentil's (2003) position that contrastive rhetoric could be a valuable heuristic tool for "familiarizing writers and teachers in situations of intercultural communication" (p. 427). I also agree with his argument that "in a context of increasing individual mobility and cross-cultural exchanges, it may be impossible and inadvisable to equate an individual's preferred writing patterns with a certain national or linguistic background" (p. 427) and that

> the rhetorical vocabulary that they may learn to attend to and talk about differences in rhetorical expectations may also help them to understand and negotiate their own rhetorical expectations with their audiences, rather than remaining confused about communication breakdowns or conforming to authoritative audiences (p. 427)

In addition to raising the students' awareness about the variety of rhetorical styles, language instructors could also employ the genre critical awareness approach to help students recognize the motives, beliefs, and ideologies associated with writing in academia. Combining the students' awareness of the existence of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural rhetorical styles with an awareness of

the existence of a variety of disciplinary rhetorical styles could be a powerful tool for enhancing the students' writing experience.

In sum, demonstrating and analyzing the linguistic and organizational features of international students' texts without tying it to a particular theory that takes the various social, cultural, and ideological situations and contexts of writing into consideration may not be beneficial. Despite the importance of the students' inherited rhetorical preferences in L1, I believe that membership in a discourse community or community of practice and absorbing its preferred rhetorical practices and discourses could trump the students' national culture as the necessary factor for success in academic writing. This belief is supported by some studies which suggested that instead of judging international students' writing in composition classes, more attention should be paid to their writing in their subject matter courses (see Johns, 1991; Leki & Carson, 1997; Schneider & Fujishima, 1995) where they do much better. In other words, the focus of L2 writing studies should be on how students write in specialized disciplinary genres. Consequently, the genre framework seems better suited to allow us to understand the writing challenges of L2 students. This understanding has been nicely addressed by Liebman (1988, p. 6) who noted that

> [t]heorists such as Patricia Bizzell, David Bartholomae, Myra Kogen, and Alan Purves argue that success in college involves learning a second language: the language of American academia. Whether a student's first language is Japanese or nonacademic oral English, the problem is the same: the student "has to learn to speak our [academic] language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 4).

Despite evidence in my data which suggests that traces of the students' first language could still appear when writing in English (e..g, Akeno's use of emotional language that characterizes the Japanese language), I believe that the disciplinary discourse could be as powerful as the students'

first language. I completely agree with Bartholomae in his characterization that students have to learn the academic language, which could be considered a second language due to its own unique characteristics. That is, in order to be able to use the English academic discourse, students have to become socialized into that language. Socialization entails viewing the world from the perspective that is shared with the discourse community and using its specialized discourse.

Implications for the Teaching of Identity Construction

As discussed in Chapter Two, the interest in the issue of identity construction of learners has been discussed frequently in composition studies and applied linguistics as evidenced from the multiplicity of publications on the topic (e.g., Block, 2007a,b; Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Hyland, 2010; Ivanič, 1998; Yancey, 1994). Because of the importance given to identity (or voice) in academic writing, some scholars questioned the real value of focusing on this notion. Hashimoto (1987), for example, argued that the importance given to voice has reached an "evangelical zeal" to such a degree that success or failure in having a voice in writing could have consequences for students: either going to heaven or hell. The notion of voice has been criticized in both composition studies (Bowden, 1999; Faigley, 1992) and second language studies (e.g., Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996) because of the difficulties it poses for ESL students. Bowden (1999), for example, argued that the notion of voice "epitomizes a logocentric, Eurocentric, patriarchal approach to discourse that ... remains stubbornly embedded in our conversations about texts" (pp. viii). Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) criticized voice for its alleged strong association with the Western assumption that the self is unitary and autonomous. They pointed out that voice is interconnected with a Western "ideology of individualism" (p. 46) and it could be challenging for ESL students because the "the notion of the individual varies substantially across cultures" (Matsuda, 2001, p. 51). Stapleton (2002) questioned focusing students' and teachers' attention on voice and expressions of academic identity in writing. He argued that instead of focusing on the

issue of identity, the emphasis should be more on the students' ideas and argumentation. In fact, this same observation was made by one of my study participants (Masatoshi) when he said that he preferred to compete with the native speakers of English using his ideas since his English proficiency was incomparable to theirs.

