Newcomer Learners' Experiences of Literacy in Canadian High Schools:

An Interpretive Inquiry

by

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Abstract

While diverse classrooms are an inevitable reality in educational settings today, our knowledge of literacy learning and development in a new language during the adolescent years is limited (Fitzerald, 2017; Uccelli, 2023; Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2018). As there is a close relationship between linguistic proficiency and school learning (Leki et al., 2008), education for English as an additional language learners (EALs) has focused primarily on their linguistic development rather than focusing on the expansion and strengthening of their cognitive capacity (Cummins, 2014b) as maturing individuals. This study sought to explore the phenomena of literacy learning in a new language in school by examining former EAL high school students' narratives of their literacy learning experiences, specifically content-area writing (social studies), which has not received much attention from researchers until recent years.

Theoretically informed by the underpinnings of Vygotskyan sociocultural theory and Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics, this study adopted a qualitative and interpretive approach to the inquiry. Data was collected from two post-secondary students, who completed a high school program in Canada as ELLs. The data used in the study include pre-interview activity, interview, participants' written artifacts (essay-type writing samples or notes taken during and after their high school years), and email communication. The study was developed spirally, consisting of three phases. The data collected from one participant in the first two phases served as the basis for developing the interview questions included in the third phase of the study.

The study illustrates how two former EAL learners approached and adapted to content-area literacy in their continuum of literacy development in a new language in English-speaking schools. It identifies factors contributing to their development of content-area literacy, focusing

on social studies writing. Their L2 writing development in social studies during their high school years is visually presented through a flowchart, which consists of three phases–learning how to think, learning how to write, and writing skill development. As the study illuminates the distinct phases that the newcomer students underwent in their process of learning to write, it can inform teachers what to expect in the development of content-area writing among newcomer students in diverse classrooms. It can also serve as a starting point for future research that attempts to offer more refined models of writing development for school-aged emergent multilingual learners.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Sung Kyung Ahn. This thesis is comprised of three research projects, which received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board: Project 1) "EDEL 665 qualitative research in education", Pro00000096, August 5, 2011; Project 2) "An English as a second language (ESL) students' experience of learning and an ESL teacher's experience of teaching English", Pro00080245, April 5, 2018; and Project 3) "English as a second language (ESL) speakers' experiences of being learners of writing in social studies classes in high school", Pro00114850, January 13, 2022.

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Chapter One: Opening

Introduction

At the beginning of a fall semester several years ago, around forty professors, sessional instructors, and teaching assistants had a meeting in a large room on campus in Canada. I attended the meeting as a new instructor. All the attendees in the room introduced their roles and plans for the academic year to the group. A professor, who was course coordinator of an undergraduate course, introduced the background of this course. A summary of the background of the course is as follows.

Several years ago, people from the local community approached the Department and proposed an alternative pedagogy that could promote equality and respect within and outside schools. An issue that they were concerned about was the marginalization of immigrant youth in school, which often led to family issues. Immigrant youth who came from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds were not well treated, respected, and supported adequately by their peers and teachers at school. The community members felt that immigrant students' negative experiences at school affect their sense of self-identity, learning, and their lives outside school and at home. Lamenting oppressive educational conditions for immigrant students, the community members sought approaches and possibilities for improving the educational environments for immigrant youth. Although they were not in a position to request in-service teachers to change their attitude toward immigrant students, the University could bring some changes to the problem of the stigmatization of immigrant youth at school by educating preservice teachers to be better prepared for diversity and to create inclusive and safe school environments. Responding to the community members' request, the Department developed a new curriculum, which sought to raise awareness of the social reality and engender cultural and

linguistic sensitivity in preservice teachers in diverse classrooms. This was how the course came to being. And the course has been a required course for all preservice teachers in the Faculty of Education of the University for several years.

When I heard about the background of the course, I found myself unexpectedly emotional and felt a lump in my throat. For a brief moment, I had a flashback of my volunteer experience with local community volunteers and social workers at a non-government organization (NGO) that helped adult immigrants and immigrant youth. Later, I realized that the professor's address refreshed in me numerous anecdotes of immigrant youth at school and home, such as difficulties with their learning, isolation/discrimination at school, and tension between youth and their parents. However, since I was not able to continue my volunteering at the organization after I started my graduate studies, my opportunity to teach this undergraduate course and to teach preservice teachers to be better prepared for diverse classrooms meant so much for me as an immigrant and former English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher. Later, I realized that my new learning and teaching journey changed my interests and the direction of my research. Subsequently, I could develop a PhD research topic on English as an additional language (EAL) learners' literacy learning, focusing on high school students in Canada.

Now, I want to introduce how I weave these threads together for the current study. I begin by identifying my research problem and discuss why my study is important. I describe my experience as a student, English teacher, and undergraduate instructor since my current research was influenced by my prior experience of learning and teaching. I finish the chapter with a brief summary.

Statement of the Problem

With the influence of globalization, diversity has become the norm in educational, social,

economic, and cultural contexts. In English speaking countries such as Canada, the United States

of America, Australia, and the United Kingdom, demographics have changed rapidly in recent

decades. As the composition of the population has changed, the demographics of the student

population in educational systems has become more diverse than ever (Booth Olson et al., 2023;

Grapin et al., 2019; Nichols et al., 2020; Uccelli, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). In Canada, students

who speak English as a second language (ESL) can make up more than 60 percent of the school

population in some schools in metropolitan cities such as Toronto depending on school district

and region (Nichols et al., 2020).

The term ESL is used to refer to speakers of English as a second language, which is

distinguished from other terms such as speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL) or

English as an additional language (EAL). In Canadian contexts, the terms English as a second

language (ESL) and English language learners (ELLs) have been predominantly used to address

educational programs, educational resources, and funding which are designed to support the

teaching of English language learners, such as in ESL programs (e.g., Nichols et al., 2020;

Selimos & Daniel, 2017). However, as attention to issues related to equity, diversity, and

inclusion has increased in recent years, there has been a shift among institutions toward adopting

EAL as a more inclusive term than ESL and ELL, acknowledging students' linguistic knowledge

in other languages (e.g., Alberta Education, 2023). In this study, however, I use the terms ESL,

ELL, and EAL to refer to learners of English in English-speaking schools, whose native

language is not English, instead of exclusively using one term. The key reasons for using these

terms are that the expression ESL was used consistently by the research participants in the

present study, and the three terms were used interchangeably in sources used in the study. I am

acutely aware that the appropriateness of the terms is open to debate (Brooks, 2015; Gagné et al.,

2022; Kibler et al., 2018), but a deeper discussion of the topic is beyond the scope of this study.

ELL students' English proficiency levels vary (Nichols et al., 2020; Rosessingh & Elgie, 2009). Some students arrive with no English whereas some students have sufficient English skills. When ELL students enter public schools, they must learn a new culture, language, discourse, curriculum, and academic norms in order to integrate into a new environment and to succeed academically (Rossiter et al., 2015). Although schools accommodate students' needs for their integration, learning, and well-being (Selimos & Daniel, 2017; Skerrett & Hargreaves, 2008), support for ELL students in schools continues to be largely insufficient (Ahn & Jang, under review; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Ngo, 2007; Nichols et al., 2020; Slimos & Daniel, 2017; Rossiter et al., 2015; the Coalition for Equal Access to Education, 2009), which contributes to ELL students' dropout and isolation or marginalization, and limited trajectories with meaningful learning and transition from high school to postsecondary education (Roessingh & Douglas, 2012). In Canadian contexts, the reasons for inadequate support for EAL students include governments' reduced funding for ELL students over time (Ngo, 2007; Nichols et al., 2020), teachers' lack of knowledge/understanding of ELL students' backgrounds and needs (Cummins, 2014a; Duff, 2005; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011; Rossiter et al., 2015), and standard curriculum (Nichols et al., 2020; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011).

Issues with ELL students' integration into Canadian public schools have been discussed in many studies (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2014b; Roessingh & Elgie, 2009; Selimos & Daniel, 2017). Studies about ELL students' integration and learning have focused on their different learning needs (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2014b; Cummins & Man, 2007); the outcomes of high school completion of ELL students or dropout (completion) rates compared with those of mainstream English speaking students (Government of Alberta, 2009); and high

school ELL students' transition to postsecondary education (Roessingh & Douglas, 2012). Although researchers have pointed out that teachers should pay extra attention to ELL students in order to support their learning (Roessingh & Elgie, 2009), the literature suggests that in reality, many teachers do not have adequate knowledge and preparedness to support newcomer students' learning in school, and these students feel that they need more guidance from teachers (Ahn & Jang, 2022; Cummins, 2014b; Francis & Yan, 2016; Kanu, 2008; Rosessingh, 2006; Rossiter et al., 2015; the Coalition for Equal Access to Education, 2009).

Importantly, as students advance to a higher level in successive school years, the demands for language and literacy skill levels increase. It is widely agreed that written language is the predominant and privileged semiotic tool used in school (Olson, 2008). While the use of writing is common for teaching and learning in secondary school settings (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Gillespie et al., 2014; Ray et al., 2016), writing instruction provided in content-areas is limited outside English language arts classes and ESL classes (Graham, 2019; Graham & Harris, 2013). However, opportunities to access writing instruction and engagements in writing communities and practices are not the same among individuals, changing their knowledge and course of writing development (Booth Olson et al., 2023). Studies have shown that some students, such as ELLs, have limited exposure to writing or writing conventions both in L1 and L2 (Booth Olson et al., 2023; Park, 2018; Valdes, 1999), which makes the mastery of different norms of writing more difficult, particularly with their limited linguistic proficiencies unless teachers' instructional scaffolding is provided (Booth Olson et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2022). Although students learn how to write in English language arts and ESL classes, which focus on students' understanding, control, and use of language, researchers have suggested that how students understand and develop writing in a new language and educational context need to be

further studied (Harklau, 2011; Willcox & Jeffrey, 2018). At the same time, as there is a tendency for teachers to resist taking on a role of literacy teaching in subjects, and students' limited writing skills hinder their academic success in school, recently, an increasing number of researchers have drawn attention to the need for providing adequate writing instruction in lessons to support students' learning in content-areas contributing to different domains of development, such as the development of language and reading skills (Booth Olson et al., 2017; Bruning & Kauffman, 2016; Graham, 2019; Grapin et al., 2019).

Research Questions

This research attempts to contribute to the understanding of ELL students' general learning and their learning of disciplinary writing in a new educational environment. I believe that this study can be a useful resource for promoting literacy across curricula at the secondary level. This research explored former ELL students' experiences of writing in English in high school, considering their different linguistic and cultural backgrounds as part of their challenges while adapting to new learning and life in Canada. More specifically, the study was designed to answer the following questions:

- What was it like for EAL students to learn and practice English in English-speaking contexts in Canada?
- How did the students experience literacy learning in high schools in Canada?
- How did the students experience literacy learning, particularly writing, in social studies classes?

These research questions were developed moving from broad to specific to have a better understanding of the interrelated factors, such as linguistic and sociocultural factors, that affected the participants' engagements in and their development of language and literacy in L2. It should

be noted that this study focused on academically valued non-literary composition-oriented writing, such as expository and explanatory writing, which consists of multiple sentences while the length of the whole text may vary depending on the writing tasks in school.

Studies related to writing illustrate that expository and explanatory writings are more difficult than narrative, recount, and procedural writing for students to produce (Christie & Derewinka, 2008; Hyland, 2007). Researchers of writing believe that expository and explanatory writings are more difficult for writers because: 1) expositions and explanation move away from writers' personal experiences to general events and abstract concepts; 2) they demand advanced thinking skills, such as identifying cause-effect and explaining relations logically; and 3) they require advanced knowledge and advanced use of language in vocabulary and grammar (Christie & Derewinka, 2008; Hyland, 2007). Despite higher degrees of complexity and difficulty, expositions and explanations are emphasized and valued over narrative in some subjects, such as social studies, at the higher secondary level (Booth Olson et al., 2017; Christie & Derewinka, 2008; Graham & Perin, 2007; Hyland, 2007).

The purpose of examining students' writing experiences in social studies is that social studies is one of the subjects that requires students to produce writing to demonstrate their understanding of content knowledge, which is included in high stakes standardized exams in the US and Canada (Klinger et al., 2008; Thompson, 2017). Research on adolescent L2 literacy and L2 writing has consistently reported that many adolescent English learners face considerable challenges in composition-oriented writing in general including social studies writing (Booth Olson et al., 2017; Booth Olson et al., 2023; Fitzgerald, 2017; Leki et al., 2008). Responding to such an issue, some researchers have paid attention to the efficacy of a variety of pedagogical approaches to supporting English learners' writing development in recent years, such as writing

intervention studies on content-area writing and related literacy skills, to promote more inclusive and equitable educational conditions (e.g., Booth Olson et al., 2023; Mont-Sano et al., 2019; VanDerHeide et al., 2023).

However, most of these studies were conducted in American contexts whereas studies focusing specifically on adolescent ELLs' or newcomers' school writing in Canadian contexts are less available. Furthermore, as the field of adolescent writing is relatively new, researchers observe that much more research is needed to identify factors and issues related to adolescent English learners' content-area writing, the characteristics of their writing development as multilinguals, the effects of classroom instruction on their writing development, and their experiences and understanding of school writing (Fitzgerald, 2017; Harris & McKeown, 2022; Willcox & Jeffrey, 2018). In fact, this considerable gap in the literature was one of the motivating factors in my decision to investigate former ELL students' literacy learning experiences in high school, focusing on content-area writing (social studies).

In the following section, I describe my past experiences in educational contexts since I uphold a belief that my prior experience may influence my forestructure of the interpretation of text (Gadamer, 2013) provided by the research participants of the study. At the same time, I assume that my learning experience, as an L2 speaker, has some similarities to my participants' experiences with learning a new language (English) in their home country.

My Lived Experience as a Learner and Teacher

Being a Learner and Teacher in Korea

Teaching and learning are often viewed as cultural and ideological (Bernstein, 2000; Bourdieu, 2012; Davis, 2009; Gee, 2012; Giroux, 1993). I grew up in a country where students learn how to write mostly by reading, which was influenced by educational policy, curriculum,

and teaching practice (Choi & Andon, 2014; Chung & Choi, 2016). When I reflect on literacy learning at the secondary level, there was an implicit assumption that teachers of Korean language arts were responsible for students' literacy development while the focus of literacy education was mainly reading comprehension, not the development of writing skills. Reading comprehension in Korean language arts was judged based on students' academic performances on tests, which consisted of multiple-choice and short answer questions (words or short phrases) that required subject knowledge and analytic thinking skills. However, demonstrating analytic skills was linked to the ability to find the right answers in tests, unlike English language arts and social studies that require students to write essays in some Western countries, such as the US (Thompson, 2017) and Canada (Alberta Education, 2015b).

With regard to writing, producing academic writings in my mother tongue, Korean, was absent throughout my schooling although I learned how a piece of good writing should look, adhering to rules of certain genres. My role as a student was to listen to teachers' lectures and study writing examples in exercise books or writing models presented by teachers even in composition classes in high school. Most of my writing practices in Korean came from my voluntary journal writing, which teachers advised us to do for personal development. I enjoyed the freedom to explore my inner space, savoring Korean. In fact, journal writing was one of the few productive literacy practices I could afford when technology-assisted communicative formats, such as text message and email, had not been introduced yet.

Similar to my experience with academic writing in Korean, I had limited experience with writing in English until graduate school. When I learned English in junior high and high school, the main focus of English classes was reading and listening, not writing or speaking. A new small step toward writing occurred during my university years in Korea, where I had the

privilege to take the highest level of English composition courses as an English literature major and language teaching minor student. Even though the name of the course had the word *composition,* the writing practices in the university courses were limited to a grammar-translation method, not the composition of academic essays. After graduating from the university, I taught English at secondary level institutions, focusing mainly on grammar rules of English and reading comprehension, which excluded all aspects of composition-oriented writing. Admittedly, it was the reproduction of what I apprenticed, with which I felt comfortable. All of my students spoke Korean as their mother tongue, and they did not question or challenge the way I taught. For me, teaching English was like business as usual with little change and challenge.

In short, throughout my learning in Korea, I did not have access to the learning of writing essays either in Korean or English. And as an English teacher, I did not have a responsibility to teach how to write academic essays because writing essays was not part of the curricular requirements in the Korean education system.

