

DISCIPLINARY ROUTES: NEGOTIATING ACADEMIC IDENTITY IN GRADUATE-
LEVEL WRITING

by

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ABSTRACT

Over the past half century, writing scholars and applied linguists have examined students' socialization into the discourses and practices of academia, highlighting the importance of writing in this regard. Specifically, scholars have considered how students try to reconcile their interests and their evolving identities with classroom and disciplinary writing expectations (Casanave, 2002), a process that is mediated by institutional or program requirements, interactions with instructors and classmates, course artifacts, and internalized notions of what it means to be a successful student or academic (Prior, 1998; see also Anderson, 2017). This work has increasingly recognized writing as a socially embedded activity and highlighted students' own perspectives on their learning. However, two distinct aspects of graduate-level writing have remained underexplored: (1) writing in interdisciplinary programs, which require students to become fluent in multiple research traditions, and (2) the role of classroom-based writing, including newer genres and low-stakes tasks, in advancing students' learning and self-perceptions.

I respond to these gaps by sharing an ethnographically-oriented (Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016) study of nine multilingual doctoral students in interdisciplinary programs at "Southwestern University," a large public research university in the U.S. Southwest. At the time of the study, the participants were in the process of completing their coursework, for which they produced a range of writing assignments, including discussion posts, reading responses, ethnographic descriptions, multimodal presentations, literature reviews, and research proposals. Using class observations, literacy and talk-around-text interviews (Lillis, 2008), and textual analysis, I examine how the students presented themselves in their writing over a period of two semesters, focusing on their disciplinary affinities and research interests. This way, I aim to

capture graduate-level writing as a “lived-through experience” (Chiseri-Strater, 1991, p. xxi) that is shaped by “a complex array of social, personal, historical, cultural, and linguistic factors” (Casanave, 2002, p. 146). My analysis draws on theories of genre, (inter)disciplinarity, multilingualism, and writer identity or voice.

The findings of this study suggest that classroom-based writing plays a more important part in “disciplinary becoming” (Curry, 2016; Dressen-Hammouda, 2008) than is often assumed, as it provides students with opportunities to adopt various subject positions and thus negotiate their sense of self as aspiring scholars or professionals. In addition, I show how digital and multimodal genres structure the learning process by facilitating various forms of peer socialization which doctoral students orient to their classmates as mutual apprentices. My analysis further indicates that classroom-based writing may help students find their way in unfamiliar disciplines and research traditions and help them formulate identities as interdisciplinary scholars. Apart from giving nuanced insight into the connections between writer identity, genre knowledge, and disciplinary learning, I offer suggestions for practitioners to improve writing instruction and support.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As doctoral degree holders are increasingly faced with a highly competitive academic job market and pressure to “publish or perish,” many are raising concerns over the goals and functioning of graduate education. Indeed, given the limited number of tenure-track faculty job openings and the growing “oversupply” of PhDs, doctoral students nowadays are often encouraged to consider teaching-intensive or administrative positions, or even to “rebrand” themselves for a non-academic or “alt-ac” career (e.g., Polk & Wood, 2019) which might offer better job security in the long run. Two decades ago, the Survey on Doctoral Education and Career Preparation (Golde & Dore, 2001) considered what doctoral students hoped to accomplish with their degrees, and whether or not their programs were effective in preparing them for the careers they hoped to pursue. Survey data from more than 4,000 advanced doctoral students in a range of disciplines suggested that students often lack a clear understanding of what doctoral education entails. What is more, many students felt that their program did not adequately prepare them for the jobs they envisioned. For this reason, commenters on academic news websites like The Chronicle of Higher Education and Inside Higher Ed have argued for the need for structural changes in doctoral education, urging professors to avoid treating students as “younger versions of themselves” (Cassuto, 2015, n.p.) and help them prepare for a changing academic landscape.

Against the backdrop of this debate, as well as the ongoing marketization of universities, the questions of what it means to become an academic and what the role of graduate education should be in this process have become ever more pertinent. Most doctoral programs continue to place a heavy emphasis on independent research skills. Unsurprisingly, then, it is the final thesis or dissertation that has received the most attention in scholarship on writing in doctoral

programs, as the most important research project PhD students complete, and one that is widely considered as a “rite of passage” and life-changing event. However, doctoral students in the U.S. first complete several years of graduate-level coursework for which they will typically produce a range of analytic or reflective writing, depending on their course of study. As Kruse (2006, 2007) has noted, these classroom writing practices can be traced back to the early-nineteenth-century university reforms in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, which coincided with a growing emphasis on written discourse in research communication. As part of these broader developments,

[u]niversities were reenvisioned as sites for the production of original and socially useful knowledge through research; the traditional roles of faculty and students were reconfigured as faculty became knowledge producers and students their active apprentices; and instructional practices shifted to serious dialogue (rather than oral exercises) and written (as opposed to oral) examination. (Prior, 1997, p. 282)

This Humboldtian university model, which casted students as novice knowledge producers, provided the basis for the rapidly emerging universities in the U.S. several decades later, where it continues to shape writing expectations in graduate programs to this day. While classroom writing tasks do not necessarily serve to report original research, they often enable students to contribute their own ideas and insights. Much like the German-style seminar, this approach thus seems aimed at stimulating relatively “autonomous, interest-oriented learning” (Kruse, 2006, p. 332; see also Russell, 2002).

Although the thesis or dissertation remains a key genre in students' transition to independent knowledge production, the importance of classroom-based writing should thus not be underestimated. The assignments they complete for their courses range from the ubiquitous research paper (or term paper) to shorter tasks such as reading responses, literature reviews, research proposals, and class presentations. At first glance, such tasks could seem of limited relevance to students' long-term learning, and they might even be dismissed as "busywork." Looking back on a landmark academic discourse socialization study (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1991) in which his own writing provided the main focus, Ackerman (1995) indeed explained that he viewed his papers more as "exercises in 'getting by' in the day-to-day expectations of a given class" than as writing that captured his disciplinary initiation process (p. 148). However, Ackerman's retrospective comment rather highlights the local and situated nature of graduate-level writing within distinct classroom "ecologies" (see also Casanave, 2002), and as such further attests to the need to consider the role of lesser known or hidden genres in shaping students' learning (Swales, 1996; see also Swales & Lindemann, 2002). Especially at this stage, students ideally have ample opportunities to explore their interests and future goals, not only under the tutelage of mentors or advisors, but also in interaction with instructors and peers, and thus to develop their sense of self as novice scholars or professionals. Multilingual students, moreover, should have a chance to become proficient in conveying themselves as users of English, especially if they have limited prior experience with English as an academic language. Upon closer examination, then, classroom writing seems to serve as a crucial site for academic identity construction.

A few writing scholars, including Paul Prior and Christine Casanave, have done pioneering ethnographic work in this regard by considering how graduate students negotiate their

purposes in writing assignments in the social sciences. Specifically, Prior (1998) examined classroom writing tasks in sociology and American Studies in several case studies, detailing how writing goals and expectations were mediated by instructors, other class members, and a variety of course artifacts. He argued that the “dialogic” process of classroom writing served to examine these (inter)disciplines and negotiate their boundaries and opportunities, rather than simply initiating students into them. Casanave (2002) in turn considered how graduate-level writing tasks also provide an opportunity for students to give shape to their evolving academic identities, thus highlighting students’ individual agency in their writing and their learning process more generally. Together, this research suggests that students do not follow down the same path as their peers or senior scholars, as they bring their own beliefs and aspirations to bear on their writing. Occasionally, students may also fail to identify with or resist certain writing conventions or practices (see also Canagarajah, 1999), and in some cases this could even make them decide to drop out their program (Casanave, 2002). Thus, scholars increasingly recognize how graduate students, and especially those for whom English is an additional language, attempt to “shape their own learning and participation by exercising their personal agency and actively negotiating their roles or positionalities” (Morita, 2004, p. 590). Applying the metaphor of role-playing, Casanave (2002) puts it thus:

Many of the graduate students and young faculty I worked with simultaneously played multiple roles, weaving in and out from positions on the sidelines to positions of greater authority and independence. However, in the settings that I became familiar with, roles and practices were not explicitly defined. Because there were few explicit and unambiguous rules—ones that could not be bent, stretched, or interpreted in more than

one way—all players necessarily (from a theoretical stance at least) contributed to the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the game itself even if they were not aware of their own roles as agents of construction and change. (pp. 260-261)

Given the growing uncertainties faced by doctoral students, it has become even more urgent to consider how students experience the “games” they are expected to play, as well as how they choose to interpret the rules. Doing so would help to gain a better understanding of graduate-level writing practices and possibly reassess these practices, while also working to improve support for both students and teachers.

This dissertation therefore continues Prior’s and Casanave’s line of inquiry into graduate-level writing, directing attention to two distinct aspects of academic discourse socialization at the graduate level that have remained understudied: (1) interdisciplinary training and (2) the use of various classroom-based writing tasks, including low-stakes tasks. Recent years have witnessed a rapid rise in interdisciplinary graduate programs, which seek to integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines and prepare students to become well-rounded scholars and professionals capable of tackling more complex research problems and responding to the changing demands of the contemporary job market. There are some indications that students in such interdisciplinary programs are relatively successful as junior researchers and have better chances with regard to job placement than those with traditional degrees (e.g., Millar, 2013). However, interdisciplinary training arguably poses additional challenges for students, for example because they are likely confronted with competing discourse conventions or expectations and could experience uncertainty regarding their disciplinary identities. This especially applies to students who complete courses across disciplines and as a result may feel as though they are being “pull[ed] in

different directions” (Newswander & Borrego, 2009, p. 551). While previous research has considered the written identities of doctoral students in terms of disciplinary enculturation (e.g., Prior, 1998), little remains known about the experiences of students in interdisciplinary programs. Thus, it is necessary to investigate how writing tasks and classroom interactions with peers and professors across disciplinary boundaries might shape their learning process and writing choices.

Another aspect that this dissertation aims to address is the growing variety of task types that are used in graduate education. The traditional research paper (i.e., the term paper, or final paper, as it is sometimes also called) is only one among many pedagogical genres, and this umbrella term itself refers to a “heterogeneity of texts” (Samraj, 2004, p. 6) which can differ substantially across classroom contexts. In addition, students normally produce many other forms of writing which complement and often play a central role in classroom discourse, such as reading responses, discussion posts or reflections, and research proposals. Digital technologies have not only impacted research communication (e.g., Luzón & Pérez-Llantada, 2019), but also provide a basis for recurring classroom tasks such as those involving virtual bulletin boards or classroom discussion forums. Such online writing tasks require students to negotiate their positionalities or roles within the classroom and graduate school in novel ways, as they interact with both instructors and classmates and may thus extend class discussions. While these writing opportunities may seem rather casual, especially if they are not formally assessed, students can nonetheless feel pressure to present themselves as serious and knowledgeable class members, for example when responding to assigned texts (Anderson, 2017; Gevers & Conrad, 2021; Pantelides, 2012). Multimodal presentations, which combine verbal and visual information, are also a staple of graduate courses, and may likewise serve to negotiate academic or disciplinary

identities (see also Tardy 2009; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Thus, research on writer identity in interdisciplinary socialization should take into consideration classroom-based writing, including online and multimodal task genres as well as low-stakes tasks.

Overview of the Study

My dissertation responds to these needs through an ethnographically oriented (Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016) study of nine multilingual doctoral students at “Southwestern University,” a large public research university in the Southwest U.S. All of these students were enrolled in interdisciplinary PhD programs, and they were in the process of completing their graduate coursework, for which they produced a range of writing assignments. I conducted recurring interviews with the students, observed class meetings, interviewed several of the instructors, and analyzed the students’ writing over a period of roughly one semester (from September 2019 until February 2020). Four of the nine students were further identified as focal participants, and additional data was collected for them during the following semester (through May 2020), so as to allow for more in-depth case studies of their writing experiences. Importantly, the research was open-ended by design, allowing me to consider the students’ and instructors’ own perspectives (Lillis, 2008) as well as aspects of the writing that seemed most relevant to them. The findings are synthesized and interpreted here using theories and concepts related to genre, writer identity, disciplinary, and multilingualism. This way, I address the following overarching questions:

- How do multilingual PhD students negotiate their interests and purposes in graduate-level writing?

- What roles do they take on in different task types and genres, including low-stakes tasks?
- In what ways do they construct identities as novice interdisciplinary scholars or professionals?

Following previous socially situated research on academic writing, my study thus aims to capture graduate-level writing as a “lived-through experience” (Chiseri-Strater, 1991, p. xxi) that is shaped by “a complex array of social, personal, historical, cultural, and linguistic factors” (Casanave, 2002, p. 146). In addition, the case studies serve to draw attention to what I see as the nonlinear, unpredictable nature of disciplinary becoming (Curry, 2016; Dressen-Hammouda, 2008) by considering how students negotiated their sense of self while traversing disciplinary boundaries in their coursework. Indeed, the title of this dissertation was inspired by the interdisciplinary theorist James Clifford, whose book *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997) considered how travel, movement, and serendipitous encounters are now characteristic of many cultural practices, challenging traditional understandings of culture as something that is tied to fixed localities and homogenous communities (see also Prior, 2003).¹ In a similar vein, I argue that graduate students’ divergent learning trajectories, including their efforts to unite multiple interests and satisfy competing demands, warrant closer attention in writing scholarship. Although students’ prior academic training and disciplinary backgrounds (“roots”) often clearly influence their writing choices, their classroom encounters and evolving interests may also lead them in new directions (“routes”), sometimes defying expectations.

¹ In a paper delivered at AAAL in 2003, Paul Prior also warned against simplistic notions of community which depict social formations as stable, monolithic, and unified and assume that shared rules and knowledge are a central force in regulating individual behavior. According to Prior, social practice concepts such as discourse community, community of practice, and activity system easily “slip toward [an] underlying structuralist matrix” (p. 20), leading scholars to fixate on “homogeneous discourses in homogeneous spaces” (p. 12).

Chapter Outline

This remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows. In Chapter 2, I discuss the scholarship to which this study responds in more detail, focusing on previous research on academic enculturation and the notion of disciplinary becoming. I also discuss the various other components of my theoretical framework, including genre, writer identity (alternatively referred to as voice), disciplinarity, and multilingualism. Chapter 3 details the methodological approach of my study, which, while lacking extended observation, was nonetheless ethnographic in nature, as it sought to provide a rich contextualized account of participants' experiences with writing through repeated interactions and a range of data sources. In Chapter 4, I explore the opportunities for identity negotiation afforded by various classroom-based writing tasks, showing how these tasks functioned within specific classrooms as well as how they formed part of the students' learning trajectories. Chapters 5 and 6, in turn, report the main findings from the case studies, detailing the "pathways" (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 175) of the four case study participants (Denise, Jeramy, Jacinta, and Yasmin). Chapter 5 examines writing that was submitted for a hybrid graduate course in applied linguistics by Jeramy and Denise, with specific attention given to the ways in which the writing goals and their discursive selves were shaped by the unique course ecology. Chapter 6 discusses how Yasmin and Jacinta negotiated diverging disciplinary and classroom discourse expectations and considers how they sought to present themselves as interdisciplinary experts in their chosen fields of study (intercultural arts studies and medical biophysics, respectively). Finally, Chapter 7 provides a synthesis of my findings and considers the theoretical and practical implications; in addition, it briefly reflects on the study's limitations and offers suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: GENRE, IDENTITY, AND DISCIPLINARITY

In this chapter, I discuss the various research strands to which the present study responds, drawing from applied linguistics, second language writing, and composition studies. After providing a brief history of research on academic discourse socialization, I discuss the theoretical concepts which serve as the foundation for this study: genre, identity, disciplinarity, and multilingualism. Finally, I consider how students' linguistic background may figure into their writing and their identity development as novice scholars.

Over the past half century, researchers have considered students' socialization or enculturation into the discourses and practices of academia, highlighting the importance of writing in this regard. Specifically, scholars have asked how learning is facilitated, which specific forms of knowledge and literacy practices writers are expected to develop, and in what kind of classroom and disciplinary contexts their learning occurs (Prior & Bilbro, 2012). Discourse-analytic research has investigated students' writing in terms of language features or rhetorical strategies, whether through corpus analysis or by examining individual texts (e.g., Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988, 1991; Hyland, 2002). Ethnographic studies of academic writing have increasingly complemented this work by considering enculturation from the perspective of students and sometimes also their instructors, capturing learning as a socially embedded activity (e.g., Beaufort, 2007; Casanave, 2002; Chiseri-Strater, 1991; Prior, 1998; Tardy, 2009; Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016). In parallel with this shifting emphasis, scholars have expanded the notion of academic literacy beyond its narrow definition to account for the rich sociocultural contexts within which academic writing takes place (e.g., Geisler, 1994; Prior, 1998; Tardy, 2005). As a result, it is now widely accepted that advanced academic literacy

(AAL) includes sophisticated knowledge about the values, beliefs, and worldviews shared by disciplinary experts, as well as expected ways of thinking, behaving, and presenting oneself (see also Bazerman, 1980, 1985; Gee, 1989, 2012, 2013).

Despite the range of theoretical and methodological approaches, a central premise of academic socialization research is that graduate school serves to initiate students into specific discourse communities (Swales, 1990) or communities of practice (CoP), in line with social-constructivist theories of learning and cognition (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).² Thus, scholars working in this tradition assume that students' participation within their chosen "target" communities will gradually increase in complexity and become more substantial over time, until they are seen as full members, following an apprenticeship model (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). For example, the first landmark studies of the academic socialization of a doctoral student, Nate (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988, 1991), describe that student's increasing mastery of the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the research community of rhetoric, based on an analysis of papers he wrote during his first years in a rhetoric PhD program (see also Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). This way, the authors aimed to capture the process whereby Nate, initially positioned as an outsider, increasingly presented himself as an insider in the discourse community of professional rhetoricians. More recently, Flowerdew (2000) proposed that graduate courses can facilitate opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) for prospective scholars, by encouraging, scaffolding, and providing feedback on their initial

² The notion of scholarly discourse communities has further be traced to relativist theories of scholarly knowledge production, such as those formulated by Foucault (1972) and Kuhn (1970), as well as the work of those who have stressed the importance of shared "disciplinary conversations" (Bazerman, 1980, 1985; see also Casanave, 1995; Flowerdew, 2000; Swales, 1990).

attempts at disciplinary participation. Other scholars have further applied the CoP framework to consider how students learn from more experienced or established members in their chosen disciplines through various forms of mentorship, most notably the adviser-advisee dyad (e.g., Belcher, 1994; Casanave & Li, 2008; Paré, Starke-Meyerring, & McAlpine, 2009).

While the notion of increasing participation in a disciplinary community offers intuitive appeal, it also has its shortcomings. To begin with, it overlooks the fact that students may feel ambivalent about, or do not recognize themselves in, roles that are deemed desirable or appropriate by a given disciplinary community.³ In one well-known study, Casanave (1990) examined the experiences of Virginia, a PhD student in a reputable sociology program at a West Coast university, as she completed two required core courses during her first year in the program. In her writing assignments, Virginia was expected to use various abstract concepts and “adopt the values embedded in them,” which were tied to positivist scientific ways of seeing the world (Casanave, 2002, p. 156). However, as a bilingual speaker of English and Spanish with a working-class Puerto Rican background, Virginia wanted to do work that would be grounded in, and made relevant to, the non-academic communities to which she belonged. The abstract terminology demanded by her professors struck her as elitist, and she increasingly felt that the language of the sociological community was needlessly obfuscating, accessible only to “theorists.” In other words, Virginia did not identify with the privileged ways of knowing and forms of self-presentation she was expected to perform. Frustrated by these experiences, she ultimately decided to leave the program. Rather than a failure, this incomplete or “partial” enculturation should be seen as an agentic decision on the part of the student (Casanave, 2002; see also Jacobson, 2019), who chose to resist certain academic discourse norms (Canagarajah,

³ This should not come as a surprise, given that almost half of doctoral students fail to graduate within ten years from entering their program (Sowell, Zhang, Redd, & King, 2008).

2004). The fact that students' goals may differ from their professors' (see also Lillis & Tuck, 2016), as this example illustrates, clearly challenges the idea of an agreed-upon end goal of learning.

Another problem with linear depictions of academic socialization is that graduate programs are not neatly aligned with disciplinary discourse communities (Prior, 1998; Prior & Bilbro, 2012), something that applies especially to interdisciplinary programs. During the early stages of graduate school, students in the U.S. typically take several graduate courses for which they complete a variety of writing assignments. These courses can be seen as independent activity systems, which interact with neighboring or overlapping realms of activity such as the university and particular disciplines or research domains, but they are also characterized by their own unique motives and outcomes (Russell, 1997). While writing assignments may provide the groundwork for students' disciplinary participation in the form of publications or conference presentations, they first and foremost fulfill pedagogical goals which vary by program, course, and instructor. These goals are subject to negotiation and may evolve over the course of the semester; they are actively (re)constructed by the class members. Classroom writing should therefore be understood in conjunction with the various other "discursive tools" used in the classroom (Russell, 1997, p. 510; see also Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010).

Rather than serving as neatly bound, homogenous communities, graduate courses are further populated by students with different goals and interests, whose individual trajectories may only briefly intersect (see also Lea, 2005). For this reason, Prior has suggested that what unites teachers and students in a university classroom setting is rather a kind of "quasi-sharedness" (2003, p. 14), and that classrooms effectively function as "microsocieties" (1991, p. 305), thus complicating the notion of a "shared enterprise" (Wenger, 1998). Scholars have

increasingly challenged top-down, deterministic accounts of academic socialization by considering “micro-level interactions” (Anderson, 2017, p. 2), including those that take place within classroom settings, as well as by examining students’ agency, showing how they actively mediate their own learning. Apart from their mentors and instructors, students also learn from their classmates, a form of peer socialization (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2011, p. 365; see also Kim, 2018) in which students act as mutual apprentices (Anderson, 2017), and this process may continue outside the classroom as students form individual networks of practice, or INoPs (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). Recently, Anderson (2017) further examined instances of internal or self-socialization among international PhD students, recognizing the role of internalized notions of what it means to be a “successful” student and emerging scholar (p. 3). Other studies suggest that such notions are shaped by various external pressures, such as the frequently heard “publish or perish” mantra (see also Anderson, 2017), and the perceived need to craft a “coherent discursal self” (Casanave, 2002; Ivanič, 1998) early on in one’s doctoral studies by identifying a distinct area of expertise or set of research interests (Gevers & Conrad, 2020).

These insights suggest that disciplinary learning is rather unpredictable and nonlinear, and that even when students end up completing their PhD degrees, their individual trajectories, or “routes,” are likely to diverge. Although writing assignments in graduate courses may seem less important than theses or dissertations, then, they emerge as an important object of investigation for academic socialization which could provide unique glimpses of academic identities in the making. Scholars like Prior (1998) and Casanave (2002) have done pioneering work to explore the “messiness” of academic socialization by considering how students approached certain writing assignments, including how they reconciled their evolving sense of

self as emerging scholars or professionals with instructor and course expectations. Yet, we still need to develop a more nuanced understanding of how scholarly identity negotiation is facilitated and constrained by various kinds of writing that are done in graduate courses, many of which have remained understudied. Such writing includes shorter tasks such as online discussion posts, reading responses, and multimodal presentations, as well as assignments related to data collection (e.g., ethnographic writing) and grant writing. In addition, it is necessary to consider how writing tasks inform academic socialization in *interdisciplinary* programs, where students are likely to encounter diverging discourse conventions or expectations. This is an important consideration especially now that disciplinary boundaries seem increasingly porous—a development I will consider in more detail below. The following sections explore the conceptual tools offered by research on genre, writer identity, and (inter)disciplinarity, which will inform my approach to this puzzle.

Genre Studies

Genre has served as a key analytical unit in writing studies since the 1980s, evolving from a synonym for text type to a more sophisticated concept. In this dissertation, I adopt Hyland's (2007) basic definition of genres as "socially recognised ways of using language" (p. 149) in order to consider the rhetorical functions of various written and multimodal genres that are used in academic settings. Theorists have noted how genres can be distinguished based on the perceived need or exigency to which they respond, the social goals they help to accomplish (Miller, 1984), the communicative purposes they serve, and the groups of people that use them (Swales, 1990, 2004). Genres are often used together with other genres in smaller sets or chains, which in turn tend to group together in genre colonies (Bhatia, 2004), repertoires, and larger

systems. A genre repertoire comprises the various genres that are used by a particular social group or discourse community to perform their duties or fulfill their shared goals, which are often highly specialized (Devitt, 2004; see also Bakhtin, 1986). Thus, the genres that are commonly used by academics to communicate research findings and gain recognition for their work, such as research articles, conference papers, scholarly monographs, and edited collections, together make up the genre repertoires of specific academic fields. Such research genres are used and valued differently across disciplinary contexts (Swales, 2004).

While much genre scholarship has focused on the writing of established scholars, especially research articles (e.g., Swales, 1990), a growing body of literature considers writing produced by students, which “manifests itself through a wider range of genres” than published research writing (Gardner & Nesi, 2013, p. 26). Scholars have examined graduate-level writing in terms of text structure, linguistic elements, typical “moves,” rhetorical choices, and contextual factors. For example, Swales (2004) synthesized previous research on MA theses and PhD dissertations and provided a genre analysis of both dissertations and dissertation defenses across disciplines, including electrical engineering and computer science, biology, social psychology, and musicology. Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, and Tuckwell (2013) examined doctoral dissertations in the visual and performing arts, tracing the complex relationship between written text and creative practice. Focusing on perhaps the most common task type in graduate programs, the research paper (or term paper), Prior (1997) showed how one student’s writing in two American Studies courses was negotiated within the classroom and shaped by professors’ expectations and preferences. Samraj (2004) further conducted a comparative analysis of student-produced research papers in two courses in an interdisciplinary master’s program in environmental science, highlighting disciplinary differences in the uses of this genre. Finally,

Tardy (2005) conducted an analysis of various graduate-level writing tasks completed by multilingual students, including writing assignments from disciplinary courses as well as a writing course; these tasks allowed the students to develop more explicit and refined rhetorical knowledge of their disciplines—a crucial aspect of genre knowledge (see also Tardy, 2009).

These studies point to the variety of student-produced genres in graduate school, which appear to fulfill different functions depending on the stage at which students are in their programs as well as disciplinary writing practices. In this regard, Swales and Lindemann (2002) have proposed that we consider genres assigned in graduate school as part of a “generic ladder” or “escalation,” “marked by steps that impose increasing levels of communicative demand on the student” (p. 87). Ideally, this instructional trajectory helps students become expert users of their chosen discipline’s genre repertoire. However, while the ladder provides a compelling metaphor, we still know relatively little about the various analytic and reflective writing tasks that doctoral students are expected to complete in their graduate courses, including the opportunities these provide for scholarly identity construction. Part of the difficulty in examining student-produced genres is that they are often labeled inconsistently and rather casually, and labels do not always refer to clearly identifiable genres (Swales, 1990; see also Johns, 2008; Samraj, 2004). For example, while the so-called research paper (also referred to as seminar paper or term paper) seems ubiquitous, in practice this term is applied to a “heterogeneity of texts” (Samraj, 2004, p. 6) that differ considerably across disciplinary and classroom contexts (see also Prior, 1998). In addition, student writing is typically only shared with the instructor and classmates, and thus falls under the category of “semihidden” or “occluded” genres (Swales, 1996; see also Swales & Lindemann, 2002). As a result, it has proven challenging to compile representative corpora that

could clarify task purposes and expectations for common task types (Alsop & Nesi, 2009; Gardner & Nesi, 2013).

Unsurprisingly, then, many taxonomies of coursework writing are primarily based on instructor interviews and surveys (e.g., Casanave & Hubbard, 1992) or course documents like syllabi, writing prompts, and grading rubrics (e.g., Cooper & Bikowski, 2007; Hale et al., 1996; Melzer, 2009), thus involving a fair amount of speculation about specific task uses and affordances as well as possible ways in which students might interpret and respond to a given task.⁴ Departing from this approach, Nesi and Gardner (2012) analyzed actual student writing that was submitted in both undergraduate and graduate courses using the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus, enabling them to propose a more classification of 13 “genre families” based on students’ task responses rather than the instructions given by their teachers (see also Gardner & Nesi, 2013). These taxonomies are crucial for improving writing instruction and supporting (multilingual) student writers (Cooper & Bikowski, 2007; see also Simpson et al., 2016), as it is often difficult for students to “identify the purpose, form, conventions, stance, and language demands—that is, the genre—of an effective response” (Caplan, 2019, p. 2). Yet, while they can thus helpfully inform needs analyses and provide a basis for genre-based pedagogy (e.g., Hyland, 2007), they do not tell us much about how graduate-level writing tasks function within specific classroom contexts. Existing genre classifications also fail to capture how students may choose to respond to particular tasks, or how they might benefit from them, for example if tasks provide opportunities to explore unfamiliar research traditions. In other words, the presumed “recurrence” (Miller, 1984, p. 157) invoked by genre labels does not adequately

⁴ This limitation is perhaps unwittingly illustrated by Hale et al. (1996), who explained that their genre classification was intended to address the following question: “What is the task and conventional form associated with *the product that is likely to result from the task?*” (p. 11; emphasis added). Gardner and Nesi (2013) provide a more detailed discussion of genre classifications of student writing.

capture student-produced texts within their “particularized conditions” (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a, p. 57), despite more general resemblances in social purposes or formal textual features. From an ethnographic point of view, then, “there [is] *no such thing* as a standard writing task”; rather, the writing task should be seen “in its holistic context as a rich, dynamic, basically open-ended activity” (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a, p. 57). In-depth case studies of student writing indeed suggest that genre expectations in university classrooms are less predetermined than one might expect, and are typically subject to negotiation, a process that Jacobson (2019) referred to as the “making of genres” (p. 171; see also Prior, 1998).

To date, few studies have looked at newer classroom genres including informal or low-stakes assignments like online discussion posts or multimodal genres. It is clear that digital technologies have strongly impacted the writing practices of scholars, who increasingly rely on blogging (Mauranen, 2013) and social media platforms such as Twitter (Orpin, 2019) to disseminate their research to a wider audience (see also Berkenkotter, 2012; Kuteeva, 2016; Luzón, 2017; Luzón & Pérez-Llantada, 2019; Reid, 2019). Yet, the affordances of graduate-level writing tasks which utilize new technologies, such as virtual bulletin boards or discussion forums, remain understudied. The same applies to multimodal presentations, which allow for a rich interplay between visual and verbal elements (Tardy 2009; Weissberg, 1993; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Online and multimodal writing tasks differ from other student-produced genres in that they are typically shared with both the instructor and other class members, whether in person or through digital platforms that seem to welcome “a blend of oral and written discourse” (Duff, 2010, p. 183). The goals of such tasks are not always obvious to students, and instructors may provide few explicit guidelines; often, the writing is simply graded for completion, meaning the stakes might seem lower (Pantelides, 2012; see also Duff, 2010; Leon, 2020; Potts, 2005;

Yim, 2005, 2011). However, Pantelides (2012) observed that, while discussion board posts “are often billed as “low-stakes,” informal opportunities, students sometimes feel additional pressure to perform well on these texts because their classmates . . . will [also] read their work” (p. 269). This impression was confirmed by Gevers and Conrad (2020), who showed how a graduate student carefully weighed her decision to critique an assigned reading in one of her discussion posts, in anticipation of her professor’s and classmates’ reactions during the following class session.

It is imperative, then, to develop a more in-depth understanding of the variety of tasks students complete during their graduate coursework, as well as the complex considerations they bring to bear on this writing in light of their short-term or long-term goals and interests. This way, teachers would be better equipped to determine how tasks can be used and implemented effectively to support students’ learning, and writing scholars could conceptualize the relation between pedagogical and research genres more clearly. In addition, more research is needed to determine how low-stakes tasks shape students’ strategies of self-presentation over the course of the semester and across courses, as they strive to be perceived as knowledgeable, “serious” students by their peers and their instructors (Anderson, 2017). When responding to an assigned reading, for example, students’ efforts to present themselves as critical, competent, thoughtful, or likeable may inform their subsequent positioning as novice scholars, including in other courses. It is also necessary to account for the different functions writing may fulfill within the classroom or in online spaces, especially in tasks that are addressed to both the instructor and one’s peers and that may be shaped by interactional routines during class meetings. Finally, the classroom uses of multimodal genres such as presentation slides also need to be considered, as discursive

choices involving visual data may serve to express academic or disciplinary identities as well (see also Tardy, 2009).

This dissertation therefore considers various forms of writing, including informal or unassessed tasks, in graduate courses. I have chosen to refer to this writing as classroom-based or “low-stakes” writing (see also Leon, 2020), so as to distinguish these short assignments from high-stakes culminating (research) genres such as written exams, theses or dissertations, conference presentations, and academic publications. However, this shorthand is not meant to imply that the assignments are unimportant, or that they are not taken seriously (see also Pantelides, 2012). Rather, I propose that writing in graduate courses should be seen as an integral part of doctoral students’ learning and an important site for academic identity negotiation.