While both arguments have their own logic, it would be useful to say that just as it is important for students to show their understanding of the subject matter, it would be important to draw their attention that writing in a particular way could convey a certain message about their persona. It would be useful to raise their awareness that their reader will form a particular image of them through the way they write. As Gentil (2003) observed:

> I believe that there is pedagogical value in raising students' awareness of the negotiation of identity in academic writing through questions such as: If you write in this way, you may create this impression about yourself on your readers; do you want to create this kind of impression? More important, perhaps, I believe in the potential benefits of helping students clarify what kinds of person they aspire to become through questions like: Where do you see yourself in ten years? What aspirations would make your life meaningful and worth living if you could realize them within the next ten years? (p. 432).

Limitations and Contributions of the Study

This study, like all research, has some limitations. First, it presents the perceptions of experiences of only five international doctoral students. While a small sample does not allow generalizing the findings to a larger population, it offers insights into the learning experiences of these five individuals and points to specific issues that may require further exploration in future research. Second, the data were collected over a relatively short period of time and do not allow for a longitudinal record of the participants' literacy development. As a result, my sense of changes in the participants' experience is based largely on their own reports. Third, because of their heavy

schedules, I was not able to collect more and different types of data from participants. With more time, additional interviews would have provided greater insight, as would have focus group discussions, for example. Despite these limitations, the study shed light on the experiences of the students and provided a forum for them to speak. It helped to understand their beliefs about themselves as students and writers and the various socio-cultural challenges they faced as international students in Canadian universities. These findings could be considered useful for providing better support for international graduate students.

Suggestions for Future Research

The participants in this study reported on the methods they used to learn writing in their disciplines: reading and analyzing articles, imitating authors' writing styles, and using a variety of resources such as self-help guidebooks, private tutoring services, and peer advisors. Some of the students said that they looked at style used in academic texts and attempted to imitate them in their own writing. Other students had problems with organizing their own texts and attempted to learn how to organize their ideas by reading articles in their fields. Due to the lack of formal support from their professors and supervisors, one of the students hired expensive private editor to fix his papers, hoping to learn from the editor how to become a better writer. Other students, who did not have the resources to hire an editor, resorted to self-help guidebooks to improve their academic writing. Finally, some students sought feedback on their writing, aiming at using this feedback to achieve better writing competence. Despite this range of strategies, some of the participants in my study struggled to master academic writing, and most expressed frustration and anger. Future research would extend my doctoral findings by tracking the process of student learning over time. Future research, then, would be longitudinal in nature in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' development as academic writers. The extended duration of the study would allow me to return to participants repeatedly and to explore the changes in their attitude, understanding, and

strategy over time. In addition, a longitudinal study would allow participants to offer more frequent and deeper reflections on their experience (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2004). The longitudinal study, thus, would be ethnographic and would use a larger sample of participants (students, professors, supervisors, and peers) and an extensive data (e.g., a variety of students' writings, class observations). The following questions might guide future research:

1) What are the implicit factors that affect international graduate students' strategies to conform to or resist the dominant disciplinary discourses?

2) At what stage in the graduate students' doctoral journey would resistance to dominant discourses become feasible and less costly?

3) Given the fact that genres are situated, local, cultural, and disciplinary bound, what factors would make the disciplinary rhetorical discourses overshadow the students' rhetorical preferences they had acquired from their cultures?

4. What differences exist between the strategies for self-presentation that expert multilingual writers adopt and those adopted by novice students?

5) Given the fact writing in the humanities and social sciences is a solitary activity, how can we encourage peer collaborative writing?

6) How can supervisors' ability to transmit their implicit disciplinary rhetorical knowledge to their students be enhanced?

7) What ways could be employed to increase the integration of international students in the disciplinary and departmental activities to decrease their sense of loneliness and its effect on their social and academic achievements?

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APPENDIX "A"

Invitation for International Graduate Students to Participate in the Study

McGill University
Faculty of Education

Dear Doctoral Student,

I am a PhD candidate in McGill's Faculty of Education. I am conducting a study to help me better understand the experiences and challenges that international graduate students face during their studies. Specifically, I am interested in exploring how international students respond to the linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical differences between their home countries and Canada. The research will help other international students adapt more quickly and effectively when they travel abroad to study, and it will help universities to support the international students that they recruit.

My research methodology consists of interviews and analysis of students' writing. I will be audio-recording interviews. All audio-recorded data will be transcribed and rendered anonymous; no audio-recording will occur without the consent of those being recorded. I hope to recruit international doctoral students from your department as participants, and expect that most participants will be asked to give no more than an hour or two of their time. If you would be willing to participate in this study, or if you have any questions, please contact me at: nazih.el-bezre@mail.mcgill.ca

If you do agree to participate, you will receive a more elaborate explanation of the study (orally and in writing) when you are asked to sign a consent form.