Transition from Passive Reading to Active Reading for the Purposes of Writing

Many educators believe that academic and literacy skills in the mother language (L1) are influential for learning in a new language (Carson et al., 1990; Cummins, 2017a). I admit that I, as an adult learner, benefited from my academic skills in L1 to learn to write in L2. But my composition-oriented writing in L1 came from self-training (e.g., writing a diary regularly), not from classroom instruction and literate activities in school. During the years of schooling, writing beyond a sentence level in school was a literacy skill that could be recognized only through occasional writing events administered in school, such as writing a letter to parents on Parents Day and writing competition day, which were non-curricular literate activities. In other words, I grew up in a society where little emphasis was placed on writing skills throughout the

school years except for the occasional non-curricular writing events.

For L2 writing, I learned how to write academic essays or academic argument-like essays in English for an English proficiency test (namely, IELTS) just before I started my graduate studies at an English-speaking university in Canada. When I learned how to write in English as part of my preparation for the English proficiency test, I had little experience in making academic arguments, even in speaking. As I already had over a decade of practice in communicative English for daily life in Canada and had previously developed reading competency in English, learning to write just for the test-taking purpose meant complying with writing standards expected in the written tasks of the English test (e.g., writing a five-paragraph argumentative essay without using sources). Just as Olson (2008) clearly stated that writing practice is necessary if an individual wants to enhance one's capacity to write, what I needed most was actual writing practice. Subsequently, I exerted my effort in practicing writing, using the styles recommended in the writing models included in test-preparation books as resources. Although the reward of my repeated writing practices (over 100 essays during a five-month-period) was meeting the writing proficiency set by the university where I applied, I was cynical about such writing experiences since I felt that I was just a performer of language before and during the test rather than being engaged in writing with excitement or motivation to construct meaningful text.

Later, when my graduate student life began, I realized that writing skills required in academic settings were much more complex and difficult, yet engaging and motivating, than writing for an English proficiency test. One of the motivating factors of writing in graduate courses in my current university in Canada was that the content of writing pertaining to the topic was prioritized, providing space for me to grow as a learner, inquirer, and writer. Importantly, as

researchers have emphasized a positive relation between reading and writing (Graham, 2019; Shanahan, 2016), I came to an understanding that extensive and active reading was critical for me not only to participate in the dynamic community of advanced learning, but also to expand my capacity to communicate effectively through writing within the disciplines where I studied (Educational Policy Studies and Secondary Education). Notably, it was the very beginning of active reading for the purposes of communication through writing, departing from passive reading, which was the predominant form of reading practice in my school learning and for English exams.

However, in the early years of my graduate studies, I had an assumption that my peers whose native language was English would have known more about how to write a variety of written assignments (e.g., literature review, article comparison, and research-oriented term paper). Contrary to my assumption, I found out that my peers were not any different from me in terms of being unfamiliar with various types of writing required in graduate courses. They, too, were learning how to solve different types of writing problems while working on writing assignments in academic courses. Indeed, every writing assignment in each graduate course allowed me to be socialized into a wide variety of academic literacies, which involved different purposes and standards of writing as well as varied expectations and beliefs of writing upheld by my professors. Because of my lived experiences of writing that constantly changed in accordance to the contexts and purposes of writing, just like what many researchers have argued (Lea & Street, 2015; Moje, 2008, 2015; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012), I came to view what it means to write and that learning to write might vary among and within individuals including school-aged learners.

Observations on School Literacy

While I was reading and writing in English for my graduate studies, I saw my children, who spent most of their early childhood in Canada, write for their own schoolwork. I also heard anecdotes of Canadian-born high school students and how they did not learn how to write in social studies classes. Based on my observation of and dialogues with them, it was clear that they struggled and were confused about how to write, feeling embarrassed about their limited writing abilities. I sometimes asked them how they learned in class and what was difficult for them. One of my children confessed that source analysis in social studies classes was challenging because she had to write not only a decent length, but also finish writing within a time limit, for an assessed piece of writing. Since I never wrote essays or did source analysis throughout my schooling in Korea, my observations of my children and other students' anecdotes about learning to write led me to rethink the status and value of writing in different educational systems and its impact on student life.

Teaching Experiences with Preservice Teachers

For adult learners, unlearning prior knowledge is complex and not easy (Bilash & Shi, 2011; Wilson & Soblo, 2019) because it requires relearning values and beliefs from a different perspective. Some might resist relearning or new learning (Conley, 2014; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). Related to this, I, as a graduate student, had first-hand experience of prospective teachers' attitudes toward unfamiliar educational values and approaches when I taught a mandatory course for preservice teachers at my university. The name of the course was Language, Literacy and Society in Educational Contexts (LLSEC), which was designed to prepare preservice teachers to teach effectively in diverse classrooms in secondary school settings. The course encouraged preservice teachers to support all students' learning in diverse

classrooms, incorporating the principles of culturally responsive/relevant teaching (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mitton & Murray-Orr, 2021) into diverse classrooms in order to support culturally and linguistically diverse students' learning and academic literacy.

My role in the course involved introducing educational terms and concepts as well as facilitating seminar discussions to support their engaged learning beyond their reception of new information. Although students were aware that diversity is an inevitable reality in school settings in Canada, there was a tendency that my students of the teacher education course were resistant to incorporate alternative pedagogic approaches, namely culturally responsive teaching, to content-area teaching, and providing strong support for linguistic minority students' literacy development. I assumed that there might have been various reasons for their resistance, such as unfamiliarity, uncertainty, inconvenience, or unwillingness to apply the new concepts concerned with content directly relevant to their teaching. At the same time, I felt that I needed to know my students better since it is known that gathering background information of teacher candidates enables teacher educators to support their learning better (Faez, 2011).

Consequently, I distributed an informal survey questionnaire in order to get to know my students on the first day of the course. I used the completed survey questionnaires as my resources for teaching, from adapting lesson plans to analyzing patterns of students' persistent problems with their coursework. Based on their voluntary reports about themselves, the majority of my students were multilingual, which was different from the preservice teachers in central Canada mentioned by a faculty member who also taught a similar kind of course to LLSEC at a different university (Personal communication with Yi Li, June 19, 2018)[1]. Since many of my

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[1] Yi Li, a teacher educator at a Canadian university, has taught a course that encourages preservice teachers to apply pedagogic approaches in their future teaching in school, reflecting the Diversity Admission Policy set by the Faculty of Education at her University. In my conversation with her in 2018, she noted that while students' backgrounds were variable in each term, the majority of her students (preservice teachers) were monolingual, and that many

students were multilingual, I assumed that they might have a sense of what it might be like to learn in a new language, hoping they would be empathetic with multilingual adolescents' challenges in learning. But my students' attitudes were contrary to my hope. Although the majority of preservice teachers appeared to understand the goal and purpose of the course theoretically, the degrees of their effort and the depths of their application of theory to lesson plans did not go beyond the surface or superficial level.

It appeared that some students reproduced what they learned in different courses without applying the new concepts introduced in LLSEC. I assumed that one factor for this phenomenon might be their unwillingness or lack of effort to delve into new learning. Some students had limited language awareness (Wright & Bolitho, 1993) while being insensitive to their own language use for teaching adolescents, especially for those who learn in a new language. I assumed that it would take time and effort for them to improve their language awareness and to gain a body of knowledge about how to teach ELL students in their subjects. However, instead of being patient, I was disappointed and frustrated when I saw little progress or changes with some students' coursework in each term. I heard and read similar thoughts about preservice teachers from fellow instructors and from relevant studies (e.g., Conley, 2014). My consequent reaction was questioning the effectiveness of the course and my role as a teacher educator. I was wondering about whether preservice teachers would be able to apply the alternative pedagogic approach that LLSEC emphasized to their teaching in the future. I did not have a clear answer for "how to deal effectively with adolescent literacy" (Conley, 2014, p. 88) in the teacher education course. But I kept searching for alternatives that could positively affect my students' sensitivity

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monolingual students were unaware of the challenges that emerging bi-/multilingual children encounter during their development of a new language. However, in a more recent communication with her (June 29, 2023), she indicated that there has been a small increase in the number of bi-/multilingual-speaking teacher candidates since Fall 2017.

to and attitude toward adolescent literacy, especially ELL students' academic literacy. Finally, I began to feel a sense of hope and possibility to bring changes when I offered preservice teachers an opportunity to make a link between theory and practice by observing classes at the secondary level.

By adding a class observation to the course content, my intention was to have students reflect on and analyze their class observations, so that they could appropriately mediate both what they learned from the class observation, and the theories and instructional approaches that they learned from the course. The class observation was invaluable both for my students and me. My students had a practical experience through which they could see how some instructional strategies were used and how they could adapt them to their own teaching. They could also share their reflections on the observation in small groups and as a class, which they used in their coursework later. For their coursework and class discussions, I encouraged them to apply what they learned from the course and the class observation. I also encouraged them to bring their voices as learners or teachers to their coursework. The result was beyond my expectations compared with their cohorts' coursework in the past. I could see more students use the instructional strategies that I emphasized (e.g., enhanced input and a combination of input and output for comprehension) for one of the assignments. Some students brought their voices and past learning experiences to develop their ideas for a writing assignment. Showing these changes was a reward to me, which I want to discuss further because they resonate with the current study.

In her discussion of the 21st century classroom, one student reflected on her learning experience as an immigrant youth and on class observations at a school assigned for her practicum. This student noted that she often saw teachers use cultural references and slang, which might be difficult for ELL students to understand, creating an exclusive environment

rather than an inclusive one (Selimos & Daniels, 2017). The student's criticism of teaching practices was that native-English-speaking teachers do not understand *what it is like to learn in a different language.* Although the criticism about in-service teachers' teaching practices was made by one student teacher, her observation and statement were powerful, affirming the critical need for changing inadequate teaching practices in diverse classrooms.

Bridging My Lived Experiences with Research

Gadamer (2013) posits that memory is not an automatic psychological phenomenon, but a formation and reservation of experienced or incarnated elements, which is a mode of knowing and being (p. 15). I attempt to explicate how my memories of learning and teaching have influenced my thoughts and agency in teaching and research.

I had a recurring thought in my graduate studies and in teaching the undergraduate course in the teacher education program. Since learning in a new language and culture was a turning point that changed my way of thinking and worldview, I had a keen interest in other L2 speakers' learning experiences in English speaking contexts. This in turn led me to conduct a small scale qualitative interpretive study as part of graduate coursework where I focused on the language learning and practice of an international student who spoke English as a second language. This hands-on work allowed me not only to develop practical knowledge about how to design and conduct an interpretive and qualitative study, but also gain an insight into the participant's literacy learning and practice, particularly writing, as an English learner. Notably, the significance of writing discovered in the study was a topic to which I paid little attention either for teaching or research until I met the participant.

Nevertheless, the unexpected discovery of the impact of his new literacy experience in Canada on his student life led me to reflect deeply on a wide variety of issues: my own learning

and teaching of literacy development in English, my observation of school literacy in Canadian contexts, pre-service teachers' attitudes toward culturally responsive pedagogic approaches to support all students' learning, and a student's observation of in-service teachers' inadequate teaching practices in diverse classrooms. The result of these reflections was a growing interest and desire inside me to play an active role in researching literacy learning experiences among culturally and linguistically disadvantaged students, so that educators can be better informed about their unique learning needs in diverse educational contexts. Interestingly, my brief review of the extant literature pertaining to school-aged learners' literacy development in L2 confirmed that research on adolescent literacy, particularly writing, is understudied although it is critical for us to better understand and support their literacy development (e.g., Fitzgerald, 2017; Leki et al., 2008; Monte-Sano et al., 2019).

Accordingly, I was convinced that research on L2 literacy during the adolescent years focusing on content-area writing would be meaningful, contributing to generating a resource that can be used for educators and researchers for their teaching and research respectively. This is how the present study came to be. Having provided the background of the study as well as the research questions, in the following chapters, I will discuss relevant literature, theoretical orientation, research methods, and the findings of the study in detail.

Summary

With the increase of globalization and migration, the population of ELL students in public schools has increased in Canada. Since ELL students have different cultural, linguistic, and social knowledge, their learning in a new environment and language is a challenge for their academic success and growth as a whole person. Schools can create environments for ELL students' effective learning, accommodating their unique needs. To improve the current

educational environment, changes should be made at multiple levels from research to teaching practices. Programs for teacher education and research on adolescents' learning can be a cornerstone for building inclusive and comprehensive education. Recognizing the importance of furthering our knowledge of adolescent literacy, this study is particularly concerned with how linguistically and culturally diverse students experience content-area literacy (social studies) in the Canadian educational systems.

Chapter Two: Literature Review of Language and Literacy for School Learning

Introduction

As this study explores the nature of English learners' literacy learning in educational

contexts in Canada, this chapter provides a review of the literature related to education,

language, and literacy. It should be noted that the goal of the literature review is to look at ELL

students' literacy learning and practice situated in educational contexts, rather than treating it as

an isolated problem focusing only on linguistic aspects. For reviewing the literature, I draw upon

findings of research from various fields since the topics of ELL students' learning and L2 writing

are studied in different fields, such as education, applied linguistics, cultural studies, and literacy

studies. At the same time, I review findings from multiple contexts. However, the majority of the

sources come from English speaking contexts in the U.S. and Canada because the two countries

share similarities with each other in terms of immigration and education. Sources reviewed

include scholarly journals, online documents produced by government or educational

organizations, conference presentations, and academic books.

For the organization of the chapter, I begin with a discussion of the relationship between

education and society to illustrate how the goals and interests of a society affect education and

identify a common aspect of schooling across nations. Then, I examine how educational policy

and practice for linguistic minority students have been determined in Canadian contexts and how

such policy and practice have affected these students' learning in school. Next, I explore the

concepts of literacy proposed by socioculturalists. In the subsequent section, I discuss

understudied issues related to schooled literacy among ELLs, suggesting areas that need to be

further studied to have a better understanding of literacy development in L2. After such

suggestions, I explore the characteristics of second language development and theories of writing

development. Since literacy learning in school is linked with academic literacy, I define academic literacy drawing from various discussions. This leads me to examine how a specific dimension of literacy, writing, is treated in educational documents and classrooms, and what the required writing skills are in high school. Later, I discuss the writing pedagogy that needs to be considered in diverse classrooms, focusing on two instructional strategies—explicit teaching and apprenticeship-oriented disciplinary thinking for subject writing. I then proceed to a discussion about the potential contributions of the study to the research on L2 literacy at the secondary level. Finally, I close the chapter with a summary.

Education and Society

Education systems in nations reflect their interests in and their own benefits of education by controlling the dimensions and effects of learning (Bernstein, 2000; Cook-Gumperz, 2006; Klinger et al., 2008; Sellar, 2015; Wheelahan, 2010). As educational policy and curricula are typically determined by the interest of the dominant groups' culture and interests rather than reflecting all voices (Biesta, 2009; Gee, 2012; Skerrett & Hargraves, 2008; Olson, 2008), in increasingly multicultural western contexts, there have been constant debates about and efforts for more equitable education without marginalizing socially disadvantaged learners, including cultural and linguistic minorities (Booth Olson et al., 2023; Delpit, 2009; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Kibler et al., 2018; Monte-Sano et al., 2021; Park, 2018; Smagorinsky, 2011).

Although historical backgrounds of education in cultures and nations differ, one of the recurring themes discussed in historical analyses of education is that literacy is inherent to schooling, or schooling and literacy are inevitably inseparable (Graff, 1987; Cook-Gumperz, 2006; Klinger, DeLuca, & Miller, 2008; Olson, 2008; Popkewitz, 2011). As society continually changes, however, the values and goals of schooling, too, change, affecting the dimensions of

literacy emphasized in school in order to produce a capable labor force contributing to the

economy (Graff, 1987), to create citizens loyal to the nation-state (Olson, 2008), to promote the

development of one whole community (Cook-Gumperz, 2006; Jeong, 2015; Olson, 2008), or to

promote critical citizens (Lee et al., 2021; New London Group, 1996). To put it differently,

varying circumstances in society have promoted different literate skills under the control of

schooling wherein the views of literacy have evolved. This leads us to ask how

schooling/education serves as a dyad for managing or controlling students' learning. As an

answer to this question, I discuss educational policy and practice that affect students' learning in

schools, concentrating on education for linguistic minority students in the following section.