Writer Identity

While “folk” understandings of voice as an expression of the writer’s innate or authentic self remain common in writing pedagogy and assessment practices, scholarly conceptions of writer identity have evolved considerably in the past few decades. Matsuda (2015) distinguished between three overarching theoretical orientations to writer identity: the personal (also known as expressivist), the social-constructionist, and the social-constructivist (see also Nelson & Castelló, 2012; Tardy, 2012). The personal or expressivist tradition of the 1960s and early 1970s associated voice with individual style within the context of the Western literary tradition, thus locating voice decidedly in the writer, who would ideally transfer it to the written text. In contrast, the social-constructionist orientation considers how writers’ textual identities are motivated and constrained within the text and its broader discursive context through various affordances or “possibilities for selfhood” (Ivanič, 1998), often as part of shared professional or

academic norms. Social-constructivist or sociocultural approaches complement this discursive view by regarding voice as the result of a text-mediated interaction between the reader and the writer, thus adding a “relational dimension” and casting voice largely as a reader effect (Ivanič, 2005; Matsuda, 2015; Tardy, 2012; see also Canagarajah, 2015). For the purposes of this study, I will treat “voice” and “writer identity” synonymously, following the sociocultural, dialogic notion of voice as a process of co-construction. I thus recognize writer identity as a complex interaction that evolves over time and can be shaped through multiple acts of writing and reading.

My dialogic understanding of writer identity builds on poststructuralist notions of the self, which is no longer seen as self-contained, fixed, and stable but rather as decentered and in a state of flux. Vitanova (2005) puts it thus: “[w]hereas the positivist self is distinguished by a unified, coherent, and rational identity, the nature of the postmodern subject is irrevocably fragmented and contradictory” (p. 152). Although Mikhail Bakhtin’s influential work on voice in literary writing predates more recent theoretical discussions of voice, social-constructivist approaches are strongly indebted to his work. One of the main tenets of Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) dialogism is that a writer’s self emerges through a process of negotiation that involves multiple competing (or even conflicting) voices (see also Prior, 2001). Individuality is merely an epiphenomenon, or byproduct, of this process (Bakhtin, 1986). According to Bakhtin, writers constantly borrow one another’s utterances to generate new meanings, and as a result, all utterances and texts are marked by a kind of heteroglossia, or multivoicedness; they contain a plurality of voices or “speech genres” (see also Prior, 2001). Thus, I recognize that students may express multiple, contrasting identities in their writing, incorporating voices from disciplinary

and classroom discourses, and their academic self may be “read” differently by different instructors (Morton & Storch, 2019).

While writers cannot always control how they are perceived, social and dialogic perspectives nonetheless recognize writers’ agency in projecting a particular kind of voice by assembling textual features or *cues* that inform the reader’s voice construction. This insight builds on Goffman’s (1959) social-interactionist theory of identity, which holds that “people construct messages about themselves through their behavior in interaction with others” (cited in Ivanič, 2005, p. 393), thus performing the self as if it were a theatrical character or persona. Cherry (1988) has been credited with first applying this view to written language to consider how writers appear in their texts, thereby laying the groundwork for more recent scholarship on writer identity (see also Ivanič, 2005). The idea of agentive self-representation through writing as mediated by shared norms and conventions as well as individual reader expectations is further supported by Halliday’s systemic functional grammar, which posits that language choices may offer information about one’s identity (the “interpersonal function”; Ivanič, 1994, p. 4). It is worth noting that similar postmodern notions of identity have also been elaborated in other fields, for example in performativity and queer theory, which show how gender is not innate, but rather performed through learned behavior in response to societal expectations (Butler, 1990, 1993). These insights have in turn informed the rise of the interdisciplinary domain of performance studies, extending the idea of performance from the theatrical context to all kinds of social behavior (e.g., Parker & Sedgwick, 1995).

A considerable body of research has considered how student writers negotiate disciplinary voices and seek to project an authoritative presence in their writing, and (to a lesser

degree) how such efforts are perceived by their instructors.⁵ Most notably perhaps, Ivanič (1994, 1998) has investigated how graduate student writers may appropriate discursive resources to align themselves with, or resist, disciplinary conventions or developments. For example, in one case study, Ivanič (1994) showed how a graduate student expressed affiliation with political discourses such as black activism and feminism by capitalizing the word *Black* and using the word *herstories*. In his case studies of graduate-level writing, Prior (1997) further described how one student's writing strategies and modes of self-presentation were perceived differently by two professors in an interdisciplinary American Studies program.⁶ Conceptualizing academic voice as an effect that is shaped by both textual and non-textual elements, Tardy (2012) further examined how exposure to video footage of undergraduate students influenced readers' voice construction and assessment of their written texts, revealing a complex relation between embodied and textual identities. A more recent study showed how teachers draw on their prior knowledge about students when evaluating their written voice (Amicucci & Neely, 2020). However, the relation between textual identity and embodied, or extra-textual (e.g., classroom) identity remains complex and therefore warrants further research (Tardy, 2012; see also Atkinson, 2001; Canagarajah, 2015).

The notion of role-playing is particularly well-suited to examine the identities that doctoral students assert through their classroom writing, as it serves as a reminder that these identities take shape on the "stage" provided by their graduate courses. Indeed, writing scholars

⁵ Scholars have identified various rhetorical moves, metadiscursive elements, and linguistic features associated with self- and other-dimensions of disciplinary voice (Fløttum, 2009). Examples include abstract nouns, terminology, self-mentions, reporting verbs, bibliographical references, and citation styles (e.g., Ivanič, 1994, 1998, 2005; see also Dressen-Hammouda, 2008; Fløttum, 2009; Hyland, 2002, 2008; Nelson & Castelló, 2012; Tardy & Matsuda, 2009).

⁶ Prior (2001) further considered how a sociology student ("Moira") ended up "envoicing" a faculty mentor's words as she incorporated his written feedback in her writing.

have used the idea of writer roles, as well as corresponding metaphors such as “scenes” (Devitt, Reiff, & Bawarshi, 2004, pp. 7-12) and “games” (Casanave, 2002, pp. 260-261), to examine how undergraduate students present themselves in their writing, and how they might grapple with academic discourse expectations. Advocating a “socioliterate” approach to undergraduate-level writing, Johns (1997) asked how writing tasks might encourage students to take on particular roles and practices that could stimulate learning, such as the “researcher” role. Bawarshi (2003) similarly examined how writing prompts ask students to take on certain subject positions, which may be more or less aligned with the subjectivities they envision for themselves (e.g., that of a cultural anthropologist; see also Jacobson, 2019). Jacobson (2019) further considered how students might be positioned in general education courses (e.g., as a “contributor” as opposed to “student”) in light of their instructors’ roles (e.g., the “teacher-as-examiner”; see also Melzer, 2014). As I mentioned, graduate students’ writer roles are often described in terms of disciplinary participation, based on the assumption that students will increasingly present themselves as disciplinary insiders or experts. However, scholarship suggests that this process of “disciplinary becoming” (Curry, 2016; Dressen-Hammouda, 2008) is rather unpredictable, and that graduate students may adopt many different, sometimes conflicting roles in their courses (Casanave, 2002; Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Prior, 1998). We thus need to gain a better understanding of the opportunities graduate-level writing tasks provide for identity formation, including how these are negotiated between students and instructors.

Although previous research on authorial identity, written voice, and role-playing provides a suitable framework to examine how students develop their sense of self in writing assignments, this work has also been subject to critique. Stapleton (2002) argued that the importance of voice has been overstated at the expense of student writers’ ideas and argumentation, and Helms-Park

and Stapleton (2003) found that the presence of voice-related discursive features is not necessarily correlated with the overall quality of undergraduate-level writing; however, it should be noted that their study was rather limited and merely looked at “individualized voice” (p. 247) in one specific writing task (Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; see also Dressen-Hammouda, 2008; Zhao & Llosa, 2008). Responding to a special issue of the *Journal of Second Language Writing* on voice, Atkinson (2001) identified additional problems with scholarly applications of this concept. First, researchers often seem to elide written voice, or textual identity, with extra-textual, or embodied, identity, despite the fact that the relationship between the two is not straightforward (see also Kramsch & Lam, 1999). Second, even social-constructivist approaches to voice often retain an individualist dimension, assuming a greater agency on the part of writers than seems plausible—this is especially a concern in student writing that responds to specific assignment guidelines, as these inevitably limit the “possibilities for selfhood” (Ivanič, 1998; see also Matsuda & Tardy, 2007). Third, student writers may not really be concerned with voice in their writing, or at least not to the extent that researchers are, in which case voice can be seen as an “experience-distant” concept (Geertz, 1976) which does not adequately capture students’ own perspectives. Thus, while voice is a useful theoretical construct, it remains highly complex, and must therefore be used with caution. In particular, analyses should be closely attuned to participants’ own concerns and reader impressions, while clearly distinguishing between textual and extra-textual aspects of identity.

Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity

Previous research on academic enculturation and authorial identity has considered how academic writing practices differ across disciplinary contexts (e.g., Samraj, 2002), as do

understandings of how writers should present themselves in their texts (e.g., Morton & Storch, 2019; Nelson & Castelló, 2012). Among others, Hyland (2002, 2008a, 2008b) has examined the relative frequency of metadiscourse and other textual aspects of voice including self-reference, stance markers, and reporting verbs, noting that preferences seem to be motivated by “the epistemological assumptions and social practices” (2002, p. 1098) of specific fields. For example, he concluded that writers in the “hard” sciences will tend to downplay their interpretive role and avoid cognitive verbs such as *think* or *believe*, due to a positivist epistemology that highly values objectivity and impartiality, whereas authorial presence is deemed more appropriate in “soft” disciplines in which the researcher’s interpretive role is openly acknowledged and could in fact help to establish credibility. Furthermore, certain genres and associated discursive features are unique to specific disciplines, meaning that their use fulfills an important symbolic function in presenting oneself as a competent disciplinary insider (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008; see also Swales). It is important, then, to avoid generalizing beliefs about what constitutes an appropriate writerly presence to all kinds of academic writing.⁷ Moreover, while genre conventions and expectations for self-presentation are often captured in disciplinary terms, academic writing practices also differ across linguistic, national, and cultural domains, for example with regard to values like individuality or directness (Connor, Nagelhout, & Rozycki, 2008; Fløttum, 2009; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999b).

As scholars have challenged simplistic views of classroom communities as homogenous, it has further become increasingly clear that academic research practices are highly complex and dispersed, and that academic communities cannot always be “unambiguously defined or

⁷ Indeed, approaching voice as a relational phenomenon, Morton and Storch (2019) found that supervisors’ impressions of authorial presence in student writing are influenced by their disciplinary backgrounds and research interests.

identified” (Casanave, 2002, p. 146; Swales, 2016).⁸ Disciplines are often portrayed as monolithic, stable entities, but disciplinary boundaries are heavily contested, and university departments do not always neatly align with disciplinary research activity (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Trowler, 2014; Trowler, Saunders, & Bamber, 2012). Instead of viewing students’ learning process as socialization into discrete discourse communities, then, Prior and Bilbro (2012) proposed that we conceive of it as a series of “ongoing negotiations of disciplinary practice” (p. 21). In this view, classroom writing becomes a multilayered activity that, among other goals, serves to examine collectively what disciplines are about and how they shape knowledge production (see also Prior, 1998). In an earlier case study, Prior (1997) considered examples of this by examining the choices of several student writers including “Lilah,” a first-year graduate student in an American Studies program at a Midwestern university. Lilah chose to write about the same topic for two seminars, namely the annual Cinco de Mayo celebration in her university town, which she characterized as a form of cultural commodification shaped by local business leaders. While the instructor for one course (“Kohler”) was supportive of Lilah’s cultural analysis and use of interviews as the primary data sources in her writing, in line with ethnographic and philosophical research paradigms, the other (“Marini”) seemed rather dissatisfied with her approach, instead emphasizing the need for written documents in support of the argument.⁹ Lilah’s research and writing choices show how student writers may align themselves with particular disciplinary discourses or epistemologies while resisting others in

⁸ More generally, critics have challenged top-down, deterministic conceptions of bounded disciplinary communities and homogeneous classrooms, both of which appear tied to the “structuralist matrix” of social practice theories (Prior, 2003, p. 20; see also see also Guthrie, 2015; Latour, 2005; Swales, 1998, 2016; Trowler, 2012; cf. Atkinson, 2004; Holliday, 1999).

⁹ According to Prior, Lilah’s experiences could be attributed to the conflicting research interests and disciplinary affiliations of the professors (urban geography, in the case of Kohl, and history, in the case of Marini). While Lilah accommodated Marini’s expectations to a certain degree, she nonetheless challenged what she disapprovingly described as “that straight historical approach” (p. 291).

their coursework, a process of self- and other-socialization that is mediated by professor and peer expectations as well as program requirements.

While Lilah's example might seem like an anomaly, the rise of interdisciplinarity in contemporary academia suggests that it is not atypical; many doctoral students will likely be expected to navigate different knowledge-making practices and beliefs during their coursework. The longstanding particularization of knowledge in disciplines, which was instigated by university reforms in nineteenth-century Europe (Klein, 1990, 1993), seems to have given way to an increased preference for knowledge production that integrate practices and beliefs from multiple disciplinary traditions. While disciplinary traditions remain influential in shared understandings of "what constitutes knowledge (ontology) and how this knowledge is obtained (epistemology)" (Kuteeva & Negretti, 2016, p. 37), disciplinary boundaries are thus more and more blurred, and the well-known image of "academic tribes" and "territories" increasingly seems outdated (Trowler, Saunders, & Bamber, 2012). Theorists agree that interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary perspectives are required to address more complex research questions and contemporary social problems, and that scholars should be "epistemically fluent" (Trowler, Saunders, & Bamber, 2012, p. 257) in multiple disciplines to be successful. In the U.S., this belief has led to an increase in graduate programs which are not tied to a single discipline but bring together faculty and resources from multiple departments. Such interdisciplinary programs are met with strong interest, and they attract students who seem to be relatively successful in their studies and subsequent academic careers (Welch-Devine et al. 2018; see also Bosque-Pérez et al., 2016; Millar, 2013; Van Hartesveldt & Giordan, 2009).

While the "institutionalization of interdisciplinarity" (Borrego, Boden, & Newswander, 2014) seems beneficial, then, little is known about the nature of interdisciplinary graduate

degrees or about the learning outcomes and writing expectations. Typically, the value of interdisciplinary programs is assumed to lie in a broad-based curriculum that integrates various disciplinary perspectives and invites collaborative interactions aimed at creative problem-solving (Borrego & Newswander, 2010; Holley, 2009). Programs which successfully facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations between students and faculty indeed appear to stimulate learning and development by generating productive “collisions” between contrasting perspectives (O’Meara & Culpepper, 2020). Yet, case studies reveal that such collisions occasionally also create tension and conflict, and students may “feel divided between collaborations, social networks, and expectations that pull them in different directions” (Newswander & Borrego, 2009, p. 551; see also O’Meara & Culpepper, 2020). With regard to writing goals, Samraj (2004) found that students were expected to demonstrate a familiarity with multiple research domains in papers they wrote for a conservation biology course; in addition, Prior’s (1997) study further suggested that interdisciplinary curricula require student writers to choose from competing research paradigms, which could also pose challenges. It is necessary, then, to develop a more nuanced understanding of how students in interdisciplinary programs address multiple disciplinary expectations in their writing, in a “transdisciplinary negotiation of self” (Gramling & Warner, 2016, p. 79), as they move across classrooms and interact with instructors and peers with different backgrounds and interests (Prior & Bilbro, 2012).

Multilingualism

Although (inter)disciplinary and classroom-specific writing expectations pose demands on all doctoral students, international students and students who use English as an additional language will likely encounter further challenges. To begin with, students may find themselves

in academic settings that are quite unlike the ones in which they received their prior education, and they may be expected to negotiate unfamiliar disciplinary practices or develop new linguistic and rhetorical strategies when writing and communicating in English (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Hyland, 2002; Matsuda, 2001; see also Morton & Storch, 2019). International students' understandings of specific disciplines might also differ as a result of their previous academic training, since disciplines vary geographically and historically (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Several studies have further revealed different preferences with regard to various textual identity markers. Cross-lingual and cross-cultural differences in the use of *I* or other forms of self-reference provide an obvious example, as such elements are often associated with the Western ideology of individualism (e.g., Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999b). In one case study, Tardy (2009) showed how one student, Yoshi, initially struggled with self-promotion in the English-language genre of the job application cover letter, as he grew up in an environment where modesty and self-effacement were valued highly; this task, then, required him to adopt a new "discursive identity" (p. 70). Apart from linguistic conventions, multilingual students may also struggle to meet academic discourse expectations regarding originality and textual borrowing in their writing tasks, and they might find it challenging to enter a discursive sphere that already seems dominated by more experienced or fluent writers, or writers who possess more "textual capital" (Starfield, 2002).

While linguistic and cultural differences may cause difficulties, then, they can also have a beneficial role in students' scholarly identity construction. As part of the "translingual" or "multi/plural turn" (Kubota, 2016; Lee, 2016), which emphasizes the fluid and emergent nature of language in use, scholars have increasingly considered how writers might integrate their academic knowledges and languages in productive ways. For example, Canagarajah (2006)

showed how various linguistic and cultural influences informed a multilingual writer's composition process, even if these would not be immediately obvious to an uninformed reader. Other studies of multilingual or translingual writing have similarly considered how (student) writers may "shuttle" between languages or use their primary language while writing in English (e.g., Kibler, 2010; Wang, 2003; for a recent overview, see Gunnarsson, 2019), as well as how this may shape their strategies of self-presentation (e.g., Lee, 2017; Lee & Canagarajah, 2019; Lorimer Leonard, 2014; You, 2016). Students may combine their various semiotic resources in creative and unexpected ways for rhetorical effect, for example by blending named languages or language varieties, an act known as "code-meshing," which could serve to perform a multilingual or "translingual" writer identity (Canagarajah, 2015). However, it is important to keep in mind that languages are often perceived, and thus continue to function, as distinct codes that are tied to specific communicative contexts (Busch, 2012; Gentil, 2018; Gevers, 2020; Ruuska, 2019; Turner & Lin, 2017), as part of a shared "languagized" frame of reference (Jaspers & Madsen, 2019).¹⁰ Particularly in academic writing, where language serves as a highly specialized tool that has developed through rich accumulation (Goodwin, 2018), writers may therefore prefer to orient to one specific language, making language mixing unlikely even if it is an option.

In some graduate courses, students may be more inclined to experiment with translingual writer identities, for example because language or writing itself provides the shared focus of the class (Canagarajah, 2015; Gramling & Warner, 2016). However, many writing tasks probably seem less welcoming or conducive to writing that visibly fuses languages, since the (implicit)

¹⁰ Thus, while I agree with Canagarajah (2010) that named languages should not automatically be treated as "the main variable" in writing studies (p. 160), I recognize that "the idea of separate languages [remains] difficult to avoid epistemically and ideologically" (Jaspers & Madsen, 2019, p. 3).

expectation will normally be that students use standard English in their writing, especially if English also serves as the language of instruction. In fact, students may be recognized as competent multilingual writers by their instructors precisely by virtue of their ability to keep their languages apart (see also Ruuska, 2016, 2019). That said, graduate students may nonetheless utilize a wide variety of linguistic and cultural resources when negotiating their sense of self as aspiring scholars, and they may draw on genre knowledge associated with non-English-language contexts (such as the universities they previously attended), even if this is not immediately visible in their writing (see also Ene et al., 2019; Gentil, 2018; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2016; Tardy et al., 2020). Such cross-lingual processes thus merit further attention in research on identity building in graduate-level writing.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I have discussed previous research that considered how graduate students learn to present themselves as scholars, focusing on the uses of writing tasks in this regard. In addition, I explored various theoretical concepts that inform research on graduate-level writing and as such provide the basis for this dissertation, including genre, identity, and disciplinarity. I showed that, while top-down understandings of academic socialization assume a linear trajectory, the process of “disciplinary becoming” is in fact rather messy and unpredictable (Casanave, 2002; Prior 1998). Classroom-based writing serves a unique set of purposes, and assignment guidelines both constrain and facilitate opportunities for identity formation. Apart from instructor and peer expectations, student agency is further mediated by institutional or program requirements as well as internalized notions of successful doctoral students and novice scholars (e.g., Anderson, 2017; Prior & Bilbro, 2012). Especially in interdisciplinary programs,

which have become increasingly common, students may encounter conflicting demands as they navigate different classroom contexts and disciplinary boundaries. While writing scholars have considered students' language choices and authorial identities in different writing assignments, little is known about how students might negotiate their sense of self in interdisciplinary settings (Prior, 1998).

The unique learning affordances of low-stakes, recurring writing tasks, including newer genres such as discussion posts and multimodal presentations, have also remained underexplored. In addition, more research is needed that considers how students' authorial identities are perceived by instructors in light of classroom interactions (Amicucci & Neely, 2020; Tardy, 2012) and disciplinary writing expectations (Morton & Storch, 2019). Finally, it is important to consider how graduate students draw on their various linguistic and cultural resources as they seek to formulate a "coherent discorsal self" in low-stakes writing tasks (Casanave, 2002, p. 140). In the following chapters, I respond to these knowledge gaps, taking my cue from previous ethnographic accounts of graduate-level writing and conceptions of writing as role-playing. Specifically, I report an open-ended, ethnographically oriented study of nine multilingual doctoral students in various interdisciplinary fields, detailing their experiences with writing in various graduate courses. In Chapter 3, I provide an in-depth discussion of my research approach in which I elaborate the methodological choices such as the research context, participant recruitment process, data collection, and analysis of the various data sources, followed by a brief reflection on my positionality as a researcher.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: CAPTURING GRADUATE-LEVEL WRITING TASKS AS “LIVED-THROUGH EXPERIENCES”

In Chapter 2, I synthesized previous scholarship on academic socialization, focusing on the role of writing in graduate education. I also discussed the various concepts that have informed this research, including genre, authorial identity, disciplinarity, and multilingualism or language difference. I concluded that, while scholars have examined graduate-level writing from different perspectives, there is still a strong need to understand the uses of classroom-based writing in the process of “disciplinary becoming” (Curry, 2016; Dressen-Hammouda, 2008). In addition, I argued that it is necessary to gain a better insight into writing in interdisciplinary fields, especially now that disciplinary boundaries are increasingly blurred. My dissertation responds to these gaps by reporting an ethnographically oriented study of nine multilingual students in interdisciplinary programs at “Southwestern University,” a research university in the U.S. Southwest. Apart from collecting their writing, I conducted recurring interviews with the students, observed class meetings, and interviewed several of the instructors from September 2019 until February 2020. This way, I aimed to capture low-stakes writing as both a “lived-through experience” (Chiseri-Strater, 1991, p. xxi) and a potential site for identity building, in conjunction with other kinds of classroom interaction. A closely related goal was to consider how students’ written selves reflect the unpredictable, non-linear nature of disciplinary learning. I therefore posed the following overarching questions:

1. How do multilingual PhD students negotiate their interests and purposes in graduate-level writing?

2. What roles do they take on in different task types and genres, including low-stakes tasks?
3. In what ways do they construct identities as novice interdisciplinary scholars or professionals?

In the sections that follow, I shed further light on my methodology by considering the research context, participants and recruitment, data collection and analysis, and researcher reflexivity.

Ethnographic Research Design

Overall, this research adopted an ethnographic multiple-case study approach (Duff, 2008, 2014; cf. White et al., 2009), following other studies that treat academic writing as a socially embedded practice (e.g., Casanave, 2002; Prior, 1998; Tardy, 2009). In the last few decades, such ethnographic and ethnographically informed studies of academic writing have become increasingly common. However, understandings of what constitutes ethnography and (appropriate) ethnographic methodology differ considerably (Green & Bloome, 1997; Lillis, 2008; Paltridge et al., 2016; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a). The basic tenets of linguistic ethnography are as follows: (1) it is concerned with recurring actions, practices, beliefs, or behaviors among groups of people; (2) it strives to account for these holistically, in relation to one another; (3) it is aimed at understanding informants in and on their own terms, while complementing this *emic* or insider perspective with an *etic*, outsider perspective (traditionally, that of the researcher-analyst); (4) it is theoretically grounded, informed by previous research; (5) it is comparative, though not meant to be generalizable in a positivistic sense; and (6) it assumes that norms of (linguistic) behavior are learned through social interaction, in accordance with theories of language socialization (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a)—or academic discourse

socialization, in the case of academic writing (Watson-Gegeo, 1988, 1997). Based on these principles, Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999a) minimalistically defined ethnographic research as research that seeks to “give an emically oriented description of the cultural practices of individuals” (p. 49), while noting that “cultural” departs from its traditional large-scale use in cultural anthropology here to include practices characteristic of smaller sociocultural units, such as schools or classrooms (see also Atkinson, 2004; Holliday, 1999).

Not all writing research informed by these principles counts as “ethnography,” or even “ethnographic,” for that matter, at least in a conventional sense (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a; Paltridge et al., 2016). Specifically, theorists have distinguished between traditional, large-scale ethnographic inquiries which typically involve participant observation and in-depth interviewing over a prolonged period of time, and the smaller-scale use of ethnographic tools or perspectives aimed at providing a more contextualized understanding of the object of analysis, including so-called microethnography (Green & Bloome, 1997). In academic writing research, Lillis (2008) observed that ethnography is often applied as a *method*, in particular the text-focused interview, resulting in a rather shallow understanding of “context” and a limited recognition of ethnography’s potential as a more “fully fledged *methodology*” (p. 355; emphasis added). Following Blommaert’s (2007) notion of linguistic ethnography “as deep theorizing” (Lillis, 2008, p. 373), Lillis argued that a more critically informed use of ethnographic methodology could enrich writing research and help bridge the gap between text and context, which are still too often treated separately (cf. Canagarajah, 2018; see also Goodwin & Duranti, 1992). She specifically noted the importance of “cyclical” or repeated interviewing and a sustained engagement with the research site more generally.

Inspired by Lillis' call, this study offers an in-depth account of doctoral students' course writing as a series of "lived-through experience[s]" (Chiseri-Strater, 1991, p. xxi), employing a variety of rich data in a reflexive manner (Paltridge et al., 2016). However, while I aim to understand the writing experiences of several individuals in their "particularized conditions" (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a, p. 57), I was unable to carry out extended observation—the hallmark of traditional ethnography—nor did I seek to provide a holistic description of all the courses and the doctoral programs in which the students were enrolled. Given these limitations, the present study is best characterized as ethnographic in its orientation rather than as a true ethnography (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a; see also Tardy, 2019). The research further involved a case study approach, as it focused on multiple concrete cases or "units of analysis" (Yin, 2017). Four students and one instructor acted as case study participants, and one graduate-level course (taught by said instructor) additionally provided a distinct research focus, enabling me to consider the writing associated with this course (Chapter 5) and the experiences of these four students (Chapters 5 and 6) in more detail. The selection of these "cases" served to determine which data points were most relevant and needed to be considered for in-depth analysis (Duff, 2008, 2014; Hood, 2009; Stake, 1995). This approach proved productive as a strategy to move beyond a text-oriented inquiry toward a more writer-oriented understanding of graduate-level writing, in which the students' own perspectives were foregrounded (Lillis, 2008).

Institutional Context

The study was conducted at "Southwestern University," a large public land-grant research university located in the U.S. Southwest. This university was listed as an "R1" institution in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, meaning that it was

considered to be among the U.S. doctoral universities with the highest level of research activity (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, n.d.). According to the university website, more than 45,000 students were enrolled at the university when the study took place, including just over 10,000 graduate students. International students, or those who had been admitted to the U.S. on F-1 or J-1 visas as citizens of other countries, made up roughly 15% of the total graduate student population. In other words, about one of every six graduate students at the university was an international student. Language background information for the student population was unavailable at the time of writing, but in terms of national citizenship, international undergraduate and graduate students represented 120 different countries, with the largest numbers of students hailing from China, followed by India, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Mexico.

The study was situated more locally within interdisciplinary graduate programs which were not housed within specific departments, but instead involved multiple participating colleges and departments at “Southwestern University.” This unique organizational structure served to bring together faculty members and students with a range of disciplinary affiliations and research interests and thus to integrate knowledge across disciplines and research traditions. As is typical for PhD programs in the U.S. (e.g., see Barnett, Harris, & Mulvany, 2017), each of the student participants was required to complete two or three years of graduate coursework, or roughly ten to twelve courses in total, in preparation for their qualifying or comprehensive examinations and culminating dissertation research. These courses served as the tangible research sites, allowing me to consider how classroom contexts shaped the students’ writing and were in turn shaped by it (see also Goodwin & Duranti, 1992). The participants completed a wide variety of classroom-based writing tasks while they participated in the study. In line with previous research findings

(Cooper & Bikowski, 2007), not all the courses taken by participants required them to submit writing other than short homework or examination responses aimed at testing their knowledge of the course content. Given the aims of the research, I therefore only collected data regarding the courses that assigned writing using open-ended questions, prompts, or assignment directions (i.e., allowing for more than one possible, “correct” response). Following Canagarajah (2015), the analysis paid close attention to how student writing was negotiated within specific course ecologies (see also Tardy, 2012) even though I was only able to conduct a limited number of classroom observations for selected courses.

Participants and Recruitment

To recruit participants, I relied on purposive sampling, a nonrandom sampling method that served to find a balance between “achieving the research goals, meeting the requirements of the relevant research methodological procedures, and managing constraints set by practical and human circumstances” (Barkhuizen, 2014, p. 5; see also Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 175). After obtaining approval for the study from the university’s institutional review board, I circulated a message with an invitation to participate through electronic mailing lists used by the interdisciplinary graduate programs. This message included an overview of the study as well as a link to a digital screening survey, which was designed to confirm potential participants’ eligibility and collect relevant information about them (including previous education and degrees, language background, year in the program, and graduate courses). Using the screening survey, I then identified nine doctoral students who planned to fulfill a major or minor degree requirement in one of the interdisciplinary programs, had not yet advanced to candidacy, and would be enrolled in at least one graduate course during the study for which they would

complete open-ended writing, excluding short responses that could simply be considered correct or incorrect (Table 1). To conceal their identities, individual participants are referred to with pseudonyms throughout this dissertation. I made sure to include students from a variety of linguistic, disciplinary, and academic literacy backgrounds, so as to “adequately capture the heterogeneity in [this particular] population” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 98). I obtained informed consent from each of these student participants during their first interview, after answering any questions they still had about the study.

As I mentioned, four of these nine students were further selected as case study participants (Duff, 2008, 2014), meaning that additional data was collected for them to allow for in-depth analysis (see Table 1). While these case study participants should not be considered “representative” in a classical positivistic sense, their writing experiences seemed well-suited to “illustrate the different pathways” (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 175) of the student participants “in their fully particularized conditions” (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a, p. 57). The four central participants appeared highly motivated to participate in the study and were available to meet and share their writing with me on a regular basis. I had already been acquainted with two of the case participants before the study (Denise and Jeremy), and I had taken the same graduate course in which they were both enrolled during the study one year prior, with the same instructor. I therefore already possessed firsthand knowledge about this particular course, which provided the basis for one of the case studies. Moreover, I was able to build rapport early on in the study with the other two case participants (Yasmin and Jacinta), and both agreed to participate in the study for a second semester, during which they completed additional coursework involving writing. All four case participants were bilingual or multilingual students who did not consider English their first language, allowing me to elicit data relevant to the research goals. Furthermore, the research

interests and courses taken by these four students were tied to different areas of inquiry in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, thus representing a range of disciplinary viewpoints.

In addition to the student participants, the study involved the participation of eight professors who taught courses in which the students were enrolled during the study, each of whom was assigned a pseudonym. I relied on the help of the student participants to identify professors who assigned multiple writing tasks in their courses and who might be willing to participate in either an interview or classroom observations or both. I assured the student participants that the interviews with their professors and the classroom observations were optional, and that I would only visit their classes and interview their professors if and when both the students and the professors indicated that they felt comfortable with me doing so. I then contacted eligible instructors by email, providing an overview of the study and explaining that the student participant had agreed to my contacting them, but that their participation was nonetheless entirely voluntary. I only revealed the identities of student participants to course instructors if the instructors agreed to participate, and not until after we had scheduled an interview or class observation. I initially contacted twelve course instructors; eight agreed to participate in the study. Of these eight instructors, five taught courses in which the case study participants were enrolled. The remaining three instructors taught courses that were taken by other participants (Samantha, Mary, and Lola).

Table 1

Student participants, with case study participants listed in bold (all names are pseudonyms)

Participant	Area of study	Year in program	L1	Highest prior degree	Number of interviews	Writing process log	Classroom observation/ instructor interview
Denise	applied linguistics	1st	Spanish/ Catalan	M.A.	5*	No	Yes/Yes (Dr. Bradshaw)
Jacinta	medical biophysics	2nd	Spanish/ English	B.A./ B.Sc.	6	Yes	Yes/Yes (Dr. Smith, Dr. Anderson, and Dr. Neugent)
Jeramy	linguistics/ applied linguistics	3rd	Spanish	M.A.	5*	No	Yes/Yes (Dr. Bradshaw)
Yasmin	intercultural arts studies	1st	Mandarin Chinese	M.A.	7	Yes	Yes/Yes (Dr. Gartner)
Bob	entomology	1st	English	M.Sc.	4	No	No/No
Kelly	music	3rd	Spanish	M.Sc.	4	Yes	No/No

	psychology						
Lola	media studies	2nd	English	M.A.	4	No	Yes/Yes (Dr. Erickson)
Melinda	educational psychology	3rd	Japanese/ English	M.A.	4	Yes	Yes/Yes (Dr. O'Connor)
Samantha	applied linguistics	2nd	Korean	M.A.	4	No	No/Yes (Dr. Davis)

*While all other participants were interviewed individually, Denise and Jeramy jointly participated in one follow-up interview (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20) to discuss their experiences with writing in Technology & Foreign Language Learning, the course they took together.