Thanks for considering this request.

Nazih El-Bezre,

PhD Candidate
McGill University
Faculty of Education
Integrated Studies in Education

APPENDIX "B"

Participants' Informed Consent Form
McGill University

Research title: International doctoral students learning academic writing in English: A multi-case study of five doctoral students' experiences in Canada

Investigator:
Nazih El-Bezre. McGill University. Faculty of Education, Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE). Email: nazih.el-bezre@mail.mcgill.ca

This study will contribute to a growing body of research into doctoral education by providing a better understanding of the challenges that international graduate students face when studying in a foreign country. This understanding can be used to help students become productive contributors to their areas of study.

Rationale for the Research

The purpose of this project is to explore and investigate the challenges that international graduate students attempting to write in their disciplines and the strategies they develop to become full members of their disciplinary communities. This exploration and investigation will help us understand how these students develop or fail to develop the academic practices and identity required to transform them from learners to participating members of the discipline.

Procedures

Procedures will include audio-recorded interviews, audio-recorded focus groups, and analyzing samples of writing.. The interview is intended to determine the graduate students' academic and linguistic backgrounds, disciplinary affiliation, and goals for pursuing a PhD. It will also discuss the challenges of academic writing in English, the difficulties students encounter in becoming members of their disciplines, and their perception of their sense of self and identity. The focus groups discuss various issues related to writing and enculturation of doctoral students in their fields of study. Finally, students' texts will be analyzed for evidence of the linguistic and rhetorical problems they may experience when writing in English.

Anonymity/Confidentiality

All personal names and other identifying information will be coded before being analyzed and presented in a report. We guarantee confidentiality of the interview responses. Fictitious names will be used during analysis and in the report.

Risks and Benefits

I do not foresee any potential risks or discomfort to you as a result of participating, and participation is entirely voluntary. There is no more risk in this study than you would face in everyday life. No sensitive questions will be included in the interviews. If you experience any discomfort and ask for

the interview to be stopped, it will be stopped immediately. I will take the following steps to guarantee your rights as a participant in this study:

1) You have the right to review all of your data at any time.
2) Names will not appear in the database. You will be assigned an alias.
3) The documents and audiotapes will be safeguarded for the period of time after the research ends, and will then be erased or destroyed.
4) You always have the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty or prejudice.
5) This study is in no way a part of the courses you are taking, and there are no consequences for refusal to participate in this project or any part of it.

The Right to Withdraw

You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study. The data collected prior to your withdrawal from the study will be retained for analysis, if you agree to indicate so at the bottom of this form.

Security and Future Use of Data

Only the principal investigator will have access to raw uncoded data, which will be kept in a locked and secure place. The raw uncoded data, including interview recordings, will be destroyed when the larger research project is completed. The uncoded transcripts will be shredded and disposed of and digital recording files will be erased.

This project was reviewed and has received ethics clearance by the McGill University Research Ethics Committee.
In order for you to participate, the university requires that you understand the nature of the study in which you have agreed to participate. *After reading this document, please sign below if you agree to participate.*

If you have any questions, please contact Nazih El-Bezre at: nazih.el-bezre@mail.mcgill.ca.

Please check the boxes if you confirm:

□ I have read the above description and letter. I understand the conditions under which I will participate and give my consent to be a participant.

□ If I decide to withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point can be used for analysis.

_____ _____ _____

Participant's Name (Please print) Participant's Signature Date

_____

Participant's Email Address

Principal Researcher's Name Principal Researcher's Signature Date

Nazih El-Bezre _____ _____

APPENDIX "C"

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Personal Background Information

1. Where are you from originally?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your mother tongue (L1)?
4. What languages do you speak?
5. Have you ever taken TOEFL or any other English proficiency tests? What was your score?
6. How did you learn English, since when and for what purposes?
7. What is your field of study for your B.A, M.A, and PhD?
8. Have you ever lived in other English-speaking countries? Where? For how long? What was the purpose?
9. What are some of the jobs that you did in your home country and elsewhere?
10. How long have you been living in Canada?