Educational Policy and Practice for Linguistic Minority Students

While some countries (e.g., the U.S. and South Korea) have national or federal

legislations that affect educational policy and practice (Grapin et al., 2019; Jeong, 2015), in

Canada, there is an absence of a federal level of educational policy since the responsibilities and

authorities of education have been given to the provinces and territories, which began with the

foundation of the nation in 1867 (MacKay & Sutherland, 2012). *Official Languages Act* (1969)

and the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* in the *Constitution Act* (1982) do not entail the

protection of linguistic minorities' learning and access to curriculum in schools (Government of

Canada, 2021). While programs of study are developed at the provincial level, programs for

linguistic minority learners, particularly ELLs, are decided at the school board level, wherein

varying educational policies exist among schools (Burnaby, 2008; Ngo, 2007; Nichols et al.,

2020; Selimos & Daniel, 2017).

However, it appears that a problem with these differing educational policies is not about

the fact that educational policies and programs are inconsistent among schools and across

provinces, but more related to the insufficiency or inadequacy of educational programs and

services for ELL students in schools, which fail to support their development of English and their

adaptation to new learning (Ngo, 2007; Nichols et al., 2020; Selimos & Daniel, 2017). A key

factor of the insufficient services for ELLs identified in Canadian studies appears to be limited

funding allocated for ELL students, which has steadily decreased over time in provinces (Ngo,

2007; Nichols et al., 2020). As such funding directly affects provisions for educating ELL

students, there have been growing discrepancies between ELLs' learning needs and educational

programs specifically designed to support ELLs in Canadian schools (Nichols et al., 2020).

　　　The negative effects of decreasing funding for education and inadequate support for

ELLs' learning can be better understood when examining educational policy and practice in

Alberta, Canada. In Alberta, Alberta Education (2011) offers the Alberta K-12 ESL Proficiency

Benchmarks to support teachers and schools with assessments and instruction plans but there is

no formal policy for special programs, such as ESL classes. The Alberta K-12 ESL Proficiency

Benchmarks divide linguistic proficiency into five levels (Level 1—the lowest, and Level 5—the

highest) in speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Measurements of ESL students' linguistic

proficiency and decisions on student placement in courses are made at the school level.

Typically, ESL students enroll in mainstream classes when they pass Level 4 in the Benchmarks,

but some schools may have a different policy for course enrollment. However, many schools

stop providing ESL support even though linguistic minority students do not reach a proficient

level for school learning (the Coalition for Equal Access to Education, 2009); part of the

shortcomings resulting from such an educational policy and practice is the fact that many ELL

students who are enrolled in mainstream classes feel that they need language support. Such

problems were also evidenced in a recent study (Ahn & Jang, 2022) on ESL high school students

in western Canada. In Ahn and Jang's (2022) study, a grade 12 student, who was enrolled in mainstream courses after taking ESL courses, was struggling with school literacy. Their analysis of the student's English proficiency based on the rubrics of the Alberta K-12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks concluded that her linguistic proficiency in writing was Level 2, which was lower than the sufficiency level (Level 4) recommended for studying in mainstream classes.

The problematic nature of educational policy and practice affecting linguistic minority students addressed above compels us to reconsider the complexity of literacy learning in a new language and the unique needs of ELLs. Considering that literacy is inherent to schooling, it is important to understand what academic literacy means today when discussing ELL students' learning in school. This leads me to turn to a discussion of academic literacy, which I connect with L2 learners in the next section.

School Literacy and L2 Learners

Historically, literacy has been perceived and defined in different ways, and there is no consensus on the concepts of literacy (Olson, 2008). From a traditional functionalist perspective, it was conceptualized as the ability to read and write focusing on written language. This conception of literacy has long been considered essential to literacy, which continues to be emphasized in school settings, spurring literacy research and its implications for literacy instruction (Smagorinsky, 2011). In the last three decades, however, diverse concepts of and approaches to literacy have been developed by researchers, moving away from the traditional functionalist perspective of basic reading and writing toward understanding literacy practices in social settings (Bazerman, 2016; Beach et al., 2016; Gee, 2012; Moje, 2008, 2015) along with other approaches, such as critical literacy (Freire, 1996) and deliberative argumentation for citizenship (Larrain et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021).

One of the different approaches pertinent to the present study is the sociocultural approach to literacy wherein a plural sense of literacy (literacies) is upheld. While varying terms and sub-branches of literacy stemming from a sociocultural perspective exist, for the purpose of the present study, I focus primarily on studies addressing the ideological nature of literacy and literacy practices in school (Gee, 2012) and disciplinary literacy (Moje, 2007, 2008, 2015). The leading ideas in these studies are that literacy comprises multiple dimensions of literate skills, and there are various factors that affect literate practices. I provide a more detailed discussion of sociocultural approaches to literacy below.

Sociocultural Approaches to Literacy

The sociocultural approach to literacy is one of the alternative claims that destabilizes the traditional constructs of literacy (Gee, 2012; Lea & Street, 1998; Moje,1996, 2007; Park, 2018; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Smagorinsky, 2011). Early studies of literacy resting on the sociocultural approach tended to offer theoretical arguments (e.g., Lea & Street, 1998; Moje, 2007, 2008). Over the years, these theoretical arguments have been refined, adding more layers to the previous works (e.g., Gee, 2012; Moje, 2015). Meanwhile, more recent work among literacy researchers has taken a step toward applying the tenets of Vygotskyan sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) to school settings to examine the effects of interventive instructional strategies and curriculum on students' literacy learning (Booth Olson et al., 2017; De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016; Moje, 2007, 2008, 2015; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Rainey et al., 2020; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Zhang et al., 2022). In this section, I begin with a discussion of the theoretical arguments and the driving ideas behind the sociocultural approach to literacy, and later examine how these ideas have been applied to and implemented in educational settings by literacy researchers.

The sociocultural approach to literacy holds that literacy is socially situated, constructed, and constituted; therefore, it cannot be studied apart from literate contexts where social networks/relations are embedded, and from purposes/functions that drive certain literate practices (Gee, 2012; Lea & Street, 1998, 2015; Moje, 2015; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Smagorinsky, 2011). That is to say, in school contexts, students learn to socialize in a unique disciplinary culture in classrooms. Yet, there are different rules and norms expected in literacy tasks within and across disciplines, and among teachers (Kucer, 2014; Lea & Street, 1998; Moje, 2007, 2008, 2015; Rainey et al., 2020). At the same time, schools or teachers are in an authoritative position to determine what is a good or acceptable literate performance, which is viewed as highly institutional and ideological (Gee, 2012; Lea & Street, 2015; Smagorinsky, 2011). Thus, each literate practice in school can be seen as a practice of discourse, which is ideological rather than universal, neutral, or unbiased. At the same time, it is problematic to view literacy as a discrete set of skills and to view literacy practices (e.g., reading and writing) as neutral processes instead of viewing them as cultural practices in specific contexts. This ideological and plural nature of literacy as discourse can be better understood by looking at Gee's conception of Discourse[2] and the construct of disciplinary literacy.

Discourse with a capital D is a term, defined by James P. Gee (2012), that connotes ways of recognizing and acting, and being recognized, in the social world. Coming from a linguistics background, Gee offered his critical understanding of the inseparable relationship between communication styles and patterns practiced in school and those of outside the school. In Gee's argument, there is no one language in society, but there exist multiple vernacular languages or

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[2] It should be noted that Gee's conception of Discourse was originally introduced in his earlier work (in 1990), which has been refined over time. In Gee's (2012, pp. 2-4) clarification, while "discourse" with a small "d" refers to language used for conveying meaning such as in conversations and writing, "Discourse" with a capital D is more than just language, involving multiple attributes as indicated in the main text on this page.

social languages that people use for speaking and acting, which are cultural-specific (schools, organizations, and communities). Important to social languages are that in every language, unique rules and patterns of thinking, being, and behaving are operated. Gee referred to these *different varieties of social languages* as *Discourses.*

In Gee's argument, since there are multiple social languages, multiple Discourses exist in society. The multiplicity of Discourses is operationalized not only in a larger society but also within institutions, such as schools. In schools, multiple Discourses exist in part because students bring their own social languages to the classrooms, and in part because distinct patterns of languages, which are connected with Discourses, are used in school subjects. When looking at students' learning in school subjects, students are socialized into Discourses of the subjects beyond language, leading to their development of multiple literacies. With this, Gee argued that literacy learning and development should not be understood solely as an abstract and cognitive phenomenon in an individual's head, thereby separating it from other aspects of literacy practices in different situations. Instead, it should be understood as multiple abilities, involving ways of thinking and valuing, as well as practicing in certain ways in varying situations. Hence, literacy development can be characterized as the process of cultivating multiple abilities to participate in milieus of events and cultural practices, wherein each literacy practice presents "one of a set of literacies" (Gee, 2012, p. 41), resulting in different effects, from reading and interpreting texts to determining subsequent actions.

Allied with Gee's assertion that literacy involves more than processing language, and that it should be understood in relation to contexts in the social world, in recent decades, a number of researchers have turned their attention to understanding literacy as socially-constructed cultural practice, focusing on the varying nature of literate practices within different disciplines in

schools (Booth Olson et al., 2017; De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016; Moje, 2007, 2008, 2015; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Rainey et al., 2020; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, 2012; Zhang et al., 2022). These scholars' discussions about literacy have revolved around students' subject-matter learning from the upper elementary to the secondary grades. A key argument of these studies is that students, particularly in secondary school settings, learn not only increasingly abstract concepts relevant to the disciplines, but also learn and practice specific ways of knowing, thinking, and how to communicate their learning with others in the specific disciplines in schools. As each discipline inherits its own disciplinary tradition, from solving problems with use of different types of texts (e.g., written texts, graphs, and symbols) to meaning making (or producing texts), the processes of literacy learning and practices in the disciplines are distinct from each other, reflecting the norms and culture of the disciplines (Moje, 2007, 2015).

Importantly, such norms are constructed within the disciplines, expecting others to follow such rules and standards. For instance, in mathematics classrooms, students are socialized into mathematical thinking as well as how to communicate using multiple semiotic systems (Moje, 2007). Meanwhile, in social studies, students learn to interpret texts and make arguments beyond processing texts (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016; De La Paz et al., 2017; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). Addressing these different literate practices in the disciplines, scholars have argued that literacy comprises multiple competences from comprehending and interpreting texts to the development of discipline-specific thinking skills, and to communicating ideas with use of a wide range of texts adhering to the standards of the specific disciplines beyond mere processing and production of written text (Booth Olson et al., 2017; Moje, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, 2012). The recognition of different ways of engaging in and communicating knowledge across the disciplines has spawned research on the effects of specific instructional strategies on

students' development of literacy skills required for learning in the disciplines (Booth Olson et al., 2023; De La Paz et al., 2019; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Monte-Sano et al., 2021). Centered in these studies is providing students with opportunities to be socialized into the targeted communities of practices for school learning. Otherwise, disciplinary ways of knowing, thinking, and doing in school are illusive for students to grapple with.

To summarize, the sociocultural approach to literacy accentuates the plurality of literacy (literacies, a plural form) within and across communities, while also affirming that literacy comprises multiple competencies. But crucial in acquiring such competencies is participation in the community of practice, in which an individual can learn and internalize certain ways of being and doing beyond processing and producing language.

Rethinking Schooled Literacy for Minority Students, L2 Learners

The concepts of literacy viewed from a sociocultural perspective discussed in the previous section have been increasingly accepted by educators and researchers of literacy in English-speaking North American countries (e.g., Beach et al., 2016; Newell et al., 2015; Mote-Sano et al., 2019). Yet, the literature suggests that less attention has been given to what needs to be considered for L2 learners in the mainstream classroom (Dockrell et al., 2016; Graham, 2019). While sociocultural approaches to literacy remind us of the importance of socialization processes for literacy development, it appears that only a handful studies have undertaken a sociocultural perspective to investigate the teaching and learning of literacy in diverse classrooms (e.g., Monte-Sano et al., 2019), leaving a considerable gap in our understanding of ELLs' socialization into their new literacy communities. Such a gap prompts a discussion of the understudied issues related to schooled literacy among ELLs, which I provide below.

First, an issue that has not been discussed in depth in the previous studies, and thus worth

exploring, is that some aspects of literacy prevalent in English speaking contexts can constrain ESL/ELL students' learning in school mainly because of their unfamiliarity. Typically, the processes of developing literate skills in school require distinct ways of thinking such as reasoning, and cultural and linguistic knowledge (Booth Olson et al., 2023; De La Paz et al., 2019; Gee, 2012; Moje, 1996, 2007; 2015; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Wright, 2019). It is known that the elements focused on in literacy education are diverse across nations, wherein the culture of teaching and learning differs (Cumming, 2009; Park, 2018; Polio & Williams, 2009; Reichelt, 2009; Roessingh, 2006). Likewise, patterns of task engagement and students' preferred methods/strategies of organizing ideas differ among students and cultures (Gorry, 2011; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). This means that when ELL/ESL students are relocated to a new learning environment, there can be a gap between their thinking skills and literacy skills previously acquired in L1 settings and the expected literacy skills in L2 settings, requiring an adjustment for students in order to meet new expectations in L2 settings.

Support for this is Steinberg's (2015) assertion that in Asian educational settings, deconstruction of text and raising critical consciousness of society is rare, whereas it is common in English-speaking countries where students are encouraged to analyze and critique texts and events in society, taking a critical position (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016; Franquiz & Salinas, 2011). Moreover, Park's (2018) study conducted in the U.S. documented that although students came from non-western countries such as Guinea and Ghana, where English was an official language, it was a challenge for them to adapt their ways of thinking and values that they grew up with to new ways with respect to interpreting text and presenting their responses to given text in writing.

Second, although some studies that adopted teaching methods grounded in a sociocultural

approach have shown the positive effects of such an approach on multilingual students' literacy learning (Booth Olson et al., 2023; De La Paz et al., 2019), what is neglected in the extant literature is how students with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds perceive predominant pedagogic practice and how it affects their literacy practice in the secondary school settings. Given that literacy is a socially constructed and situated cultural practice (Gee, 2012; Moje, 2007, 2015), we can ask what it might mean for learners with different prior learning experiences to engage in literate practices in content-areas in which different norms of culture, language, and thinking are operationalized. Such a question remains to be answered. Thus, it is noteworthy to explore what it means for students with diverse backgrounds to learn literacy in a new culture and language, and the impact of students' differing educational experiences and expectations on their learning in new educational environments (Kibler, 2011; Park, 2018; Smagorinsky, 2011; Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2015).

A third issue that needs to be considered is quality, condition, and frequency of opportunities for ELL students to be socialized into diverse discourses in L2 (both educational and non-educational discourses), which can lend them socio-cultural and linguistic knowledge that can be used for school literacies (Gee, 2012; Villava, 2006). Given that the acquisition of socio-cultural and linguistic knowledge does not occur in isolation, but through discursive practices in varied situations, it is important to understand how ELL students' engagements in discursive communication practices within and outside the classroom affect their learning of school literacies (Gee, 2012; Hawkins, 2004; Khote & Tian, 2019). Admittedly, there can be a difference between learning through the lens and language of what they are already familiar with, and learning through unfamiliar lenses and a new language. The latter is the case of ELL students' learning in Canada, which puts them at a disadvantage (The Calgary Board of

Education, 2008; Selimos & Daniel, 2017). The effects of limited experiences of or access to

cultural and socio-linguistic knowledge on ELL students' school learning and their literacy

development have been documented in studies on linguistic minority students (Francis & Yan,

2016; Kanu, 2008; Rossiter et al., 2015; The Calgary Board of Education, 2008).

For instance, school learning in social studies at the secondary level requires students to

apply multiliteracies and other knowledge, such as historical and socio-cultural knowledge

embedded in society, which is unlikely to be familiar to ELL students. Aligned with this issue,

the Calgary Board of Education (2008) in Alberta stated that ESL students have disadvantages in

studying social studies because of their lack of "knowledge of Canadian geography, history,

social structure, and government," and their unfamiliarity with subject specific terms, discourses,

structures and academic "ways of thinking" required in social studies (p. 4). Similarly, Francis

and Fan's (2016) study about newcomer youth's experiences of school learning in a Canadian

metropolitan city revealed that when learning in a new educational system, the students did not

know what to focus on or how to study because of their unfamiliarity with the culture of

educational practices. At the same time, some of them were afraid of asking for help since there

was a tendency that they were not welcomed by local mainstream students, meaning that some

mainstream students were unwilling to share necessary information with them. Meanwhile, a

study (Rossiter et al., 2015) conducted in Alberta, Canada, reported that support for newcomer

students' learning in school was limited. In Rossiter and colleagues' study (2015), an adolescent

learner observed that mainstream teachers did not appear to have sufficient knowledge related to

supporting linguistically diverse students' language learning, which was compounded with

teachers' limited available time to help newcomer students' learning.