Data Collection

In line with naturalistic research on academic writing practices, I gathered data regarding the participants' writing from a range of data sources over a period of time (in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020). This sustained engagement and inclusion of multiple data sources was aimed at triangulating, or "weaving together" (Lillis, 2008, p. 356), a large number of data points which in turn would allow me to provide rich, detailed accounts of the participants' writing experiences through "thick description" (Geertz, 1973). My approach was intended, then, to ensure the credibility (Duff, 2006) or "trustworthiness" (Creswell, 2013, p. 196) of the findings (see also LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Data collection procedures were modeled after previous studies of (graduate) student writers and academic literacy practices in higher education more generally

(esp. Prior, 1998; see also Casanave, 2002; Paltridge et al., 2016; Tardy, 2009). Specifically, data were obtained from the following sources:

- a. Student questionnaires.** As part of the screening survey that was used to identify potential participants, students completed a brief questionnaire with relevant personal data such as their graduate program, year in the program, (anticipated) major or minor focus, previous degrees, language background, research interests, and courses they planned to take (see Appendix A). The responses were used to formulate initial interview questions for the students who were selected to participate, so as to consider how their coursework and the writing they were asked to complete related to their personal research interests and learning goals. In addition, the questionnaire also served to construct more detailed individual profiles for the four central participants in the case studies (Chapters 5 and 6).
- b. Student interviews.** To bring about sustained engagement, or what Lillis (2008) refers to as “longer conversations” (p. 362; see also Maybin, 1994), the student participants were interviewed repeatedly between September 2019 and February 2020, and the four case study participants were interviewed several times more between February and May 2020 (Table 1 lists the number of interviews conducted with each participant). In total, 42 student interviews were conducted. Most of the interviews were held in person in meeting rooms in Southwestern University’s main university library. The interviews with Jacinta were conducted in a meeting room in the medical library. Two of the interviews with Lola (Interviews L3 and L4) took place via video call (Skype) upon her request, and one interview with Yasmin (Interview Y7) was also conducted as a video call

(Zoom). The interviews were audio-recorded and selectively transcribed to non-verbatim written format using third-party transcription services (rev.com). Two distinct qualitative interview types were employed to ensure that the student writers' own perspectives and understandings could be explored and centered as much as possible: (1) the academic literacy history interview and (2) the cyclical talk-around-text interview (Lillis, 2008).

- 1. Academic literacy history interviews.** Before sharing written texts with me, each of the students participated in an initial semi-structured academic literacy history interview which was aimed at eliciting autobiographical accounts regarding academic writing, including both previous experiences and future goals. For example, questions pertained to the students' prior education (including the various kinds of writing they had done), how they saw themselves as writers, their reasons for enrolling in their interdisciplinary program, their expectations of the courses they were taking during the study, and what they hoped to accomplish with their writing in general and the upcoming course writing more specifically. Broadly speaking, these interviews served to capture the "autobiographical selves" (Ivanič, 1998, 2005) that the students brought to bear on their writing, enabling me to understand their course writing "within the broader sociohistorical context of [their] life (and academic writing) trajectory" (Lillis, 2008, pp. 362–363).
- 2. Cyclical talk-around-text interviews.** The remaining interviews were devoted to cyclical, open-ended conversations about the writing tasks the

students had recently submitted for their courses, were currently writing, or were expected to complete later in the semester. These text-focused interviews were minimally structured and involved few predetermined questions (Richards, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012), so as to allow for “an exploratory space to be developed” (Lillis, 2008, p. 363) within which the researcher and the participants could consider issues related to the writing that seemed relevant to the participants at that particular moment in time (see also Talmy, 2010). While the students were sometimes asked to comment on concrete textual aspects of their writing, most of the conversations moved beyond the text-as-object and revolved around their experiences with the writing as situated meaning-making more generally. This way, the interviews made it possible to capture some of the participants’ decisions and immediate concerns and track their evolving goals and understandings over the course of the semester.

- c. **Student-written texts.** Using synchronized online document sharing (Google Drive), student participants were asked to share writing they produced for their graduate courses, regardless of the length or nature of the text, and including various multimodal formats (e.g., presentation slides). In principle, I collected any course-related writing students were willing to share with me, such as notes, outlines, proposals, drafts, even if these were not submitted to fulfill course requirements. I encouraged students to organize their digital folder, decide on the file types, and name the specific files as they saw fit, as long as I could establish the connection with specific courses and tasks. Most participants created

subfolders for their different courses and assignments, depending on the amount of writing they completed. While most students uploaded writing on a regular basis, I sometimes invited them to add new writing at the beginning or end of the interviews. In addition, I sent an email reminder to all student participants after the Fall 2019 semester had ended (in January 2020) to ask if there was any remaining writing they were willing to share with me for the purposes of the study.

- d. Student writing process logs.** The student participants were further invited to maintain a log of their course-related writing activities throughout the semester, for which they could earn additional compensation (see also Prior, 1998). Four of the students completed writing logs, including two of the central participants (Jacinta and Yasmin). Specifically, students were encouraged to write brief weekly or biweekly entries to keep track of their work, including time spent reading, note-taking, conducting research, and interacting with professors or classmates, and/or to share images documenting their writing process. Apart from these general guidelines, expectations for the logs were minimally specified to allow the participants to decide how to comment on their process and “avoid placing unreasonable demands” (Duff, 2008, p. 126) on them. Participants kept their logs in the same digital folder that they used to share their other writing.
- e. Class observations.** In consultation with the student participants and professors who consented to classroom observations, class meetings of a select number of courses were chosen for observation. In total, I attended and observed seven class sessions taught by six different instructors. Extensive field notes were taken

during each observation, focusing on Spradley's (1980) nine "key dimensions" for observation (see also Cowie, 2009); no audio or video recordings were made. At the beginning of each observation, I briefly introduced myself to the class and explained the purposes of my visit. My role as an observer differed across class settings: while some professors invited me to participate or even actively involved me in the class discussion, in other classes I acted as a non-participant observer (Cowie, 2009). Because of practical and logistical constraints, I was unable to carry out prolonged observation and thus familiarize myself more closely with the shared practices and evolving dynamics of each class, which is an important goal of ethnographic research (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a; Watson-Gegeo, 1988, 1997). However, the observations nonetheless served to obtain a general impression of class routines and interactions, including some of the ways in which writing tasks were used or negotiated, which allowed me to triangulate student participants' accounts of their classroom experiences and formulate follow-up questions for the interviews.

- f. Instructor interviews.** In total, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with professors who taught courses taken by the student participants. Eight instructors participated in these interviews; each was interviewed once, except for Dr. Bradshaw and Dr. Gartner, both of whom completed a follow-up interview. The first interview with Dr. Bradshaw as well as the interviews with Dr. Neugent, Dr. Erickson, Dr. Davis, and Dr. O'Connor were held in their university offices. The second interview with Dr. Bradshaw and the interviews with Dr. Smith, Dr. Anderson, and Dr. Gartner were held using videoconferencing software instead.

The interviews were audio-recorded, and non-verbatim transcriptions were obtained through third-party transcription services (rev.com). These interviews mainly served to elicit the instructors' views of the writing they had assigned in their courses as well as the impressions they had of student participants' authorial identity and embodied (classroom) identity. Specific questions therefore considered the relation between course content and writing, the rationale and goals of specific writing tasks, the use of feedback and assessment practices, and aspects of student participants' written work and participation in class.

- g. Supplementary data sources.** I collected any additional data that could provide further context for student participants' writing, including course syllabi, writing assignment guidelines, handouts, and written instructor feedback. Two instructors further gave me access to their online course management systems (CMS), allowing me to collect further materials they had uploaded, such as announcements and presentation slides. One of these course websites was used in the course that served as the main focus in the classroom case study, a so-called blended or hybrid course in which face-to-face meetings were complemented by online learning activities (McGee & Reis, 2012). In addition, I gathered various materials that enabled me to consider the less immediate or "extrasituational" context (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992, p. 8) within which the participants' writing practices were embedded, such as university websites, graduate program student handbooks, course descriptions, and other institutional documents.

Data Analysis

Following the tradition of open-ended naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I examined data points from multiple data sources in conjunction, and I developed the research foci and findings through an iterative, ongoing process. For example, the class observations and interviews guided the interpretation of the student-written texts; conversely, analysis of the student-written texts served to identify writing choices and aspects of the students' authorial identity that seemed potentially relevant, and which therefore informed subsequent interviews and observations. The field notes, writing process logs, and supplementary data sources were primarily used for data triangulation, allowing me to provide a detailed, contextualized account of the student participants' writing choices and experiences. Based on Talmy's (2010) theorization of qualitative interviewing, the student and instructor interviews were further treated as social practice rather than as an objective research instrument. I thus analyzed the interview data as situationally contingent and collaborative accounts of the student participants' writing practices which resulted from an ongoing negotiation between me as a researcher and the participants (see also Agar, 1996; Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). In the findings chapters, I therefore occasionally include interviewer turns when I directly quote from the interviews, in an attempt to acknowledge "the interviewer's contribution to the interaction which ultimately generate[d] the data for qualitative analysis" (Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006, p. 43).

To facilitate data analysis, data points and stretches of data were coded using coding software (NVivo 12). Coding took place in multiple cycles, and coding schemes evolved over time. I relied on various coding methods such as open coding, focused coding, axial coding, pattern coding, values coding, and theoretical coding (Saldaña, 2016; see also Mackey & Gass,

2016). Whereas some codes initially emerged from the data (e.g., TIME PRESSURE, RISK-TAKING, NEGOTIATING EXPECTATIONS) (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), others were primarily motivated by major concepts or theories in the relevant research literature (e.g., GENRE KNOWLEDGE, DISCIPLINARITY, COURSE ECOLOGY). Most of the codes were researcher-generated labels that served to quickly identify recurring themes, although occasionally I also employed so-called *in vivo* codes, for example if participants repeatedly used the same phrases or if their wording seemed particularly evocative or compelling (Saldaña, 2016). Due to practical limitations, all coding was completed by me, the researcher, and no inter-coder or intra-coder reliability measures were used; as a result, it was not possible to test for or eliminate inadvertent coding biases (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

Researcher Positionality and Reciprocity

Postmodernist, poststructuralist, critical (neo-Marxist), feminist, and postcolonial theorists have challenged assumptions underlying classical ethnography and Western knowledge production more generally, motivating a rethinking of notions like culture, validity, representation, objectivity, and agency (e.g., Abu-Lughod, 1990; Berger, 1993; Chiseri-Strater, 2012; Clifford, 1997; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Goodwin, 1994; see also Grenfell & Pahl, 2018; Hornberger, 2006; Paltridge et al., 2016; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a). As a result, the need for reflection and reflexivity is increasingly emphasized, including an awareness of the researcher's positionality, the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and the ways in which these contribute to the construction of knowledge (Grenfell & Pahl, 2018; Paltridge et al., 2016). My identity as a white, cisgender, heterosexual, middle-class, European, male, nonnative-English-speaking, international student, writing instructor, and novice applied

linguist doubtlessly shaped my interactions with the research context and the participants—and, by extension, my interpretation of the resulting data. Like my student participants, I was also enrolled as a doctoral student in an interdisciplinary program at the university where the study took place. I further approached the research site as a teacher, having previously taught and tutored graduate students across disciplinary and institutional contexts. Finally, it is important to note that I had already acquainted and befriended several of the participants prior to the study. Thus, rather than approaching the study as an “ethnographic stranger” (Agar, 1996; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a), I felt quite at home in this environment, and I was therefore faced with the task of “render[ing] the familiar strange” (Paltridge et al., 2016, p. 7) when interacting with my object of analysis.

With regard to qualitative interviewing, Duff (2008) has noted that “it is often easier to develop rapport [if] interviewers are closer to research participants in age and status (for example, graduate students interviewing other students)” (p. 137). Indeed, the fact that I was also enrolled as a doctoral student in an interdisciplinary program seemed to facilitate the “rapport-building process” (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007, p. 177) with student participants, granting me “insider” status (Duff, 2008, p. 126). Being a graduate student myself, I could often easily relate to the stories shared by my student participants or the experiences described by them. Rather than assuming a neutral or passive stance, then, I would show concern and empathy if they shared their struggles with a particular course or writing task or the demands of graduate school more generally, or excitement if they told me about their writing or their research goals. When doing so felt appropriate, I would also share my perspective or offer stories of my own in return. As is common in naturalistic studies, my interaction with the student participants—and the case study participants in particular—gradually became less and less formal, as the students

increasingly asked me about my opinions, shared personal information, and at times demonstrated a strong interest in the study and their role within it. Thus, we soon began to “link as human beings apart from the roles [we were] playing as researcher and participant” (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007, p. 191). Apart from financial compensation, I also offered my student participants reciprocity in the form of writing advice, an offer taken up especially by Yasmin, who often used me as a resource when revising her writing. Several participants further indicated in the last interviews that they had benefited from participating in the study by reflecting on, and in doing so becoming more aware of, their writing strategies (see also Duff, 2008).

While the class observations and one-time interviews with professors (except for Dr. Bradshaw and Dr. Gartner, whom I interviewed twice) offered fewer rapport-building opportunities, I nonetheless strove to establish trust with the instructors by being respectful and polite in all my communication with them, attending to their needs and preferences, and aiming to understand their perspective. To my surprise, the instructor participants seemed particularly willing to help me with the study and invite me to their classes, even after I had reassured them that class observations were optional. In the interviews, instructors also frequently “opened up” and shared personal beliefs or details about their own prior experiences as graduate student writers, possibly motivated by my status as a graduate student. Jokes and humorous asides may have contributed in this regard, as these seemed to reduce the seriousness of the interview relationship. Several instructors further showed their appreciation for the fact that I was interested in their reasons for assigning particular writing tasks. Dr. Bradshaw also expressed an interest in hearing my perspective on the use of writing in her course, which I had completed as a student in the preceding academic year.

In the next three chapters, I present the main findings of the study, based on my analysis of the questionnaires, interviews, student-written texts, writing logs, class observations, instructor interviews, and supplementary data sources. Rather than providing an exhaustive overview, I focus here on the most salient observations, highlighting the four case study participants and their individual “pathways” (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 175). In Chapter 4, I consider the various roles the students performed in their writing tasks, including digital and multimodal genres, drawing from relevant concepts in genre studies and writer identity research. Focusing in on specific tasks, Chapter 5 examines writing that was submitted for a hybrid graduate course in applied linguistics by Jeramy and Denise, showing how writing goals and discursal selves were shaped by the unique course ecology (Canagarajah, 2015; see also Tardy, 2012). Finally, Chapter 6 discusses how Yasmin and Jacinta negotiated (inter)disciplinary and classroom discourse expectations as they sought to present themselves as experts in their respective fields of study (intercultural arts studies and medical biophysics).

CHAPTER 4

WRITING AS ROLE-PLAYING: SELF-PRESENTATION IN LOWER-STAKES

WRITING TASKS

In Chapter 2, I discussed previous research that considered how student writers negotiate a sense of self in their writing. While doctoral students are normally expected to complete a wide variety of shorter writing tasks in their coursework, the opportunities provided by these tasks for scholarly identity construction have remained understudied, as scholars have tended to focus on culminating, high-stakes genres like theses or dissertations and (to a lesser degree) term projects (for exceptions, see Casanave, 2005, Ivanič, 1998; Samraj, 2004; Tardy, 2005, 2009). Yet, writing in graduate courses seems to provide an important site for PhD students' identity development, at a time when students begin to formulate their research interests and aspirations as novice scholars in interaction with their instructors and classmates, thus carving out "coherent discursal selves" (Casanave, 2002, p. 140) while reconciling their personal goals with (un)stated course goals and expectations. My study therefore examines how multilingual students from different backgrounds approached the writing they completed during their interdisciplinary coursework, as well as how they negotiated their purposes and evolving scholarly selves in their writing.

This first findings chapter explores various opportunities for identity negotiation, drawing from all of the participants' experiences with lower-stakes writing tasks. Apart from detailing the learning goals and purposes for various tasks and students' uptake of these, I also consider how the writing formed part of their "disciplinary becoming" (Curry, 2016; Dressen-Hammouda, 2008). My discussion is guided by the following questions: What goals did the instructors have with the tasks, and how did the tasks fit within the context of the course? What roles were

students expected to enact in their writing, and in what ways did this expectation facilitate or constrain their learning? While I discern various common task types in this overview, my approach differs from large-scale classifications which group genres based on their social functions and conventional textual forms, based on an analysis course documents like syllabi, writing prompts, and grading rubrics (Cooper & Bikowski, 2007; Hale et al., 1996; Melzer, 2009) or, more rarely, actual student writing (Nesi & Gardner, 2012; Gardner & Nesi, 2013). Such genre taxonomies can helpfully inform needs analyses and provide a basis for genre-based pedagogy (e.g., Hyland, 2007; see also Caplan, 2019; Simpson et al., 2016), but they offer little insight into how writing tasks function within specific classroom contexts, nor how they function as part of students' unique learning trajectories, or what Prior (1998) refers to as "complex microhistories of situated action" (p. 63). Therefore, following Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999), I instead sought to grasp each task "in its holistic context as a rich, dynamic, basically open-ended activity," accounting for the students' task responses within their unique, "particularized conditions" (p. 57).

By examining how students presented themselves in their writing, this study further extends existing research on role-playing, a notion that is linked to dialogic understandings of writer identity. Drawing on this concept, as well as closely related metaphors such as "scenes" (Devitt, Reiff, & Bawarshi, 2004, pp. 7-12) and "games" (Casanave, 2002, pp. 260-261), scholars have explored how students are expected to take on certain subject positions in their writing, which may be more or less aligned with the subjectivities they envision for themselves. For example, undergraduate students are often expected to present themselves primarily as "learners" in their writing, even though they would benefit from taking on the role of "knowledge contributor" (Jacobson, 2019), or from experimenting with various "researcher"

roles such the “cultural anthropologist” (Bawarshi, 2003; Johns, 1997). With regard to graduate-level writing, scholars long understood students’ subject positions in terms of increasing disciplinary participation, thus depicting scholarly identity formation as a rather linear process (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988, 1991; see also Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Flowerdew, 2000). More recent studies suggest that this process is in fact rather messy and unpredictable, and that graduate students may adopt many different, even conflicting roles in their writing for the various courses they complete (Casanave, 2002; Prior 1998, 2005). In interdisciplinary programs, expectations for appropriate or desired identities may be even less clear-cut, and students’ approaches are likely informed by their prior training and their future goals.

With this understanding, the following sections consider how the students responded to opportunities to perform various classroom and disciplinary identities in their writing, conceptualizing low-stakes writing tasks¹¹ as an integral part of doctoral students’ disciplinary becoming. My discussion distinguishes between three overarching roles: the classroom contributor, the ethnographer, and the disciplinary expert.

Classroom Contributor

In a pilot study conducted prior to this research, Gevers and Conrad (2020) examined how one student negotiated her identity in the online discussion posts she wrote for an applied linguistics course, in which students were expected to discuss assigned readings and raise

¹¹ Although “low-stakes writing” (Leon, 2020) is a convenient shorthand to distinguish short writing assignments from culminating (research) genres such as written exams and dissertations, it is not meant to imply that these assignments are unimportant. Rather, I propose that writing in graduate courses should be seen as an integral part of doctoral students’ learning, and an important site for academic identity negotiation.

substantive questions in response to them. The instructor compiled the questions in presentation slides in the order of submission and showed these during class meetings, inviting the students to elaborate on their questions and engage in follow-up discussion. The close connection between the writing task and these class routines strongly influenced how the student approached her writing, as she tailored her writing not only to the professor but also to the other students in the class. For example, she repeatedly chose to address topics that had not yet been raised by her classmates, or referenced their posts in her writing, in anticipation of the class discussion. On one occasion, she carefully weighed whether it would be appropriate for her to critique an assigned reading in her discussion post, given that no other students had done so up until that point in the semester. After realizing that her critique was welcomed by the instructor and her peers, the student increasingly expressed a strong stance in her subsequent posts. This example serves as a reminder that the purposes of writing in graduate courses are mediated by both teacher-student and student-student interactions, and that understandings may evolve over the course of the academic term.

Several of the participants in this study were asked to complete recurring tasks that similarly provided a direct basis for classroom interaction. In the interviews, it became clear that they primarily considered such tasks as opportunities to foster productive exchanges with the instructor and their peers, positioning them as knowledge contributors within the classroom community. This seemed to be the case especially with tasks that were shared with the whole class, such as discussion posts and reading responses, and with writing that would be submitted to the course website or a virtual bulletin board so that it could be viewed by both the instructor and the other students, as was also the case in Gevers and Conrad's (2020) study (see also Duff, 2010; Potts, 2005; Yim, 2005, 2011). In these tasks, the students would typically incorporate "a

blend of voices and practices” (Casanave, 2002, p. 146) from the classroom, for example by responding to previous class discussions and drawing on others’ interests and observations, even if such dialogical processes might not be immediately obvious to an outsider. Moreover, while students were often instructed to summarize course readings or list the main “takeaways,” the tasks also invited them to connect these to their own research interests and to formulate new ideas, question prior assumptions, and rethink established concepts—thus transforming knowledge within the classroom (Geisler, 1994).

In Fall 2019, Melinda, a third-year PhD student in educational psychology, took an introductory graduate course on family and interpersonal theories for which she wrote weekly “thought questions,” identifying themes across the assigned readings and proposing topics for further consideration. The instructor, Dr. O’Connor, would select excerpts from the students’ writing and include these in a handout which she distributed at the beginning of each class, giving students time to read and respond to each other’s questions. She explained that the task essentially served as a “springboard for class discussion” by providing a shared overview of the readings based on the student’ own interests and interpretations (Interview O, 12/5/19). During one of the class meetings, students who had raised similar issues in their “thought questions” engaged in small group discussions to further refine their questions, which provided a framework for the remainder of the class as well (Class Observation, 10/21/19). The course syllabus provided specific clear guidelines for the writing task: students were instructed to contextualize their questions in a page-long discussion referencing the weekly readings, with citations highlighted in yellow; the questions themselves had to be underlined, making it easier to refer to them during class meetings. In addition, the questions needed to be “integrative,” meaning that they should arise from a critical engagement with all of the assigned texts.

When I first met her, Melinda explained that she had recently begun preparing for her qualifying exams and dissertation, in which she planned to look at immigrant adolescents' experiences in schools. She hoped that this course would allow her to learn more about the field of family studies, which was relatively new to her.¹² In approaching her first few thought questions, Melinda was mainly concerned with adequately conveying the main points from the assigned readings, noting that she “found it incredibly difficult to integrate all studies” in her discussions, and sometimes spent “5+ hours!” on the task (Writing Log, 9/27/19). Her actual questions initially tended to address specific issues that seemed more obvious, such as strengths and shortcomings she noticed across the readings. Yet, she gradually realized that “bigger” ideas would make for more stimulating discussion and began to take more liberties in her questions, exploring topics of interest to her and worrying less about providing detailed summaries of the readings.

This shift is illustrated by her fifth thought question, in which she invited the class to consider the potential benefits of a more “in-depth, person-centered” approach to human relationships (Figure 1). Here, Melinda chose to formulate her question directly in response to one specific article, as this allowed her to “expand on my own ideas” regarding a perceived shortcoming of social exchange theory (“SET”); indeed, she noted that she was “more opinionated in this piece,” and had started “using more “I/me/my” language” (Writing Log, 10/20/19). When I asked her about this choice, Melinda explained that, given her increased understanding of family studies, she felt encouraged to write questions that “push it further” and “make you wonder,” rather than questions that could simply be answered “through literature

¹² Commenting on her interest in family studies, Melinda told me that, “as somebody who will be working in the schools [and] with families, I think family engagement is really important, especially with newcomer immigrant families, [who] need more support than anyone else to like navigate a completely different school system” (Interview M1, 9/13/19).

review or through another [small-scale] study” (Interview M3, 10/25/19). Over the course of the semester, Melinda gradually moved away from a “knowledge-telling” role, increasingly presenting herself as a knowledge contributor (Geisler, 1994; Tardy, 2005; see also Jacobson, 2019).

One of my favorite aspects of this week’s reading is Sabatelli, Lee, and Ripoll-Núñez’s (2018) expansion on SET considering an ecological framework to better understand how close relationships are both structured and experienced. Often times, theories can feel distant from practice in that important components are missing or not addressed in regards to how dynamic and complex both humans and relationships tend to be. For example, without taking into consideration the history, customs, and practices of a particular apartment building in Chicago’s Southside, and taking into account the greater context of cultural values and need for “satisficing,” Rosen and Venkatesh (2008) may have arrived at completely different research questions and conclusions. Luckily, given the authors’ experience, commitment (nearly two decades!), and apparent established trust with the participants; I am more likely to trust and better understand the data presented as a consumer.

...

Given Sabatelli et al.’s (2018) call for a more coherent and holistic understanding of relationships over modal patterns of variables, how can we measure effects of individual, ecological, and dyadic factors across time to illustrate relationship structures and experiences to assess need satisfaction and the kinds of rewards both partners may be gaining from said relationship? Further, if such in-depth, person-centered studies were to occur, what kinds of information could we learn from them to make change in society for how families and relationships are sought and served?

Figure 1

Excerpt from one of Melinda's "thought questions" ("TQ#5") which illustrates her efforts to identify knowledge gaps in course readings and propose ways to address them

Several other participants also completed tasks which invited active participation in knowledge construction within the classroom. For instance, Samantha, a second-year PhD student, wrote three shorter, ungraded papers in a graduate course that provided an overview of applied linguistics, her field of study. The course syllabus referred to the papers as "thought pieces" and explained that they were meant to offer students a chance to examine three basic concepts in applied linguistics: language, learning, and teaching. Students were encouraged to write in an informal, exploratory manner for this task. While the writing itself was not shared with their classmates, the students discussed and elaborated the ideas they wrote about in small groups at the beginning of class. The instructor, Dr. Davis, explained that his goal with the assignment was to

put the students in a position where they should think about these [concepts] based on their own experience, not just think off the top of their head . . . but actually have to sit down and, you know, come up with something which they can then share with others and educate others and then hear my own take. (Interview D1, 2/23/20)

While many of the students in the course had limited experience with carrying out independent research, the task nonetheless served to positioned them as active contributors, recognizing their prior experiences as (language) teachers and learners as relevant to the classroom community. At

the end of the semester, Samantha told me that this had been her favorite course so far, precisely because of Dr. Davis's emphasis on student input: "for the whole like two and a half hours, we kind of like discussed [our own ideas] and he always, like, gave us the questions that we really had to think about, abstract questions like "what is learning?" Right? It's really big" (Interview S4, 2/10/20). In her "thought pieces," Samantha repeatedly drew on her prior experiences as a teacher of Korean and English, a Master's student of English linguistics in South Korea, and a Japanese language learner, as she wanted to make her writing more "personal."¹³ In addition, she chose to include pictures that captured how she understood the concepts, by way of a "visual representation" (Interview S2, 10/10/19). When presenting her writing, Samantha was able to make a unique contribution to the small-group discussion, informing her classmates' understanding of the concepts in question by adding her own views. Rather than (re)telling established knowledge, then, she utilized the writing task to engage in an active knowledge-building process within the classroom, which provided a "scene" of writing in its own right (Devitt, Reiff, & Bawarshi, 2004).

While Melinda and Samantha acted as classroom contributors in ways that seemed in line with their instructors' goals for these tasks, students did not always share their instructors' expectations for appropriate writer roles. Like Samantha, Jeramy and Denise drew heavily on

¹³ For example, in her thought piece on "learning," Samantha observed: "In South Korea, especially for elementary school education, we call teaching "whole-person education". This means that teaching and education is not only about teaching necessary subjects, such as science, Korean, and social studies, but also about developing various skills and abilities that the learners will need later in society." Later on, she noted that she had found her Japanese classes intimidating: "In high school Japanese class, my language instructor would point at students or call us by numbers and ask us to stand up and read dialogues out loud. She would laugh whenever we made mistakes in terms of pronunciation before she corrected them. Sometimes, I did not want to be in the class since the contents were too difficult for me as a beginner in Japanese. From this experience, I learned that as a language teacher, it is important to make a classroom where your students want to come and enjoy. By implementing different teaching methods, you can make your students learning process more fun and enjoyable, and that's what I want to achieve in my class."

their personal experiences and understandings in the weekly reading responses they submitted in a Technology & Foreign Language Learning course, and Jeramy's wording often conveyed a strong sense of personal involvement, yet it became clear that their instructor expected a more formal "knowledge-telling" role that emphasized the knowledge contained in the assigned readings. Chapter 5 discusses Jeramy's and Denise's writing in more detail.

Ethnographer

It is clear, then, that the students conceptualized many of the tasks they completed as opportunities for contributing to the class, especially if their writing provided a direct basis for classroom interaction. When reflecting on their long-term learning, however, students rather tended to associate writing tasks with specific researcher roles that they took (see also Johns, 1997). Distinctions between qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry appeared particularly relevant in this regard, possibly because the students were expected to be knowledgeable about multiple research traditions in their interdisciplinary fields. Indeed, their professors sometimes purposefully contrasted different research paradigms. For example, Kelly, a third-year PhD student from the Dominican Republic who specialized in music psychology, took a course on research methodologies in music education in Fall 2019 for which she was asked to submit five "Research Article Analyses" on peer-reviewed studies of her choice, each of which had to be representative of a different methodological approach.¹⁴ When discussing her experiences in this class and with writing in English (her second language), Kelly explained to me how she

¹⁴ The students needed to select articles that corresponded to the following methodological paradigms: "Descriptive, or Survey," "Inferential/Experimental," "Historical or Philosophical," "Ethnography," and "Case Study or Narrative." Kelly explained that students were given a specific template to use for their analyses: they needed to provide an APA citation for their chosen article, detail the research questions or hypotheses, methods, results, and include "your own review or criticism that may have."

understood the relation between research methodology and her personal trajectory as an academic writer, noting her general affinity for quantitative research:

The approach for each class, and even the writing, is very different. . . . Methods influence your writing *a lot*. Like, your writing for qualitative contexts will not always work for quantitative [research] because you have to be so straightforward, [while] qualitative writing requires a more abstract way of thinking, you know, where you're talking about people. [laughs] . . . Honestly, I am, I have definitely more of a quantitative mind. I do consciously know that mixed methods is, it's sort of the basis for having a really true out approach for interdisciplinary studies, but I am more on [the quantitative] side. . . . So, I think that's one of the challenging things for me, writing about like music or ethnomusicology, you know. That's the one thing that I have to learn, that I'm still learning. (Interview K1, 10/15/19)

As these comments neatly illustrate, Kelly often framed her writing experiences and ambitions with reference to an overarching “quantitative”/“qualitative” distinction, which provided a convenient shorthand for her. Because of her background and interests in experimental research design, she generally expressed more confidence in writing that she associated with quantitative methods, regardless of the specific task at hand, though she was also eager to improve her mastery of what she saw as “qualitative writing,” including writing in philosophical or hermeneutic research traditions (Interview K1, 10/15/19).¹⁵

¹⁵ While Kelly had previously been registered as a doctoral student in communication, she had recently decided to transfer to an interdisciplinary program in intercultural arts studies, as she felt that program was more closely aligned with her cross-disciplinary interests.

Several other students similarly perceived their coursework writing in relation to both different research traditions and their own goals as novice scholars, which guided their engagement with specific tasks. For example, Lola (media studies) and Yasmin (intercultural arts studies) completed writing assignments that clearly positioned them as an ethnographer, and a participant-observer more specifically, inviting them to explore this researcher identity within their respective classroom contexts and disciplinary settings. It is worth noting here that, in a detailed analysis of genre and writer roles in first-year writing, Bawarshi (2003) observed how several undergraduate students failed to identify with the role of “ethnographer” or “cultural anthropologist” in one essay task, and as a result struggled to inhabit this role in their writing (see also Jacobson, 2019). In contrast, Lola and Yasmin seemed relatively comfortable with ethnographic writing, both by their own account and in their instructors’ estimation. Their uptake of the ethnographer role was relatively intuitive; it followed rather naturally from their “self-prompted desires to write” (Bawarshi, 2003, p. 138). Coincidentally, both conducted observations during (unrelated) music events for the occasion, yet each approached this quite differently, motivated by their personal backgrounds, interests, and plans for the future.