Education and Professional Experience

1. When did you decide to pursue a PhD in your discipline?
2. How and since when have you developed an interest in your discipline?
3. Do you see a link between your desire to pursue a PhD and your motivation to learn English?
4. What are your aspirations in life in addition to earning a PhD? How would you rank these aspirations?
5. Do you see a link between these aspirations and your motivation to learn English?
6. Please talk a little about your previous educational experiences in your home country.
7. Please talk about your educational experience in any other country where you pursued your studies.
8. What department and program are you in now?
9. What stage are you at in your current program?
10. What are the requirements for your current program? Courses? Comprehensive Exams? Thesis? Dissertation?
11. How many courses have you taken? Have many courses are remaining?
12. What are some of the classes you have taken?
13. Have you taken the Comprehensive Exam?
14. Have you submitted your thesis proposal? Was it approved?
15. Are you working on the thesis?
16. What stage in your thesis? (data collection, data analysis, writing up the thesis)

Writing Practices in Your Native Language and English

1. What types of writing did you do in your native language as an undergraduate and/or a graduate student?
2. What are you memories about how you learned to write acceptable papers in school (high school, college)? Does any event or experience stand out for you as memorable?
3. What piece/s of writing from any previous classes stands out for you as memorable? Why was it memorable? What kinds of feedback you have gotten on the paper from your professors, and your response to this feedback.
4. Describe what it was like for you to write papers in graduate school.
5. Recall whether there was a special way of talking and writing about issues in your field. Recall how you learned this discourse?
6. Compared to your peers in your home country, how do you evaluate your writing in your native language?
7. When writing in your native language, what areas of writing do you find most difficult/the easiest? (grammar, vocabulary, style, organization, planning)
8. Have you had any academic publications in your L1? When? Which journal? Is it a peer-reviewed journal?
9. What English writing courses have you taken in your home country?
10. What was emphasized in the writing courses or other courses that required writing?
11. How do you evaluate your writing in English when you compared to that of your peers back in your home country?
12. What are some of your difficulties when writing academic tasks in English?
13. What are your strengths in academic writing in English?
14. Do you prefer to write in your native language or English? Why?
15. What kind of academic writing are you currently doing or have recently been doing?
16. What was the hardest part about writing in English?
17. What was the easiest part about writing this piece?
18. Do you follow a particular writing style?
19. How do you evaluate your writing in your English if you compare your writing to that of native speakers of English?
20. Which aspects of writing you wish you can be better at?
21. Do you try to improve your writing? How?
22. Many international students around the world would like to have an accent similar to the native speakers of English when they speak. In writing, do you think it's important to sound like a native speaker of English in terms of style? Why?
23. What kind of writing sources do you often use while writing in English? (e. g. dictionary, grammar book, journal articles in your area regularly)
24. When you read the professional journal article, what do you do usually? (e. g. take notes, copy useful sentences, make a photocopy and keep it).

25. Have you had any academic publications in English? When? Which journal? Is it a peer-reviewed journal?
26. What was the easiest part of writing the article?
27. What was the hardest part?
28. What are the major differences when writing an academic paper in English and in your native language? Can you describe the differences?
29. Are you currently writing the thesis or dissertation?
30. What is your topic for your thesis or dissertation?
31. How did you choose the topic or the general area of your thesis or dissertation?
32. How much assistance does your advisor give you on your writing?
33. Has your advisor worked with you to improve your English writing skills? If yes, please give examples.
34. Besides your advisor, who else helps you with your writing?
35. What are your suggestions for your advisor to better help you with your writing of research articles or your dissertation?
36. What kind of help on your writing do you get from your professors?
37. Do you discuss your writing with other students in your department?
38. Do you feel such a discussion helpful? If yes, why?
39. What kinds of comments and suggestions from your advisor and professors do you think are the most helpful for improving your writing?
40. What was the most positive/helpful comment you received from advisor?
41. What kind of outside help do you get on your writing?
42. Which sections in your papers are most difficult to write? (e.g., introduction, review of the literature, methodology, results, discussion).
43. When writing in English, do you try to imitate the writing style of other writers?
44. Do you prefer to write in English? Why?
45. Do you prefer to write in your native language? Why?

Perception of Change

1. Looking back to your first semester in the PhD program, describe how your view of yourself as a PhD student has changed. Where do you think you would like to end up in a few years?
2. Between the first semester and now, do you perceive that your attitude toward your discipline has changed? If so, in what ways?
3. Looking back to the first semester, has your attitude toward your writing changed since the first semester? If so, in what ways?
4. How do you feel about your writing these days? How do you feel about yourself as an academic writer? What changes occurred in your academic writing?