In addition to the limited support from both peers and teachers within school settings,

students are also expected to complete school related tasks outside the classroom, which allows more time for them to research and make their own decisions and choices to solve the literate tasks assigned in content areas (Park, 2018; Beach et al., 2016). This leads me to suggest another dimension worth exploring: that is, students' histories of socializing into language and literacy beyond their observable behaviors in the classroom, about which we know little. Presumably, the quality of peer interaction beyond the classroom and other varieties of social networks (family, relatives, and members of a community) can affect ESL students' process of L2 literacy development, similar to the findings in studies about culturally and linguistically diverse learners in English-speaking countries (e.g., Enright, 2011; Kibler, 2011; Moje et al., 2004; Moll, 2019; Villava, 2006). In these studies, however, students' histories of language and literacy are absent, remaining as a topic to be researched.

To summarize, in this section, I have discussed additional aspects to be considered for studying literacy learning among linguistic minority students. The literature suggests that there is a need for unraveling ELL students' experiences of literacies and their backgrounds beyond examining their academic performance in school. Related to this, we cannot ignore the fact that their learning occurs in a new language, English, which can have an impact on their educational and literacy trajectories (Booth Olson et al., 2023). Attending to such a relationship, in the following section, I discuss the characteristics of English language learners' language development and its relation to literacy development in L2. In so doing, I discuss the relationship between linguistic proficiency and L2 literacy.

English Language Learners' Language Development and L2 Literacy

Adolescent students who are referred to as ELLs or ESL learners come to Canada with a well-established mother language (L1). However, there is considerable variation in their level of

L1 literacy, English proficiency, opportunities to be socialized into language and literacies in L2, and prior experiences of schooling including teaching and learning styles, which can have an impact on their educational trajectories in L2 (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 2008; Enright, 2011; Park, 2018; Villava, 2006; Wright, 2019; Yi, 2010). A growing body of literature suggests that teachers need to be better prepared to cope with culturally and linguistically diverse learners rather than simply perceiving or even stigmatizing them as being less prepared for cognitively demanding academic tasks (Both Olson et al., 2017; Booth Olson et al., 2023; Fitzerald, 2017; Grapin et al., 2019; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2022). Frequent researchers' discussions about ESL students' school learning are related to the relationship between linguistic proficiency and literacy development in K-12 (Lee, Quinn, & Valdes, 2013; Webster & Hazari, 2009), and misperceptions of ESL students' linguistic proficiency for school learning (Cummins, 2014b; Enright, 2011; Grapin et al., 2019; Haneda, 2014; Kibler et al., 2018). For this reason, in the next section and its sub-section immediately below, I discuss the prevailing constructs of the relationship between language and literacy, pointing out other aspects that need to be considered for a better understanding of the complexity of literacy development in L2.

Constructs of the Relationship between Linguistic Proficiency/Fluency and Literacy

Early studies of second language proficiency were based on fundamental linguistic aspects developed in the first language (L1), which occur at an early age (Hakuta et al., 2000). The traditional understanding of children's language development emphasizes conversational language and oral fluency in natural settings (Hakuta et al., 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). When children enter school, they learn schooled literacy, which requires particular ways of thinking, speaking, and writing (Gee, 2012; Olson, 2008). While they can capitalize on their oral fluency for schoolwork, students are expected to learn and use discourses and concepts taught in content

areas to solve subject-related problems. In order to meet these norms in school, learners must possess sufficient linguistic knowledge (syntax, vocabulary, and certain discourse styles), content knowledge (Booth Olson et al., 2017; Cummins, 2008; Galloway, Stude, & Uccelli, 2015; Krashen & Brown, 2007), and disciplinary thinking skills or cognitive processing (Barber et al., 2018; De La Paz et al., 2017). As new learning in school often involves new language and concepts demanding increasingly more complex and sophisticated skills, lack of linguistic knowledge relevant to content areas can pose challenges with students' learning of subject-matter information in a given discipline, including comprehension and production of text (Fitzerald, 2017; Snow & Uccelli, 2009). This means that although a learner is proficient in oral communication outside the classroom, the learner still can struggle with learning in content areas if the learner's knowledge of academic language used for topics taught in a lesson is limited; this can be applied to both mainstream English-speaking students and English learners, requiring teachers' support (Uccelli, 2023). Then, the question is what the defining features of academic language and literacy are, which I discuss next.

Academic Language and Literacy

Varied definitions and approaches to academic language and literacy have been proposed. One of the most influential constructs relevant to language learners is Jim Cummins's (1979, 1981, 2008) theory of language development (Bunch, 2006; Ngo, 2007; Hakuta, 2011; Roessingh & Elgie, 2009). In Cummins's (1981) theory of linguistic proficiency, there are two types of fluency—*conversational* and *academic fluency*. Here, it should be noted that some researchers use *oral proficiency* as a broad term instead of conversational fluency, and *academic proficiency* to refer to academic fluency (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). Cummins's (1979) key argument is that it is easier to develop conversational fluency because conversations occur in

concrete contexts in daily life. Although the period required for conversational fluency may vary depending on individual variables, when ELL students are immersed in English speaking contexts, it takes about 2 to 3 years for English learners to develop a similar level of conversational proficiency to their peers in general (Cummins, 2008). Similar to Cummins's research finding, a study (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000) conducted in Canada and the U.S. reported that it takes 3 to 5 years for the development of conversational fluency.

On the other hand, *academic fluency* is more difficult and takes longer to develop than conversational fluency. A key reason is that the language used in school is more cognitively demanding. It is because the language used in school is often abstract and decontextualized unlike the language used in everyday conversation. Thus, academic fluency requires a higher level of linguistic proficiency for academic language used in schools, which is widely agreed among L2 literacy researchers (Hakuta, 2011; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Thompson, 2017). The period required for academic fluency ranges between 4 and 7 years (Cummins, 2008; Hakuta, 2011; Collier, 1995; Thomas & Collier, 1997) when learners have prior schooling experience in their first language. However, it may take longer (7 to 10 years) when students do not have prior school learning in their first language or depending on individual variables, such as socio-economic status, motivation (Echevarria & Short, 2010), individual goals (Cumming, 2012), the educational environment, degrees of support from school (Collier, 1995; Monte-Sano et al., 2021), and teachers' treatment of students (Cummins, 2014a).

A converging idea among the studies of the language and literacy issues addressed above is that although language learners can converse in English with their peers outside the classroom for socializing purposes, their academic English may not be sufficient for academic discussion in class or for producing written text (Echevarria & Short, 2010; Hakuta, 2011; Hakuta et al., 2000;

Roessingh & Elgie, 2009). Thus, it is a mistaken assumption that linguistic fluency in conversation might be an indication that ELL students can follow instruction in class (Cummins, 2014b; Hakuta, 2011) because social or survival language is different from academic language (Cummins, 1981). Cummins's (2008) distinction has informed educators and policy makers, emphasizing caution when teaching in diverse classrooms or making educational policies related to language learners. In fact, research has shown evidence of the linguistic reality of this distinction between conversational and academic aspects of language proficiency (Biber, 2007; Corson, 1997).

Despite such evidence, Cummins's theory of linguistic fluency has received a variety of criticisms, including the objection that it is a narrowly defined distinction that privileges school-based language over other language resources that students bring to the classroom, and the argument that it fails to specify specific language skills that require teachers' attention in classroom instruction (Bunch, 2006; Enright, 2011; Haneda, 2014; Hawkins, 2004; Valdes, 2004; Schleppegrell, 2004; Uccelli et al., 2015). Consequently, these criticisms have yielded alternative views of academic language among researchers and what counts as academic language/fluency is still open to debate. But a thorough review of these arguments is beyond the scope of the present study.

In my view, however, both Cummins's theory of linguistic proficiency in relation to school learning and others' expanded views of academic literacy contribute to our understanding of different aspects to consider when teaching or researching linguistic minority students pertaining to language and literacy development for their school learning. Cummins's cognition-oriented theory of linguistic proficiency reminds us of the importance of the role that educators and educational programs can play in providing the support needed for minority students'

academic success (Cummins, 2008). Such a theory is also helpful since we cannot ignore the fact that there exist certain aspects of language embedded in school learning that can be more accessible to language learners when teachers provide additional scaffolding for their socialization into the norms of academic communication, including use of academic language, in the host country (Englert et al., 2006; Galloway et al., 2015; Haneda, 2014; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Monte-Sano et al., 2021; Schleppegrell, 2013). On the other hand, the expanded views of academic literacy encourage us to rethink what language learners bring to the classroom and the potential effects of peer interaction and teacher support on their development of language and literacy, which can be promoted or hindered depending on the quality of interaction (Johnson, 2009).

While both the cognitivist approach to academic language and the expanded views have made contributions to the literature, most of the discussions of academic language and literacy in these studies have focused primarily on linguistic and literacy skills that involve oral communication and reading comprehension, rather than the effects of linguistic proficiency on writing. Although the role of English proficiency in writing often appears in studies of ELLs' writing and L2 writing theory (e.g., Booth Olson et al., 2023; Myhill, 2009; Reynolds & Perrin, 2009), such studies do not explain to what extent ELLs' linguistic proficiencies affect their literacy learning and practice in school over an extended period (e.g., an entire high school program), and what resources they draw upon to overcome or compensate their linguistic weaknesses for their learning in school.

At the same time, we need to consider the possibility that some ELLs' difficulties with their school learning might be due to other factors, rather than their English proficiency, as seen in some studies (Brooks, 2015; Kibler et al., 2018; Park, 2018). Such scholars suggest that ELLs'

difficulties with learning might be more related to inadequate classroom instruction, such as content-driven lessons taught without explicit literacy instruction (Brooks, 2015) or students' different prior learning experiences (Park, 2018). When taking these scholars' claims into consideration, it is problematic to presume that English proficiency is the main factor determining ELLs' development in academic literacy and their success or failure of academic performances, without considering other aspects, such as their learning environment, as addressed above. The point that I want to make here is that we have limited knowledge about how ELL students' linguistic proficiency affects their school learning for a longer period, and about their literacy needs beyond language.

Having discussed the differing perspectives of the relationship between linguistic proficiency and academic literacy, I discuss a specific dimension of literacy, writing, in the subsequent section.

Writing in Educational Contexts

Earlier in this chapter, it was established that literacy should be understood as a cultural practice, which reflects the values and norms of a certain community. Writing is not an exception. Admittedly, writing is a fundamental skill for functioning in today's literate society (Graham, 2019). Nevertheless, the extent to which composition-oriented writing is used and required for school learning varies across countries (Jo, 2020; Reichelt, 2009). That is to say, in some countries, such as China and South Korea, writing is hardly emphasized or taught in schools while content-focused teaching and receptive-skills-focused learning (reading) are predominant in these countries (Jo, 2020; Lee, 2014). On the other hand, in North America, historically a strong emphasis has been placed on writing for schooling, wherein certain ways of thinking and writing are privileged and required (Kucer, 2014; Olson, 2008).

Studies on writing in North America have informed us that the use of writing for content teaching has increased across subjects over time (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Graham, 2019), which suggests the importance of writing in content learning. However, the majority of secondary students, including ELLs, in the U.S. and Canada do not meet the expected standards of writing at their grade level (Booth Olson et al., 2023; Reynolds & Perin, 2009; Thompson, 2017)[3]. Composition-oriented writing required in content areas exacts a toll on students who are unfamiliar with, or who have had limited opportunities to learn how to compose well (Ahn & Jang, 2022; Park, 2018). Despite these facts, a recurring discussion in writing studies is that providing writing instruction outside English language arts (ELA) classrooms is limited at the secondary level, which has been a concern for many scholars (Booth Olson et al., 2017; Enright & Gilliland, 2011; Graham, 2019; Harris & McKewon, 2022). It is this concern that I discuss next.

Issues with the Teaching of Writing to Adolescents

One of the concerns and issues related to adolescents' learning of writing in school is a lack of support for writing in school and teachers' attitude toward the teaching of writing (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Ferretti & Fan, 2016; Graham, 2019; Graham & Harris, 2013; Kiuhara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009). A typical pattern of teaching in school is a decrease of writing instruction outside of ELA after grade three (Graham & Harris, 2013) even though the complexity and components in text increase in later grades (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). Thus, I will illustrate the issues addressed above drawing on studies produced primarily in U.S. contexts, where its sociopolitical and sociocultural environment affecting education often overlap with

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[3] While the statistics of students' performance on a writing assessment across Canada is not available (Reynolds & Perrin, 2009), in the United States, less then 30% of 12th graders scored at or above the expected grade level on the writing test administered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Booth Olson et al., 2023).

Canada.[4]

The literature of writing studies suggests that there are a variety of factors inhibiting sufficient and effective writing instruction in today's schools (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Gillespie et al., 2014; Ray et al., 2016; Graham, 2019). One of the key factors contributing to inadequate writing instruction in the content-areas is time constraint (Gillespie et al., 2014; Ray et al., 2016). According to Graham (2019), since curriculum is already overcrowded, teachers tend to focus on the teaching of content with little attention to instructional practices for writing. As a result, writing instruction tends to be emphasized and provided mainly in the grades in which writing is included in standardized tests (Graham, 2019; Harris & McKeown, 2022). This can be problematic since writing development does not occur linearly and quickly (Bazerman et al., 2017; Schleppegrell, 2013). While developmental trajectories of writing are considerably variable among individuals and within an individual (Bazerman et al., 2017), it is known that it takes much longer for many students to develop certain types of writing skills required for school learning (e.g., expository writing) (Schleppegrell, 2013).

In addition to time constraint, studies reveal that teachers' beliefs and knowledge of writing affect classroom instruction for writing (Graham, 2019; Scott et al., 2018). That is to say, when teachers are better prepared to teach writing with pedagogic knowledge related to writing (e.g., how to teach writing, how to use writing to facilitate learning, and the nature of writing development), they are more likely to spend more time in providing good writing instruction. Conversely, if their preparedness for teaching is inadequate, it is less likely for teachers to allocate writing instruction in their lessons (Graham, 2019), which appears to be the case for many teachers, leading to their resistance or reluctance to teach literacy (Conley, 2014; Conley,

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[4] The literature of writing suggests that large-scale published surveys on the writing practices of teachers in Canada are less available (e.g., Cumming, 2016a; Graham, 2019).

Kerner, & Reynolds, 2005; Fitzerald, 2017; Scott et al., 2018). Scott and colleagues (2018)

observe that teachers' reluctance to teach literacy, including writing, is closely related to the lack

of opportunities for them to learn about literacy teaching through courses offered by teacher

education programs, implying the failure of teacher education programs. Collectively, the studies

addressed above suggest that the lack of writing instruction, teachers' resistance, and non-ELA

teachers' knowledge about literacy teaching are not just problems that should be blamed on

individual teachers, but a shared problem that teacher educators, researchers, and teachers can

address together.

While the classroom practices outlined above help us to understand what hinders non-

ELA teachers' provision of writing instruction at the secondary level, it is important to remember

that what is emphasized in classrooms is likely to reflect the goals and purposes of a curriculum

set out by educational authorities (Abbot, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to examine how

writing, as literacy, is actually treated in official educational documents and what writing skills

are expected in subjects in high school, to which I turn next. In doing so, I analyze and critique

Alberta Education's statements related to writing in the high school curriculum, including

English language arts and social studies.

Required Writing Skills in High School Subjects: English Language Arts and Social Studies

In an official document, *Teaching Quality Standard* (Alberta Education, 2018), the

Government of Alberta suggests principles and guidelines for quality education in the province

of Alberta. In the *Teaching Quality Standard,* Alberta Education (2018) states that teachers

should ensure students' development of literacy skills (p. 5). Since this statement is for all

teachers, statements related to literacy in a Program of Studies should be aligned with the

statement in *Teaching Quality Standard* in order to promote literacy learning across the curriculum. In contrast, although writing is a required skill to meet the standard of high school literacy in both English language arts and social studies, there is a significant difference between the two subjects in terms of categorizing writing and weighting the importance of writing.