Lola, a second-year student in media studies, repeatedly took on the position of ethnographer in a qualitative methods course she took during Fall 2019, which involved a wide range of writing tasks. Throughout the semester, Lola carried around a fieldbook, a composition notebook in which she kept handwritten fieldnotes—a common form of data collection in ethnographic research, and thus a supporting genre or tool that reinforced the ethnographer role. Apart from their fieldnotes, the students in this class also completed various other short writing tasks in their notebooks, as part of a “weekly log” that was worth 50% of the final course grade. Specifically, the log contained discussion points or questions based on assigned readings (“5 key

points,” as they were referred to in the course syllabus), in-class exercises related to observation (“stretching exercises”), fieldnotes, interview notes, research memos, and reflections on the learning progress; each entry further needed to be dated and titled, and students were instructed to leave space for instructor feedback and their own commentary, as well as to facilitate data coding at a later stage. The instructor, Dr. Erickson, explained the rationale for this approach as follows:

They actually write almost everything in their fieldbook . . . because I want to see what they’re thinking and I want them to be able to practice writing by hand . . . a less obtrusive way of taking notes, you know, [so] there’s not a technological barrier between them and their, their world . . . just to build that routine. So I tell them to go out and observe, and train their senses, [while] also reflecting on . . . where you are now in your pursuit of, you know, qualitative inquiry. (Interview E, 2/24/20)¹⁶

By connecting these various genres, the notebook thus integrated the “student” role with that of the qualitative inquirer and ethnographic observer, effectively positioning students as qualitative researchers-in-training. Over the course of the semester, Dr. Erickson repeatedly collected the fieldbooks “on a rotating basis” to provide feedback on the students’ writing (Interview E,

¹⁶ Lola indicated that, while she understood the importance of taking handwritten notes, she nonetheless preferred to write on her computer whenever Dr. Erickson allowed it: “She really thinks that like going for the interview process or field observations you seem less intrusive, you know, when you’re using a notebook with a pen and paper [rather] than bringing a laptop and stuff like that. . . . But then also, [Dr. Erickson] does know that we do like to use our technology, so like, I have all my vocabulary words from class or the readings on a Word document that I continually add to, or interview transcriptions. . . . So there are instances where you could use the field notebook, I guess, if you wanted to transcribe your interview into it, but then also [she] understands that we are in this, you know, digital age where it's often easier when you're transcribing to do it on a Word document than by hand.” (Interview L3, 11/4/19)

2/24/20), meanwhile encouraging them to experiment with different “styles” of note-taking and to consider which notes should be developed into “full fieldnotes” (Class Observation, 10/28/19). In their final assignment, a “mini-report paper,” students were expected to share illustrative samples of data and coding and to carry out some analysis, in addition to providing more fully fledged ethnographic accounts.

When I interviewed her, Lola explained to me that, after exploring cultural analysis and critical theory as an undergraduate student (allowing her to write “more creatively”), she had decided to pursue “post-positivist” quantitative research during her graduate studies, in a way similar to Kelly:

I initially went to do more film theory work, so trying to watch films and interpret them from a feminist film theory lens. Halfway through my [Master’s] program, I met a professor who was doing quantitative social science research and I just fell in love with that, so I took the leap to go from a very qualitative philosophical approach to [a] social science [approach], wanting to collect data, you know, run statistical analyses, and kind of have *evidence*—I hate to say it that way, but that in my mind at the time was why I made that leap. So it was a huge transition for me, but then that’s kind of led me down the path for my PhD and the kind of the research I do now. (Interview L1, 9/17/19)

In Lola’s understanding, this disciplinary path explained her ambivalence toward the qualitative methods class and the ethnographic writing tasks. On the one hand, as someone conducting quantitative research on media effects who had learned to “use [a] very social-scientific researcher voice” in her writing, Lola felt “a little out of her wheelhouse” in this class; indeed,

some of the in-class observation exercises and writing tasks almost seemed like a “free-for-all” to her (Interview L1, 9/17/19). On the other hand, she appreciated that the fieldnotes and reflections offered “flexibility,” allowing her a certain degree of creativity as a writer and the freedom to explore topics of a more personal nature in her writing. Indeed, during the interviews, she occasionally lamented the fact that her academic writing had to be “stripped” of her personal voice,” “which is like kind of a bummer because I always think it's fun to have your own voice come through in your writing” (Interview L2, 10/18/19).¹⁷

For the purposes of this class, Lola decided to carry out autoethnographic research on the role of fandom in interpersonal relationships, connecting her interests in fandom and her personal experiences as a “Swiftie,” a Taylor Swift fan. To this end, she took field notes during an indie rock concert and a university sports game; in addition, she kept a diary commenting on her thoughts and interactions with her partner and with strangers, inspired by Taylor Swift’s personal diary entries which had recently been released as part of a series of special-edition CD booklets. This approach dovetailed with scholarly conceptions of “fan objects” as “self-reflexive vehicles for the development of fans’ attitudes and behaviors,” as Lola explained in her final “mini-report.” In this assignment, which according to her was “the longest paper I think I have ever written” (Interview L4, 2/3/20), Lola strategically interwove her diary entries, field notes, interview data, and research reflections. These combined sources supported her discussion of how fandom could strengthen interpersonal connections by making strangers seem more familiar, which she connected to a communication theory known as “uncertainty reduction” (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) (Figure 2).

¹⁷ Lola added: “with academic stuff, at least at this stage of my career, it feels very much like the personal or the creative voice gets stunted a little bit, because you haven’t maybe quite proven yourself to be able to explore that [aspect] (Interview L2, 10/18/19).

To reduce uncertainty, people frequently engage in some form of connection. For the current project, this came in a variety of forms, such as fan discourse, dancing, and even something as simple as a smile. One of the most poignant experiences during my field observations occurred when an unknown young woman found me in the crowd and came over to share a dance:

I'm swaying my arms to the music when again, I feel a tap on my right shoulder. I turn around but this time it's a young woman – dark curly hair, black shirt and jeans with a big smile on her face. She waves at me and I wave back. She starts dancing and I start dancing. It appears she saw me in the crowd and wanted to join in. I feel a little nervous and [name partner] starts laughing. "Do you know her" they ask. I shake my head no and get back to my moves. The unknown, dancing woman stays with me for a song. We both dance next to each other – no words are exchanged; we don't even look over at each other again. We just dance together, sharing an experience, yet we have don't know anything about one another.

This moment captures what [name partner] referred to as a set of concert-going "rules and norms." During our interview, they explained that when attending a concert there is:

"Like this weird norm where you can just be comfortable with anyone that you talk to because of that connection that you feel the band."

Such moments of connection with these familiar strangers are often ephemeral. Yet, the interpersonal connection via this shared experience is longer lasting.

Figure 2

Excerpt from Lola's term paper ("mini-report") for the qualitative methods course, illustrating her use of autoethnographic data

Dr. Erickson seemed impressed with Lola's writing, noting that autoethnography "is one of the more difficult things to pursue" and may at first seem "weird" to students, and that, despite her lack of experience with this kind of research, Lola had found "a really creative way [to tell] these parallel stories . . . taking Taylor Swift's voice and experience and map[ping] her own onto that" (Interview E, 2/24/20). Nevertheless, Lola told me that she struggled with the writing tasks in this course, and that she had not spent much time on them, instead prioritizing the writing in her other classes.¹⁸ She explained that the autoethnographic project has been "an interesting experience," resulting in a "very personal," "vulnerable" paper (Interview L4, 2/3/20), but she did not expect to engage in ethnographic research after completing the course, and therefore did not read Dr. Erickson's feedback closely:

I don't see myself really doing much like this again in the future. . . . And since I'm not really, like, wanting to do anything with this . . . I didn't really care what her comments were because I was like, I'm done. I don't want to touch this. It was a very vulnerable

¹⁸ That semester, Lola was enrolled in two other graduate courses, for which her writing was "expected to be solely quantitative academic. . . . [where] you don't talk about personal anecdotes, you know. It's going to be very dry" (Interview L2, 10/18/19). She expressed more confidence in her writing for those classes, in contrast with the autoethnographic "mini-report," which clearly posed difficulties for her: "Honestly, as I wrote this one, the entire time I was writing it, I was like, I don't know if I'm doing this correctly, but there's not enough time for me to ask the professor, there's not enough time for me to really do anything about it. It's due in two days. I just gotta do it" (Interview L4, 2/3/20).

paper for me to write to begin with . . . I didn't really want to read her comments on the content. (Interview L4, 2/3/20)

Lola had successfully carved out a space for her “autobiographical self” in her writing (Ivanič, 1998, 2005), as a Taylor Swift fan interested in learning more about her own fandom, allowing her to show a side of herself that she would not normally express as an academic writer. However, as her comments illustrate, the task did not align with the disciplinary self she envisioned, which ultimately limited her engagement with the writing and the feedback she received.

In contrast, Yasmin, a first-year student in intercultural arts studies, benefited more directly from the opportunity to write as an ethnographer, as it helped her reconsider her interests and goals as a novice researcher. In Spring 2020, Yasmin was enrolled in a proseminar course that was required for all the students in the interdisciplinary program. The course served as an overview of the theories, methods, and practical applications in intercultural arts, as well as the various disciplinary approaches that are used in this research domain. The students submitted several writing tasks over the course of the semester, including one task for which they were expected to do an “ethnographic exploration” based on their own field observations, as the syllabus stated. The instructor and chair of the program, Dr. Gartner, indicated to me that she wanted the assignments to be “a little bit of everything,” allowing students to experiment with different data collection methods and “[take] on different roles,” especially given that “writing is so different from one discipline to another” (Interview G1, 5/13/20).

Yasmin had previously conducted ethnographic research during her M.A. in dance at a Chinese university, for which she did extensive fieldwork on folk dance performances among the

Qiang people, an ethnic minority, and submitted a thesis in Chinese. However, she had since become more interested in doing survey-based and mixed-methods research, as she felt this would allow her to combine her interests in dance and public health: “my Bachelor’s and Master’s degree[s] are in dance, but I [was] looking for PhD program like interdisciplinary, and not just only in dance, that crosses dance to other subjects. . . . So I’m focused on cross of dance and public health” (Interview Y1, 10/17/19). Despite her original plan to pursue mixed-methods research on dance therapy, the writing in Dr. Gartner’s class helped Yasmin realize that the ethnographer role was one of her strengths that she continued to draw on. Looking back on the semester, she told me that the ethnographic exploration had “definitely” been her favorite writing assignment (Interview Y7, 5/7/20). In her assignment, she described her experiences at a local country bar that she had visited together with her host family (Figure 3). It was the first time that she attended a country music event, and apart from detailing her observations of people’s interactions and the music genre—which was new to her—she also wrote about her experiences with trying out some country swing dance and line dance moves as the night progressed, overcoming her initial unease. She told me that the event had been very meaningful to her as an international student and a dancer, as it allowed her to learn something about the U.S. and establish a stronger connection with her host family, in a shared “cultural experience” (Interview Y7, 5/7/20).

The space was ample but very crowded. . . . All the waiter and waitress wore a cowboy hat, and many customers dressed like a cowboy.

. . .

I bought a margarita standing at a bar to observe. . . . The band has four members: vocal & rhythm, lead guitar, Bass slapper, and drum. They look like the pop music band. But I can't tell what's different about country music. Some big screens behind the band hanging on the wall scrolling some advertisements. The computer lights changed color while spinning overhead.

. . .

My friend taught me some basic swing steps, and I tried the swing dance. This is a place full of interaction. . . . Between the social dance parts, there was a line dance part. A woman who was very good at it starting dancing in the front, then more and more people imitated her step and joined the dance. I learned the pattern of her movements soon and joined the dance group. It's much more relaxed and comfortable for me to do this. I think that was because I trained many years to imitate and learn movements very quickly as a single dancer, but there's no contacting duet dance tradition in Chinese dance.

. . .

I feel a little weird because I was the only Asian person in that place. And most costumers are older people. I didn't see people around twenties. That makes me curious, do young people not like country music, or they don't go to the bar? Why are there so many older people in the bar?

Figure 3

Excerpts from Yasmin's ethnographic description which documented her experiences as a participant observer at a country music bar

In her feedback, Dr. Gartner praised Yasmin for incorporating aspects of her own perspective and positionality. When I asked her about this, Dr. Gartner told me that she believed the assignment has “allowed [Yasmin's] voice to come out,” adding that

so often at the undergraduate level you see people writing ethnographic reports that are so boring and that have so little character to them that it takes the life [out] of what ethnography should be in terms of, not just a written objective description of what one sees, but an experience that one has in a space. . . . And I think she [Yasmin] was able to have really that outsider perspective . . . [conveying] a space through writing. . . . I think she has a strong personality and . . . a sense of humor and I felt like it came through in this piece of writing. (Interview G1, 5/13/20)

Yasmin valued Dr. Gartner's perspective, and inspired by her comments, she gradually reconsidered her future research plans. Her final writing assignment for the course, a grant proposal, outlined an applied research project on the potential therapeutic benefits of a dance class on body percussion, which incorporated ethnographic methods. This idea, Yasmin explained to me, might well provide the basis for her dissertation research: "Yeah, I think that would be my start, beginning . . . for my dissertation" (Interview Y7, 10/17/19). Ultimately, the task thus allowed her to reimagine herself as an ethnographer, a role that was quite comfortable to her and that seemed promising in the long term as well.

Disciplinary Expert

Previous writing scholarship has shown that subject matter knowledge is merely one aspect of advanced academic literacy (Belcher, 1994; Tardy, 2005). To "count" as disciplinary experts, academic writers also need to learn how to convince their scholarly peers that their work is credible and offers new knowledge or insights, in a more complex rhetorical act of

“knowledge-transforming” (Geisler, 1994; Tardy, 2005).¹⁹ This increasing rhetorical demand is perhaps most obvious in the various high-stakes writing tasks associated with graduate education, such as research papers, conference presentations, and dissertations/theses. However, my participants’ experiences suggest that low-stakes or shorter assignments could also play an important, yet previously overlooked, part in learning to perform expertise. Indeed, several of the tasks seemed to grant the students an initial chance to present themselves as an authority in a specific research domain or topic, an epistemic role I will refer to here as disciplinary expert (see also Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2007).

Although several classroom genres seemed to invite this role (e.g., literature reviews, research proposals), I have chosen to consider it in relation to the journal club presentation, a recurring task for the two students majoring in the sciences (Bob and Jacinta). As a genre, the journal club presentation is relatively unknown in applied linguistics and writing studies, as is the case with many spoken and multimodal genres (Tardy, 2009). Based on my observations, the genre seems to bear a close resemblance to spoken “research process” genres (Swales, 2004). These include peer seminars or colloquia, in which invited speakers (usually experts in a given field) discuss their ongoing research activities or share work being done by their research teams or at their home universities (Aguilar, 2004; see also Swales, 1990), and graduate student seminar presentations, in which students present their original research to a small audience—sometimes as part of the same colloquia series that feature more senior researchers and visiting speakers (Weissberg, 1993). Importantly, journal club presentations differ from these multimodal

¹⁹ As Tardy (2005, 2010) has noted, student-researchers thus need to develop multiple kinds of knowledge as writers, complementing their knowledge of “generic form” and “subject-matter content” with *rhetorical* knowledge, which includes “an understanding of epistemology, background knowledge, hidden agendas, rhetorical appeals, surprise value, and *kairos* (rhetorical timing), as they relate to the disciplinary community in which a given genre is situated” (2005, p. 327).

genres in that they do not disseminate original research but rather report on previous research in the form of refereed articles or book chapters. A shared feature, however, is that attendance is normally open to anyone interested, including graduate and undergraduate students, postdocs, lab assistants and managers, and faculty, regardless of their own research focus or relation to the speaker. In all three cases, presenters are therefore expected to accommodate a mixed audience by using supporting visuals and providing explanations where necessary, unraveling the intricacies of the research domain as well as the various steps taken in the study they are presenting. Journal club presentations thus resemble research talks in that they involve a certain degree of what Aguilar (2004) calls “didacticism” (p. 61), casting students as experts who need to make their topic accessible to peer non-experts.²⁰

A first-year student in the interdisciplinary entomology program, Bob repeatedly frequented journal club presentations and had already given several presentations himself during his graduate studies. While his own research dealt specifically with mosquito biology and mosquito-borne diseases, he felt that he benefited from attending talks on other subjects: “I like it, and you learn a lot, as long as [the presenters] are good speakers” (Interview B2, 10/30/19). The lab he worked for organized its own student seminar and journal club presentations, attracting a small but varied audience consisting of “whoever has time and can make it . . . we tend to be about ten people [in total]” (Interview B2, 10/30/19). Jacinta, a second-year student in medical biophysics and one of the case study participants, also did several journal club

²⁰ In a study on spoken academic discourse socialization among L2 graduate students, Zappa-Hollman (2007) similarly noted that students in scientific disciplines were expected to “sound like an expert” in their academic presentations, or to “avoid sounding tentative, whereas students in history and anthropology courses felt the need to be “authoritative” but “without sounding presumptuous” (pp. 467-469). An analysis of the presentations showed that, “[w]hile in general the participants . . . opted to display an image of themselves as experts or relative experts, students in the social sciences courses seemed to take on a variety of stances along the expert-novice continuum throughout the AP, particularly in the discussion period” (p. 479).

presentations, which provided a recurring topic of conversation in my interviews with her. In the initial stage of her graduate program, she was required to participate in one journal club per semester, which also earned her course credits. In Spring 2020, Jacinta took a credit-bearing journal club course, for which students took turns presenting on articles of their choice and moderating others' presentations. The instructor who led the journal club, Dr. Smith, explained the rationale for the course format as follows: "generally, the students in the journal club don't have their own work to present at this point . . . so this is really meant as a [forum] for reading current literature" (Interview S, 3/23/20). She also emphasized the need to "talk about the scientific process and how data is presented, how you display it," emphasizing the importance of effective communication: "I think the parameters of success are really communication, both written communication and oral communication, *teaching others about your work* . . . [whether] in the classroom or in conferences, presentations. . . . Effective communication is really the bedrock I think of [being] a successful scientist" (Interview S, 3/23/20; emphasis added).

The journal club focused on (heart) muscle physiology, Jacinta's area of specialization. Her decision to pursue doctoral research in this area had been rather serendipitous, as she had unexpectedly landed a job in a lab that looked at muscle tissue after finishing her undergraduate degree in biomedical sciences. Still, Jacinta seemed hesitant to present herself as an authority on muscle physiology in our conversations, emphasizing her practical know-how instead:

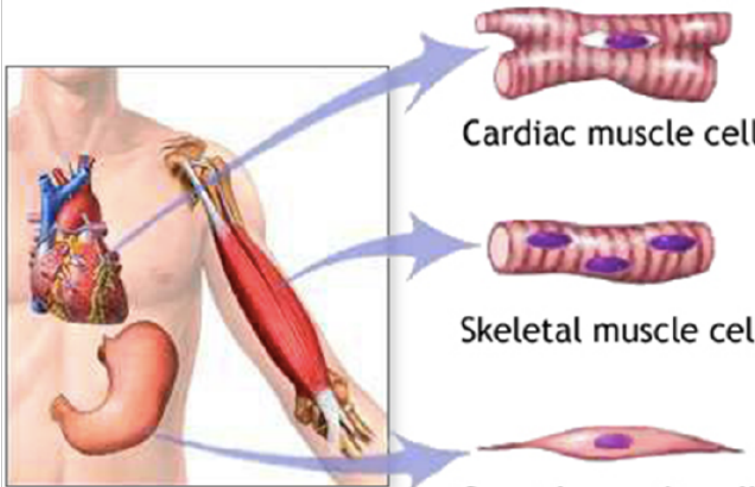
I was the technician working in the lab that I'm doing my research in right now, and my boss encouraged me to apply for a PhD . . . I was like, "Okay, I will do a PhD, [but] only if I can still do it in this lab," because I didn't want to start from scratch, learning new techniques and getting trained. . . . So I'm just kind of carrying on the work, and I mean,




we have the facilities. We have all the equipment. I've been trained on it. . . . So that's why I'm doing it. I am slowly starting to love it more, I guess. (Interview J1, 9/11/19)

While Jacinta mainly looked at muscle research, some of the other students enrolled in the journal club specialized in cancer research. Encouraged by Dr. Smith, Jacinta volunteered to do the first presentation of the semester, for which she chose to discuss a book chapter that provided an introduction to *sarcomerogenesis*, or muscle formation. In her presentation slides (Figures 4a-4e), she strategically combined text and images to convey key concepts from the chapter, providing additional explanations (“Extra Information,” as she labeled these) and illustrations she had come across in her lab work “mostly for the girls that just don’t know about it. . . . [And] two of them said I did a really good job” (Interview J4, 1/29/20). Dr. Smith was impressed by Jacinta’s explanations and effective use of visual illustrations. In the interview, she noted how the presentation “was pitched very well . . . [especially for] the non-muscle students” (Interview S, 2/23/20). Although Jacinta successfully tailored her presentation to her non-expert peers, Dr. Smith noted that she could have included a more substantial evaluation of the chapter’s strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, in the last slide, titled “Comments, Critics [*sic*] and Opinions” (Figure 5), Jacinta’s momentarily seemed to slip out of her “expert” role, presenting herself more as a student by focusing almost exclusively on surface-level features of the chapter. Nonetheless, Jacinta’s tentative assessment that the chapter was dated (“Maybe time for an update”) again served to remind the other students of her expertise in this area. The lack of a more substantial critique also seemed justified, given that the presentation dealt with an introductory chapter rather than a research study, as Dr. Smith also pointed out: “to be fair . . . there wasn’t a whole

lot to critique, in [this] particular paper, because it was just a chapter basically” (Interview S, 2/23/20).

Muscle Types



	 Cardiac muscle cell	Found in the heart, is involuntary, has striated and branched cells uninucleated fibers
	 Skeletal muscle cell	Usually attached to the skeleton, is voluntary, cells are striated and tubular. Multinucleated fibers
	 Smooth muscle cell	Found in walls of organs and blood vessels, involuntary. Non-striated and spindle shaped. Fibers are uninucleated.

<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/imagepages/19841.htm>

Sarcomerogenesis: Production of Proteins

- Gene expression (regulated different for each protein)

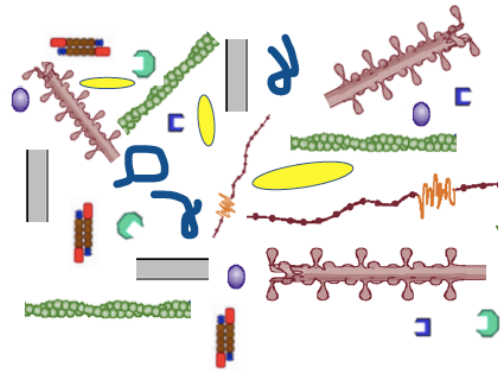
Transcription → synthesis of RNA

Translation → Synthesis of Protein

Post Translation → modification/folding of proteins

Spontaneous assembly (actin)

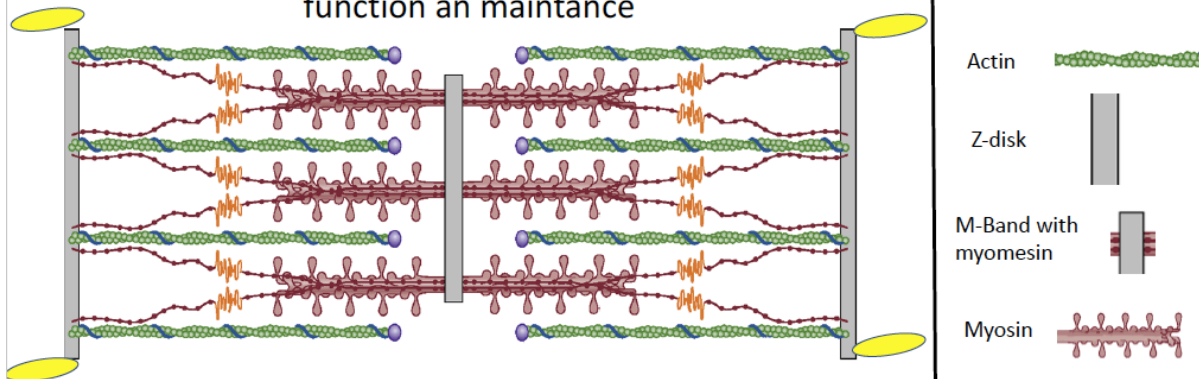
ATP dependent chaperones (Big proteins)



Sarcomerogenesis: Assembly of Proteins

Step 5:

Final product, involves the integration of other proteins, such as nebulin, MyBP-C, capping proteins, etc. in order to determine precise sarcomere lengths, muscle function and maintenance



Ottenheijm, Coen A. C. and Henk L Granzier. "Lifting the nebula: novel insights into skeletal muscle contractility." *Physiology* 25 5 (2010): 304-10 .

Sarcomeres, Extra Information

- Sarcomere structure is conserved between all vertebrate animals and is very similar to invertebrate animals with complex locomotion.
- Stable structures, once assembled they do not spontaneously disassemble if a fiber is isolated and stored properly.
- Sarcomeres are highly regulated structures.
- Lengths of filaments are precise:

Sarcomeres: Skeletal vs Heart

Similarity:

Skeletal and heart sarcomeres have similar pathways of formation, same function of contraction.



- Can develop but doesn't need to be functional until after birth.
- Has sequential order of proteins that are expressed
- Has Nebulin, regulates thin filaments



- One of the 1st organs to develop and must be functional during development.
- Sarcomere proteins are co-expressed before myofibrils are seen.
- Microtubule network is essential for sarcomere assembly
- no Nebulin – different regulatory mechanisms

Figures 4a-e

Jacinta's slides which served to explain basic concepts of muscle tissue research to her non-expert peers

Comments, Critics and Opinions

- Simple read, like a story, since it's a review/ chapter of a book it's low on hard science results and methods
- Good subheadings
- Easy to get lost in the details, many moving parts, genes, proteins, switching between heart and muscle, etc.
- Lack of color on photos
- Color photo website didn't work
- Maybe time for an update, desmin vs. vimentin

Figure 5

The final presentation slide from Jacinta's journal club presentation in which she evaluated an introductory book chapter on sarcomerogenesis, or muscle formation

Halfway through the semester, Jacinta again gave a journal club presentation, this time through videoconferencing (Zoom) as the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions prevented in-person meetings; in this presentation, which was attended by a larger audience including several senior researchers, Jacinta presented herself as more authoritative than in the first, positioning herself as a muscle researcher rather than a student. Her presentation reported a recently published study on muscle growth and recovery in mice, which had been recommended to her by a colleague at the lab, and which she thought might inform her own research. Jacinta told me that, apart from fellow students and colleagues at her lab, she often shared presentation slides for journal club and student seminar presentations with her thesis supervisor (the lab director), so that he could provide her with feedback. After incorporating his feedback and suggested edits, she would usually ask him to look at her presentation again—a process that was usually repeated several times, resulting in many different draft versions. Although her supervisor generally seemed supportive, he was also quite demanding, and indeed would not hesitate to tell Jacinta if he felt she was not ready to present: “My boss keeps reminding me that I have terrible grammar. . . . I guess I’m trying to [find] my academic voice, because it’s still in this infantile stage” (Interview J1, 9/11/19). However, after I first met her, Jacinta’s supervisor also began to express confidence in her more often, for example by inviting her to present her work to the other people employed at his lab; on one occasion, he told her that she should “own” her various projects (Interview J6, 5/29/20). Bolstered by his encouragement, as well as by Dr. Smith’s feedback on her earlier

presentation, Jacinta increasingly began to present herself as a disciplinary insider in the journal club. This is clear from her final slides of the second presentation, which included more critical considerations, weighing the value of the study (“Good insight into cerebral palsy disease from a non brain injury perspective”) while also raising questions that remained unanswered and could be addressed in future research (Figures 6a and 6b). This way, Jacinta showed that she possessed intricate knowledge of the field of muscle physiology, allowing her to assess the study as an expert reader.

Comments:

- Sarcomeres in series are not possible to measure in humans, non-invasively.
- This mouse model is not a brain injury/ cerebral palsy model.
It is still unknown how brain injury at birth leads to reduced sarcomeres in series and satellite cells in skeletal muscles
- Tamoxifen is an estrogen blocker might have side effects on the mice especially in females.
- What if tamoxifen was given first before casting of the legs, would this affect results? Especially in the EDL that seemed to adapt in 14 days to muscle stretch

Pros:

- Good article, easy to follow, well laid out and explained
- Mentions the limitations
- Good insight into cerebral palsy disease from a non brain injury perspective.
- Leads into the importance of maintaining and increasing number of satellite cells in skeletal muscle.
- Give me a new avenue to consider into for my project.

Cons:

- In results very, data/number heavy. I would have liked a graph to compare and contrast across the muscles and experimental groups.
- Never really mentioned why collagen was important or thought to increase.
- Doesn't mention why some muscle are affected, vs others? Is it fiber-type dependent? Or function dependent?

Figures 6a and b

Slide set from Jacinta's second journal club presentation showing her more in-depth evaluation of a research study on muscle growth and recovery

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I discussed various classroom-based writing tasks completed by the participants, highlighting the various roles they enacted in these tasks, as well as how these roles functioned in the context of their coursework and their long-term development as novice scholars and academic writers. After detailing the instructors' goals, my analysis considered the "possibilities for selfhood" (Ivanič, 1998, 2005) discerned by the students, as well as their task responses, which I situated within their "specific sociohistoric trajectories" (Lillis, 2008, p. 371) as academic writers. I discerned three roles of particular interest: the classroom contributor, the ethnographer, and the disciplinary expert. The role of classroom contributor was most obvious in

tasks that were shared with the students' classmates, such as discussion posts and reading responses, and which served to facilitate spoken routines during class meetings (see also Gevers & Conrad, 2020). I showed how Melinda and Samantha took advantage of the opportunity to participate in knowledge construction in the classroom. Melinda started focusing less on summarizing assigned readings in her weekly reading responses, and instead would propose "bigger" questions in which she speculated about new research directions and thus shaped ensuing class discussions. In her so-called "thought pieces," Samantha drew on her educational background and personal experiences as an international student to reflect on basic concepts that were often taken for granted in her field. Both cases illustrate how short writing tasks may allow students to present themselves as independent thinkers capable of contributing new knowledge within the classroom context, even if the tasks respond to previous research rather than reporting new findings.

As part of their interdisciplinary programs, students were often expected to practice using various modes of inquiry associated with different research traditions within their field of study. Indeed, many of the writing tasks they completed were associated with qualitative or quantitative researcher roles (Johns, 1997), such as that of the ethnographer (see also Bawarshi, 2003). I noted that Lola and Yasmin both effectively accounted for their positionality as ethnographers in unrelated tasks, and thus convincingly enacted this role in both their own and their instructors' estimation. Yet, as a self-described quantitative social scientist, Lola did not expect that she would perform ethnographic research again in the future, leading her to deprioritize her autoethnographic project and focus her energies on her other courses. Yasmin, in contrast, had previously carried out ethnographic fieldwork during her Master's degree, but had entered her PhD program with the intention of doing mixed-methods research connecting applied arts and

public health. Her positive experiences with the ethnographic description task in a first-year proseminar course made her rethink this plan, as she felt that she should continue to draw on her strengths as an ethnographer in her PhD research. Finally, my analysis showed how Jacinta increasingly positioned herself as a muscle expert in her journal club. Although the primary goal of her journal club presentations was to summarize and evaluate existing research, they also required her to explain domain-specific knowledge to non-expert peers, including both fellow PhD students and senior researchers. Especially in her second journal club presentation, Jacinta took on the role of research area specialist, drawing on her experience as a research lab assistant and encouraged by the support from her supervisor. As in previous research on academic literacy, this mentorship played an important role in shaping Jacinta's learning process, and helped her gain the necessary confidence to present herself as a disciplinary "insider."

These findings indicate that low-stakes tasks might play a more prominent role in disciplinary identity processes than has hitherto been assumed, even if such writing is easily dismissed as "busywork" (Interview B2, 1/22/20; cf. Ackerman, 1995). The assignments discussed here further appear to straddle the divides between research- and pedagogically-oriented genres, between "writing-to-learn" and "learning-to-write" dimensions (Manchón, 2011; see also Kruse, 2006), and between "knowledge-telling" and "knowledge-transforming" aspects of AAL (Geisler, 1994; Tardy, 2005), complicating these oppositions. For example, recurring tasks that required students to respond to assigned readings also seemed to provide opportunities to explore their own research interests and disciplinary affinities, or to formulate critical questions that they believed should be addressed. Such opportunities clearly depend on how writing is used within specific classroom ecologies, in combination with other discursive tools (Russell, 1997). Other tasks seemed to invite students to "reinvent" themselves, as it were, taking

on roles that more or less aligned with the subjectivities they envisioned for themselves as emerging scholars. As in Casanave's (2002) case studies, students thus adopted different, at times conflicting roles in their coursework, in ways that were both facilitated and constrained by specific tasks. Especially in interdisciplinary programs, these dynamics need to be examined in more detail, as written coursework emerges as a critical site for students to experiment with particular researcher roles and reflect on disciplinary beliefs and values associated with them.

CHAPTER 5

**“THERE’S NEVER ENOUGH TIME”: NEGOTIATING WRITER IDENTITY IN A
HYBRID GRADUATE COURSE**

In the previous chapter, I considered how nine doctoral students at “Southwestern University” approached the writing in their graduate courses, focusing on lower-stakes tasks and genres that have received limited attention in previous research on doctoral writing. In this and the next chapter, I provide a more in-depth analysis of the writing by the four case study participants (referred to with the pseudonyms Denise, Jeramy, Yasmin, and Jacinta). Specifically, this chapter considers the negotiation of task expectations and purposes and academic selfhood within a mixed-mode graduate course that Denise and Jeramy took together. Chapter 6, in turn, examines aspects of “disciplinarity” (Prior, 1998) in Yasmin’s and Jacinta’s low-stakes writing tasks across the various courses they completed, thus providing a glimpse of their “*interdisciplinary becoming*” (cf. Curry, 2016; see also Dressen-Hammouda, 2008).