In English language arts, writing is included as one of the six strands of language arts that students learn to develop. According to Alberta Education (2015b), English language arts (ELA) aims to develop students' capacities for "an appreciation of literature and an ability to use language effectively," focusing on six language arts—listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing (p. 1). The ELA Program of Studies identifies English language arts teachers as playing a key role in language learning (p. 2). The program of studies explains that, in English language arts, students learn to appreciate, explore, analyze, and interpret a variety of texts while they learn to develop and refine ideas by expressing effectively in writing or other forms of texts. In the high school diploma exam, written tasks are included, such as personal responses to texts, critical/analytical responses to literary texts, visual reflection, literary exploration, and persuasive writing (Alberta Education, 2015b). In sum, the Program of Studies for English language arts makes it clear that writing is one of the key skills on which English language arts teachers focus.

In contrast to English language arts, the Program of Studies for social studies (Alberta Education, 2015a) makes teachers' role in writing unclear. It appears to rely on communication skills learned in language arts for social studies. The Program of Studies clearly states that writing is used in social studies class to convey knowledge and ideas (Alberta Education, 2015a, p. 10). Categorizing writing under communication skills, the Program of Studies indicates that language arts equips students with communication skills, including organizing and clarifying

ideas (p. 10). What is implied in this statement is that students learn communication skills in the language arts, and that students transfer or apply those skills, including writing, to social studies.

Social studies is a mandatory subject that assesses students' learning with written tasks included in the high school diploma exam for social studies (Alberta Education, 2017a, b). The types of written tasks and assessment criteria included in the diploma exam for social studies are a source analysis, an interpretation of sources, and writing an essay (a position paper) to demonstrate learners' content knowledge and personal ideas about a topic (Albert Education, 2017a, b). The assessment criteria that Alberta Education uses are interpretation, analysis, evidence-based argument, smooth flow and transition of writing, appropriate use of academic concepts and terms taught in social studies, and grammar. The required writing skills in the social studies diploma exam overlap with the valued components that writing scholars have suggested for expository writing, such as persuasive essays and the interpretation of primary sources[5] (Christie & Derewinka, 2008; Schleppegrell, 2006).

Given that writing instruction in non-ELA classes is limited (Graham, 2019), it is possible that some students might have to complete a written task and be assessed without receiving adequate writing instruction in social studies. Such cases can be interpreted as assessment without access to proper information for students. Arguably, this kind of educational condition is more unfair for ELL students because many ELL students have limited exposure to writing conventions in English, and because their linguistic proficiency is still developing unlike mainstream students whose English is fully developed (Booth Olson et al., 2023; Fitzerald, 2017; Park, 2018).

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[5] Studies about writing have outlined components expected in expository writing: displaying knowledge, well-structured/organized text, providing detailed examples or evidence related to an intended point, coherence, and appropriate language use (Christie & Derewinka, 2008; Coffin, 2004; Schleppegrell, 2006).

What is worrisome is that many students face considerable challenges in producing these kinds of writing even in L1 (Booth Olson et al., 2017; Booth Olson et al., 2023; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). In fact, educational authorities and researchers have recognized such academic challenges among ELL students at the secondary level in the U.S., particularly in their social studies writing (Monte-Sano et al., 2019). Given that cultural and linguistic diversity in schools is common in the U.S. and Canada, and that writing is crucial in social studies in both countries (Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Olson, 2008), we can assume that ELLs in Canadian schools may encounter similar challenges with their social studies writing.

Moreover, a number of studies have articulated students' difficulties with transferring writing skills across subjects (De La Paz, 2007; Helstad & Lund, 2012; Vue & Hall, 2012) and languages (Bazerman et al., 2017; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Fu, 2009). A key argument among these scholars is that although students learn writing skills in one subject, it is problematic to assume that their writing skills can be automatically transferred into different subjects (Johns, 2008; Kibler, 2011; Slomp, 2012; Smit, 2007; Troia, 2014) since knowledge transfer is uncertain and variable among learners. It has been argued that knowledge transfer depends on the degree of similarity between what was learned in one context and what needs to be applied to new contexts (Slomp, 2012; Smit, 2007), a learner's background and prior learning experiences, and individual cognitive skills to generalize "aspects of knowledge and skills to new situations" (Smit, 2007, p. 121).

For ELL students, knowledge transfer can be more complex and difficult. That is because admittedly, their mind operates in L1 (Cook, 2005; Lantolf, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978) (I will return to this more in detail later) and translating the ideas developed in L1 to L2 is challenging (Bazerman et al., 2017; Fitzerald, 2017; Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2018) when their linguistic

proficiency is limited (Booth Olson et al., 2023). More specifically, for ELL students, the nature

of knowledge transfer necessitates qualifying or selecting their internal resources (long-term

memory and schema) to complete new tasks as well as transferring their ideas developed in L1 to

L2, which is an additional obstacle for communicating in written English when their linguistic

proficiency in L2 is limited (Fitzerald, 2017; Reynolds, 2005; Thompson, 2017; Wilcox &

Jeffrey, 2018). Then, based on the issues discussed above, it can be concluded that the

combination of increased demands to cognitive processing and a limited linguistic reservoir that

can be used for transferring from L1 to L2 make knowledge transfer more difficult for ELL

students when carrying out literate tasks. For these reasons, literacy researchers have argued that

non-ELA subject teachers should teach how to write, instead of assuming that students who have

basic literacy skills can be proficient writers in all subjects (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016;

Shanahan, 2016; Scheleppegrell, 2013).

The question then becomes how best we can teach or support ELL students' learning of

school writing. At the same time, we must understand that secondary writing is not all about the

production of written language, just as it is suggested in the assessment criteria of the high

school social studies diploma exam (Alberta Education, 2017a, b) and in studies of disciplinary

literacy (Moje, 2007, 2015). This leads me to discuss, in the next section, how secondary writing

might be approached and practiced in classrooms by teachers.

Writing Pedagogy Considerations at the Secondary Level

It should be noted that as the present study examined the participants' in-school

experiences with content-area writing, in which their thoughts about their teachers' approach to

writing were expressed, it is important to address pedagogic strategies for secondary writing.

While there exist variations and adaptations of instructional strategies for writing in the

literature[6], I highlight two strands of intervention strategies for writing which have a salient

importance for ELLs and which are pertinent to the present study. The two groups of

instructional strategies include *explicit teaching* that can contribute to textual development, and

apprenticeship-oriented disciplinary writing wherein *disciplinary thinking* and *reasoning* are

emphasized.

Explicit Teaching

Explicit teaching is one of the most frequently addressed instructional approaches

recommended for supporting students' school writing. The essential feature of explicit teaching

is that teachers provide students with explicit information needed for writing in subjects (Englert,

Oklolo, & Mariage, 2008; Newell et al., 2015). Explicit teaching can occur at multiple levels

(e.g., the vocabulary and discourse level, phrasal level, textual level, and

structural/organizational level). However, as space is limited, I address explicit instruction

beyond the vocabulary level, namely, text frames or transitional words and phrases (Hillocks,

2008), and models of writing (Englert et al., 2008; Graham, 2017; Milner et al., 2017). These are

particularly helpful for ELLs since many ELLs are unfamiliar with features of academic writing

(Booth Olson et al., 2023) and may not have experiences in constructing meaning with more

formal written English although they may have proficient reading skills (Ahn & Jang, 2022; Jo,

2021; Park, 2018). Providing such writing resources can help ELL students develop a sense of

rhetorical appropriateness in use and how to communicate in more formal ways in disciplines

(Booth Olson et al., 2023; Gibbons, 2009; Kibler, 2011; Reynolds & Perin, 2009; Troia, 2014). It

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[6]Literacy researchers have introduced and advocated a variety of instructional models and pedagogic tools that can support school-aged learners' literacy, such as differentiated literacy (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2005), self-regulated strategy development, a strategy instructional model (Harris & Graham, 1999; Harris & McKeown, 2023), cognitive apprenticeship models (Booth Olson et al., 2023; De La Paz et al., 2017; Reznitskaya et al., 2001), and explicit teaching (Booth Olson et al., 2017; Reynolds & Perin, 2009), to name a few.

has been argued that providing concrete examples of text is necessary (Bruning & Kauffman, 2016; Gibbons, 2009; Song & Ferretti, 2013; Vue & Hall, 2012) since just a description of how to write might not be good enough for developing writers to grasp subtle linguistic features embedded in written text (Moore & Sheleppegrell, 2014; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Empirical evidence supports that explicit text-structure instruction with text models can yield significant improvement in writing among students who speak English as a native language, and students who speak a native language other than English (Booth Olson et al., 2023; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Reynolds & Perin, 2009).

While providing explicit instruction at the textual, structural, and organizational level involves relatively declarative knowledge (Hyland, 2007), a body of studies shows that procedural knowledge (cognitive skills) can also be taught explicitly, and if not, may remain implicit or less obvious to students (Booth Olson et al., 2017; De La Paz et al., 2017; De La Paz & Sherman, 2013; Monte- Sano et al., 2019). However, the explicit teaching of procedural knowledge, such as abstract thinking skills, typically involves the integration of various processes and facilitative tools into writing instruction (Monte-Sano et al., 2019). Put differently, explicit teaching as addressed above can be part of more sophisticated writing instruction. Improved instruction can also be implemented using a model of instruction wherein the development of disciplinary thinking and reasoning is emphasized, which I discuss in the following section.

The Teaching of How to Reason and Think for the Development of Writing in Disciplines

Recently, in studies of secondary writing and instructional strategies for writing, there has been an increasing recognition of the need for facilitating students' *disciplinary ways of knowing* and *thinking* for their development of writing beyond mastery of a notational system, and beyond

accuracy and knowledge-telling (Bazerman et al., 2017; Booth Olson et al., 2017; Booth Olson et al., 2023; De La Paz et al., 2017; Graham, 2019; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Newell et al., 2015). A growing consensus among these studies is that as there are multiple disciplines in school where subcultures exist, crucial in the learning of disciplinary writing is the acquisition of particular ways of thinking, reasoning, and knowing within the specific disciplines. These studies have revolved around *disciplinary literacy* (De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz et al., 2017; Moje, 2007, 2008, 2015), in which researchers claim that while such ways of thinking and knowing can be acquired implicitly, they can be learned more effectively through explicit teaching. This means that teachers play an important role in promoting students' literacy development in writing.

Studies examining students' subject writing have emphasized facilitating students' socialization into the whole process of disciplinary ways of knowing rather than focusing merely on the mechanical production of writing. This is because disciplinary thinking skills are crucial for content-area writing. For instance, when writing in social studies, students are required to interpret texts and make arguments to support claims in an analysis of the texts or topics given by a teacher (De La Paz et al., 2017; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). Thus, solving a writing problem in social studies entails not only content knowledge and linguistic knowledge, but also how to think and reason in a domain-specific way. But researchers have observed that struggling writers with low-academic performance, including ELLs, are relatively weak in their disciplinary thinking skills in comparison with strong writers with higher-academic performance (Booth Olson et al., 2023; De La Paz et al., 2017; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). Recognizing such learning needs among struggling writers, some researchers have focused on improving these students' disciplinary thinking skills to promote their writing development (De La Paz et al., 2017; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). Subsequent studies have attempted to incorporate comprehensive cognitive

strategies and instruction in lessons, while providing students with multiple learning tools to support their development of reading, thinking, interpretation, and writing skills (Booth Olson et al., 2023; De La Paz et al., 2017; Monte-Sano et al., 2019).

For instance, in a study (Monte-Sano et al., 2019) that aimed to improve linguistically and socio-culturally disadvantaged students at the secondary level in the U.S., the writing pedagogy adopted to support their social studies writing involved *explicit instruction* of the targeted literacy practice (e.g., reading, historical thinking, and argument writing), and providing opportunities for students to be engaged in meaningful oral discussions to explore the content or topics taught in class. In this study (Monte-Sano et al., 2019), the explicit strategy instruction was centered around the explicit modeling of disciplinary literacy practices, namely, modeling how experienced readers make sense of texts with use of think aloud and modeling how writers construct arguments in written language beyond providing students with mentor texts. While explicit modeling was intended to make expected disciplinary thinking and writing more explicit to students, frequent opportunities for students to talk about the substantive topics could allow students to develop and practice their ideas pertaining to their learning, which could serve as preparation for their writing later. The results of students' writing performances during a one-year-period showed statistically significant gains in students' ability to write an argument and in their disciplinary thinking. Interestingly, such gains were more significant among students whose literacy skills were below or on-grade level in a pre-test assessment, particularly ELLs.

In another study (De La Paz et al., 2017), similar pedagogic processes found in Monte-Sano et al. (2019) were applied to social studies in diverse secondary schools in the U.S. The findings of the study revealed that in post-assessments, intervention groups outperformed control groups both in the quality of historical writing and overall holistic quality of writing (essay

length, clarity, persuasiveness, and structure). Thus, both studies support the idea that the

learning of subject writing must concur with the learning of disciplinary thinking and reasoning.

In sum, the writing pedagogy adopted in the studies addressed above stresses the

importance of providing opportunities for students to be socialized into disciplinary ways of

thinking, knowing, and communicating, rather than focusing only on writing. The two exemplary

studies (Monte-Sano et al. (2019) and De La Paz et al. (2017)) remind us that access to school-

based written text and writing opportunities alone may not necessarily lead to students'

development of disciplinary writing, particularly struggling ELL writers. These studies also

underscore the need for explicit teaching and modeling to promote students' development of

disciplinary writing. As it is known that ELLs have limited opportunities to be engaged in

cultural-specific ways of knowing and communicating within and outside of school (Kibler et al.,

2018), the intervention strategies for writing demonstrated in Monte-Sano et al. (2019) and De

La Paz et al. (2017) encourage us to consider such pedagogic practices when teaching in diverse

classrooms.

Seeking to Fill Gaps in the Research on Secondary Writing in L2

Although not exhaustive, the various ideas, theories, and the findings derived from

empirical research outlined in this chapter allow us to have a sense of how linguistically diverse

students' literacy development at the secondary level have been understood and studied in the

fields of literacy education and secondary writing. I have attempted to offer my critique of the

topics discussed in the chapter where applicable, pointing out limitations found in previous

studies. However, it would be better to make explicit how the present study can contribute to

advancing our knowledge about multilinguals' literacy development in L2 and their learning

needs during the adolescent years. Thus, I describe the importance of the study, addressing gaps

in the literature.

Firstly, since this study investigated the phenomena of L2 literacy learning and practice at the secondary level, it can add new information about adolescents' literacy development in L2, which has been understudied (Harris & McKeown, 2022; Leki et al., 2008; Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2018). The value of such information can be appreciated more when considering educators' and researchers' claim that our knowledge of the nature of L2 literacy is insufficient, particularly during the adolescent years, suggesting the need for more scholarly attention to adolescent ELLs' school literacy (Cumming & Geva, 2012; Graham, 2019; Harris & McKeown, 2022; Leki et al., 2008; Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2018).

Secondly, as discussed earlier in this chapter, we need research reporting in detail how ELL students' English proficiency affects their school learning and literacy practice over an extended period by investigating the focal students' in-school experiences since there can be other factors affecting their literacy learning rather than their linguistic proficiency (Brooks, 2015; Kibler et al., 2018; Park, 2018). Given that they bring with them accumulated linguistic and cultural resources as well as prior learning, their histories of language and literacy learning need to be taken into account if we want to have a proper understanding of their literacy trajectories in relation to their linguistic development. This study can illustrate to what extent ELLs' linguistic proficiencies affect their literacy learning over an extended period since it examined the participants' accounts of language and literacy practice during their entire high school program, identifying both their weaknesses and strengths in their L2 literacy development in new educational environments in the host country. Considering that there are only a handful of studies that offer students' insights into literacy learning, particularly secondary writing (e.g., Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2015, 2018), the present study can make an important contribution to the

study of secondary writing in L2.

Thirdly, related to L2 writing, this study can demonstrate how multilinguals' subject writing develops, examining the relationship between classroom instruction and the participants' writing development. Given that classroom instruction affects students' literacy learning and their educational trajectories (Booth Olson et al., 2020; Brooks, 2015; Kibler et al., 2018; Monte-Sanao et al., 2019), it is important to understand how certain pedagogic practices are applied to subject lessons and how these are perceived by students, thereby affecting their learning and practice of subject writing. Although some studies have investigated the effects of certain writing instructional strategies on ELLs' disciplinary writing (Monte-Sano et al., 2019; De La Paz et al., 2017), few studies have examined how ELL students' perception of their teachers' approach to or attitude toward literacy teaching in subjects affects their development of disciplinary writing. There might be a gap between researchers and educators' understanding of students' behavior and students' understanding of school literacy (Smagorinsky, 2011; Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2018). To this end, the present study brings forth the students' insights and voices pertaining to the learning of subject writing in high school, which can contribute to renewing our current understanding of L2 literacy.

Summary

There is a wide agreement that education is ideological and serves the goals and needs of society, and that multiple perspectives on education exist. Although it is inevitable that educational policy changes as history and society change, the importance of literacy has remained unchanged since the introduction of modern education. Students learn to write and write to learn across subjects, building on their knowledge obtained in other classes, which imply that all subject teachers can contribute to ELL students' academic literacy development and

learning. Moreover, since knowledge transfer across subjects is difficult for many students, scholars suggest that providing classroom instruction for writing in subjects is necessary. However, not all educational authorities recognize the need for teaching writing in subjects, all the while teachers' knowledge and support of ELL students' learning in content classes are limited. In addition, research on adolescent ELL students' writing at the secondary level is less than sufficient (Leki et al., 2008; Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2018), which implies the need for further research about L2 learners' school literacy and writing. On the other hand, a positive sign is that scholars have proposed more sophisticated instructional strategies to promote struggling learners' disciplinary literacy. Informed by the literature, the present study was intended to contribute information about a lesser-known area–linguistic minority students' literacy learning at the secondary level.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Several years ago, intellectual property rights emerged as a topic of class discussion in a graduate course I took. There was little doubt that most of us in the classroom agreed on the idea that authors deserve to be acknowledged/respected as original thinkers of specific ideas or their work, considering the laborious nature of intellectual work, their investment of time in reading relevant sources, developing new ideas, and finally crafting their own written text. As the discussion continued with similar ideas, one classmate, who came from a non-Euro-American culture, expressed his thoughts with a humble voice: "I have ideas and say things, but none of them are purely mine. I have to say I learned much of what I know and how I think from others. I don't think it's just me who thinks this way in my culture. I owe people around me my knowledge, but I don't know how to cite or give credit to them even though the things I say or do are not mine." Certainly, this classmate's gratitude to others for his own knowing and knowledge brought new air to the classroom, while, at the same time, changed the flow of the seminar discussion[7]. His voice was gentle and humble, yet his message was powerful, provoking us to rethink the extent of others' influence on our knowing and doing. Although I had not thought about how much others influenced me, I felt a gratitude toward the former classmate's humility about his knowledge and acceptance of others' influence on his way of being and thinking, which offered a new vantage point for me to think about the social and historical nature of thinking and knowing. Here, the point I want to make is not the importance of intellectual property rights, but more about the forgotten or ignored aspects of the internal realm of humans,

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[7] I would like to honor the teaching of the late Dr. Jerry Kachur, who made such a multi-voiced seminar discussion possible, attuning to distinct thoughts and ideas among non-mainstream students, namely, international students who came from non-English-speaking countries.

which is enmeshed with the external and others' influence. This leads me to introduce the intellectual basis foregrounded in the present study since my ideas were not developed in my head alone but influenced and mediated by others' thoughts and prior experience, as the former classmate noted.

For the present study, my theoretical basis for inquiring about the problem is grounded in Vygotskyan sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981a, 1998, 2012a, 2012b) and Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 2007, 2008, 2013). While many researchers in the fields of second language acquisition (SLA), language teaching/learning, and literacy education have adopted sociocultural theory to support their arguments (Gee, 2012; Prior, 2006; Rogoff, 1990, 1994; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Smagorinsky, 2011; Smagorinsky & Mayer, 2014; Storch, 2005; Weissberg, 2008; Wertsch, 1985, 1991; Xi & Lantolf, 2021), fewer researchers have taken up hermeneutics in these fields (e.g., Murphy, 1989; Ochsner, 1979), perhaps due in part to the pursuit of scientific rigor and scientific methods (Davis, 2009) influenced by research practices in natural sciences. Or it can be because of a lack of communication among disciplines (Wertsch, 1985, p. 1) or "compartmentalization" (McVee et al., 2005, p. 534) in inquiring about problems.

However, when I delved into the works of both Vygotsky and Gadamer, I came to believe that drawing on some of the key ideas from both scholars would be beneficial for inquiring into my research problem, opening up a new conversation among literacy researchers, particularly researchers who focus on literacy education in diverse classrooms or multilingual students' literacy learning and practice. This belief was reassured by the literature that suggests that crossing disciplines or boundaries can foster more fruitful ways to address difficult problems (e.g., Ellis, 1998a; Gonzaleza et al., 1995). Given that Vygotsky's and Gadamer's theories stemmed from different lines of knowledge tradition (sociocultural theory from cognitive

psychology/science and hermeneutics from Western philosophy), incorporating the two theories into the present study projects certain challenges such as with the use of terms and with discourses in describing the characteristics of learning and behavioral changes, to which strong proponents of either theory may object or raise a question. Despite such challenges, I attempt to bring Vygotsky and Gadamer together in an effort to advance our understanding of multilingual learners' literacy. This kind of approach can be more convincing when considering Gadamer's (2007, 2008, 2013) assertion that a dialogue or conversation contributes to enhancing one's understanding of others or the text of others.

Likewise, the integration of the theories can be understood as my attempt to bring them into a dialogue with each other to offer a more fruitful discussion about the problem investigated in the study. That is to say, I believe that drawing on some of the key ideas of the two theories can lend support to a more comprehensive understanding of language and literacy development in L2. Earlier studies in the literature of second language acquisition (1970s-1990s) suggest that my theoretical take up can fill a gap between what we know and what we need to know in studying L2 literacy based on a number of researchers' acknowledgements of the relevance between the two theories (e.g., Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Lantolf, Dicamilla, & Ahmed, 1997; Murphy, 1989; Oschner, 1979).

Although explicit discussions of the benefits resulting from the integration of the two theories are less available in recent studies, I observe that discourses used in today's scholarship in education and applied linguistics resonate some of the central ideas of Vygotsky and Gadamer; that is, learners' past experiences in varying contexts affect their way of thinking and literacy practice in the present, which is one of the leading ideas in the works of Vygotsky and Gadamer. Although a thorough analysis of the two theories is beyond the scope of the present

study, some examples of the intersecting ideas of these theories can be found in the following

discourses: *prior knowledge/funds of knowledge* (Moje et al., 2004; Moll, 2019),

translanguaging (Canagajajah, 2015), and *culturally responsive/relevant teaching* (Byrd, 2016;

Ladson-Billings, 1995).

In the present study, there are a number of benefits of integrating some of the key ideas

from Vygotsky and Gadamer. One advantage of incorporating the two theories into this study is

that it allows me to take a holistic approach to the research problem, *literacy learning in a new*

language, since I can analyze how learners' historically accumulated knowledge and experiences

affect their new learning and literacy development in the present. Another benefit of adopting

these theories is that it helps me in reinforcing the idea that we, as humans, perceive and interpret

what occurs around us subjectively and differently, rather than objectively and uniformly,

because of our differing experiences in time and place. I hold that the effects of one's historically

stored knowledge on one's understanding of the surroundings can be applied to not only

students, but also teachers, researchers, and readers of my text, which will be discussed further in

this chapter and the subsequent chapter.

For the organization of this chapter, I begin with a brief discussion about Vygotsky's and

Gadamer's reactions to scientific approaches to studying human nature in their times. After this,

I explore the premises of Vygotskyan sociocultural theory and Gadamerian philosophical

hermeneutics that are pertinent to the present study. In discussing the work of Vygotsky, I focus

on three themes, which include *social origins of mental development, mediation,* and *the Zone of*

Proximal Development. In addressing Gadamer, I concentrate on the central ideas pertaining to

t*he structure of understanding, the nature of language,* and *dialogue.* Finally, the last section of

the chapter offers *an analysis of Vygotskyan and Gadamer-informed research on L2 literacy, addressing shortcomings* and *implications*.

Reactions to the Conventional Scientific Methods

Based on my reading of various studies (e.g., Gadamer, 2008, 2013; Gadamer & Palmer, 2007; Kozulin, 2012a, 2012b; Wertsch, 1985), it appeared that there was a concern and skepticism among scholars about the traditional approaches to knowledge and scientific methods. Consequently, scholars developed alternative philosophies and research methods in Europe and the United States in the 20th century (Cole & Scribner, 1978). Among the alternatives, some scholars, namely Lev S. Vygotsky (1896-1934) and his colleagues, introduced a sociocultural approach grounded in history for studying human development, challenging conventional scientific methods in psychology. In philosophy, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) argued that the application of scientific methods to human sciences is ill-suited, insisting on the need for humanistic approaches, namely modern hermeneutics, to the human world instead of scientific methods.

In the following sections, I detail the backgrounds and premises of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, identifying how the underpinnings of the two theories help us enrich our understanding of L2 literacy, highlighting aspects that educators and literacy researchers should consider.

On Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Rationale of the Use of the Term, Sociocultural Theory

While many scholars use the term sociocultural theory when adopting Vygotskyan frameworks (Lantolf & Thorne, 2014; Stetsenko & Vianna, 2009; Weissberg, 2008; Wertsch, 1991), *cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT)* (Engeström, 2001) is also used as an equivalent

term for sociocultural theory (Lantolf et al., 2015). However, the two terms are not universally used. Some scholars, such as Cole (1996) and Ratner (2002), suggest that *cultural psychology* or *cultural-historical psychology* be used when referring to Vygotsky's theory (Lantolf, 2006). Lantolf et al. (2015) noted that most studies on language teaching and learning use the term *sociocultural theory* when Vygotskyan frameworks are adopted (pp. 222-223). For this reason, in the current study, I use the term *sociocultural theory* consistently. In what follows, I explicate underlying philosophies that Vygotsky drew upon for developing his theories first and the premises of sociocultural theory next.

Intellectual Orientations of Vygotskyan Sociocultural Theory

It is known that Lev S. Vygotsky (1894-1934) was the first modern scholar who proposed a sociocultural approach to developmental psychology, which was revolutionary in his time (Cole & Scribner, 1978; Kozulin, 2012a). Concerned with a methodologically holistic approach to developmental psychology and a psychological analysis that could explain higher psychological processes of humans (Vygotsky, 1978, 2012a), Vygotsky departed from behavioristic reductionist, traditional individualist, mentalist (Cartesian mind-body dualism), and Piagetian schema (patterns of action) (Cole & Scribner, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). The premises of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory were influenced by Marx, Engels, Wundt, Hegel, Spinoza, and others. Among the theories and previous intellectuals, Marxian theory that is grounded in *dialectical and historical materialism* was one of the most influential philosophies for the work of Vygotsky. According to Wertsch (1985), the thoughts that Vygotsky borrowed from Marxism included Marx's methods of genetic analysis and holistic units of analysis; Marx's idea that human consciousness originates in social contexts; and Engels's idea that humans use material and symbolic tools/signs as a mediational means for their activities.

However, while Vygotsky drew upon only some aspects of Marxian philosophy, a key difference between Marxian and Vygotskyan theories is that Marx focused on historical changes and contradictions in society, looking at the influence of material life on human behavior, whereas Vygotsky focused on how society and social relations produce changes in the mechanism of individual intellectual/cognitive development (Cole & Scribner, 1978; Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2014). Thus, Vygotsky's major contribution can be the fact that he incorporated the Marxian theory of dialectical and historical materialism into his hypothesis and logical explanation of the development of the higher psychological processes in human development, distinguishing from elementary mental functioning. As he expanded his theory of psychological development to language, thought, and education, in which social relations are profound, the educational implications that Vygotsky offered based on his theory are invaluable for educators today.

One of the Vygotsky's ideas that inspired the current study was *tracing developmental processes* for studying human behaviours. Vygotsky's (1978) argument about *studying human cognitive or behavioral development historically* involves an analysis of one's history or process of a certain development beyond examining the final product of the targeted development. Cautioned by Vygotsky (1978), studying something historically does not mean studying past events, but more about studying the whole process of a certain development, wherein multiple "phases and changes" naturally occur, functioning as its base (pp. 64-65). In this way, as Vygotsky (1997) rightly put it, it enables us to "understand the whole path" of a certain development and "the meaning of its different stages" (p. 235). Vygotsky's (1997) rationale of tracing one's history of developmental processes is shown in his text below:

A certain state of development and the process itself can only be fully understood when we know the endpoint of the process, the result, the direction it took, and the form into which the given process developed ...we can more easily understand the whole path in its entirety as well as the meaning of its different stages (p. 235).

Vygotsky's urge to study cognitive or behavioral development (in the psychological sense) by tracing one's past changes provoked me to think that this approach would allow me to discover multiple yet less known phases, on the way to the development of L2 literacy. My decision to actualize my thought in research practice, taking up Vygotsky's approach, was confirmed when I found out that few studies have traced the historical development of L2 literacy among language learners in the extant literature, although prevalent approaches have been examining finished products of development or observable behaviour. Thus, it is hoped that this study can contribute to fill this gap in the literature.

In what follows, I discuss three themes of Vygotsky's theories—*social origins of mental development, mediation,* and *the Zone of Proximal Development*. When discussing these themes, for the purpose of the present study, I relate Vygotsky's theories to language and literacy development in L2 when needed, since Vygotsky's scholarship was built on the premise of the cognitive development primarily in L1 and in monolingual contexts.

Social Origins of Mental Development

One of the key themes in a Vygotskyan sociocultural framework is that the foundations of cognition are in the social. It is a belief that while humans possess and develop the intellect superior to animals, the development of human intelligence has its roots in human interactions, which is social and cultural, rather than in-the-head of an individual isolated from others (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981b, 2012a). In his theory of developmental psychology, Vygotsky (1978,

1981b) proposed that human behaviour is not only a result of biological evolution originated from inheritance but also a by-product of the historical and cultural evolution of mental functions. Distinct in human behaviour that separates from other species is that humans form or develop higher types of behaviour or higher mental development, which the internal mechanism of humans makes possible. But humans' higher mental development does not occur in a vacuum or in complete isolation; instead, the source of the development originates from the external and others. For instance, the aid of caregivers can be a source of infants' development for communicative ability. Thus, higher mental development begins at the social level first and proceeds to the individual level later. As Vygotsky (1981b) put it, "all higher mental functions are internalized social relationships" (p. 164), highlighting internalization of the social/cultural/external as one of the most distinct features in qualitatively higher mental development.

Vygotsky's theory of the steps of higher mental development holds that humans are exposed to the external world in which culturally developed materials (signs and tools) are used for social relations; exposure to the social world functions as *a cultural experience*, providing an opportunity for an individual to learn, and then develop a capacity to control and practice cultural means and behavior for social interactions in one's life. Thus, in Vygotsky's view, the cultural experience itself, which occurs at the social level, is one phase of development, serving as a base for new forms of development, which may occur in multiple phases in one's lifespan. From this perspective, he claimed that *interactive experience* is fundamental to human development, concluding that the social is the very origin of *higher* mental development.

Vygotsky (1981b) elucidated the processes of higher forms of mental development with use of two psychological planes—the *interpsychological* plane (the external/social) and the

intrapsychological plane (the internal); that is, higher mental development proceeds from the interpsychological plane (the external/social) to the intraspychological plane (the internal). The core of his argument was that human cognition rises from an elementary level to a higher level, producing qualitative changes within an individual. In Vygotsky (1978), the processes of higher mental development are explained with use of an analysis of cultural language development of a child. As a child interacts with others (e.g., mother and family), the child pays attention to the external (e.g., gestures and language) voluntarily, through which the external materials are directed inward (to the child). The internally perceived external materials are reprocessed and reorganized in the child's internal system. This can lead to the child's imitation or copying externally. When the child repeats imitation, each repetition requires the internal process of reorganization and reconstruction prior to external operation or reversed cultural practice. As reconstruction occurs in *spiral* rather than re-appearance of the same construction, the child's internal system advances to a higher level of development (Vygotsky, 1978) in each reconstruction of the external.