In an effort to systematically investigate textual voice and thereby make this elusive notion more tangible (see Atkinson, 2001), many recent studies have followed a reader-oriented involved approach to voice, focusing on how writers are perceived by readers (e.g., Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Tardy, 2012; Morton & Storch, 2019).²¹ However, these studies were typically removed from the classroom context, meaning that the readers did not know the writers personally. Situated accounts of how writer identity is negotiated and renegotiated between students and their instructors within the classroom context still remain lacking (exceptions

²¹ As discussed in Chapter 2, I use the notion of textual “voice” in accordance with social-constructivist or “dialogic” understandings of writer identity as a construct that emerges through a negotiation between the writer and the reader and is motivated by the text (Canagarajah, 2015; Matsuda, 2015; Nelson & Castelló, 2012; Prior, 2001; Tardy, 2012), thus involving a “writer-text-reader interactive triad” (Amicucci & Neely, 2020, n.p.).

include Amicucci & Neely, 2020; Canagarajah, 2015; see also Prior, 2001),²² despite the recognition that discursive identities are subject to “tensions and contradictions” (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010, p. 232) and that reader perceptions of a writer may evolve over time. Therefore, we need to gain a better understanding of how graduate student writers are perceived by their instructors through the written texts, as well as how embodied interaction within a classroom setting is connected to, and may indeed shape, opportunities for writing-based identity formation (Amicucci & Neely, 2020; Tardy, 2012). As others have noted, such insights could help improve writing support and instruction for multilingual students, allowing them to become more keenly aware of what impression they give of themselves in their writing and how they might be perceived (at least partially) as a result of this.

In this chapter, I therefore consider academic identity construction within the context of Technology & Foreign Language Learning, a “hybrid” graduate course that was combined in-person class meetings with online, asynchronous instruction. My analysis concerns the writing of Denise and Jeramy, both multilingual PhD students in the interdisciplinary applied linguistics program, who already were friends prior to enrolling in this course and frequently shared their writing with each other. To examine their writing experiences, I rely on multiple data sources, including written assignments, recurring interviews with the students and the instructor, observations during in-person class meetings, and supplementary data including the syllabus, assignment guidelines, course website, and written feedback (see Chapter 3). The students completed a wide range of tasks, including online discussions which responded to the assigned readings. I was interested in understanding how they approached particular tasks as well as how

²² While Prior (1998) did not specifically frame his case studies in terms of voice, his findings nonetheless shed light on the negotiation of authorial presence in graduate students’ writing (see also Nelson & Castelló, 2012, 43).

they were perceived by the instructor, Dr. Bradshaw, who seemed particularly attuned to the complex demands of writing in graduate school. Thus, my inquiry was guided by the following questions: How were the goals of the writing negotiated within the course ecology? How did Jeramy and Denise seek to convey their purposes and identities through the writing tasks, and in what ways did they anticipate how they would be “read” by Dr. Bradshaw and their classmates? What were Dr. Bradshaw’s impressions of Jeramy and Denise as writers, and how did her perceptions change over the course of the semester?

In my analysis of the writing, I bring together strands of research in genre studies, second language writing, academic literacies, and academic discourse socialization. For example, from the perspective of language socialization, scholars have considered how graduate students orient to each other in computer-mediated communication (including online bulletin-board discussions), noting that instructor expectations for these newer genres are not always obvious (Duff, 2010; Potts, 2005; Yim, 2005, 2011; see also Pantelides, 2012). Yet, we still know little about the more complex considerations students might bring to bear on this kind of writing, in light of their long-term goals as students and novice scholars (e.g., Prior, 1998), nor about how their writing might be perceived by professors within the context of the course ecology (Canagarajah, 2015; Tardy, 2012). Such issues provide the focal point of this chapter.

Technology & Foreign Language Learning: An Overview

The course that served as the local research context for this case study took place in Fall 2019. The course served as “an introduction to the practice, theory, and research of technology-

enhanced foreign language learning,” according to the course syllabus.²³ It was taught by Dr. Bradshaw, an assistant professor in the French Department at Southwestern University. Following the principle of blended learning, the course combined weekly in-person class meetings with asynchronous activities using Southwestern University’s online learning management system (LMS). As Dr. Bradshaw explained to me, the choice for this mixed-mode, “hybrid” format was a deliberate adjustment from the first time she taught the class, during the previous year, as it allowed her to post short lecture videos on the class website in which she introduced the week’s theme and provided some context for the assigned readings before meeting in person (Interview B1, 12/6/19). The use of the hybrid mode did not seem directly motivated by the course topic, though it did appear beneficial in that some of the class discussions addressed the very teaching tools and approaches used in this course. While Jeremy had previously taken courses that were fully taught online, this was the first hybrid course he and Denise took as graduate students. When I interviewed them together a few months after the course had ended, both Jeremy and Denise indicated that they found the format beneficial in this case. In Denise’s understanding, Dr. Bradshaw’s use of online lectures freed up time during class meetings, meaning that “class time [could be used] more purposefully for discussion” (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20).

²³ In applied linguistics, this field of inquiry is alternatively referred to as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) or Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL).

Table 2

Writing tasks completed in Technology & Foreign Language Learning according to the syllabus and assignment guidelines, with details provided for the final project option (the literature review) that was chosen by both Jeramy and Denise

Task	Referred to as	Frequency	Deadline(s)	Approx. length	Percentage of grade	Shared with classmates
Weekly reading responses	“Padlets”	28x (twice weekly)	Weeks 2-15	No length requirement	10%*	Yes
Longer reading responses	“Commentaries”	3x	Weeks 7, 12, and 15	2-3 pages (double-spaced)	25%	No**
Pedagogical portfolio (four components) a. Technology review b. Pedagogical activity c. Digital presentation d. Technology philosophy		1x	Week 14 (c; drafts of a and b) Week 16 (complete portfolio)	No length requirement (a and b) 5-10 minutes (c) ½-1 page (d)	20%	Yes (drafts of a and b)*** No (d)**
Final project (multiple options) ● Literature	“Lit review as publication”	1x	Finals week	MA students: 15 pages (double-spaced)	35%	No**

<p>review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching unit ● Action research project/proposal 				<p>PhD students: 18-20 pages (double-spaced)</p>		
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*According to the syllabus, the “Padlets” were assessed as “Online/Hybrid” participation, together with in-person participation (each being worth 10% of the final course grade)

**Although students were not required to share these tasks with their classmates, Denise and Jeramy usually shared their written coursework with each other in Google Drive (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20)

***These preliminary drafts were submitted for peer feedback, to be incorporated in the complete final pedagogical portfolio that was due in Week 16

The students completed a variety of writing tasks in the course (Table 2). To begin with, they wrote weekly reading responses, typically answering discussion questions or prompts related to that week’s course material which instructed them to comment on or critique the readings and pose follow-up questions. Both Dr. Bradshaw’s prompts and the students’ responses for this recurring task were submitted using Padlet, a free online application that allows users to create and post to virtual bulletin boards. Fittingly, these tasks were referred to as “Padlets” during class routines and in the interviews I conducted with Dr. Bradshaw, Denise, and Jeramy. Next, longer reading responses, or “Commentaries,” provided an opportunity to “dig deeper,” in the words of Dr. Bradshaw’s assignment guidelines, as students were asked to synthesize both class readings and outside sources on a weekly course theme of their choice and

discuss the implications for language learning research or practice. The pedagogical portfolio, in turn, consisted of multiple components: (a) a technology review, which considered the possible uses of a specific technological application, (b) a pedagogical activity involving that application, (c) a digital (multimodal) presentation on both, and (d) a “technology philosophy,” in which students discussed the role of technology in their own teaching praxis. Finally, for the term project, students could choose from three options, and both Denise and Jeramy chose to write a literature review. In contrast with the Padlets and parts of the pedagogical portfolio which were submitted for peer review, the Commentaries and final projects were not shared with the other students.

While Denise and Jeramy took the course as PhD students, it was also open to graduate students at the MA level. Dr. Bradshaw seemed particularly attuned to students’ different needs and prior experiences in the way she designed the tasks: “one of the challenges in developing writing assignments for this class [was] trying to figure out an activity or sets of activities that are going to be beneficial to all of the students” (Interview B1, 12/6/19). She partially relied on the Padlets and Commentaries to emphasize conceptual and theoretical aspects of the scholarship, noting that in graduate school, “everyone needs to be developing critical habits and thinking about [relevant scholarly literature].” At the same time, students were encouraged to connect their observations to their own interests, whether those were tied to research or to practice. The technology-focused portfolio further added a practical dimension: “[students] could think of it as something they might use on the job market . . . in a larger teaching dossier or something like that. . . . even if you’re a PhD, when you’re going on the job market, you’re going to need [materials you can include] in your teaching portfolio” (Interview B1, 12/6/19). Having obtained her PhD only several years prior, Dr. Bradshaw noted that her use of writing tasks in

the course was strongly inspired by her own professors, especially those whom she considered her mentors and who had helped her strengthen her own writing in graduate school. She was very open to input regarding her course design and choice of writing tasks, both from me and her students, and she repeatedly emphasized that one of her main priorities was providing constructive feedback on the writing and tailoring her instruction to students' future goals more generally.

Before I discuss how Denise and Jeramy approached the tasks as well as how they negotiated their purposes and scholarly identities in their writing, I will provide brief biographical sketches for each based on the participant screening survey as well as the academic literacy history interview (Lillis, 2008), as described in Chapter 3. Following Ivanič's (1998) model of writer identity, I thus provide a glimpse of the "autobiographical selves" that Denise and Jeramy brought to bear on the tasks, including their interests and motivations, which informed the "discoursal construction of identity through writing" (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010, p. 239).

Participant Biographies

Denise

Born in Venezuela, Denise moved to Catalonia, Spain at age eight, where she completed her schooling with Catalan as the main medium of instruction and obtained her B.A. degree in philology (Interview D1, 9/24/19). Her "lived experience with language" or *Spracherleben* (Busch, 2017) thus revolved around (Castilian) Spanish, which was her family language, Catalan, and English, which she first began learning when she was five years old. In addition, Denise indicated that she had basic proficiency in Italian and Portuguese. Prior to enrolling in the

interdisciplinary applied linguistics program, Denise had completed an M.A. in Spanish at Southwestern University. In the interview, she told me that her decision to continue her studies in the U.S. was serendipitous, as she had originally planned to stay in Spain and pursue a professional Master's degree that would allow her to teach in the public school system. However, after learning that her boyfriend had been admitted to a PhD program at Southwestern University, she decided that she would apply for the M.A. at the same institution, as she knew that this could help her gain entrance to the interdisciplinary applied linguistics (AL) doctoral program. At the time she participated in this study, Denise was in the first semester of the AL program.

With regard to her research interests, Denise explained that she was primarily interested in sociocultural aspects of language use and pragmatics, “and specifically in prosody and how we communicate meaning, maybe not just by what we say but how we say something” (Interview D1, 9/24/19). Furthermore, she had recently begun teaching Spanish to heritage speakers at Southwestern University, stimulating her interest in research on heritage language learning. One of her main reasons for choosing to take Technology & Foreign Language Learning was that she felt it could help her with her teaching, as she had limited experience with digital technology:

Denise: Yeah, I consider myself not on the technology side, but I see how now more of them, they are asking you to incorporate technological tools in class. I felt that I need it, because I was not aware of even all the tools available. The way my education has been, has been pretty classic: the teacher delivers the lecture, we might have a [black]board, but we didn't even have a projector.

Jeroen: It's all offline, basically?

Denise: Yeah, it's all offline. During my B.A. we didn't even have an [LMS] where to upload things. I find myself struggling with technology and every time I use something it's like the thing I have to prepare for that day and nothing to go wrong. I was like, I need to stop this. So that's why. (Interview D1, 9/24/19)

At the same time, she also saw opportunities for exploring how technology might benefit heritage language learners in her research. To a certain degree, then, Denise's practical and theoretical learning goals seemed to be intertwined: "[I]t's a mix of, I want to improve how I am as a teacher, and also I want to see if I can explore [technology] in my research." Early on in the semester, she decided that she would write a literature review on the use of digital technology in the heritage language classroom for her final project, to see if this was a topic she could pursue further.

When I asked her how she wanted to be seen as a writer, Denise stated her modest aim of being seen as "competent," adding that she did not prefer to take an overly critical stance in her writing: "I'm not [confrontational] in my personal life, so I wouldn't be in my writing. . . . I wouldn't be too hard on my point of view" (Interview D1, 9/24/19). She further explained that she took great care in her writing and found the process quite tedious, not only because she struggled to find words in English to express her ideas, but also because she tended to approach all her writing as though it were the final draft, continuously editing her language: "It takes me a long time to write even 500 words for an assignment." In addition, she told me that she found it difficult "not to sound too informal," even in the weekly Padlet posts. To facilitate her writing process, she often relied on a variety of resources while composing, including Google Translate,

WordReference, and Linguee, for example to look up synonyms or English vocabulary using Spanish. After completing a paragraph or section, she would often also use Grammarly to check her writing before revising it. Overall, Denise described herself as very diligent in the way she approached the tasks, not easily satisfied with her writing, and concerned about being perceived as intelligent and well-informed about the subject matter. Jeremy saw her as a more skillful writer than himself: “She writes better than me” (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20).

Jeremy

Jeremy was born and raised in Colombia, where he completed high school and attended university using Spanish as his home language and the language of instruction. At the time of the study, he was in the third year of his doctoral program in Hispanic Linguistics, while pursuing an academic minor in the interdisciplinary AL program. Jeremy explained to me that the AL program had been his first choice when he applied to study at Southwestern University, though he was admitted only to the Hispanic Linguistics program. However, much of his graduate coursework could satisfy the AL program requirements, and he was therefore hoping that he could eventually switch to that program. Previously, Jeremy had obtained an M.A. in French at a public research university in the Midwestern U.S. In our conversations, he repeatedly described himself as a “language lover” (Interview J1, 10/4/19). His language repertoire centered around Romance languages, especially Spanish and French, as well as English, in which he first received formal instruction at age fifteen. He also had intermediate proficiency in Portuguese, and he had taken Chinese language courses as an undergraduate student.

As in Denise’s case, Jeremy’s identities as a language teacher and researcher were intricately connected. In the screening survey, he indicated that his interdisciplinary research

interests focused on comparative linguistics, second and third language acquisition, corpus linguistics, and syntax. However, he explained that he considered himself a teacher first, and his main goal as a researcher was to learn from and better support his students:

I like interaction. I like contact. . . . I prefer to be in the classroom and to know what is happening in [my students'] minds. . . . [T]he students for me are the data. I can learn from them and I can study what they do, and I can create whatever, I can create an article and make it for the students. . . . I would like to publish something that can help learners and teachers, not just linguistic people, no. (Interview J1, 10/4/19)

In this regard, Jeremy believed that Dr. Bradshaw's course could help him expand his pedagogical knowledge regarding the use of technology and online course design:

[A]s my background is more in linguistics and teaching . . . I don't have anything related to technologies, anything related to online courses. . . . it's going to be worth it for my CV and if I'm going to look for a job, if I'm able to create an advanced or something related or if I know how to use technology. (Interview J1, 10/4/19)

At the same time, he hoped that the course would deepen his understanding of "how qualitative research works," as he generally felt more comfortable with quantitative research methods. At the beginning of the semester, Jeremy also decided that he would use the course as an opportunity to "find gaps" that he could pursue in his future studies, specifically regarding the

use of machine translation tools (such as Google Translate) in second language learning, which he chose as the subject for his literature review paper.

In the interviews, Jeramy presented himself as eager to develop his knowledge and not overly concerned about how his writing would be assessed by his instructors within the context of their courses: “Basically, in any of my courses, I don’t expect an A. I expect to learn something” (Interview J1, 10/4/19). He characterized himself as a “clumsy” yet self-aware academic writer, who struggled with paragraph development, strongly relied on genre templates after which he could model his own writing, and was not afraid to ask professors or peers for help. Like Denise, Jeramy also took advantage of resources like Grammarly to check his writing for grammatical correctness, though he did not use Grammarly for the Padlets, but only “for the final papers,” as he explained later (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20).²⁴ In addition, he generally seemed less focused on being perceived as an expert, aiming instead to communicate his ideas in “coherent,” “understandable” prose (Interview J1, 10/4/19). According to Jeramy, this goal was directly tied to his interest in public scholarship, and his desire to make his writing accessible to a wider audience of language teachers and students. In his own estimation, he wanted to appear knowledgeable but not “pretentious,” and he wanted to avoid what he considered unnecessary jargon or technical language in his assignments. Ultimately, Jeramy’s wariness of seeming pretentious could be interpreted as a form of resistance against academic literacy conventions (Lillis & Tuck, 2016; see also Ivanič, 1998), or even as an unwillingness to identify with a role he believed academics are expected to perform as disciplinary experts.²⁵

²⁴ When I interviewed them together, Denise and Jeramy agreed that while Jeramy struggled to make his writing cohesive, one of his strengths was to find suitable academic phrases, including idiomatic expressions or collocations. Addressing Jeramy, Denise noted that “it seems you have more background [than I do] about English as a second language” (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20).

²⁵ He clarified: “For my audience, I was thinking... I want them to know that I know what I’m talking about, that I’m coherent. But also I want them to know that I’m not pretentious. I’m not going to look for

Participating Online: The “Padlets”

In order to understand how academic selfhood was negotiated in the weekly reading responses, it is necessary to consider the instructor’s goals with this task. Dr. Bradshaw told me that she had decided to assign the Padlet responses not only to ensure that students would engage with the weekly readings and “get some analysis done in advance” (Interview B1, 12/6/19) but also as a way to “launch discussion and bring the class together” (Interview B2, 1/22/20), thus providing a starting point for further conversations during the face-to-face class meetings. The students’ written posts were assessed as part of their class participation, which in total constituted 20% of the final course grade; students could receive an equal number of points for “Online participation” (in the form of the Padlet posts) and “In-class participation” (in the form of spoken discussion and group work) (Participation Guidelines). Students were expected to complete two Padlets per week, one in which they responded to a question assigned by the instructor, and one in which they formulated their own “lingering questions” based on the readings (LMS). At the beginning of the in-person class meetings, Dr. Bradshaw would normally summarize the students’ contributions, highlight individual comments that she considered especially noteworthy, and invite the class to respond to questions that had been raised. Both Denise and Jeremy indicated that they found the Padlets helpful as a way to prepare for class. For example, Denise mentioned that the Padlet posts often helped her distinguish between the “important parts” and “smaller details” in the assigned readings, enabling her to participate more

the most specialized word to explain a term that can be simplified. If I can simplify things, I will do it in that way. . . . For example, my advisor or my mentors are going to say, you should use more technical [language]. I say, yes, but at the end of the day, the people who will be able to read this [are] going to be language teacher[s] from high schools. If the text is not accessible for them, why we are doing this?” (Interview 1, 10/4/19)

effectively during face-to-face class discussions regarding the weekly theme (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20).

Although academic discourse socialization in online settings remains understudied, scholars have noted how online discussion genres allow for new forms of participation which differ from traditional writing tasks as they invite “a blend of oral and written discourse” (Duff, 2010, p. 183; see also Pantelides, 2012; Potts, 2005; Yim, 2005, 2011). Indeed, for Denise, the Padlet posts seemed more akin to “having a discussion with your classmates . . . it doesn’t feel like an essay that you have to turn in to a professor” (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20). That said, Dr. Bradshaw’s expectations regarding the appropriate roles appeared to differ somewhat from the students’, especially at the beginning of the semester:

I think it took us a little bit with the weekly postings to get to a point where I felt like they were fully engaging in the, with the articles, [as opposed to the] “I feel” kind of responses where it has nothing to do with the research or the articles, so basing the response that you give in what we read or in research, in theory. So it took us a little bit to kind of get to that point, but I think it was relatively successful. Those were what I was looking for. (Interview B1, 12/6/19)

Like the instructor in Yim’s (2005) case study, Dr. Bradshaw expected carefully formulated contributions that engaged with empirical research findings and theoretical applications from the assigned readings, even though the online discussion board might otherwise seem conducive to a more casual communication style focused on personal opinions and experiences. Dr. Bradshaw

was aware of this apparent contradiction with regard to the “possibilities for selfhood” (Ivanič, 1998) afforded by the task:

it’s supposed to be an informal platform, but because it’s an assigned platform . . . it becomes much more formal. . . . [It’s true that] it has colors and you can pick a funky icon and, you know, but it’s still in a class, it’s still in a grad seminar, and both that and the fact that I’m making them talk about academic texts is most likely influencing what comes out. (Interview B1, 12/6/19)²⁶

Typically, the Padlet posts revolved around prompts that focused the students’ attention on salient aspects of the course readings and asked them to comment on “major tensions and major themes,” as Dr. Bradshaw put it, which she felt would be more engaging than having students simply restate the findings of each article (Interview B1, 12/6/19). In the second half of the semester, however, Dr. Bradshaw occasionally also asked students to submit short “annotations” of class readings in their Padlets, to check their overall comprehension of the readings. She told me that she had assumed students would take detailed notes and write summaries of the articles without being instructed to do so. Yet, after requesting anonymous feedback from students midway through the semester, Dr. Bradshaw realized that students sometimes felt that they had failed to grasp the main ideas in certain articles. Following a

²⁶ It is worth noting here that the appropriateness of different roles and registers in various online writing settings was also a recurring topic during class discussion in *Technology & Foreign Language Learning*. In our conversation, Dr. Bradshaw noted that “[w]e talk about this all the time in class actually . . . this weird kind of layer of what tools do to, in terms of genre” (Interview B1, 12/6/19). Indeed, during one class session devoted to the use of social media in language learning, Dr. Bradshaw asked the students to discuss whether “it [is] our role as language instructors to teach students how communication or discourse works in online spaces” (Class Observation 2, 11/6/19).

suggestion by an outside observer, she decided to explain how to write an annotation, using a template that included a brief summary, evaluation, and discussion of possible implications of the reading, which she reviewed during class (Class Observation 1, 10/30/19). According to Denise, the class discussion of the weekly readings became more structured after Dr. Bradshaw began assigning this annotation task. Thus, it was clear that the task purposes were negotiated based on the students' own interests and goals as well as the instructor's perceptions of their writing.

Contributing to the Class

Interestingly, Denise and Jeramy both indicated that they first looked to other students' Padlet posts when preparing to write their own, hinting at the importance of peer socialization. Indeed, their impressions of their peers' writing often seemed more influential in shaping their responses than Dr. Bradshaw's instructions. For example, even if the discussion prompt did not specifically ask students to connect their observations to their personal experiences as language learners or teachers, Jeramy explained that he might still decide to do so, "because I follow the examples of others . . . just in case I'm missing something" (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20). Denise followed the same approach:

Denise: I never talk about myself, but when I see people [have done this], I say, okay, let's put an example.

Jeramy: Yeah, an example of yourself, what is happening in your case. (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20)

Denise further noted that she sometimes waited for other students to submit their responses, allowing her to confirm that her understanding of Dr. Bradshaw's prompt was accurate:

“Sometimes I don't understand the question. So, in those cases I try to read what people have said. It gives me a better idea. . . . and I'm like, okay, maybe we all will be wrong, *or*, this is the way I should go for answering this.” As in Yim's (2005) case study of asynchronous bulletin board discussions in a mixed-mode graduate course, then, peer socialization clearly played an important role in negotiating the task purposes and expectations for appropriate content in the “Padlets” (see also Duff, 2010; Potts, 2005; Yim, 2011).²⁷

Apart from referencing the class readings or Dr. Bradshaw's video lectures, Denise and Jeramy often used “we” to refer to themselves and the other class members. They sometimes also explicitly acknowledged previous contributions in their posts, expressing agreement with their peers. However, while Jeramy normally only acknowledged specific comments that were directly relevant to his own ideas (“I endorse [Jocelyn's] thoughts on . . .”) (Week 8), Denise sometimes included a more general positive appraisal of previous posts, without naming anyone in particular: “I agree with all the suggestions that my classmates have already mentioned” (Week 5). This way, Denise and Jeramy presented their responses as contributions to the classroom discourse community. In these dialogic exchanges, the distinction between the modes of communication used in the course occasionally became blurred, for instance when Jeramy prefaced his response as follows: “*As we discussed — posted previously*, including technology in

²⁷ Interestingly, Denise repeatedly mentioned that she was determined to learn from peers during her PhD, for example when commenting on a required first-year seminar.

Denise: “[the course has] helped me recognize the importance of socialization and how it should be done.

Jeroen: Do you mean socialization as in interacting with professors?

Denise: Professors and peers. They make you understand that maybe the people that are in your class or that you meet might be, in the future, people you would work with or that might help you find a job.

(Interview D1, 9/24/20)

the (L2) classroom must be justified, have a purpose, not just being trendy or fashionable” (Week 4; emphasis added). Interestingly, references to other students’ comments gradually became less common in Denise’s and Jeramy’s Padlet posts as the semester progressed. It is possible Dr. Bradshaw’s increased emphasis on formal “knowledge-telling” (Geisler, 1994; see also Tardy, 2005) limited this interactional aspect, as students began focusing more on capturing the main ideas of the readings than responding to others’ posts and sharing their opinions (“knowledge-transforming”).

Negotiating Writer Identity: Expectations of “Writtenness”

Although Denise and Jeramy both strongly oriented to their classmates’ Padlet responses and often followed their example, there were also differences in the way they approached the task. To begin with, while the “Padlets” were due on Wednesdays, the day of the weekly in-person class meeting, Denise usually submitted her responses early, ideally several days in advance: “I try to have it done before the weekend. . . . I don’t like to do it in the last moment” (Interview D2, 10/17/19). She would normally compose her posts using Microsoft Word before copying and pasting it into the bulletin board, and check them with Grammarly before submitting them. In contrast, Jeramy did not always prioritize this task, and he typically spent less time planning his responses, instead trying to “catch something” that he believed would satisfy the prompt (Interview J2, 11/8/19):

Jeramy: I was usually the last one.

Jeroen: You were the last one?

Jeremy: I'm pretty sure. I think once I finished it before the, one minute before the class started. (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20)

These differences in approach seemed at least partially tied to how Denise and Jeremy conceptualized the task and the way their writing might position them in relation to Dr. Bradshaw and the other students in the class. While both saw the “Padlets” as low-stakes, Denise explained that she nonetheless experienced some “pressure” to write well because her writing was “public,” given that her classmates could also read it (Interview D1, 9/24/19). Jeremy, on the other hand, attached less importance to the responses, emphasizing their practical use ensuring that students come to class prepared, both in this and another course he was taking at the time of study: “I think they ask us to do the Padlet just to, they have that feeling of . . . in that way I’m going to make sure you are reading, even if you don’t understand [the reading]” (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20). Jeremy further questioned whether professors who set up discussion boards read all their students’ posts closely, speculating that they might not notice if he did not fully address the prompt in his writing.²⁸ Denise’s and Jeremy’s understandings of the appropriate level of formality diverged as well. Denise indicated that she perceived the Padlet posts as “a bit more informal” compared with the other writing assignments, but that she nonetheless often used Google to see how she could “say it in a formal way” (Interview D1, 9/24/19), unlike Jeremy, who generally seemed less concerned with his word choice.

²⁸ When commenting on the “usefulness” of the writing tasks, as well as her concern with providing helpful feedback, Dr. Bradshaw explained how she envisioned this: “My sense is that, I’ve heard from students that many professors don’t read online discussion posts, for example, or that they just assign a lot of busywork, and I *do* do that [assign discussion posts]. . . but I use it as a way to launch discussion and bring the class together” (Interview B2, 1/22/20).

Jeremy: I can just figure out what is the prompt, and [start writing], because [what matters] is what you think about it, what you think of the reading.

Jeroen: Okay, so it doesn't have to be as polished, or...

Jeremy: Or as big...

Denise: Well, I don't see it like that. I think it should be polished, because everyone is going to see it, right? . . . it doesn't feel like an essay that you have to turn in to a professor, but still, it doesn't give me the sense that it has to be completely informal.

(Interview DJ5, 3/2/20).

Thus, as they inscribed themselves in their Padlet posts, crafting their “authorial self” in these specific acts of writing (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010, p. 240), Denise and Jeremy differed in their anticipation of how they would be read.

Despite this contrast, the differences I observed between Denise's and Jeremy's discussion posts with regard to speech functions and language use were rather subtle. Both alternated between summarizing and commenting on the weekly readings, often drawing on their prior knowledge, and expressing personal opinions about possible ways to use digital technologies, often using examples from their own teaching or experiences with language learning. In doing so, both combined typical features of written academic discourse, including a preference for Latinate vocabulary (“indubitably”; “evident”), transitions (“Thus, . . .”; “In addition, . . .”), reporting verbs (“describe”), and APA-style references (“According to Kern (2011), . . .”), with language elements more typical of spoken communication and instant messaging (“I mean, . . .”; “okay”; “justifying tech”), including the occasional use of emoticons (“I even thought of my mum, a smart woman :) who frequently uses language learning apps”).

On the whole, though, Jeremy's posts are somewhat more characteristic of "involved production" as opposed to "informative production" (Biber, 1988; see also Jonsson, 2015), as he frequently relied on discourse markers ("I explain myself."), rhetorical questions ("How?"), sentence fragments or ellipses ("good or bad tech, well...", and other elements that implied a sense of immediacy or audience involvement ("let's think about the memes as a genre").²⁹ In addition, compared with Denise's Padlet responses, Jeremy's contained more atypical punctuation and word spellings that could be perceived as "errors" according to academic writing conventions (see also Pantelides, 2012), suggesting a limited concern with proofreading or accomplishing a sense of "writteness" (Turner, 2018).³⁰

When I asked her how she perceived Denise and Jeremy, Dr. Bradshaw indicated that she considered both to be "[very] strong academics" who clearly presented as "scholars" in their writing. Based on the Padlet posts, Denise further struck her as "a very precise writer . . . I don't know if it's about the time taken, but it's very thoughtful, precise, well-defended answers" (Interview B1, 12/6/19). Conversely, she noted that Jeremy's responses seemed "a little bit more quick and hasty," adding that "*I think [he] is always doing them right before class and they feel less polished, sort of a reflex. . . . I feel like his answers are sometimes less rooted in [the] texts*" (Interview B1, 12/6/19; emphasis added). Thus, apart from the content of the posts and the perceived level of engagement with course readings, the time of submission seemed to be a

²⁹ Jeremy also repeatedly used square brackets to comment on his own word choices ("foreign languages [additional languages, sounds better]"; "'accurate' way [if there is an accurate way, of course]").

³⁰ Highlighting how writing itself serves as an object of assessment in academic literacy practices, in addition to its role in conveying ideas, Turner (2018) defined *writteness* as "the written nature of the text, the culture of evaluation surrounding the quality of the writing, and the wider socio-symbolic effects that this issue has in academic culture" (p. 205). The quest for "coherence" in graduate-level writing tasks appears to be intricately connected to the perceived need to achieve writteness, meaning that writing is often expected to be unmarked or devoid of "nonstandard" elements (see also Conrad, 2020).

significant non-discursive feature (Matsuda, 2001) that contributed to Dr. Bradshaw's perception of Jeramy's self "in [her] act of reading" (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010, p. 241). Dr. Bradshaw also understood their self-presentation in relation to academic writing expectations more generally, for instance when she described Denise's responses as "very academic" (Interview B1, 12/6/19), and observed that Denise was "very attuned to generic conventions" (Interview B2, 1/22/20), whereas Jeramy's posts "sometimes stand out [because] they're a little bit more off the cuff" (Interview B1, 12/6/19). At the same time, she may have also sensed Jeramy's wariness of "pretentious" writing, as she repeatedly characterized him as a "free spirit" (Interview B2, 1/22/20): "he brings this sort of informality to the profession that I find very refreshing, honestly" (Interview B1, 12/6/19).

Dr. Bradshaw acknowledged that the way she perceived Denise's and Jeramy's writing was shaped by classroom interactions, especially with regard to the Padlet responses: "you have impressions that sort of then influence the way you think about . . . how I'm thinking about the writing." She felt it could sometimes be problematic to consider student writing based on such "embodied impressions," but believed it was difficult to avoid doing so: "I'm sure it's a part of what happens when professors look at writing. So it's not, unfortunately, an unbiased affair" (Interview B1, 12/6/19). These comments point to the complex relation between voice and "extra-textual identity" (Tardy, 2012), and indeed echo the findings of a recent study that showed how teachers draw on their prior knowledge about students when evaluating their written voice (Amicucci & Neely, 2020). Although Dr. Bradshaw did not explain how exactly their classroom identity would have contributed to the process of voice construction, Denise and Jeramy did comment on their class participation during my interview with them. Specifically, they agreed that Jeramy tended to speak up whenever he felt like doing so ("I'm more extrovert"), even if his

remarks might be perceived as off-topic, whereas Denise generally seemed more quiet and self-aware,³¹ closely monitoring the conversation while waiting for the “right moment” to respond to others (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20).³² Thus, it is probable that Dr. Bradshaw’s characterizations of Denise posts as “very thoughtful” and Jeramy’s as “a little bit more off the cuff” was at least to some degree informed by their participation during the in-person meetings.

Voice Construction in a New Genre: Jeramy’s Literature Review

So far, this chapter has considered how Denise’s and Jeramy’s writer identity was negotiated through the weekly reading responses in Padlet, highlighting the role of peer socialization and the close ties between textual and extra-textual identity within the classroom context. In addition to this recurring task, the final project turned out to be central to the process of voice construction in the course, especially in Jeramy’s case. In this section, I therefore briefly situate this task and then consider how Jeramy actively *renegotiated* his discursive self by drawing on others’ voices (Prior, 2001; Nelson and Castelló, 2012), showing how his writer identity evolved in this context.