Important here is that reconstruction itself is a revolutionary mental activity that is induced or mediated by the external, thus a mediated mental activity that enables the child to have a better control of internal functioning for external operation. Vygotsky (1978) referred to the "internal reconstruction of an external operation" as *internalization*, which is accompanied by a series of transformation or qualitative shifts in the courses of development (p. 56). Its subsequent result is that the child can develop the capacity to use a wide variety of cultural artifacts, such as language, independently in different contexts by adapting to the self (Vygotsky, 1979). In short, the formation of higher mental development begins at the interpersonal level

through exposure to the external, and interactivity functions as a force or stimulus that induces the individual to undergo revolutionary changes at the intrapersonal level.

If we accept Vygotsky's proposal of higher mental development, its principles can be applied to individuals in different age groups, such as K-12 students and adults. Given that (repeated) exposure to the external makes one's external operation or reversed cultural practice possible, engagement in day-to-day cultural practices in communities and institutions can channel with higher mental development, which encompasses copying and reorganization/reconstruction of cultural tools, symbols, and meanings developed historically. For school-aged children (K-12), advancing their knowledge and use of such cultural tools, schooled literacy promoted by the school in particular, can be evidence of new forms of their development. This is not an exception for students who learn in a new language, namely ESL or EAL students because acquiring language and literacy in L2 falls in the very category of higher mental development Vygotsky argues for. For ESL or EAL students, the social can be even more important for their language and literacy development in L2, when considering that their exposure and opportunities to practice the new language are significantly less than students who learn in L1.

Although it is widely accepted that the social is equally important in language and literacy development in L2, studies of language and literacy development in L2 suggest that exposure to or living within newly adopted cultural spaces does not necessarily hold the promise of higher development expected in those cultures. It is because there are other factors that need to be considered for understanding human behaviour, such as conditions and qualities of social exposure or engagement, socialization/networks/relationships with others, motivation/investment, agency, social style, and interest/preference/desire, which can affect their

phases of higher development (Cumming & Geva, 2012; Duff, 2002, 2005, 2017; Graham, Harris, & Chambers, 2016; Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006; Park, 2018; Reynolds & Perin, 2009; Villava, 2006; Weissberg, 2008). In other words, while the external is the precondition of higher mental development or "growing into a culture" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 34), how it takes place among L2 speakers can be more complex and delicate than L1 speakers. This leads to the next discussion, *mediation*, which is one of the core arguments in Vygotsky's theory of higher mental development.

Mediation

The theme, mediation (mediated mental activity), is in fact a further discussion of humans' higher mental development. The leading theme of Vygotsky's discussion about mediation is that humans constantly use culturally developed signs or tools on the one hand, and use of sign and tool influences people internally on the other hand (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981a, 1981b). Vygotsky's proposal of mediation in cognition was drawn from Marx and Engels' analysis of the dialectic relationship between human and nature, that is, while humans use tools to master nature to meet their needs and wants, their act and processes of appropriating nature, too, change the nature of humans (Vygotsky, 1978).

Echoing Marxian historical and dialectical materialism, Vygotsky (1978) claimed that humans as sociocultural beings appropriate and integrate accumulated cultural artifacts, such as semiotic signs, concepts, numbers, and logic, into their mental activities, adapting to ceaselessly changing social contexts. Because of the penetration of the cultural means, radical changes occur in their intellectual operations, namely their method of thinking, thereby leading to a higher development of the intellect (Vygotsky, 1978,1981b, 1998, 2012a). However, while reflecting

the ideas of Marx and Engels as seen above, Vygotsky was concerned more with analyzing the effects of sign systems, in particular language, on mental development, which I discuss next.

Language and Its Mediating Role

Use of language is a significant part of the developing and maturing processes for humans. Vygotsky's (1978, 1998, 2012b) analysis of the relationship between language and cognition reveals that the roles of language encompass not only a communicative means but also its mediation in mental functioning/thought development from young children to mature adults. Vygotsky's (2012b) assertion that language is integral to thought is notable for a better understanding of the mechanism of constantly changing mental functioning.

Tracing the genetic roots of thought and speech, Vygotsky (2012b) extrapolated how language penetrates and operates human behaviour internally. He asserted that a child's grasp of the "external structure of a word-as-object" proceeds the "inner symbolic structure" (p. 98). His explanation of this argument is in the following: the initial stage of language development is learning new words, which is the most rudimentary level of generalization (grasp) of words (e.g., *word A* represents *object A, word B* is directed to *object B,* etc.). The next stage of development is a higher level of generalization of words, which can occur when the child's cognitive ability or intelligence develops; and after these phases, "true concepts" of words can be developed in the end (Vygotsky, 2012b, pp. 158-159). In other words, language development is not an instant phenomenon but a long process, in which the child undergoes different levels of understanding of words, progressing from a rudimentary perception of a word as an external sign (a word-as-object) to a higher type of perception of a word as a bearer of concept (the true/genuine sense of a word). This means that although there is a qualitative difference in regard to maturity or

understanding of words, it is language that lies at the foundation of human thinking. And by the *inner symbolic structure* noted above, Vygotsky (2012b) meant *concept.*

In Vygotsky (1998), concept is characterized as a "psychological structure in the full and true sense of word," which grows out of a series of thinking and reflection of an object in relation to other objects of reality (pp. 55-56). Because it is not a mere heap of memory stored in the brain but a result of complex acts of thought, concept is a "mediated knowledge" of the object or experience (p. 53) in which words are bearers of meanings and concepts. Concept can be developed organically based on one's everyday experience, which is referred to as *spontaneous* concept; concept can also be developed with the help of others, such as instruction or deliberate explanation, which is referred to as *nonspontaneous* concept (Vygotsky, 2012b, p. 162). However, the two types of concepts are not exclusive from each other in development. Instead, they mutually influence each other, as "parts of a single process" of cultural and historical development (Vygotsky, 2012b, p. 166).

According to Vygotsky (1998, 2012b), when a child or adolescent is introduced to a new concept or when a concept is developed, the content of thinking or thoughts about certain things are reorganized with the help of the concept, on the one hand. On the other hand, a new higher form of cognitive ability, "thinking in concepts," is developed concurrently (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 34). Because of these changes, the child can perceive the world differently, which can lead to a better or enriched understanding of how things are connected in reality and a re-construction of thinking in a new whole. For instance, a child may use a word, fruit, to describe objects on the shelf at a grocery store, instead of listing apple, grapes, and melon. Vygotsky (1998) characterized this transition in cognitive development as a revolutionary change, ascertaining that the threshold of the transition to think *in* and *with* abstract concepts that children cross is the

adolescent period, highlighting the effects of concepts on intellectual development particularly among children who have entered a later childhood phase (the adolescent period).

      The discussions above highlight Vygotsky's theory premised on cognitive development primarily in L1. In this study, I explore how mental development in L2 may take place, which is relevant to ESL/ELL students. In so doing, I reiterate Vygotsky's developmental principle, in which he extrapolated a difference between a spontaneous process and a nonspontaneous process by characterizing the former similar to acquiring a native language (L1), and associating the latter with acquiring a foreign language (L2). To Vygotsky (2012b), acquiring L1 and acquiring L2 are completely different processes by nature. When learning a foreign language, a language learner's internal mechanism is operationalized in the native language. More explicitly, for the case of a language learner, the mediator used in processing meanings and concepts is one's native language (L1), not a foreign language (L2). Vygotsky (2012b) described the cognitive process in L2 in the following way:

> The acquisition of a foreign language differs from the acquisition of the native one precisely because it uses the semantics of the native language as its foundation…one does not return to the immediate world of objects and does not repeat past linguistic developments, but uses instead the native language as a mediator between the world of objects and the new language (pp. 169-171).

His notion of "the native language as a mediator between the world of objects and the new language" meant that language learners translate word meanings developed in L1 as a part of processing the world of objects when they learn and practice L2. In accordance with this, James Lantolf (2011), a leading proponent of Vygotsky's theory in the field of SLA, also noted that the language used in processing thinking among late-language learners is their L1. Then, when

accepting these assertions, we can say that it is natural for L2 learners, such as ESL/ELL students in school, to draw upon meanings and concepts developed in L1 even though new content and concepts are introduced in English in school.

Mediation as an Intervention

In the Vygotskyan (1978, 1981a) framework, the force of mediation in mental development is characterized as a form of intervention. While the process of mental development through mediation/intervention can occur naturally in everyday life as a result of the child's concrete experiences (e.g., language development and concept formation), the mediation can be made artificially to intervene in the natural course of mental development (Vygotsky, 1978, 2012a). Education can be an example of intervention, which was the very concern of Vygotsky (2012a).

Viewing schooling as an artificial cultural product, Vygotsky (1978, 2012a) contended that schools are sites for transforming learners' internal states that can have an impact on children's mental functions. Vygotsky provided extensive discussions about the role of schools and teachers in students' learning and development in school. One of his assertions was that schools teach students technical and scientific concepts, which are abstract and new to the students. For example, children's perception of the world may change from the *quantity* of things to a mathematical sense of quantity because of the influence of school learning of mathematics (Vygotsky, 1978). Another example of intervention in school can be that students learn how to defend their opinions in a logical manner in subject classes (Vygotsky, 1998), such as sciences and social studies, where use of words is inevitable either in spoken or written language.

Both mathematical thinking and thinking for logical arguments are different from students' habit of thinking in everyday life outside of school. For this reason, students'

engagement in school learning demands not only thinking *about* new content but also thinking *in* new forms, "synthetic forms of thinking" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 76), which can be also understood as thinking in nonspontaneous concepts discussed in the previous section. As school learning itself is remote from concrete reality, occurring in an artificial context, students come to learn and develop new concepts mainly through language, which are often abstract rather than concrete. Vygotsky (1998) explained that for dealing with the problem of absence of the concrete, logical thinking is prioritized as a means in school learning, defining logical thinking as a "concept in action" (p. 57). Thus, by being engaged in logical thinking for learning, students come to think not only *with* and but also *in* new concepts, combining their naturally developed thinking skills and concepts based on concrete experiences (spontaneous concepts) in everyday life with the new (technical, scientific, and abstract concepts) (Vygotsky, 2012a). Hence, schools or school instruction play a role in mediating students' thinking, namely abstract thinking or new higher forms of thinking, through which students can recognize and disclose underlying logical relations and connections in reality without relying on concrete objects or experiences. In other words, because of schools' intervention, children can develop abstract thinking skills, which would be otherwise developed much later or more slowly when relying solely on natural development.

Vygotsky's theory of thinking and concept formation discussed above leads me to propose the following ideas in which I relate to ESL/ELL students' learning in school. First, when ESL/ELL students come to a new environment, they bring both spontaneous and nonspontaneous concepts with them to the classroom. Second, when they learn in a new language, English, in school, ESL/ELL students constantly translate word meanings and concepts historically and culturally developed in their L1 to study new content and concepts

although the duration of processing time for translation may vary depending on the complexity of the objects taught. Third, school instruction can mediate their patterns of thinking, promoting their higher mental development. Therefore, the role and power of school that can alter the path of mental functioning of students remains the same for all students including ESL/ELL students.

From here, I turn to the next discussion, the Zone of Proximal Development, in which Vygotsky (1978) claimed that for teaching and learning, what needs to be considered in schools is not only students' actual ability, but also potential ability and development.

The Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development is widely used among researchers and educators since it suggests that what needs to be considered for teaching and learning in school is not only students' actual ability but also potential ability, which can be affected by teachers' mediational role. Although different approaches to development exist, a Vygotskyan approach to development focuses on *changes in process* rather than the finished product/state (Vygotsky, 2012a). Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development asserts that the zone of changes in process can be affected by others' mediation, such as teachers, peers, or adults. That is to say, instead of treating development as "a gradual accumulation of separate changes" (p. 73) or "the accumulation of all possible responses" (p. 81) just like the way the traditional cognitivists viewed, Vygotsky (1978) focused on "reconstructive processes," in which various "external and internal factors, and adaptive processes" are involved (p. 73). Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development reflects his interest in this complex nature of development that involves both internal and external factors.

In theorizing development, Vygotsky (1978) extrapolated the relation between learning and development, and approaches to development. Vygotsky (1978) challenged assumptions that

the learning of a certain knowledge and the acquisition or development of a specific ability or skill should be understood as separate phenomena—the former is external and the latter is internal. He also challenged the idea of an ideal approach in studying mental development by looking at a child's independent intellectual skill level. Vygotsky's argument against the first assumption about learning and development was that during the process of learning, "a variety of internal developmental processes" may occur but the full development of the target skill lags behind, while other kinds of development occur (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). Thus, his point was that other kinds of developmental processes need to be considered for studying mental development, instead of focusing only on the full and complete development of a certain intellectual skill.

Vygotsky's (1978) criticism of the second assumption about development was that it is problematic to focus only on children's independent skills without considering a teacher's or more knowledgeable peers' influence on their mental functions in solving problems. His reason for this criticism was that a teacher can change the course of a child's mental functions by providing varying degrees of assistance when the child is not capable of solving a problem, which requires a higher level of intellectual skill than the child's actual mental ability. For Vygotsky, the teacher's assistance is a tool or an external stimulus, which can mediate the child's mental functions, thereby helping children to solve problems that are initially difficult for their mental ability. Hence, the child's intellectual achievement with someone's assistance should be considered for studying cognitive development.

However, Vygotsky (1978) noted that the child's achievement of a problem-solving task under the teacher's guidance is not an indication of the mental development that presents their capability to solve the same difficulty level of problems independently *all the time* immediately after the incident. Rather, it suggests the *potential* that the child can carry out a similar difficulty

level of activity independently in the future. Referring to the Zone of Proximal Development, Vygotsky (1978) viewed this stage in which the child's mental ability is demonstrated under a teacher's guidance as the beginning of maturation and development. In Vygotsky (1978), the Zone of Proximal Development is defined as "*the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*" (p. 86, *italics* original). Therefore, the Zone of Proximal Development is the potential of what students might be able to do in the future.

Schools function as creating conditions for the Zone of Proximal Development in which students' mental functions begin to mature. For the creation of such conditions for the Zone of Proximal Development, teachers and more experienced individuals, such as peers, can be involved. What is important in the Zone of Proximal Development is that the "lowest threshold" must first be understood to plan the "upper threshold" (Vygotsky, 2012b, p. 200). And good instruction is not just to consider students' past, completed skill levels and strengths, but to consider what they could not yet do "to maximally further the level of the higher functions while they are maturing" (pp. 200-201). In this way, schools can play a role in initiating students' radical development and transformations. With this, Vygotsky (2012b) concluded that the larger the Zone of Proximal Development is, the better a child might be in school (Vygotsky, 2012b).

For the present study, two key aspects of the Zone of Proximal Development are particularly important—viewing development as changes in process and potential development with assistance. First, Vygotsky's (1978) argument that a learner's inner state goes through a variety of changes in learning directs us to rethink the nature of ESL students' literacy development in L2. Influenced by Vygotsky, I was interested in examining closely what other

developments concur prior to the object of development—L2 writing for the case of this study.

Second, Vygotsky's notion of potential development with others' assistance invites us to

consider the effects of others' assistance on ESL/ELL students' literacy development in L2,

tapping onto possibilities of development, as suggested in the Zone of Proximal Development.

Thus far, I have discussed Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and I now turn to the

remaining theoretical basis of the present study, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

On Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics

Concepts of Hermeneutics

The term *hermeneutics* (plural in form) is derived from the Greek word *hermeneutikos,*

which is associated with the Greek messenger, Hermes. Hermes delivered the messages of the

gods to humans by interpreting the languages of the gods and presenting them into the human

language (Gadamer, 2007, p. 44). Today hermeneutics is known as the study of interpretation;

the art of interpretation (Murphy, 1989; Oschner, 1979); "the process of explaining and

clarifying the intent" (Bauman, 1978, as cited in Prasad, 2005/2015, p. 31); "the practice and

theory of interpretation and understanding in human contexts" (Moules et al., 2015, p. 3); the

"discipline of thought that aims at (the) unsaid life of our discourses" (Grodin, 1995, p. x, cited

in Moules et al., 2015, p. 3). Gadamer (2007), one of the most prominent modern philosophers of

hermeneutics, characterized hermeneutics as "a natural human capacity [for understanding]" (p.