³¹ In the academic literacy history interview, Denise also mentioned that she generally “[didn’t] speak that much in class” (Interview D1, 9/24/19).

³² Jeroen: How would you describe each other in a classroom setting?

Denise: We’re the opposite.

Jeroen: In terms of how you interact?

Jeramy: Yeah, we’re the opposite, yeah, because I’m more extrovert. So in some cases, I don’t, maybe I’m not reflecting that much what I want to say, so I [just] say it. . . . [Denise] is focused on the track of the conversation. Even if she is quiet, she is on track. So [whatever] she is going to say will be coherent with the context, but with me, no, it’s the opposite. . . .

Denise: But I think you are not afraid of being wrong or saying something...

Jeramy: I can be wrong.

Denise While I’m more shy. Even if I know the answer, I let people...

Jeroen: You wait?

Denise: I wait. . . . And I feel more tense. You’re always relaxed. (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20)

For the final project, students were invited to choose one of three genres: (a) a pedagogical unit (including lesson plans), (b) an action research project or proposal regarding the use of technology in language teaching, and (c) a literature review on a chosen topic. With these options, Dr. Bradshaw wanted to make sure the task would satisfy the students' own interests and goals, which she emphasized in the syllabus: "Most importantly, this project should dovetail with your current graduate work and program. In other words, it should be useful to your career and educational trajectory."³³ Dr. Bradshaw noted that she had also allowed students to submit "full-fledged" research projects or book reviews when she taught the course previously, but that she had decided not to include these again because of the time constraints, and because she wanted to provide students with adequate preparation: "[M]y reasoning behind removing some of the options [was that] I felt like I needed to be able to support students better in what they chose" (Interview B1, 12/6/19). Nonetheless, she still welcomed formats other than the ones specified, noting that one student was planning to submit a completed IRB protocol. "I'm leaving that option open. If they feel strongly about doing a research project . . . that's fine, but I didn't necessarily want to, if someone didn't have a research project in mind, I didn't want to push them there" (Interview B1, 12/6/19). Before approving their choice, Dr. Bradshaw asked students to turn in a proposal, worth 5% of the grade for the final project. In addition, she met with students individually to discuss their plans. Apart from checking that students were making sufficient progress, these meetings also enabled her to tailor her feedback to students' stated goals, allowing her to make the feedback more "helpful": "[M]aybe that's also why I asked them

³³ In the assignment guidelines for the literature review option, Dr. Bradshaw further differentiated page length expectations for MA students ("approx. 15 pages") and PhD students ("approx. 18-20 pages"), in anticipation of their different needs and prior experiences.

to come talk to me if they're interested in pushing something forward. My feedback will differ based on what you want to do with something" (Interview B1, 12/6/19).

Looking back on the final project, Jeremy acknowledged that "[there were] many options for us, in terms of doing something that is going to be useful for your future, not just for the purpose of the class" (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20). Both he and Denise chose to write a literature review about a topic they wanted to explore further after the course ended. Specifically, Jeremy focused his literature review on language learning and the use of machine translation tools (such as Google Translate), noting that he considered translation as one of his areas of specialization and that it would likely be one of the subjects for his qualifying or comprehensive doctoral examinations. Although students were free to choose different topics for the various writing tasks in Technology & Foreign Language Learning, machine translation served as a recurring theme in Jeremy's writing for the course. For example, Google Translate provided the main focus in one of his Commentaries as well as his pedagogical portfolio, and Jeremy frequently mentioned this application in his Padlet responses as well. In this sense, Jeremy's literature review reflected his efforts to build a "coherent discursal self" as a graduate student (Casanave, 2002; see also Ivanič, 1998), despite the "multiple discourses" that structured the "social space" (Prior, 1998, as cited in Casanave, 2002, p. 140) of this particular graduate course. Jeremy had also written about the use of translation technologies in his previous coursework, but he assured Dr. Bradshaw that he would not resubmit this work, as he planned to look at different sources in his literature review: "I told her, I don't want any issue with [this] . . . I'm going to expand it" (Interview J4, 1/28/20).³⁴

³⁴ In a way, then, Jeremy's writing must be understood as part of a textual history or "microhistory" (Prior, 1998) that already began before he took Dr. Bradshaw's course (see also Nelson & Castelló, 2012, 43).

To help students prepare for the literature review option, Dr. Bradshaw devoted part of one in-person class meeting to a discussion of this genre (Week 11), following the principles of genre-based pedagogy (e.g., Hyland, 2007). She first gave a brief PowerPoint presentation in which she distinguished between the “Lit Review AS a Paper,” or standalone literature reviews, and the part-genre of the “Lit Review IN a Paper,” noting that the first must be “comprehensive and transparent” whereas the second is normally more “selective and focused” (Class Observation 2, 11/6/19).³⁵ Next, students discussed a published literature review that had been assigned for that week (Hattem & Lomicka, 2016), which surveyed empirical research on the possible uses of Twitter in language learning. After eliciting feedback from students regarding the article, Dr. Bradshaw concluded the discussion by noting the uses of standalone literature reviews, which, she explained, said could be used effectively to show “the lay of the land” and to “lay bare what’s missing.” Jeramy explained that Dr. Bradshaw had already mentioned the article in question to him earlier on in the semester, and suggested that he could use it as an example, since this was the first time he would be writing “this particular kind” of literature review: “Here it’s like, the literature review [itself] is the research, is the focus of the thing. I was confused” (Interview J4, 1/28/20). He also felt unsure if a comprehensive review would be feasible on his topic, as he had not found many references to research on translation technology in his previous coursework: “I told [Dr. Bradshaw], I’m afraid because I don’t know if I’m doing great or bad. I’m just doing it. I’m just going to go ahead because it’s nice just to be the first one.”

³⁵ In our conversations, Dr. Bradshaw also referred to the standalone literature review option as the “lit review as publication,” clarifying that she meant “the kind where you choose a set of parameters to identify [texts], and then you review them” (Interview B2, 1/22/20). The phrase “lit review as publication” was used repeatedly by Jeramy as well (e.g., Interview J4, 1/28/20).

Given his lack of prior experience with the genre, the “Twitter article” proved to be a very useful model for Jeramy. Two weeks before the final project was due, he explained to me that he was planning to closely “follow the format” of the article. “Basically what I’m going to do is to copy the template, what is the structure. Let’s see what [will] happen” (Interview J3, 12/4/19). A comparison reveals that Jeramy’s review indeed adhered to the same overall approach and organization, especially with regard to the methodology (Figure 7), while also making several adjustments. As in the article, Jeramy clearly stated his “selection criteria” and “identification procedures” so as to render his approach transparent—a genre feature that Dr. Bradshaw had emphasized in her explanation—using wording that was roughly similar.³⁶ He conducted his literature search following four phases, using the same criteria that Hattem and Lomicka (2016) in turn had borrowed from elsewhere (Jeramy attributed both sources in his assignment), and he similarly described each of these phases under a separate subheading. Finally, he followed the article’s example of providing a “keyword cloud” to give an initial impression of the research surveyed, and he also included tables to identify major differences and commonalities between the studies. At the same time, Jeramy deviated from the model provided by the “Twitter article,” especially in introducing the research domain of machine translation as well as in the way he organized and described the findings of his literature survey (though his results section remained unfinished, as I discuss below). For example, while Hattem and Lomicka (2016) formulated multiple research questions, Jeramy simply chose to end his introduction by stating the overall goal of his paper, which he felt was more exploratory in nature

³⁶ Looking back, Jeramy further clarified that, while he took inspiration from the article and followed its structure, he had refrained from using the exact same wording, despite the fact that the authors “were so clear,” which was “a little bit tricky.” He also told me that he had explicitly mentioned in his literature review that the article served as an example, so as to “avoid any plagiarism issue” (Interview J4, 1/28/20).

given the lack of prior research. Thus, in applying his evolving genre knowledge, Jeramy relied on, but at the same time moved beyond, “a conventional form” (Tardy, 2009, p. 79) so as to account for his unique purposes with this task and ensure that he would be perceived as “coherent” (Interview J4, 1/28/20; cf. Casanave, 2002, p. 258).

Figure 7

Subheadings and excerpts from the article that Jeramy used as an example (left) and Jeramy’s literature review (right). Influential phrasings and phrases borrowed from the article are underlined.

Hattem & Lomicka 2016	Jeramy’s Literature Review
<p>What the Tweets say: A critical analysis of Twitter research in language learning from 2009 to 2016</p> <p>...</p>	<p>Translation Technologies in SLA: An overview of the last decade research (2009 – 2019)</p> <p>...</p>
<p>Methodology</p>	<p>Literature Review</p>
<p><i>Selection Criteria</i></p>	<p>Selection criteria:</p>
<p>Adhering closely to the method employed by Gao et al. (2012), the following selection criteria were devised.</p>	<p>1. <u>Research must focus on the use of Machine Translators for L2/Ln learning.</u> Research on translation tools for the professions,</p>
<p>(1) <u>Research had to focus on using Twitter for language learning in an educational setting.</u></p>	<p>computational linguistics, natural language processing, <u>was excluded from the present</u></p>
<p>Informal studies about other microblogging</p>	<p><u>study.</u></p>

<p>tools (e.g., Plurk) or repurposing other tools as a microblogging tool (e.g., EdModo) were <u>excluded from this analysis.</u></p> <p>(2) <u>Research had to be empirical studies reporting actual qualitative or quantitative data derived from observation or experimental studies.</u> Any research relying on <u>anecdotal experience</u> was excluded. <u>Theoretical papers on how to use Twitter in the classroom,</u> but not reporting on actual use, <u>were also excluded from the analysis.</u></p> <p><i>Identification of studies</i></p> <p>To identify studies for this article, <u>the researchers again employed similar search criteria to that used by Gao et al. (2012),</u> and carried out the search independently in four phases. This identification was followed by a comprehensive descriptive approach to analyzing the data.</p> <p><i>Phase one</i></p> <p><i>Phase two</i></p> <p><i>Phase three</i></p> <p><i>Phase four</i></p>	<p>2. <u>Research must be empirical approaches presenting qualitative and/or quantitative data derived from observation or experimental studies.</u> <u>Anecdotal and theoretical studies relying merely on the use of translation in classroom were excluded.</u></p> <p>Identification procedures:</p> <p>For this purpose, <u>I employed the four-phases identification criteria implemented in Hattem & Lomika (2016) study based on Gao et al. (2012).</u></p> <p>Phase 1: Academic Databases</p> <p>Phase 2: Google Scholar</p> <p>Phase 3: International Journals</p> <p>Phase 4: Snowball sampling</p> <p>Results:</p> <p>Keywords</p> <p>Figure 1. Keywords</p> <p>By collecting the keywords from the selected articles and using the visualization online program Voyant-Tools (https://voyant-tools.org/), <u>the emerging topics in the last decade were exposed</u> (see Figure 1).</p>
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<p><i>Analysis of studies</i></p> <p>Results</p> <p>Figure 1. Most common keywords displayed in a keyword cloud.</p> <p><i>Keywords</i></p> <p>Examining the keywords in the abstracts <u>helps lend a focus to the emergent themes in the literature</u>, and provides a helpful overview . . . (see Figure 1).</p> <p>. . .</p>	<p>. . .</p>
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“There’s Never Enough Time”: Renegotiating Jeramy’s Writer Identity

Jeramy clearly made a concerted effort in preparing for the task, but when the time came to submit it, he was unable to finish his literature review, even though Dr. Bradshaw had extended the deadline by a few days. While his literature review included an abstract, introduction, methodology section, and brief description of the main attributes of the surveyed studies (i.e., the number of participants, the target languages, and the classroom settings under investigation), his discussion of the “Major contributions” (as he labeled this section) remained incomplete.³⁷ Instead, he included several bullet points listing some of his observations regarding the studies’ main insights and the implications for future research which he had planned to discuss. Jeramy

³⁷ It should be noted here that, while Hattem and Lomicka (2016) did not include this subheading, Dr. Bradshaw had used this particular phrasing in one of her instructions in the literature review assignment guidelines: “Summarize very briefly *major contributions* of significant studies and articles to the body of knowledge under review” (emphasis added).

attributed his inability to complete the literature review to the large number of sources he needed to read and analyze. “[B]ecause it’s the first time I was doing this project, I had to read 20 articles. . . . I was expecting to have more time, but I couldn’t . . . analyzing the data took longer . . .” (Interview J4, 1/28/20). He further cited his heavy workload toward the end of the semester as another reason, noting that he had “several papers for other classes the week before . . . everything is due at the same time” (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20). In retrospect, he jokingly characterized his experience with the task by alluding to a popular meme that captures the failure to realize one’s (over)ambitious plans, often when faced with an encroaching deadline (Figure 8).

Jeramy: Have you seen the meme of the horse drawing?

Jeroen: [laughs]

Jeramy: “Oh, I want to do this, this, and this, but I don’t have time anymore!” [laughs]

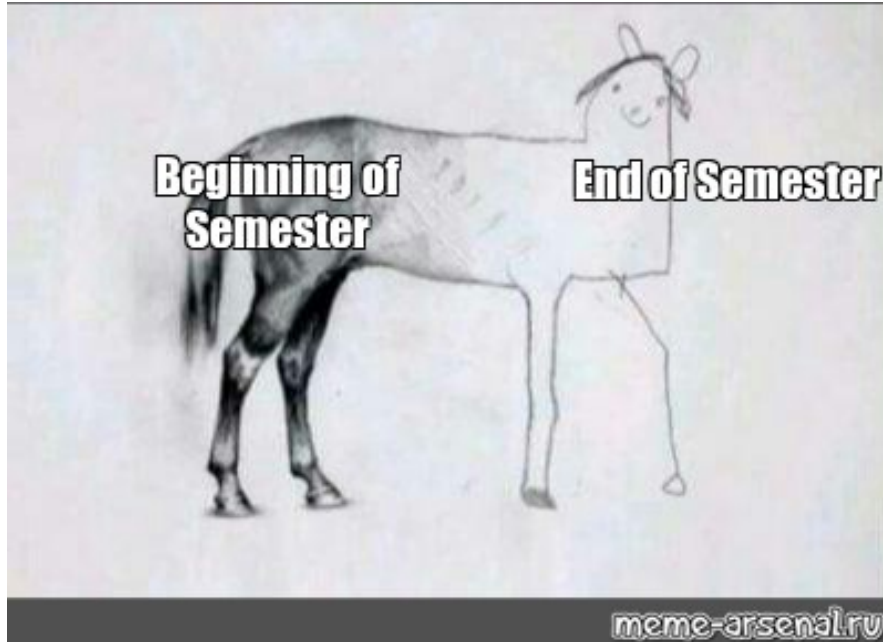
. . .

Denise: That’s a very good meme, like, that’s the story of our lives. (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20)

Figure 8

*A version of the unfinished horse drawing meme which evokes the time pressure students often experience at the end of the semester*³⁸

³⁸ Although the origins of this meme are unclear, it is sometimes identified as the *pafinis* (“unfinished”) horse meme in online meme databases.



Realizing that his work might fall short of expectations, Jeramy directly addressed Dr. Bradshaw in his literature review under the “Major contributions” subheading: “My apologies. I have read the articles, extracted the information to describe and analyze and I could not summarize the major contributions.” When uploading his literature review to the course LMS, Jeramy left an additional note for her (Figure 9), in which he clarified his goals while hinting at the potentially face-threatening nature (Goffman, 1967; see also Brown & Levinson, 1988) of submitting incomplete work. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, Jeramy chose to write his note in French. During class, students frequently spoke French (or Spanish), especially in small group discussions or quick asides to individual classmates, even though English served as the main language of instruction. Occasionally, students would address Dr. Bradshaw in French as well. In written class communication, on the other hand, French was used more sparingly. Jeramy would sometimes use French for courtesies, and Dr. Bradshaw also included French in her written feedback for Jeramy, he explained, “but just for the greetings and the thank you[s] and [such]”

(Interview J4, 1/28/20).³⁹ However, Jeramy felt that in this case, using French would enable him to convey his intentions more effectively, given that he wanted to maintain a sense of formality, which he found easier in French than in English. He added that French was a shared professional language for him and Dr. Bradshaw: “French is the thing that connect us.” Jeramy’s use of French here thus conveyed a multilingual writer identity, which seemed an appropriate rhetorical choice given his audience (a faculty member in the French Department), the setting (a course on foreign language learning), and the specific timing (the end of the semester).

Figure 9

The message for Dr. Bradshaw that Jeramy submitted to the course website along with his literature review (the English translation is my own)

<p>Bonjour, Dr. [Bradshaw]</p> <p>Je vous remercie à nouveau d'avoir prolonger la date pour rendre le projet final. Cela m'a beaucoup aidé. (Il n'y a jamais assez de temps pour lire, même pas pour écrire, mais on ne cesse)</p>	<p>Hello Dr. [Bradshaw]</p> <p>I want to thank you again for extending the due date for the final assignment. It helped me a lot. (There’s never enough time to read, let alone to write, but we don’t stop)</p> <p>First of all, I must admit that this is the first time I have done a final project like this</p>
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³⁹ For example, when uploading his writing tasks to the course website, Jeramy would sometimes write “Merci for your feedback.” Toward the end of the semester, Dr. Bradshaw also responded to a brief thank you note Jeramy had submitted along with an assignment with “Et merci à toi! C’était un semestre formidable!” (“Thank you too! It was a great semester!”)

<p>D'abord, je dois avouer que c'est la première fois que je fais un projet final comme ceci (literature review) et mon point de départ a été Hattem & Lomicka (2016). Donc, j'ai essayé de dupliquer leur étude, mais envisageant la mienne sur les technologies de traduction et l'apprentissage de langues secondes. Je suis sûr qu'il aura plein de détails à améliorer, je suis désolé en avance pour les inconvénients.</p> <p>Votre feedback est bienvenue! (Je ne suis pas pressé et si vous avez du temps avant la rentrée ou pendant le début du semestre prochain, je serai content que vous puissiez me guider sur mon sujet de recherche.)</p> <p>Merci infiniment pour ce semestre!</p>	<p>(literature review) and my starting point was Hattem & Lomicka (2016). So, I tried to duplicate their study, but focusing on translation technologies and second language learning in my case. I am sure there will be many details to improve, I apologize in advance for the inconvenience.</p> <p>I welcome your feedback! (There is no rush and if you have time before the start of the school year or at the start of the next semester, I would be glad if you could offer guidance on my research topic.)</p> <p>Thank you so much for this semester!</p>
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When I asked why he hadn't requested an additional extension, Jeramy explained to me that in his mind, doing so would be unfair and disrespectful toward Dr. Bradshaw: "I want to impress her, . . . but there are obviously time constraints. For me, it's a lack of respect saying, "Give me extra time." I don't ask for extra time. . . . I'm not going to look for any advantage, like, "Oh, I know her." She's grading my performance, not my friendship" (Interview J4,

1/28/20). Denise seemed struck by Jeramy's candidness, but he felt justified in simply submitting "what I have," given that his literature review was a work in progress.⁴⁰ After all, he had already agreed with Dr. Bradshaw that they would meet during the following semester to discuss how he could take his project forward. In her feedback on another task, Dr. Bradshaw also encouraged Jeramy to submit an abstract for a project she was working on related to machine translation and language learning, which points to the close connection she tried to forge between classroom writing and the students' "future endeavors" (Interview B1, 12/6/19), including disciplinary writing. Thus, while the note partially served as an apology, it could also be read as a confirmation of Jeramy's intention to continue working with Dr. Bradshaw and apply the knowledge he gained in her class to advance his disciplinary participation.

During a follow-up interview, Dr. Bradshaw acknowledged Jeramy's note and indicated that her perception of Jeramy as a writer had shifted on the basis of this task, which showed him as a more serious student who was eager to learn how to write in this new genre. Dr. Bradshaw had previously seen him as someone who "was a little bit freewheeling" and less concerned with formality in his writing tasks (Interview B2, 1/22/20), but she now made special note of his attempt to closely follow the apparent genre conventions manifested in Hattem and Lomicka (2016), and praised his overall effort in writing in this new genre, as she did in her written feedback (Figure 10). She elaborated her impression as follows:

[I]t was almost mirrored how he did that, to the point of, they [Hattem and Lomicka (2016)] use a word cloud to talk about keywords, and he used a word cloud to talk about

⁴⁰ This fit with his conception of the graduate course final paper more generally, which he believed served a practical purpose within the context of the course: "It's not like it has to be the best paper you have done" (Interview J4, 1/28/20).

keywords. Things that weren't necessarily part of the genre . . . and I think that's part of the process of learning how to write in these academic [genres]. That's how you start.

You are like, "Hey, that looks cool, I'm going to do that." But I just remember it being a distinction. I had not attributed that to [Jeremy's] writing before. (Interview B2, 1/22/20)

Jeremy received 80 points for the literature review, which was lower than his other grades in the course. Dr. Bradshaw decided to evaluate it "[based] on what was there . . . he had done the reading. The part that's missing [is] that last step of synthesizing and analyzing, which is a big step I think." At the same time, she readily admitted responsibility for the fact that Jeremy's literature review was incomplete, given the somewhat limited opportunities she felt she had provided in the course to prepare for this final project option. Overall, then, Dr. Bradshaw's view of Jeremy's discursive self changed as a result of the way he approached this particular task, in light of the task genre and the unique opportunities and constraints it afforded him as a learner.

Figure 10

Dr. Bradshaw's written feedback on Jeremy's literature review, which she submitted along with her in-text comments

Nice work on this [Jeremy]. You did a lot of great reading, and I appreciate the effort to emulate the "lit review as publication" format. I made some comments on organization and coherence in the document. Without the major synthesis section, I couldn't fully evaluate the review, but I think this is a good start.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I have considered how two multilingual PhD students in an applied linguistics program, Denise and Jeramy, approached the writing tasks they encountered in a mixed-mode, “hybrid” graduate course on language learning and technology, focusing on their interests and aspirations as language teachers and novice scholars as well as their respective goals of presenting themselves as “competent” (Denise) and “not pretentious” yet “coherent” (Jeramy). My investigation revealed the importance of peer discourse socialization in the weekly reading responses or “Padlets,” thus echoing previous research on affordances of CMC in graduate programs, as both Denise and Jeramy closely followed the example of their classmates’ posts especially with regard to the use of personal examples. At the same time, their perceptions of the task also differed: whereas Denise worked to ensure that her writing would be sufficiently “academic,” Jeramy used a more conversational style as he seemed less concerned with achieving “writtenness” (Turner, 2018), instead emphasizing the task’s practical use in preparing for in-person class meetings, and he was typically the last to submit his responses. Thus, Denise and Jeramy differed in envisioning how they would be perceived.

These diverging approaches influenced how Denise and Jeramy were “read” by Dr. Bradshaw, who indicated that she expected slightly “more formal” contributions, despite the use of an online application (Padlet) that might seem conducive to a casual interactional style (see also Yim, 2005). While Denise projected an appropriate authorial presence, coming across as a careful and diligent writer, Jeramy’s posts struck Dr. Bradshaw as somewhat “off the cuff.” Importantly, though, these impressions of Denise’s and Jeramy’s authorial selves were also informed by their classroom participation, by Dr. Bradshaw’s own admission, in line with previous studies that point to the intricate relationship between textual and embodied identity

(Amicucci & Neely, 2020; Tardy, 2012). This relationship may be especially prominent in mixed-mode or online courses, in which the combined use of asynchronous (written) exchanges and synchronous discussion could significantly shape class participation. In conclusion, the way in which the students performed this writing as an “act of identity” (Ivanič, 1998), as well as how they were perceived by their instructor, took shape through a complex array of textual features referencing multiple discourses and voices (including those of classmates), non-discursive or extra-textual factors (such as the time and order of submission), and more unique aspects of the course ecology (for instance, the way the reading responses served to connect asynchronous class activities and face-to-face meetings).

These findings provide further support for my conclusion in Chapter 4, where I noted that low-stakes tasks might play a more prominent role in identity processes than has hitherto been assumed, even if such writing is easily dismissed as “busywork” (Interview B2, 1/22/20; cf. Ackerman, 1995). In addition, my analysis confirms that writer identity is not static but dynamic (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010, p. 232), for example as it is constructed anew across different tasks or genres within the same classroom context. By closely modeling his final project (a systematic literature review) after a class reading that provided a helpful genre exemplar, Jeramy presented himself as a writer committed to learning how to use this particular genre, even though he was unable to complete his assignment by the deadline. My analysis of the note that Jeramy left when he turned in his literature review also showed how such occluded or “(semi-)hidden” writing (Swales, 1996), as part of a classroom-based genre set or chain (Devitt, 2004; Swales, 2004), can perform highly complex identity work as well that further informs an instructor’s act of

reading.⁴¹ Jeramy's deliberate use of French added a personal touch to his note that reflected his sense of self as a language scholar and teacher and built on the rapport that was already established between him and Dr. Bradshaw, while simultaneously conveying his "professional" attitude (Interview DJ5, 3/2/20). By reiterating his intention to meet with Dr. Bradshaw and continue working on his project after the semester ended, the note emphasized his long-term goals and hinted at the task's possible role in scaffolding his disciplinary participation, which was one of Dr. Bradshaw's stated aims for the writing in her course. Lastly, his use of French also demonstrated his linguistic resourcefulness at an opportune moment and thereby helped to convey his identity as a competent multilingual writer. This example illustrates, then, how student writers may choose to visibly display multiple languages, even if they choose not to "mesh" them, to convey aspects of their self—a strategy that, like code-meshing, is shaped by the rhetorical context at hand (Smith, 2019).

⁴¹ Although my analysis did not account for other written student-professor interactions, such as emails, it would be worth considering these as part of the genre sets or genre repertoires (Devitt, 2004) of classroom communication more generally which could inform how student writers are perceived by their instructors.

CHAPTER 6

PERFORMING INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE: WRITING ACROSS DISCIPLINARY AND CLASSROOM SETTINGS

In Chapters 4 and 5, I considered how the participants in this study negotiated their evolving academic and disciplinary identities in their graduate coursework. Specifically, I described the students' experiences with a variety of low-stakes⁴² writing tasks across classroom settings and examined how these tasks formed part of their individual learning trajectories. Importantly, my analysis indicated that classroom-based writing likely plays a more important role in “disciplinary becoming” than is often assumed, as it provides a rich site for scholarly identity construction in interaction with instructors and peers. As I argued in Chapter 4, the tasks seemed to afford the students multiple and at times overlapping roles as writers, including those of classroom contributor, disciplinary expert, and researcher, thereby enabling them to explore various subjectivities they envisioned for themselves as students and emerging scholars. In Chapter 5, I further showed how students' writer identities may evolve over time, and indeed over the course of a semester, as they are shaped by unique classroom ecologies. This finding was exemplified by Jeramy's efforts to present himself as a knowledgeable and “coherent” writer to his instructor and classmates, and someone who would be seen as “professional” yet unpretentious.

⁴² As I mentioned in Chapter 2, this shorthand is not meant to imply that the assignments are unimportant, but rather serves to distinguish classroom-based writing from high-stakes culminating (research) genres such as written exams and theses or dissertations. While classroom-based writing is typically intended to provide less formal learning opportunities, students may nonetheless find it daunting or feel considerable pressure to perform well (Pantelides, 2012).

In this chapter, I turn more specifically to processes of *interdisciplinary* becoming in writing, as I consider Jacinta's and Yasmin's experiences with various classroom assignments including grant proposals. In the U.S. and elsewhere, the number of interdisciplinary graduate programs seems to have increased rapidly in recent years, as part of a broader "institutionalization of interdisciplinarity" at universities (Borrego, Boden, & Newswander, 2014). Such programs often bring together resources and faculty from multiple departments with the aim of facilitating the cross-fertilization of knowledge. While these programs thus respond to the growing recognition that interdisciplinary perspectives could help tackle complex questions and societal needs, they also pose additional challenges for students, who may encounter multiple, at times contradictory expectations regarding writing and identity development (Newswander & Borrego, 2009; see also O'Meara & Culpepper, 2020). Multilingual and international students may further be confronted with new writing practices or assignment requirements that depart from their previous academic training and could therefore seem relatively foreign to them. Although writing scholars have considered aspects of writing practices in specific disciplines as well as a few interdisciplinary fields, more research is needed on how students navigate such new or unfamiliar writing demands, as well as how they endeavor to present themselves as interdisciplinary scholars. For this reason, the present study focused on interdisciplinary programs in which students typically complete courses in different departments to build cross-disciplinary expertise.

In Chapter 4, I already showed how, when confronted with multiple and diverse writing practices, several of the participants expressed a strong affinity for a particular research paradigm or mode of inquiry as writers, for example by aligning themselves with quantitative as opposed to qualitative methods (in the case of Kelly) or post-positivist as opposed to ethnographic

researcher roles (in the case of Lola). These findings echoed Prior's (1997, 1998) case studies which documented how student writers may choose to follow certain academic discourses or epistemologies while resisting others, in a process of self- and other-socialization that is shaped by professor, course, and program expectations. In this chapter, I share a more in-depth analysis of two students who independently sought to traverse disciplinary boundaries in their writing and present themselves as interdisciplinary researchers: Jacinta and Yasmin. The questions that provide the impetus for these two case studies are as follows: How did Jacinta and Yasmin reconcile their own goals as aspiring interdisciplinary scholars with classroom and disciplinary writing demands? In what ways did their classroom writing facilitate their academic socialization in this regard? What interdisciplinary values did they project in their writing, and how did they seek to present themselves as novice researchers capable of integrating multiple disciplinary approaches? Ultimately, these questions allow me to consider Yasmin's and Jacinta's writing assignments as instances of a "transdisciplinary negotiation of self" (Gramling & Warner, 2016, p. 79; emphasis added), which will help to develop a more nuanced understanding of graduate-level writing in interdisciplinary settings.

In order to situate Yasmin's and Jacinta's writing experiences within their academic trajectories (Lillis, 2008), I will briefly discuss how they presented themselves during the literacy history interviews, before examining a select number of their writing assignments. These narratives thus serve to capture aspects of their "autobiographical selves" (Ivanič, 1998; see also Burgess & Ivanič, 2010) which shaped processes of identity negotiation in their written coursework.

From Outsider to Well-Rounded Novice Scientist: Jacinta

At the time of the study, Jacinta was a second-year student in medical biophysics. Jacinta grew up in the U.S.-Mexico border region, using Spanish as her home language. She first received formal instruction in English at age six, when she entered a bilingual school program in Texas. Commenting on her “lived experience with language” or *Spracherleben* (Busch, 2017), Jacinta explained that, at the time, she “struggled a lot with English, mostly because my mom doesn’t speak English, so she couldn’t help me with school work” (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19). In spite of this, she developed a strong interest in languages, completing both a B.Sc. in biomedical sciences and a B.A. in modern languages with an emphasis in German and a minor in Spanish. Afterwards, she considered the possibility of specializing in neurolinguistics, but her quest for a position at a research lab led her in a different direction. In the end, she secured an internship at a research lab based at Southwestern University that looked at muscle growth and disease, which is how she became interested in doing a PhD. She explained:

I was the technician working in the lab that I'm doing my research in right now, and my boss encouraged me to apply for a PhD . . . I was like, “Okay, I will do a PhD, [but] only if I can still do it in this lab,” because I didn't want to start from scratch, learning new techniques and getting trained. . . . So that's why I'm doing it. I am slowly starting to love it more, I guess . . . and that’s how I’ve just kind of stayed. (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19)

Jacinta’s decision to specialize in medical biophysics was further motivated by her ambition to work in the biotechnological or biopharmaceutical sector, which strongly values interdisciplinary expertise: “It was between medical biophysics and cell biology, and I talked to my boss, and he

strongly recommended medical biophysics, because I want to go into industry” (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19).

At the time of the study, Jacinta was in her second year in the medical biophysics program. Students in the program were expected to complete coursework in biology, (bio)chemistry, biomedical engineering, physics, and mathematics, and as a result, Jacinta often interacted and collaborated with students in other graduate programs. While she felt quite comfortable with concepts from biology and mathematics, it still took her additional effort to understand and write about biochemistry:

In biochemistry, every amino acid is given a letter and I don't have them memorized. So then you have to look them up. . . . I'm not quickly trained in that and it takes forever. There are many topics that are like that, where you're just like, 'I understand the basics and I can see what they're trying to tell me.' But if you're talking down to, like, the thermodynamics, I'm out. (Interview Ja2, 10/16/19)

Although her work in the lab had allowed to gain technical know-how, Jacinta also still felt that she needed to familiarize herself more with scholarly literature: “my goal is to be very familiar with the background work that has been done to help me better understand my experiments, my designs, what's going on, kind of tailor what type of proteins I need to look into, what has worked, what hasn't” (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19). In any case, she already knew that her dissertation project would consider some aspect of titin, a large protein that forms part of sarcomeres (skeletal muscle fibers), and effectively serves as a molecular spring. In her first year in the program, Jacinta had presented at several conferences, both in the U.S. and abroad, but she

told me that she planned to focus her energies on her classes for the foreseeable future, noting that she often felt stressed about meeting deadlines and having to “play catch-up” after returning from conference travels (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19). At this stage, then, he seemed more concerned about her performance as a student than her disciplinary participation.

Despite her affinity for languages, Jacinta indicated that she did not consider herself a strong writer, though she often equated writing with grammar: “I don’t like writing. It’s not my strong suit. . . . I would like to be better at grammar. I’m terrible at prepositions, if I’m being honest” (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19). However, she believed that she had received sufficient opportunities to practice writing in high school and during her undergraduate studies:

Jeroen: How would you describe yourself as a writer, as an academic writer?

Jacinta: Awful, really bad. So I’m very good at editing other people’s work. I don’t know why, but I’m very good at [it]. Me personally, I’ve never enjoyed writing—personal writing, creative writing. I’m better at-

Jeroen: It doesn’t matter what kind?

Jacinta: Yeah, never enjoyed it. I am better at academic writing, just because I was trained well in it. (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19)

Occasionally, her long days at the lab made it difficult to find the time to work on writing, though she also admitted that she would procrastinate sometimes. To make the writing more enjoyable, she sometimes wrote at a cafe or held writing parties with classmates: “[we] just get together, talk, and write—just misery-loves-company stuff” (Interview Ja5, 3/17/20). As I mentioned in Chapter 4, Jacinta often requested feedback from her thesis supervisor and lab

director; in addition, she repeatedly shared her writing with more senior students, postdocs, or others at the lab for feedback. Thus, apart from her classmates, Jacinta strongly relied on her extended academic network to improve her writing (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). She also indicated that she tried to model her writing after publications in her research area. This way, she hoped to come across as a “competent” writer, even if she was still “trying to [find] my academic voice” (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19).

Physical Biochemistry: Navigating Unfamiliar Territory

Although Jacinta expressed limited confidence in herself as a writer, her self-reflective stance generally allowed her to plan her tasks efficiently and satisfy her instructors’ expectations for the various courses she completed. That said, Jacinta did sometimes struggle with writing in knowledge domains other than cell biology and muscle physiology. This became clear in a course she took in Fall 2019 on concepts and techniques in physical biochemistry, a disciplinary branch with which she felt relatively unfamiliar. Jacinta told me that she was the only student in the class who did not specialize in chemistry: “There’s like 15 people, [and] I’m the only non-chemistry person there. . . . Everyone’s in the chemistry and biochemistry department” (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19). As the syllabus stated, the course was intended for “advanced graduate students,” and most students seemed to have a very clear idea of what their dissertation research would look like. As a result, Jacinta perceived herself as the “odd one out,” which partially shaped how she approached the writing tasks.

Apart from two oral class presentations, the course included one major writing project: second-year students had to develop a research proposal that they could then use to apply for a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, while first-year students were asked to submit a

scientific literature review instead.⁴³ While Jacinta was in the second year of her program, she nonetheless thought that writing a scientific review would be more beneficial to her than developing a grant. The research she hoped to do at her lab did not seem suitable for a NSF grant, meaning the proposal would be less useful for her: “[T]hey grant basic science funding, and my project is more towards the medical field, and we use mouse models, so most of our grants are funded by the NIH, which is the National Institute[s] of Health” (Interview Ja1, 9/11/19). In addition, she felt that she still lacked the necessary knowledge of the research literature in biochemistry to put together a “decent grant,” and that writing a scientific review could help improve her grasp of this territory—her main goal for this course. After consulting with her thesis supervisor and lab director, who agreed with her assessment, Jacinta contacted the two course instructors by email to explain her situation, noting how she felt the review option could allow her to develop cross-disciplinary knowledge: “I believe a writing a review would help me better understand the background of my project, and look at [the] science from a biophysical point of view instead of a biological [one]” (Writing Log, 9/12/19). To her relief, the instructors approved her request to write a scientific review instead of a grant proposal.

Jacinta’s comments on her writing process illustrate her evolving genre knowledge of scientific literature reviews, some of which seemed applicable across the disciplinary domains in which she participated. For example, she noted that the goal of a review was to synthesize and evaluate previous studies, and believed that doing this could help her personally by identifying knowledge gaps and ways to situate her own project. Thus, she recognized that writing a review could serve to prepare her to be more successful in her role as a novice researcher:

⁴³ The succinct assignment guidelines indicated that the review should be six pages long and formatted using “11-point Arial font; 1” margins on all sides; fully referenced; 3-5 figures/tables.”

I think [the scientific review] will be good because you're reading all of these different papers, you're trying to combine, 'oh, this relates to this, and they found this.' I think [my goal is] just having a good, strong background of what has happened, because I don't want to repeat the same work, and move forward.

Jacinta also knew from reviews that she had previously read in biomedical journals that they were usually organized either thematically or chronologically, "depending on the topic," and she decided she would adopt the former approach, organizing her sources by subtopic. In other words, she was able to adapt some of her evolving genre knowledge to this new task, even though she found herself in a relatively unfamiliar writing context (Tardy, 2009; Tardy et al., 2020).

Yet, while she made sure to set aside sufficient time for reading and note-taking, she still felt intimidated by "heavy biochemistry topics," and therefore decided to avoid more in-depth discussion of certain articles in her review:

I realize that I'm not very good at understanding what's going on. I read this very chemistry, biochemistry-heavy paper, and I'm like, 'Oh, that's a cool idea,' but I don't really understand it because I'm not a trained biochemist. So I don't want to go into mass detail and not know what I'm talking about. (Interview Ja2, 10/16/19)

In addition, Jacinta was initially confused by the use of citations in the biochemistry articles she read. She decided to use the format that would help increase her total word count, as she was worried she would fail to meet the assignment requirements: "I am starting to understand that

citation style depends on the journal[;] some do numbers, some do last names and years... I think based on [the] length of this assignment I will be doing last names and years of papers” (Writing Log, 10/1/19). Interestingly, Jacinta felt that she often “over-credited” in her writing, as she preferred to attribute ideas to other sources instead of assuming responsibility for them herself. She was relieved, then, when she realized that she did not need to worry about that in this assignment, given the purposes of the literature review genre: “[I]t’s a review, so it’s supposed to be no new data, no new information. . . . it’s okay if I over-cite because it’s not supposed to be new things” (Interview Ja2, 10/16/19). While she was partially concerned about avoiding plagiarism, Jacinta’s general preference for attribution over averral (Thompson, 2012) might also be seen as indicative of her hesitance to present herself as an authority in this course.

Before submitting the review, Jacinta requested feedback on her draft from three peers, two of whom specialized in biomedical engineering, and one in pharmacy. Rather than asking them to comment on specific aspects, she simply told them that she could use their help with editing, leaving it up to them to decide how to proceed. Interestingly, she did not specify that the writing was for a course: “I didn’t specifically tell people it was for class. Everyone thought it was for publishing. . . . I mean, it could be published [eventually], I guess” (Interview Ja3, 11/7/19). Most of the feedback focused on grammar, but her peer reviewers also commented on the overall structure and content of her review, and Jacinta followed many of their suggestions in her final version. This approach illustrates how Jacinta relied on her individual network of practice, or INoP (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), which extended across disciplines, to help her with her writing. However, although she spent many hours preparing, writing, and revising her review, Jacinta failed to meet all her instructors’ expectations, as her review avoided in-depth discussion of biophysical techniques and instead focused on biological aspects due to her limited

content knowledge of the former. The instructor who provided written feedback made note of this shortcoming (Figure 11). Thus, although Jacinta successfully adapted some of her prior genre knowledge and enlisted the help of her peers to improve certain aspects of her review, she felt that she lacked the necessary knowledge and confidence to present herself as an authority in this task, an impression that was shared by her instructor.

Figure 11

Excerpt from instructor feedback on Jacinta's scientific review, commenting on her limited engagement with biophysical research methods (the disciplinary focus of the course)

This is a very well-written survey of the established muscle mechanosensors [*sic*]. . . . What I missed were details on the biophysics of the methods used to make these discoveries. How did the measured data lead to these conclusions? Why is one method better than another? You discuss AFM and force-probe molecular dynamics. What are these methods? How do they work? How did the data measured lead to the conclusions. This is a great survey, but it just missed the core biophysics.

Performing Interdisciplinary Expertise

Jacinta's position as a disciplinary outsider in her scientific review can be contrasted with her journal club presentations, in which she repeatedly positioned herself as an expert evaluator of published research (Chapter 4). This difference can be attributed to her prior training and disciplinary affinities: while the scientific review was supposed to demonstrate her understanding of physical biochemistry, the journal club focused on cell biology and muscle physiology more specifically, which also served as the main focus of Jacinta's research lab and

her intended area of specialization. However, while she initially tended to present herself first and foremost as a biologist in her coursework, as the literature review and journal club assignments showed, Jacinta increasingly took on the role of a well-rounded novice scientist ready to undertake original research that would bridge multiple disciplinary traditions. This shift in her discursive identity was most obvious in a grant proposal she wrote in Spring 2020, for a scientific writing course offered by the immunobiology department at Southwestern University.

To gain a better understanding of this context, I interviewed Dr. Anderson, one of the instructors for the course, who had also co-taught multiple iterations of it prior. She explained that the overarching goal was to help students “put together a competitive proposal” that students might actually submit for a predoctoral research grant administered by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). To this end, the course specifically followed the guidelines and format for the grant in question, though many of the considerations applied to scientific grant writing more generally. The final draft was submitted for a “mock panel review” by professors from various scientific disciplines who were not directly involved in teaching the class but had agreed to serve in this role, following the review criteria for NIH research grants. According to Dr. Anderson, “a lot of our students do submit these proposals for funding and several of them have been successful. So it serves a practical purpose for them too and is a real boost for their careers if they can get them funded” (Interview A, 4/29/20). In addition, Dr. Anderson hoped that the course would instill a “habit of writing,” noting that “often students don’t have a lot of experience writing . . . and maybe in the biological sciences or in the sciences it’s even worse because they’re not writing term papers, so often students come in with a very small skill set with respect to writing” (Interview A, 4/29/20).

Although Jacinta's research on muscle physiology was suitable for NIH funding given its potential medical application, she told me that she did not qualify for the grant, as she had already secured funding for her doctoral studies. She nonetheless recognized the value of the task in preparing for her qualifying exams, for which students were required to submit a detailed research proposal, as well as her dissertation project:

Even if you don't submit it, it's a proposal about your project. It should be a very good stepping-stone to where you're going to spend the next year or three years in research . . . [this way] your committee members [will] get a really strong idea of what your project is.
(Interview Ja4, 1/29/20)

The course was designed in such a way that students developed their proposals in stages and exchanged drafts in groups, meaning they repeatedly received feedback from peers who were in different graduate programs. Jacinta appreciated this aspect, noting that "it really pushes you to think about your project and where you should be," and she found it helpful to practice explaining her research to her group members from other disciplinary backgrounds, effectively acting as a disciplinary expert: "There are people from different fields [and] when they ask you questions, they genuinely don't know or don't understand. So it forces you to step back" (Interview Ja4, 1/29/20). The questions from her peers clearly shaped Jacinta's writing, as she made sure to avoid unnecessary jargon, provide definitions for key concepts, and rephrase explanations for clarity. While Jacinta's proposal initially seemed somewhat "underdeveloped" in comparison to her group members' writing, Dr. Anderson ultimately praised her for effectively communicating her research to those outside her area of expertise: "she's successfully

navigated those waters in terms of making it understandable” (Interview A, 4/29/20). In this regard, Jacinta may have also benefited from her journal club, where she had to explain the intricacies of muscle physiology to her non-expert peers as well, albeit using a different genre.

In the final draft of her proposal, Jacinta relied on several strategies to show that she was well-positioned to carry out her interdisciplinary research project, which considered the role of titin (a skeletal-muscle protein) in promoting muscle growth. To begin with, she emphasized her technical know-how as a lab technician to convince the reviewers that she was qualified to perform the highly specialized tasks that her proposed research required; specifically, she mentioned that certain procedures were “done routinely in our laboratory both by myself and others,” and that she had “experience in performing” another technique (Figure 12a). In addition, she made strategic references to an extensive interdisciplinary network throughout her proposal. Instead of simply listing the research facilities she would use (a conventional aspect of scientific grants), she repeatedly mentioned specialists who could provide the necessary methodological and statistical expertise or resources to assist her (Figure 12b). This gesture implied that Jacinta’s own understanding was limited in these areas, yet it also demonstrated that she had thought through her research and ensured that she could access relevant resources. I could be argued, then, that Jacinta presented herself as an interdisciplinary novice researcher this way, given that interdisciplinarity is often defined or operationalized in terms of teamwork or “collaboration between individuals representing traditional academic disciplines” (Borrego & Newswander, 2010, p. 64). The evaluation she received from one of the mock reviewers confirmed that Jacinta’s strategy of “borrowing” expertise was seen as a positive aspect that helped to convey the study’s value and feasibility, complementing her own practical experience and expertise as a researcher (Figure 13).

Potential Pitfalls and Alternatives

In terms of procedure, I do not predict having any trouble with dissecting out tissue and measuring fiber lengths, and sarcomere lengths as this is something done routinely in our laboratory both by myself and others.

...

I do not predict any issues with the isolation and stretching of the 5th toe EDL muscle, since this is a technique that is routinely performed in our lab and it is a technique that I have experience in performing.

Muscle samples will be sent to the state-of-the-art proteomics core at [Southwestern University] where bioanalytical expertise by [name] and instrumentation usage are available.

...

Consultations with the faculty of the [Southwestern University research center] will also be requested to assist in broader gene expression analysis and alternative interpretation of results.

...

I will follow a protocol that is published by Dr. [name]'s Laboratory [33] in which it demonstrated an increase of phosphorylation to mechanosensitive [*sic*] proteins in response to passive stretch.

Figures 12a and b

Excerpts from Jacinta's final grant proposal in which she made note of her personal qualifications and explained how she would rely on the expertise of others in her research

- The PI has experience doing the sarcomere series counting, dissections, and muscle mechanics studies in both aims
- Despite missing details to proposed proteomics experimental approach, expertise and mass spec [spectrometry] facilities of Dr. [name] will ensure quality data, analysis and interpretation. Additionally, a biostatistician will be requested to assist with gene expression and interpretation.

Figure 13

Anonymous reviewer feedback from “mock panel review” addressing the relative merits and feasibility of Jacinta’s research based on her proposal

Looking back on Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, Jacinta told me that the biochemistry literature review and the grant proposal were the most challenging assignments she had completed thus far in her academic studies. At the same time, she believed that she had strongly benefited from both, as they had helped her solidify her project ideas and allowed her to present herself as a more confident, well-rounded scientist ready to undertake original research in her field.

Specifically, the literature review task enabled her to expand her content and rhetorical knowledge of writing in biochemistry, while the grant proposal provided an opportunity to show how she was capable of drawing on her interdisciplinary network and compensate for her limited expertise in certain domains, emphasizing the interdisciplinary value of collaboration (Borrego & Newswander, 2010).

Applying Cross-Cultural Knowledge: Yasmin

At the time of the study, Yasmin had just entered the interdisciplinary program in intercultural arts studies as a first-year doctoral student. Hailing from China, she grew up speaking (Mandarin) Chinese, and she first received formal instruction in English at age twelve. Before coming to Southwestern University, Yasmin had completed an M.A. degree in dance at an academy in China. For this degree, she took both dance performance and dance studies courses, culminating in a final written thesis in which she looked at cultural traditions of the Qiang people, an ethnic minority in Sichuan province, China. This topic also provided the focus for several writing assignments in her first year at Southwestern University, as she continued to explore aspects of Qiang cultural heritage while at the same time developing new research ideas and projects.

Yasmin primarily considered herself a scholar-practitioner of dance, but her interests ranged widely. Specifically, she hoped to specialize in the interdisciplinary field of arts and health, allowing her to consider how the performing arts can contribute to health across different settings, and her long-term goal was to teach at a university in the U.S. This explained her interest in the intercultural arts studies program, which provided a unique opportunity for her to combine her interests in dance and public health research:

I think the program is what I [have been] looking for . . . my major was dance, my Bachelor's and Master's degrees are in dance, but I [was] looking for PhD program like interdisciplinary, and not just only in dance, that crosses dance to other subjects. . . . It's just four to five universities [that] offer this kind of program, but most of them are

focused on dance . . . So I'm focused on cross of dance and public health." (Interview Y1, 10/17/19)

As part of her interdisciplinary approach, Yasmin also wanted to take a cross-cultural perspective, for example by considering how Eastern medicine as well as meditational movement practices such as qi gong, tai chi, and yoga could be combined with dance for therapeutic purposes or to promote well-being more generally. She further felt it was necessary to adopt a comprehensive understanding of "the body-mind interaction" (Interview Y1, 10/17/19), noting how mindfulness might serve to reduce stress and performance anxiety (or stage fright) equally among dancers, musicians, and athletes. Yasmin thus seemed particularly attuned to parallels between different yet related research traditions so as to develop effective arts-based practices, including areas like sport psychology.

When I asked her to describe herself as a writer, Yasmin explained that she had enjoyed writing from an early age, and she had often received praise for her writing from her teachers. She liked to keep a diary and even wrote a novel when she was still in high school, and during her graduate studies she worked as a journalist for an arts center, conducting interviews and writing articles on a regular basis. While Yunjia considered herself a strong writer, she thought that creative writing was easier for her than academic writing. In addition, she felt quite limited in her ability to convey her ideas and write eloquently in English, and would typically use "simple vocabulary and simple [sentence] structures" (Interview Y1, 10/17/19).⁴⁴ In a later

⁴⁴ Jeroen: So you like to write?

Yasmin: Yeah, I like to write . . . writing is not a big problem for me in Chinese, but when I got here, I feel stuck. When I thought something, it's a little bit hard for me to write in English, because the expression is different and maybe I can use some very beautiful sentence in Chinese to express myself,

interview, Yasmin also noted that she was very critical of her writing, and avoided using complex language as she was wary of making mistakes: “in English sometimes I feel, I start wondering if I’m wrong, so I keep it as simple and clear [as possible] . . . Actually, I always try to be perfect, so sometimes I feel stress from that” (Interview Y2, 10/31/19). When drafting her assignments, Yasmin often jotted down her ideas using a combination of English and Chinese, depending on what words would come to mind first, and then she would try to find appropriate English words or phrases to “realize the sentence, polish the sentence into English” (Interview Y4, 1/15/20). She often used Google Translate to help her consider possible alternatives at this stage, but she would rarely incorporate a translation without adapting it first, noting that the proposed structures were often “strange” (Interview Y5, 1/30/20).⁴⁵ Like Denise and Jeramy, whose writing processes I described in Chapter 5, Yasmin sometimes used Grammarly to check her prose for grammatical correctness, following the advice of one of her instructors; however, she frequently dismissed the suggestions it offered, such as the use of active voice in instances where the passive seemed more effective to her. In addition, she often relied on Google Translate to look for the right phrases to use in her writing, something I will consider in more detail below.

Yasmin also felt disadvantaged when reading academic articles in English, since she had only read Chinese-language texts in her previous studies, and she soon noticed that she took

but I can just use some simple vocabulary and simple structures to express [myself] in English. (Interview Y1, 10/17/19)

⁴⁵ On one occasion, Yasmin shared a screenshot with me which showed a combination of Chinese and English words that she had entered in Google Translate while writing. She explained: “Sometimes I have some ideas in my mind, and I don’t want them to disappear . . . so I write down, just mixed Chinese and English together. Yeah, to keep those ideas as soon as possible. So I write this kind of sentence, so mixed Chinese and English. Because for me right now, I can, sometimes English appear better words in my mind, but sometimes Chinese. So Chinese and English consolidate in my mind sometimes. . . . So I wrote down whatever in my head. . . . Yeah. Yeah, so if I write in English, it would be slower, and maybe some mind will disappear in that moment when I want to write them. So when I have some ideas, I want to write them as soon as possible, to get those. . . . And then I realize the sentence, polish the sentence into English. Yeah.” (Interview Y5, 1/30/20)

much longer than her classmates to complete readings. This applied especially to philosophical or hermeneutic—as opposed to empirical—papers in (ethno)musicological journals or edited volumes. For this reason, she tended to pick shorter articles when instructors assigned multiple readings to choose from: [N]ormally I would choose a shorter one because my reading still is slower than others . . . I think I have to spend more time reading and I need to take notes” (Interview Y2, 10/31/19). She used several applications to facilitate reading, including Google Translate and LiquidText, which allow users to highlight and annotate texts and organize their notes. In the interviews, she repeatedly mentioned that she believed reading actively in this way could help her become a better writer in English, noting the close connection between reading and writing: “It’s kind of a bond” (Interview Y1, 10/17/19).

Extending Previous Research: Qiang Cultural Revitalization Efforts

Despite her extensive prior experience with both academic and non-academic writing in Chinese, Yasmin repeatedly struggled with the writing assignments she completed for her courses. Her struggles were partially caused by the fact that she often could not think of suitable expressions in English to convey her ideas. Because of this, she sometimes also tended to use more direct quotations in her writing than her instructors deemed appropriate, as she found it difficult to summarize or paraphrase her sources accurately (Interview Y2, 10/31/19). However, as in Jacinta’s case, writing expectations pertaining to “disciplinary conversations” (Bazerman, 1980) and epistemology (Kuteeva & Negretti, 2016; Tardy, 2005) also posed significant difficulties, especially in longer assignments such as research papers.

This was most obvious in a term paper Yasmin completed in Fall 2019 for a course that focused on ethnomusicology, and more specifically ecomusicology, an interdiscipline that

considers the relation between music and various ecological factors, partially inspired by ecocriticism. Yasmin told me that she had a strong interest in ethnomusicology, which she perceived as a close neighbor to dance studies: “in most circumstance[s], dance and music cannot separate. . . . And a lot of ethnomusicology papers include dance as part of their research. I don’t think we have a long distance . . . and I can also use the same method, the same perspective.” (Interview Y5, 1/30/20). However, the specific research area of ecomusicology was still relatively foreign to her, and she encountered a lot of “new words [and] new knowledge” in the assigned readings, which considered music traditions around the world in connection with issues like sustainability, cultural heritage and loss, global warming, indigenous knowledge, and social inequities (Interview Y1, 10/17/19). Ultimately, though, the disciplinary writing expectations in her ecomusicology course did not match with the interdisciplinary self she wished to convey as a student and aspiring researcher, which explains why she struggled with the term project in the course.

For their final project, the students were expected to write a paper on an “Ethnographic or investigative project” and present it to the class, as the syllabus indicated, which ideally would be modeled after the assigned readings (Interview Y1, 10/17/19). Since there was not enough time to complete new ethnographic research for this course, Yasmin decided to use data she had collected for her M.A. thesis on cultural practices of the Qiang ethnic minority. This topic seemed very well suited for an ecomusicological project, as the Qiang people and their traditional culture had suffered immense loss during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, a major catastrophe which destroyed entire villages and killed an estimated tenth of the local population. Yasmin’s M.A. project looked at Qiang dance practices more broadly, but for this assignment she decided to consider the use of the sheepskin drum in Qiang ritual ceremonies and heritage

performances, drawing from her previous fieldwork (which was conducted in 2014) and a small number of Chinese publications on this topic. In her final paper, she provided an overview of the unprecedented challenges faced by the Qiang in the aftermath of the earthquake, including the increased threat of cultural loss and poverty, as well as the large-scale resettlement and cultural revitalization efforts led by the government. She considered how the sheepskin drum was now increasingly taught at local elementary schools and in university courses, whereas traditionally it had been exclusively used in rituals performed by *Shibi*, priests and custodians of Qiang culture who were trained for this role. The official recognition of Qiang ceremonies as intangible cultural heritage had further led to the rise of talent training programs and choreographed sheepskin drum performances during festivals which increasingly catered to tourists.

In her paper, Yasmin weighed the merits of the cultural revitalization efforts, noting that the rapid development of tourism could also have negative outcomes: “with such growth, the art and culture of the Qiang can quickly become a symbol and form without the context and connotation that nourished these arts.” While she acknowledged the complexity of the issue, she ultimately praised the revitalization for stimulating renewed interest in Qiang culture among the younger generation and enabling Qiang people to profit from tourism (Figure 14). However, the professor and other class members pressed her on this after her class presentation and did not seem satisfied with her conclusion. In Yasmin’s understanding, they wanted her to be more critical in her assessment, possibly because they tended to view the Chinese government in a more negative light as a result of U.S. media coverage (Interview Y4, 1/15/20). When she met with the professor to discuss how she might revise the paper and submit it for publication, the professor clarified her feedback and suggested looking at published research in English-language ethnomusicology journals:

Yasmin: She said my paper is more a descriptive piece, but I need to add more analysis. . . . and she mentioned that different countries have different values, and maybe I need to have a look at papers already published right now, focusing on China, and have a look at what kind of issues they concern. I guess maybe my paper does not address the right values.

Jeroen: I see. Does she mean that different countries have different values for publishing, or different expectations?

Yasmin: Yeah. Different expectations for what kind of issues [are relevant]. (Interview Y5, 1/30/20)

Later in the interview, Yasmin told me that she had come to realize that ecomusicology is not merely concerned with the natural environment, but also with social and political issues, which could explain the professor's feedback: "The ecosystem is a wider concept. It's not [just] the eco-environment, but also social and policy [issues], and I think maybe that's why she [expects] more critiques" (Interview Y5, 1/30/20).

The Qiang culture has experienced an endangered stage of cultural extinction. After the disaster reconstruction, the government, universities, research institutes, foundations, and other departments have supported the rapid development of tourism. Among them, the government played the most crucial role in the whole process. Instead, the Qiang culture has shown an unprecedented prosperity trend. Most of the local people and scholars generally believe that the Qiang culture has received more attention and development than before the earthquake,

although it has also brought more other modern cultural influences. When we look back at the past ten years, the Qiang area has adopted the priority of “cultural development” instead of pure culture conservation, and they achieved excellent results. It is to increase the local people’s income through tourism development and at the same time, revive the culture through tourism. Qiang people value their culture more. But with such growth, the art and culture of the Qiang can quickly become a symbol and form without the context and connotation that nourished these arts. Under the influence of modernization and globalization, how to protect and develop indigenous culture is a global issue. How to preserve and promote art in the face of environmental change and extreme disasters has also received widespread attention.

From the development of sheepskin drum, we can see three contexts: folk context-classroom context-stage context. The latter two have out of the original meaning and show new functions and vitality. They have become purified and purified. The drum beating rhythm becomes complicated; the costume becomes colorful; the movement and the body postures become upward and extend; the formation becomes to face one direction to adjust to stage. These changes are a cultural adaptation. Although there are still many problems in the development of the Qiang culture, I argue that the cultural recovery and resilience of the Qiang people after the earthquake can be used as a positive case for global scholars to study.

Figure 14

Excerpt from the conclusion section of Yasmin’s paper on cultural revitalization among the Qiang people, which she wrote for an ecomusicology course in Fall 2019

Initially, Yasmin thus considered adapting her paper and including more criticism, if that would make it more suitable for publication in an ethnomusicology journal. She told me that she believed it was important for her to start thinking about publishing early on, so as to increase her job prospects, in line with the so-called “publish or perish” mantra (see also Anderson, 2017). However, she soon decided to put the paper aside, and instead used her subsequent coursework to develop a new research project—her Dance Intervention Project—which she hoped could provide the foundation for her dissertation research. In contrast with the cultural revitalization paper, this was a more practice-oriented project, motivated by the question of how dance classes could be used for therapeutic benefit—one of her main interests as a dance scholar-practitioner. Thus, Yasmin ultimately abandoned her Qiang cultural revitalization project as it did not seem to align with her interdisciplinary goals. In the following section, I briefly discuss how Yasmin conceived the Dance Intervention Project before considering the strategies she used to present herself as an interdisciplinary researcher in her writing.

The Dance Intervention Project: Pitching Interdisciplinary Research

In Spring 2020, Yasmin took another course with the same instructor who had taught the ethnomusicology course the semester before, this time focusing on ethnomusicological theory and methodology more generally—a discipline that was somewhat more familiar for Yasmin. To complete the course, students were required to carry out original research in the form of a music-related ethnographic project, “including planning, fieldwork, research, and oral and written ethnographic reports,” in total accounting for 40% of the final course grade. Early in the semester, Yasmin decided that she wanted to explore some ideas she had for her dissertation research, with regard to how music and dance practices served to promote well-being in different

contexts. An experienced ethnographer, Yasmin considered several fieldwork sites, but the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions on in-person meetings soon forced her and her classmates to adjust their research plans: “Almost all of us revised it [our plans], because . . . the fieldwork that most of us wanted to do we have to do in person . . . [so] we had to change it to virtual ethnomusicology, online” (Interview Y7, 5/7/20). At the same time, the pandemic provided her with a new exigence for a research, as well as a sense of determination, as she believed that music and dance could help people cope with the challenges brought by the global health crisis. Therefore, she decided to use online ethnographic methods to examine how music was being used to counter isolation, raise funds, and lift their spirits, focusing on streaming services and platforms such as YouTube and Spotify.

In her final written report, Yasmin discussed her findings, noting the many beneficial uses of music as evidenced by online interactions. In addition, she also briefly reported on a twice-weekly online dance class that she herself had started teaching using videoconferencing (Zoom), aimed at promoting students’ mental and physical health during the pandemic. She explained that she applied “different therapeutic dance elements” in her class, combining meditational and physical movement practices such as qi gong, tai chi, and yoga. In addition, her class used body percussion with the aim of synchronizing sound and movement and stimulating acupoints, or those parts of the body surface that are also targeted in acupuncture. This way, Yasmin aimed to reduce stress and anxiety and foster social connections between participants throughout this period. While she told me that she found it challenging to teach dance online, she thus recognized the pandemic as an opportunity to test new applications for health-oriented performing arts practices, in what she ultimately hoped could serve as a pilot study for her dissertation research.

Yasmin's dance class also provided the basis for a different writing assignment—a research proposal—in a course she took during the same semester (Spring 2020), a proseminar on intercultural arts studies that served as an introduction to this interdisciplinary field. According to Yasmin, the proseminar helped her explore the scope and possibilities of applied intercultural arts research: “it’s a really really big area with a lot of potential, so I’m excited about that” (Interview Y6, 3/5/20). The students submitted a variety of writing tasks in this course, including the “ethnographic exploration” discussed in Chapter 4, allowing them to experiment with different disciplinary approaches or data collection methods and thus to “[take] on different roles,” as the instructor put it (Interview G1, 5/13/20). For the final project, students were encouraged to write a proposal for a research grant of their choice. Dr. Gartner, the instructor and program chair for intercultural arts studies, explained that she thought it would be useful for students to write a grant proposal as this “could actually translate into something tangible” (Interview G1, 5/13/20). Like Jacinta, Yasmin used the grant writing task not only to solidify her research plans, but also to formulate an identity for herself as an interdisciplinary student and scholar who was qualified to carry out innovative research (Figure 15).

There have been nearly 4 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including over 274 thousand deaths worldwide by May 10th, 2020 (WHO). . . . People are experiencing the negative psychological effects of social distancing and are living with lack of exercise.

. . .

As a 1st year doctoral student interested in researching the relationships between East Asian dance and movement techniques and public health and wellness, I am requesting an [name grant] to further develop and evaluate an online-dance class I designed to address wellness and

social isolation during Covid19 . . . The class combines therapeutic elements of mindfulness-based movements (yoga, Tai chi and Qi gong) folk and modern dance, body percussion, and traditional Chinese medicine theory, all modalities I have studied in China prior to coming to the United States.

. . .

First, I will collect data from the participants of a free “Online dance for wellness During COVID-19”, which I lead from March 31 to May 30, 2020, in order to help people to get through the difficult time during Covid-19 to promote physical and mental wellness, activate the immune system, and help individuals remain socially connected while they stay at home.

. . .

Second, I will learn from and consult some Tai chi and Qi gong masters, traditional Chinese medicine experts and experienced dance professors to get more knowledge of them and ask feedbacks from them to figure out the best way to merge the therapeutic elements in a dance class and to enrich this innovative class.

Figure 15

Excerpts from Yasmin’s grant proposal in which she formulated her interest in applied arts and health research that would address a concrete practical need

In her final grant proposal, Yasmin highlighted the practical need to which her applied research responded, in particular the “negative psychological effects” and “lack of exercise” brought about by the pandemic, thus echoing her online ethnographic project which I discussed above. In addition, she pointed to her prior familiarity of Chinese medicine as well as the various movement practices her class sought to integrate, showing that she had possessed relevant

expertise. In a way similar to Jacinta, she also indicated that she planned to rely on expert outsiders, which in her case included “Tai chi and Qi gong masters, traditional Chinese medicine experts and experienced dance professors,” to help her improve her class. Finally, when describing the original contribution of her research, Yasmin emphasized its interdisciplinary nature and cross-cultural approach, which according to her was capable of “expand[ing] the field of art and medicine.” When I interviewed her, Yasmin acknowledged that she had obvious advantages in this regard: “I guess they will see me as someone [who has] firsthand knowledge, who knows more about the cultural background . . . so probably I can be a bridge” (Interview Y8, 3/4/2021). She further told me that traditionally, Chinese movement practices (including dance and martial arts) were seen as closely intertwined, even though they had become separated over time, and that she had long perceived them as such in her own teaching. Thus, her decision to frame this combined approach as innovative and interdisciplinary within a Western context was also a strategic one.

When she learned about a research grant for advanced graduate students at Southwestern University, Yasmin decided to adapt her proposal and submit it, incorporating the feedback she received from Dr. Gartner. Although her grant application was rejected, she explained that the process had nonetheless been helpful in developing her ideas and confirming her interest in public health research. Indeed, in Fall 2020, Yasmin joined an established research group which looked at the potential benefits of tai chi classes for university employees by monitoring their physical health and sleep quality. Apart from teaching one of the intervention classes, she was also involved in preparing a literature review and interpreting the data for the project. While the focus of this study differed from the research she proposed in the grant, she was able to reuse some of the sources that she cited in her grant. Overall, then, the grant writing task provided an

important opportunity to prepare herself for her role as an interdisciplinary research assistant in arts and health, the field she wanted to specialize in.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I examined how two multilingual doctoral students, Yasmin and Jacinta, adapted their evolving knowledge of disciplinary writing when navigating unfamiliar knowledge domains. In addition, I considered how they ultimately sought to present themselves as interdisciplinary scholars in research proposals, a task genre that seems particularly well suited for enacting this role. I first showed how Jacinta, who perceived herself as a weak writer, struggled to produce a scientific review of relevant research on biophysical techniques for a biochemistry course, leading her to focus her discussion on aspects of muscle physiology with which she felt more familiar thanks to her prior education in biology. While she was thus able to recontextualize some of her previous genre knowledge (Tardy et al., 2020), Jacinta still lacked the necessary methodological and rhetorical knowledge to present herself as an authority within the disciplinary context of biochemistry. This experience differed markedly from her participation in a journal club on muscle physiology (Chapter 4), where she acted instead as a disciplinary expert when explaining muscle research to her non-expert peers. However, a grant writing class which she took in Spring 2020 helped her develop strategies to compensate for her lack of training in certain areas, allowing her to formulate an authorial identity as a well-rounded novice scientist ready to undertake original research in medical biophysics. Apart from emphasizing her practical know-how as a lab technician in her grant proposal, Jacinta indicated how she would “borrow” expertise by seeking advice and assistance from peers and senior

researchers—a collaborative approach which is considered an important strength of interdisciplinary research initiatives (Borrego & Newswander, 2010).

Yasmin, in turn, came to Southwestern University with considerable experience as a writer and ethnographer of dance, though she felt limited when writing in English and struggled to anticipate certain disciplinary writing expectations. Specifically, a research paper she wrote for an ecomusicology class on Qiang cultural heritage performances, which she had researched as an M.A. student in China, was considered too “descriptive” by her instructor, likely because her discussion did not include substantial criticism of the Chinese government and its role in promoting cultural tourism. While Yasmin initially wanted to keep working on this project and possibly develop it into a publishable article, this experience made her realize that she was more interested in pursuing applied research on ways to promote people’s physical and mental well-being through dance. She solidified her research plans in a subsequent class paper and grant proposal, in which she proposed a therapeutic intervention in the form of a dance class taught by her which incorporated elements from Chinese medicine and meditational movement practices. The global crisis presented by the COVID-19 pandemic provided an additional impetus for this research, as she believed that her dance class could help counteract social isolation, anxiety, and reduced opportunities for physical exercise. Like Jacinta, Yasmin self-consciously positioned herself as an interdisciplinary scholar, noting how her practice-oriented project united diverse bodily practices and would involve expert outsiders within these specific domains. In doing so, she further crafted an identity for herself as a “bridge” between Eastern and Western knowledge traditions with the aim of addressing a contemporary societal need.

The stories of Jacinta and Yasmin illustrate how students in interdisciplinary fields may experience discursive shifts while traversing disciplinary boundaries in their coursework, as they

encounter diverging writing expectations and could even feel as though they are being “pull[ed] in different directions” (Newswander & Borrego, 2009, p. 551). These case studies add to previous research that points to the messiness of disciplinary becoming, which should not be seen as a linear path. Indeed, they show that in interdisciplinary programs, writing tasks may provide obstacles as well as learning opportunities that lead students in new directions, as they try to reconcile their own goals as novice scholars with the various disciplinary and classroom writing expectations they encounter along the way. Occasionally, students will learn to successfully navigate new territories, as in the case of Jacinta, who was able to expand her understanding of biochemistry and biophysical techniques to a sufficient degree so that she could present herself as an interdisciplinary scientist. Yasmin’s first foray into ecomusicology, on the other hand, influenced her long-term learning process somewhat differently, as it made her realize that she ultimately preferred applied research that could have a more immediate impact over research that valued social and political critique. In the next chapter, I will elaborate my conclusions from this and the preceding chapter and reflect on the theoretical and practical implications of the study, providing recommendations for both researchers and educators.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has added to previous research on academic discourse socialization by considering academic identity negotiation in graduate-level writing in interdisciplinary settings, drawing from theoretical concepts related to genre, writer identity, disciplinarity, and multilingualism. Specifically, I examined how nine multilingual students in interdisciplinary programs approached various classroom-based writing assignments, including low-stakes tasks and newer genres such as online discussion posts and multimodal presentations, as well as how they took up the opportunities for identity construction afforded by these—what Ivanič (1998, 2005) has referred to as “possibilities for selfhood.” I further devoted specific attention to how writing for courses associated with different disciplines influenced students’ writing choices, and I considered their authorial identities in interdisciplinary terms. My analysis was motivated by the following questions:

- How do multilingual PhD students negotiate their interests and purposes in graduate-level writing?
- What roles do they take on in different task types and genres, including low-stakes tasks?
- In what ways do they construct identities as novice interdisciplinary scholars or professionals?

Here, I will briefly summarize the findings that were discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 through 6, before considering the theoretical and practical implications of these findings. Finally, I identify several limitations of the study and provide some suggestions for future research.

Synthesis of the Findings

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 each focused on different aspects of academic identity construction in classroom-based writing. Chapter 4 showed how the students took on various, at times overlapping roles in their writing, including those of classroom contributor, disciplinary expert, and researcher. Such “role-playing,” I argued, effectively allowed them to reflect on their future goals and explore their disciplinary affinities. For example, several of the students expressed a personal preference for certain research traditions or epistemologies over others, including quantitative as opposed to qualitative methods (Kelly) or post-positivist as opposed to ethnographic researcher roles (Lola). This shaped their positioning in their writing, as well as the kinds of knowledge they decided to contribute to the classroom discourse.

Chapters 5 and 6 complemented these findings through in-depth case studies of four participants, showing their idiosyncratic writing strategies and situating these in their learning pathways. In Chapter 5, I illustrated how Jeramy’s and (to a lesser degree) Denise’s writer identities were negotiated and renegotiated over the course of a semester within a particular course context, informed by interactions with the instructor and participation in class discussions through different modalities. My analysis highlighted the intricate relationship between textual identity, as constructed through writing, and extra-textual identity, in the form of embodied or virtual presence within a shared classroom space (Amicucci & Neely, 2020; Tardy, 2012)—a relationship that is especially complex in mixed-mode or “hybrid” courses like this one. Chapter 6 described how Yasmin and Jacinta drew on their prior knowledge of, and experiences with, academic discourse when writing in new disciplinary contexts through various processes of recontextualization. I also examined their rhetorical strategies in separate grant-writing tasks

which served to position them as novice *interdisciplinary* researchers, thus complicating distinctions between disciplinary “insider” and “outsider.”

These findings have several broader implications which are relevant for educators and researchers. First, it appears that low-stakes classroom-based writing tasks, including so-called “writing-to-learn” activities (Manchón, 2011), have a more prominent role in academic identity building than is typically assumed, as they provide students with repeated opportunities to negotiate their sense of self as aspiring scholars or professionals. While theses or dissertations remain a central aspect of students’ transition to independent knowledge producers, the importance of coursework writing in the process of “disciplinary becoming” (Curry, 2016; Dressen-Hammouda, 2008) should therefore not be underestimated. Successions of writing tasks can provide students with repeated opportunities to negotiate their research interests and professional goals with their instructors, as they endeavor to present themselves as “coherent” (Jeremy), “eloquent” (Yasmin), and knowledgeable or “competent” (Denise and Jacinta) while striving to meet course goals and instructor expectations. This way, students may invent and reinvent themselves as academic writers, for example as they realize that they still lack the necessary knowledge to present themselves as experts in certain research domains, or that they identify more with certain researcher roles than others (cf. Bawarshi, 2003).

Second, low-stakes tasks, and digital and multimodal genres in particular, further structure the learning process by facilitating various forms of peer socialization (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2011, p. 365; see also Kim, 2018), in which doctoral students orient to their classmates as mutual apprentices (Anderson, 2017). This could clearly be seen in Jeremy’s and Denise’s “Padlets,” which responded to and often were modeled after their classmates’ posts. Despite the casual style that online discussion tasks seem to invite (Duff, 2010), they nonetheless allow

students to present themselves as active contributors, given that their contributions will be read by other class members as well (see also Pantelides, 2012). As such, these tasks are not necessarily just produced for the “teacher-as-examiner” (Melzer, 2014), as is the case with much undergraduate-level writing; instead, they can function as dialogic exchanges that constitute a shared process of knowledge construction within the classroom community. Multimodal class presentations also offer possible benefits in this regard, as students may use these as an opportunity to showcase a distinct area of expertise and explain aspects of it to non-expert peers, allowing them to build confidence over time (as in the case of Jacinta). In other words, multimodal presentations can serve to scaffold students’ efforts to take on an epistemic stance as expert (Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2007; see also Ohta, 1991), which is necessary for the more complex rhetorical act of “knowledge-transforming” (Tardy, 2005) in theses or dissertations and research publications. Grant writing tasks also offer a chance to build expertise in interaction with classmates, as students need to clarify their ideas and make them accessible to non-expert readers.

Third, especially in interdisciplinary programs, classroom-based writing may help students find their way in unfamiliar disciplinary contexts and research traditions as they complete coursework across disciplinary divides. For example, while Jacinta already felt quite comfortable with academic discourse related to biology, in which she had received most of her prior training, developing a scientific review of literature in physical biochemistry allowed her to increase her grasp of this neighboring discipline, even if she still struggled to meet the writing expectations for her course. In Yasmin’s case, a term paper assignment for an ecomusicology course allowed her to deepen her understanding of this interdisciplinary research area, as she gradually learned to recognize what forms of knowledge were valued and how scholars might be

expected to comment on social and political issues in their publications. However, rather than integrating ecomusicological approaches into her research, this task ultimately served to confirm for Yasmin that she was more interested in pursuing practice-oriented research combining insights from public health and performing arts, as she had originally planned to do when she enrolled in the program. Thus, while writing tasks can position students in new roles or invite them to explore unfamiliar territories, they may also serve to solidify particular (inter)disciplinary identities. In addition, my findings suggest that students may use low-stakes writing to formulate unique identities as interdisciplinary researchers who are capable of addressing practical needs or overcoming traditional research constraints, for example by “borrowing” expertise or collaborating with researchers in neighboring disciplines (Borrego & Newswander, 2010).

Finally, while this has not been a main focus in this dissertation, my findings further echo previous indications that low-stakes writing may facilitate the construction of multilingual identities in a variety of ways. Specifically, I found that the students actively utilized their first or other languages as well as various translation or editing tools while writing, as previous studies have also considered (e.g., Canagarajah, 2006; Gunnarsson, 2019; Kibler, 2010; Wang, 2003); additionally, the case studies showed how students frequently drew on genre knowledge from different educational and linguistic settings (Tardy et al., 2020). This does not mean, however, that they necessarily intended to negotiate translingual identities by deliberately mixing named languages. Indeed, students will often orient to English in the writing they submit, opting to leave out any visible traces of their cross-lingual process, as Yasmin’s approach illustrated. Others may prefer to formulate a competent multilingual writer identity by using their languages separately (see also Ruuska, 2019), for example when writing in courses environments with

instructors or peers who share the same set of languages. This clearly applied to Jeramy, who submitted an apology and thank-you note for Dr. Bradshaw in French along with his final writing assignment, using what he perceived as their shared professional language and a language that was commonly used during class meetings as well (Interview J4, 1/28/20). Importantly, this act of writing took place within the context of a course on foreign language learning, in which the students and the instructor were united by their professional identity as language teachers. Jeramy's purposeful use of distinct languages thus made sense within the context at hand. While this separate use of named languages in writing is perhaps best characterized as pluri- or multilingual rather than translingual (e.g., Canagarajah, 2015), it could nonetheless serve to convey a form of "multi-competence" (Cook, 2008) or linguistic resourcefulness as part of one's authorial identity.

Theoretical Contributions

The findings of this study also offer more general insights with regard to the concepts of writer identity or voice, genre, and multilingualism, some of which indeed go beyond graduate-level writing. To begin with, I have examined several instances of writer identities in flux, showing how writers may perform multiple different (and at times competing) roles in their texts, depending on the situation at hand (see also Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). These examples make it clear that the construction of self is affected by an array of sociocultural factors, including not only textual conventions or expectations but also personal relations or "micro-level interactions" (Anderson, 2017, p. 2) between writers and readers. Extra-textual factors such as the timing of an act of writing, or what rhetoricians more generally refer to as *kairos*, also seems to exert a strong influence on how writers present themselves as well as how they are perceived.

Such considerations are perhaps more obvious in the context of a graduate classroom, where writers engage in repeated interaction in a shared social space, but they apply in other contexts as well. Writing scholars already acknowledge that identity is fluid and may vary across time and space, recognizing it as an interactive process. However, the negotiation of voice remains an elusive process, and there is still a need for more fine-grained accounts of how this process unfolds. Furthermore, I agree with previous observations that the link between textual and extra-textual aspects of voice, or between writer identity and identity more generally, appears to be highly complex and therefore warrants further research (Amicucci & Neely, 2020; Tardy, 2012).

The case studies presented here also shed light on the intricate connections between (writer) identity, self-regulation of learning, and evolving genre knowledge. Specifically, my study revealed how previous writing experiences shape writers' self-perceptions and writing goals, which in turn contribute to how they approach new tasks (see also Roderick & Moreau, 2021; Tardy et al., 2020). The large variety of genres used in pedagogical settings, including newer genres and genres that are subject to change (e.g., online discussion boards), clearly offer divergent affordances for voice construction, or what Ivanič (1998) has termed "possibilities for selfhood." Given that in many cases, genre expectations are open to negotiation (see also Jacobson, 2019), writers' strategies may be largely guided by their sense of what they hope to accomplish professionally or academically and how they wish to be seen. For instance, Jeremy was wary of seeming "pretentious" as an academic writer, which shaped his approach to the online reading responses in his foreign language learning course. With regard to self-regulation, disciplinary knowledge and self-perceptions also appear to inform writers' perceived need to practice using certain genres, such as the annotated bibliography or the literature review, which could help formulate an appropriate authorial presence in the long run. Thus, this study

highlights writers' agency in advancing their genre knowledge and demonstrates how recontextualization processes (Tardy et al., 2020) are mediated by their sense of professional or (inter)disciplinary self. Effective classroom and writing instruction should recognize such self-knowledge as a starting point for reflection and learning (see also Kuteeva & Negretti, 2016), a point I will consider in more detail below.

A closely related contribution of this research pertains to the "situatedness" of genre knowledge in graduate education (Tardy, 2009, p. 8) as well as opportunities for knowledge adaptation to new tasks or genres more generally (Tardy et al., 2020; see also Freadman, 2002; Wardle, 2009). Scholars have proposed that writing tasks in graduate school would ideally serve as a trajectory or "ladder" of increasing rhetorical demand (Swales & Lindemann, 2002), so that students will gradually learn to master the genre repertoires they need. However, the connections between low-stakes writing and research genres have received limited attention. On the surface, the low-stakes tasks (see also Leon, 2020) discussed here seemed largely pedagogical in nature, in that they served to satisfy the expectations of particular instructors, courses, and programs (see also Ackerman, 1995). That being said, the findings also pointed to various linkages between these tasks and the genres used by research communities and as such provide clues for how low-stakes writing scaffold disciplinary participation. Some of the tasks seemed modeled after research genres of part-genres (also known as "sub-genres").⁴⁶ The literature review, as the "quintessential site of identity work where the novice researcher enters . . . occupied territory" (Kamler & Thompson, 2006, as cited in Morton & Storch, 2019, p. 15), is an obvious example of this. Yet, I also showed that the journal club presentation closely resembles spoken research

⁴⁶ This particular kind of intertextual or interdiscursive linking of pedagogical and research genres can be characterized as a process of uptake (Freadman, 2002), whereby genres "play off of (or take up) each other" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 83; see also Emmons, 2009), in this case as a result of teachers' and students' knowledge, values, or beliefs as (prospective) members of one or multiple academic disciplines.

genres like colloquia or (invited) seminars, effectively inviting students to enter new or contested areas and begin positioning themselves as knowledgeable experts. Given that such genres are used and valued differently across disciplines (Swales, 2004), this kind of modeling or “uptake” (Freadman, 2002) can be particularly instructive for students, especially in interdisciplinary programs perhaps, as a way to learn about disciplinary writing practices.

My analysis further points to the need to explore how genres are clustered together in graduate education (see also Devitt, 2004), rather than merely considering them in isolation. For example, Lola’s fieldbook, which included field notes, diary entries, interview questions, and researcher reflections, allowed her to learn how such research genres may work hand in hand. Although this confirmed her prior impression that she did not wish to pursue ethnographic research beyond this course, it was nonetheless a valuable learning opportunity which ultimately increased her grasp of qualitative data collection. In the same vein, grant writing assignments might serve a dual purpose as classroom tasks that allow students to learn about the role of writing in research funding (see also Tardy, 2003) but could also initiate chains of genres that may extend outside the pedagogical realm. Several of the instructors that participated in this study further provided clear rationale for sequencing particular writing tasks *within* the context of their courses, as they hoped one task could naturally give way to the next. However, while scholars have mapped various genre chains used in academia, showing their intertextual relations (e.g., Hyon, 2008; Swales, 2004), these kinds of classroom-based genre sets or chains, as well as the complex relations between pedagogical and research genres, still warrant further research.

Practical Recommendations for Teachers and Educators

Writing in graduate school is not just a means of communication, it is also an opportunity for students to develop their sense of self as aspiring scholars or professionals, in what I have characterized as a process of “disciplinary becoming” (Curry, 2016; Dressen-Hammouda, 2008). Ideally, then, students should have ample opportunities to write, including in the early stages of their doctoral training, as this allows them to formulate their academic identities in negotiation with instructors and peers. Apart from learning to produce the genre repertoires of (multiple) academic communities (Devitt, 2004; Swales, 2004), students also need to learn how to position themselves within—or in relation to—those communities. In addition to term papers or other more substantive assignments which resemble published research writing, following a “learning-to-write” model, low-stakes writing tasks should therefore be incorporated into graduate courses as well, in line with a “writing-to-learn” approach (Manchón, 2011; see also Kruse, 2006). Such low-stakes writing could include recurring tasks, such as discussion posts or reflections and reading responses, as well as scaffolds that are designed to prepare students for more “serious” writing, such as outlines, annotated bibliographies, and research proposals. Digital genres like online discussions and multimodal presentations allow students to position themselves as knowledge contributors within the classroom context before they start producing original research. A strategic use of tasks can thus help students transition from “knowledge-telling” to “knowledge-transforming” roles (Geisler, 1994; Tardy, 2005) by combining aspects of both.

While all graduate instructors should consider how they can use low-stakes writing tasks purposefully to stimulate student learning, regardless of their disciplinary focus, this seems especially the case for teachers in interdisciplinary programs, where students are likely confronted with diverging writing practices and conflicting expectations regarding their

disciplinary identity. As this study showed, low-stakes writing tasks can help students expand their understanding of research traditions with which they are less familiar and consider how they want to present themselves in relation to those, so as to convey a “coherent discursal self” (Casanave, 2002; Ivanič, 1998). In particular, journal club presentations appear to be a helpful multimodal genre through which students can practice explaining an area of inquiry and making research findings accessible to non-experts, thus scaffolding their disciplinary participation in the form of student seminars and colloquia. In addition, students might benefit from grant writing tasks to learn how to position themselves as experts and researchers in interdisciplinary knowledge domains. Indeed, Yasmin’s and Jacinta’s experiences suggest that writing grants gives students a chance to begin formulating identities as researchers who are capable of conducting innovative interdisciplinary research projects. Given that research funding is highly competitive, such opportunities might enable students to be more successful in their grant applications and subsequent research activities. Program administrators and instructors should therefore implement these kinds of tasks strategically, keeping in mind that the research paper is only one among many possible genres. Rather than following a one-size-fits-all approach, it is important to consider students’ individual disciplinary and educational backgrounds as well as their different learning needs. Occasionally, it might be best to provide students with various assignments options to choose from, giving them increased agency in their learning process.

In addition, instructors of both content and writing courses should consider how they might use other kinds of classroom tasks that encourage students to reflect on their evolving genre knowledge, which also involves knowledge regarding the role of epistemological factors in disciplinary writing practices (Kuteeva & Negretti, 2016; Tardy, 2005). As this study showed, students in interdisciplinary fields are typically expected to become “epistemically fluent” in

multiple knowledge-making practices (Trowler, Saunders, & Bamber, 2012, p. 257), including ones with which they are less familiar. For example, Yasmin's writing in her ecomusicology course proved challenging despite her expertise in Qiang cultural heritage, as she was new to the epistemological values and beliefs of this disciplinary context. While Yasmin was ultimately able to clarify these aspects by meeting with her instructor, she might have benefited from more explicit discussion of them during the course. To address this need, teachers can use metacognitive scaffolds, or activities that encourage reflection on how students might approach their writing. Negretti and McGrath (2018) provide two examples of such activities: one in which students consider how their work contributes to a research community, and one that requires them to visually conceptualize how various genres relate to one another. These metacognitive scaffolds could be combined with other principles of genre-based pedagogy (Hyland, 2007), as students analyze similarities and differences between writing in different knowledge domains and consider how they might draw on and adapt their previous knowledge in new writing situations (Tardy et al., 2020; see also Sommer-Farias, 2020). This way students can develop increasing awareness of the processes of recontextualization in which they engage when they adapt their writing across languages, genres, and disciplinary or classroom settings.

Teachers could provide further support by inviting students to consider how they wish to present themselves as writers, and how the identities they seek to build as novice scholars, researchers, or professionals might be read or evaluated by different disciplinary communities (see also Morton & Storch, 2019). It is worth recalling here that the "mock panel review," in which Jacinta's grant proposal was assessed by professors from various scientific disciplines, clearly commented on aspects of her interdisciplinary positioning and preparedness, thereby encouraging her to reflect on these aspects. Interestingly, when looking back on the study,

several of the participants also told me that their writing process logs and conversations with me had made them more aware of their sense of self as well as how they would be perceived by instructors and classmates or other (future) readers of their work; some further noted that as a result, they felt enabled to make more informed decisions with regard to their authorial presence. To encourage this kind of reflection, graduate-level writing courses should also incorporate activities in which students give and receive feedback on each other's writing focusing specifically on aspects of authorial identity. Such activities would ideally follow reader-oriented understandings of voice which assume a "relational dimension" (Ivanič, 2005; see also Matsuda, 2015; Tardy, 2012), while highlighting the complexity of voice. This way, students are given the chance to consider how "readers' impressions [of voice] are influenced by their own personal histories, values, expectations and the context in which the reading takes place" (Morton & Storch, 2019, p. 17). Again, this approach could be effective in any graduate program, but it might prove useful especially in interdisciplinary programs where students need to orient to readers with different disciplinary backgrounds and interests.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While the students who participated in this study should not be seen as "representative" in the positivistic sense of the word, their stories nonetheless document a range of experiences with graduate-level coursework, thereby showing various illustrative "pathways" (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 175) or "routes" across disciplines. Other students may encounter similar challenges or opportunities in their writing, despite their individual differences and the sheer variety of task genres used in graduate education (Cooper & Bikowski, 2007; see also Gardner & Nesi, 2013). In this way, then, this dissertation makes an important contribution to academic

socialization research through its in-depth analyses of how students used low-stakes writing to negotiate their interests and present themselves as novice (interdisciplinary) researchers.

Like all research, however, the study was limited in several respects, and it is worth considering how it could be complemented in future endeavors. To begin with, as I mentioned in Chapter 3, the study did not involve sustained engagement in the form of repeated class observations which could have provided a more detailed description of the courses completed by the students and the many different functions of writing within those courses. For this reason, the study is best characterized as ethnographically or “emically” oriented, rather than ethnographic in a traditional sense (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999a, p. 49; see also Tardy, 2019). As a consequence, the findings merely provide a partial picture of graduate-level writing practices, focusing on the students’ own experiences and perspectives as much as possible. Not all course instructors took part in the study, and those who did were interviewed only once or twice. In future research, recurring class observations and additional interviews with professors and program administrators could provide a more comprehensive account of writing in graduate courses as these would better capture the views of different stakeholders.

Another limitation of this study pertains to its focus on (peer) discourse socialization within the context of the classroom. On the one hand, classroom writing experiences provide crucial opportunities for identity negotiation in interaction with instructors and classmates, and for this reason it seems sensible to consider how student writers present themselves to fellow class members. On the other hand, it is important to recognize that classrooms are not homogenous, stable communities, as others have previously observed (Prior, 1991, 2003), and that academic socialization also takes place through “micro-level interactions” (Anderson, 2017, p. 2) outside the classroom. Jacinta’s experiences serve as a clear example of this, as she often

requested feedback on her writing from her thesis advisor, who directed the lab where she worked, as well as from senior students, postdocs, or others at her lab. Already during the coursework stage, then, students' learning may be mediated by various forms of (peer) mentoring, including those involving advisors (see also Belcher, 1994; Casanave & Li, 2008; Paré, Starke-Meyerring, & McAlpine, 2009) but also other individuals. For this reason, Zappa-Hollman and Duff (2015) proposed the notion of individual network of practice (INoP), drawing social practice theories like community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998): "INoP places the learner at the center of the socialization process while simultaneously taking account of the other individuals (and communities) with whom the learner interacts and engages in linguistic and discursive practice" (p. 334). The role of such social networks—which may extend across disciplinary contexts—should also be taken into consideration in future studies to gain a better understanding of interdisciplinary socialization processes.

Finally, while this research documented how the students' academic identities evolved over a period of two semesters, "weaving together" a range of data sources (Lillis, 2008, p. 356), it would be worthwhile to analyze students' experiences over a longer period of time, up to several years. This would make it possible to consider how classroom-based writing informs subsequent writing and research activities in the form of exams, theses or dissertations, and publications or conference presentations. The case study participants frequently commented on their future goals, as well as how they believed their written coursework might help them prepare for those goals. For example, Jeramy and Jacinta took advantage of literature review assignments to expand their knowledge about particular topics, identify knowledge gaps, and formulate their research ideas with an eye towards their qualifying exams and dissertation projects as they were envisioning them at the time. Yasmin was only in her first year as a doctoral student, but she

nonetheless used her writing to begin exploring possible dissertation topics as well. Although multi-year case studies can pose logistical challenges for both researchers and participants, they could provide a clearer picture of how low-stakes writing shapes students' disciplinary becoming in the long run, adding a retrospective view.

Looking Ahead

The above observations and pedagogical recommendations are clearly not sufficient to address all of the rapid changes in higher education that I discussed in the introduction chapter. Indeed, some of the more worrying trends rather have to do with the marketization of universities, resulting in lack of funding, elimination of many programs (especially in the humanities), and a dwindling number of stable job opportunities. That said, increased attention to writing support and classroom instruction might nonetheless address some students' concerns and prepare them more adequately for an uncertain future. While students often seem to have a strong sense of their research interests and future goals, they may nonetheless lack insight into what is expected of them as writers and how they might meet those expectations (Golde & Dore, 2001). This research suggests that low-stakes tasks (Leon, 2020) provide an attractive tool that allows students to explore and formulate their subjectivities as scholars or researchers, drawing on their prior genre knowledge. As I mentioned, a purposeful use of tasks can be especially beneficial for students at a time when they are transitioning from "knowledge-telling" to "knowledge-transforming" roles by combining aspects of both (Geisler, 1994; Tardy, 2005). For example, multimodal presentations, literature reviews, and grant writing tasks serve as an opportunity to explore (unfamiliar) knowledge-making practices, identify gaps, and propose ways to respond to those through original research. The suggested emphasis on reflection

activities could further help students document and evaluate their evolving genre knowledge, including both strengths and areas for further development, and demystify writing expectations in specific scholarly communities. Such activities may thus also allow students to consider with what communities (if any) they identify the most, and in what ways they could see themselves contributing to those in their future endeavors.

Lastly, it is worth reiterating that interdisciplinary programs hold promise at a time when the academic job market is in flux, as students graduating from them seem to be better positioned than those with traditional degrees (e.g., Millar, 2013). By facilitating productive exchanges between students and faculty from different disciplinary backgrounds, or what O'Meara and Culpepper (2020) refer to as "collisions," such programs indeed appear to encourage students to become "epistemically fluent" in multiple disciplinary domains (Trowler, Saunders, & Bamber, 2012, p. 257), which could in turn enable them to adapt more quickly to shifting needs. Companies also value graduates who have received interdisciplinary training and are able to participate in cross-disciplinary collaborations, as Jacinta's conversation with her advisor attested, meaning that this might make them more "hirable." At the same time, writing in interdisciplinary settings also poses unique challenges, since students typically encounter competing discourse conventions or expectations and may experience uncertainty regarding their disciplinary identities as they are being "pull[ed] in different directions" (Newswander & Borrego, 2009, p. 551). Given the relative novelty of such programs, then, it would be sensible to conduct additional research on the nature of interdisciplinary learning and writing; doing so could both aid the development of writing support for prospective students and provide better insight into contemporary knowledge-making practices.

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS

1. Screening survey for potential student participantsContact details

First name:

Last name:

Email address:

Program details and current status

- What is your degree program? (e.g., PhD in Genetics)
- In what year are you in your program?
- What is your expected graduation term and year?
- What is your current and/or anticipated major?
- What is your current and/or anticipated minor?

Please select all that apply to you:

- I am completing graduate-level courses that count toward my major during this and/or next semester
- I am completing graduate-level courses that count toward my minor during this and/or next semester
- I am taking graduate level-courses that do not count toward my degree requirements
- I am preparing to take my comprehensive exams (also known as qualifying exams) this or next semester

- I am preparing to write and/or defend my thesis/dissertation proposal this or next semester
- I have already successfully defended my dissertation proposal but I am still taking courses
- What graduate-level courses will you be taking this semester, if any? Please list the course codes and titles.
- What graduate-level courses do you expect to take next semester, if any? Please list the course codes and titles.

How many of the courses you are currently taking include multiple written assignments?

- One
- Two
- Three or more

How many of the courses you plan to take next semester do you think will include multiple written assignments?

- One
- Two
- Three or more

Educational background

- What is the most advanced academic degree you hold? Please include the discipline (e.g., Bachelor of Arts in Musicology)
- At what institution did you complete this degree?
- What do you consider as “your” academic discipline(s), that is, the discipline(s) you are most familiar with, have a special interest in, or expect to work with in the future?
- What were your main reasons for pursuing graduate education at [Southwestern University]?

Language background

- What is/are your first and/or dominant language(s)?
- At what age did you begin learning English, if English is not your first language?
- What other languages do you speak? Please roughly indicate your proficiency level for each language.
- In which country did you complete high school?
- What was the language of instruction at your high school (i.e., the language used to teach subjects other than that language)?

2. Interview questions for student participants

- How did you decide to apply for this interdisciplinary program?
- What are your main research interests?
- What courses are you currently taking?
- What are your reasons for taking these courses? What do you hope to get out of them?
- How do you think they might help you advance your research interests?

- How might they help you prepare for future program requirements (i.e., qualifying or comprehensive exams, dissertation project)?
- How might these courses serve to directly support or inform your disciplinary participation, for example if you plan to attend conferences or publish your work in the near future?
- How would you describe yourself as a student? How do you see yourself as an (academic) writer? What kinds of writing have you done in the past, both during and prior to your studies at [Southwestern University]?
- What aspects of academic writing do you find challenging?
- Have you done any writing yet for your courses this semester?
- What writing assignments are you expected to complete for your courses in the remainder of the semester?
- What do you think your instructor hopes to accomplish with these assignments? What do *you* hope to accomplish with them?
- How do the assignments fit within the course schedule and syllabus, in your understanding?
- Are the assignments related to each other? If so, how?
- How will the assignments be assessed? Will you receive a grade, feedback, or both? What kind of feedback do you expect to receive (e.g., collective/individual, spoken/written)?
- How would you like to present yourself in your assignments (e.g., as a critical thinker, as a hard worker, as an expert on a certain topic)?
- How do you hope to be seen? What factors do you think will influence the way you come across in your writing?

(Questions for subsequent interviews with students were individually generated based on the students' written assignments and their responses to the above questions)

3. Interview questions for teachers

- What writing assignments did you assign in your course this semester?
- What did you want to accomplish with these assignments?
- How did the assignments fit in the course schedule and syllabus?
- Were the assignments related to each other? If so, how?
- What do you think your students accomplished with the assignments? How did they benefit from the assignments?
- How did you assess the assignments? What kinds of feedback did you give the students, if any?
- What was your overall impression of [student participant]'s written work in your course?
- Did you discuss [student participant]'s assignments with them in more detail?
- How would you describe [student participant]'s identity as a writer?
- In what ways did they present themselves as a novice or prospective scholar? How did they come across?
- How would you characterize [student participant]'s disciplinary affinities and/or research interests based on their writing?
- How would you characterize [student participant]'s disciplinary affinities and/or research interests based on their contributions during class, for example in class discussions?

(Additional questions were formulated based on the interviews with the student participants as well as textual analysis of their written assignments)

4. Class observation sheets (field notes)

Date: Time: Location: Course code: Student participant(s):	Observation number:
Overarching research questions:	
Guiding questions for this observation:	
DETAILS (Observations)	COMMENTS (Interpretations and further questions)
BRIEF REFLECTION	
Points of attention for future observations/interviews	

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