248), a "philosophy" that has a practical effect to promote the good (p. 264), and an art [a

techne] that requires a practical ability that can understand and bring something hidden to

expression (p. 45). Taken together, common among the selected definitions of hermeneutics are

interpretation and *understanding.*

Focusing on Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics

Although different traditions of hermeneutics exist, this study focuses on Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) was a German philosopher who defied pervasive scientific traditions and methods that overshadow the role that intuitive intelligence/capacity can play for inquiring about matters in the human world, and in turn, inquired deeply about human understanding and interpretation of texts and events. Working within Heidegger's constructs of language and ontology, Gadamer (2013) offered a clear account of the evolving nature of human understanding, in which he argued that understanding is interpretation governed by one's fore-conception/prejudice (p. 305) or fore-understanding (p. 340). Gadamer's key contributions include his assertion of philosophical hermeneutics as practical philosophy (Caputo, 1987; Davey, 2006; Gadamer & Palmer, 2007;) and his emphasis on the humanistic for inquiries in human sciences in accordance with incessant changes in reality (Davey, 2006; Moules et al., 2015; Gadamer & Palmer, 2007; Smith, 1991). Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics has been influential for scholars, inquirers, and practitioners from theory to practice in disciplines[8] such as nursing (Moules et al., 2015), medicine (Lees et al., 2019), and education (Davey, 2017; Ellis, 1998; Jardine, 2008; Smith, 1991). Pertinent to the current study is Gadamer's claim that fore-understanding affects consciousness, which, I believe, is profound not only in learning, but also teaching and researching. In fact, many studies have shown the effects of fore-understanding shaped by experiences in the past on learning, teaching, and researching, although discourses used to describe such effects differ (e.g., Canagarajah's (2015) argument of transligualism, Gee's (2012) notion of Discourses, and Smagorinsky's

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[8] Moules et al. (2015) highlight the significance and applicability of Gadamer's philosophy human interaction-based fields using the term "practice disciplines," such as education, social work, or nursing (p. 50).

(2011) discussion of the relationship between students' funds of knowledge and their understanding of school text.

Philosophical Influences on Gadamer's Ideas of Hermeneutics

As Davey (2006) characterizes philosophical hermeneutics as an "interpretation of interpretation" (p. 1), Gadamer, as a philologist and philosopher, drew upon and interpreted ideas from the ancient Greeks to 20th century figures, such as Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Kant, and Heidegger. Among the Western philosophers, one of the most influential figures for Gadamer's (2013) works on hermeneutics was Martin Heidegger, a teacher of Gadamer. Gadamer undertook Heidegger's question and analysis of the "existential structure of understanding" (Gadamer, 2007, p. 23) and offered an account that hermeneutical experience affects one's consciousness and understanding, which virtually represents Gadamer's contention of philosophical hermeneutics. However, grounded in Western philosophy and classical text, Gadamer's ideas of hermeneutics excluded non-Western ideas and text (Gadamer & Palmer, 2007) like many Western philosophers. For the purpose of the present study, I engage in three themes of Gadamer's ideas of hermeneutics—the *structure of understanding, language,* and *dialogue.* This leads me to the next discussion, human understanding and consciousness taken up by Gadamer.

The Structure of Understanding

Gadamer's (2007, 2013) philosophical hermeneutics holds that in all understanding, something is already foregrounded. The foregrounded refers to *forestructure*, fore-understanding, or prejudice. The premise of the forestructure of understanding in Gadamer (2013) is that people have their own history of experience; experience is not science, but what is acquired, belonging to humans; and while a person undergoes experiences in a variety of milieus, these experiences remain as a unity or general structure within self, affecting consciousness; every individual has

one's own structure of experience, namely *forestructure*, through which one interprets the external world; and as one's forestructure shaped by differing experiences vary, their interpretation of the perceived external world, too, differs from each other. With this, Gadamer proposed that it is *interpretation* that makes understanding possible, and that "all understanding is interpretation" or vice versa (pp. 318 & 407). In his *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (2013) stated, "no understanding…is free of all prejudices, however much the will of our knowledge must be directed toward escaping their thrall" (p. 506). Gadamer's point was that experience, which is social, cultural, and historical, is a crucial element of the ontological structure of understanding, and that unlike natural sciences, the structure of understanding is humanistic, rather than scientific.

As Gadamer's notion of the forestructure of understanding is concerned with a unity of experience in the mental structure, experience needs to be further discussed here. In Gadamer (2013), experience is characterized as an event or occurrence no one, as a living being, can avoid and control. However, the nature of experience is finite and partial. To explain another way, since a person's experience takes place in specific situations, experiencing the totality of the world is impossible. In Gadamer (2013), the concept of *situation* is compatible with the concept of *horizon*. Horizon denotes a certain "range of vision," which is attainable from only a particular vantage point (p. 313). The range of vision from a vantage is similar to a situation that determines an accessible zone to see and experience something. When experiencing something *in* a situation, one can see and know the significance of something *within* the visible zone or horizon *from* one angle, yet unable to see and know other particularities that can be attainable from other angles. That is why experience in a situation is inevitably partial and limited, no matter how thorough it is.

However, Gadamer (2013) reminded us that although the nature of experience and understanding is undeniably partial and finite, humans have the capacity to *improve* the problem. That is because a person's standpoint is never fixed to one standpoint and one closed horizon (Gadamer, 2013, p. 315). Instead, horizons change since human life itself is in motion where encounters with others and multiple events occur. This means that human experience itself provides opportunities to expand one's horizon, which can lead a person to see and understand the surrounding environment (others) and self from a different angle. With this, Gadamer (2013) proposed that an expansion of horizon or the fusion of horizons can bring *upheavals* and *sudden changes* within self. While the expansion of horizon can occur naturally as part of human life, it can be also created through one's effort by being open to change (Gadamer, 2013). This confirms that as the formation of the forestructure is always in process, human consciousness and understanding, too, is protean. In short, while a person cognizes the external world or text with the help of the forestructure/fore-understanding that was shaped by the hermeneutical experience and encounters with others, the forestructure itself constantly changes in accordance with experience. And at the same time, allowing the unfamiliar (otherness) to enter can create potentials to welcome other horizons while the unfamiliar (otherness) shapes one's culminated experience and self-knowledge anew.

In my view, Gadamer's conception of human understanding and Vygotsky's theory of human consciousness (development) intersect with each other. Gadamer, like Vygotsky, theorized the nature of humans' understanding or consciousness, arguing that experience (encounters of events and others in situations) sets conditions for humans' perception and understanding of the external, which is continually re-shaped and re-cognized as life unfolds. Vygotsky, like Gadamer, established an idea that one's exposure to or experience of the external

(interactivity with others) mediates or shapes one's internal realm, engendering spasmic or revolutionary changes with cognition, leading to higher mental development.

Returning to hermeneutics, I want to discuss how I take up Gadamer's underpinning of human understanding for my inquiry. Because of my encounter with Gadamer's text (Gadamer, 2007, 2013), I came to view that we, humans, are interpreters of text (others) and events, which are processed through our forestructure, as teachers, students, or researchers. Gadamer's notion of the finitude of our experience and understanding made me rethink how much or how little we know about the multi-faceted nature of L2 literacy development among ESL/ELL students. It reinforced my thought that it is important for teachers to consider how ESL/ELL students might perceive and understand what is taught in class and what they bring with them to the classroom.

The Nature of Language

Language is inherited in a community. Humans are born to and grow into these linguistic communities where language sets conditions for experience and perception of the world (Gadamer, 2007, 2013). In his exploration of the nature of language in human experience, Gadamer (2013) argued that although language enables humans to understand consciousness of others and express thought, it has its limitations at the same time, requiring effort and insight for proper use and understanding of it. Indeed, the heart of his argument about language is not in its utilitarian function in communication, but its inseparable relationship with a human mind that demands intelligence/intuition or a humanistic sense for understanding the "substantive content" that is concerned in text (Gadamer, 2013, p. 444).

It was argued that language is a fundamental aspect of experience and understanding (Gadamer, 2013). According to Gadamer (2013), "language is already present in any acquisition of experience, and in it the individual ego comes to belong to a particular linguistic community"

(p. 356). Gadamer's proposition was that as experience accrues in a social environment that is tied to the *linguistic/verbal world* (p. 461), people learn to speak language from members of a certain community. But speaking is not a mere copy/reproduction of a sign system. Instead, it is more of making their own language to which their prior knowledge and experience is brought back and applied. That is to say, when speaking, a speaker uses "pre-established words with general meanings" that exist in one's unity of experience (p. 446) rather than uttering only new words. And speaking is the actualization of the content and meaning that a person has in mind, which is bound to one's preconception or knowledge about the world that exists within self while the content of speaking arises mutually in a specific conversation with a partner.

This brings us to another aspect of the relationship between language and experience/understanding, which is linked with *concept formation*. Gadamer (2013) contended that in the processes of learning and practicing language, people's experience can be enriched. It is because people come to know the human world by engaging in conversations with others in language. Engagements in conversations in various circumstances enable people to widen their knowledge, in turn leading to a natural formation of concept (p. 446). Gadamer (2013) suggested that people develop concepts based on generalizations of their everyday experience including speaking (p. 446). Since occurrences of conversation in language and interactions are natural phenomena of human life, it can be assumed that concepts are constantly formed and reformed, which helps people see the world anew. Then, it can be said that both language and concept are in the process of growth in accordance with experience. From this perspective, Gadamer (2013) argued that in speaking, a "constant process of concept formation is going on" (p. 446), and that concepts are applied in all understanding.

While language contributes to the development of concept, it serves as a medium that offers potential and possibilities in its application and interpretation (Gadamer, 2013). Ironically, its productive role arises from its imperfect status as an invention of humans. In Gadamer's (2013) account, the imperfection of language can be considered as a flaw on the one hand, yet an "advantage" on the other hand (p. 445). That is to say*,* owing to the imperfection of language, people have a great degree of freedom in terms of how to express their thoughts and concepts that exist in mind. Moreover, naturally developed concepts in language sometimes cannot be fully understood when following the "structure of logic," which was proposed by Aristotle (p. 445). In reality, people find or create ways to make themselves understood to others as closely as possible to the content and concepts that penetrate their mind with finite and imperfect words, subsequently producing an infinite number of expressions and concepts. Hence, people become productive and creative in their own way (their own words and linguistic structure) when expressing an "verbally mediated content" (pp. 485-487), which Gadamer (2013) referred to as "a curious advantage" (p. 445). The notion of the infinite number of expressions and concepts with finite words leads us to ask ourselves how language might affect the production and interpretation of text, which I discuss next.

When producing verbally-oriented text, an essential task is bringing out thoughts with the external means of language, either in speaking or writing (Gadamer, 2013). However, it is difficult for the text producer to externalize the thoughts perfectly, mirroring the whole image of the thought onto language since the text producer's knowledge/experience of language is finite, and at the same time, language itself reflects the finiteness of human knowledge and experience, which was discussed above. Although the text producer tries to create a text as close as the thought and meaning intended, the externalization of the thought ends up pointing to a "unitary

meaning" or bearing a resemblance to the inner word/thought, rather than reflecting the copied image of the thought with correct words in an absolute sense (Gadamer, 2013, p. 429). As an effect, what is uttered or written becomes reduced to the "abstraction of pointing," referring to itself in a certain context (p. 431), which can be sometimes expressed in metaphorical words (p. 446) or poetic words (p. 485) that hold a similar sense to the content in mind. Consequently, this can contribute to making the meaning of a text less obvious to readers or listeners unless the interpreter (listener or reader) is fully prepared for or aware of this kind of tradition or style presented in speaking or writing. In other words, although producing text itself presents an activity or actualization of mind, the realization of the meaning of text is not guaranteed. It can depend on the text producer's sensitivity and knowledge about the external mediums (speaking or writing) for making the text intelligible to listeners/readers. It can also depend on the capacity and preparedness of the interpreter of the text in terms of coming to a proper understanding, discovering the meaning buried in letters/symbols, which can be misunderstood otherwise (Gadamer, 2013).

Suggested in Gadamer (2013) is that language is the very process and result of human experience in which concepts are continually formed and reformed. While it provides potential and possibilities of understanding the world, language demands intuition and a humanistic sense in order to make language of a holistic meaning properly addressed. Although there exists the structure of logic proposed by Aristotle, its usefulness is limited, failing to make the meaning of text fully understood. The nature of language articulated by Gadamer holds significance in understanding the problem (multilingual learners' experience) investigated in the present study since it underscores the idea that individuals' understanding of their experience is greatly influenced by their historically accumulated linguistic knowledge and concepts. Moreover, it

emphasizes that their intended meaning may not always be explicitly expressed, requiring an interpreter (reader or listener) to discern the intended meaning. Thus, the conceptualization of language proposed by Gadamer offers an ideal framework for understanding the experiences of the participants in the current study, who are emergent multilinguals.

Dialogue

The previous section focused on the linguistic nature of human experience and understanding/consciousness. This section turns to Gadamer's conviction that dialogue leads to understanding, widening the vision of the world. Gadamer (2007, 2013) underscored the importance of dialogue since true meanings of text are not always obvious or immediate, and at the same time the interpreter's preconceptions can affect the interpretation of text. Taking into account these factors, Gadamer (2013) asserted that it is necessary for people, as interpreters, to read text beyond literal interpretation in order to see possible meanings and even the unsaid. However, arriving at a proper understanding of text is uncertain because of the impediments discussed above. In this case, the interpreter's consciousness needs to be mediated for the understanding of text. Such mediated understanding can arise from dialogues, involving a dialogue between self and the other(s)/text on the one hand, and a dialogue between past and present within self on the other.

Dialogue with the Other/Text

Admittedly, a person's experience of the world differs from others'. Gadamer's notion of different experience suggests possibilities of varying understandings, which can lead to a mis-understanding. In order to avoid the problem of mis-understanding, or to overcome one's finite understanding of the world, people need to extend their horizons. Gadamer (2007, 2013) proposed that dialogue can improve people's finite experience and understanding. As dialogue

requires engagement of both a speaker and a listener, it creates a condition for access to each other's horizon, wherein a new range of vision is attainable. It is believed that dialogue presupposes or creates a "common language" in the two partners, who share concerned ideas (Gadamer, 2013, p. 386). That is to say, dialogue proceeds on a basis of mutual understanding. For instance, while the speaker can provide the context of a text, the listener can follow up on the speaker's expressions, requesting clarifications. Thus, the content of a text is articulated step by step rather than making a mere statement from one's own view. Gadamer (2013) reminded us that in a successful conversation, people can be "bound to one another in a new community" because of the influence of the subject matter (p. 387). In addition, given that the meaning of words is contingent, depending on discourse and context, a dialogue with the speaker is pivotal for the listener's grasp of a text with a "unitary meaning" (Gadamer, 2013, pp. 429-430).

While a dialogue with the presence of the speaker and the listener can be more ideal than the non-presence of the speaker, a person can enter a different form of dialogue, that is, a dialogue with the text, referring to as "the task of hermeneutics" (Gadamer, 2013, p. 376). It alludes to a metaphorical sense of dialogue. Important in a dialogue with text is the interpreter's constant movement within a text, finding the relationship between parts and the whole context of text, while keeping in mind possible meanings to which words point. Gadamer's (2013) advice about the relationship between the part-whole relationship of text was that every word "causes the whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole world-view that underlies it to appear" and "carries with it the unsaid, to which it is related by responding and summoning" (p. 474).

Dialogue with Self

The problem of mis-understanding of text can be also mitigated by having a constant dialogue with self. The dialogue with self involves reflection on one's hermeneutical experience, calling one's interpretation and understanding of text into question. This is because all human understanding is temporal and one's realization of the meaning of an event or text can be regarded as a "changing process of understanding," which others can influence (Gadamer, 2013, p. 381). While reflection on self leads to advancing self-knowledge, questioning one's understanding and interpretation can provoke the self into thinking about whether the meaning of text one arrived at answers to a question embedded in the subject matter of the text. In other words, reflection and questioning in a dialogue between self and the text produce a constant movement between one's current thought about the meaning of a text, which already passed through one's linguistically constituted experience, and the potential space where one's concernful attitude toward the subject matter might bring forth possibilities of meaning. This is the very nature of hermeneutical task, through which a person is constantly transformed, preserving everything that was cultivated within self (Gadamer, 2013, p. 11).

I have discussed how dialogue (with the Other and self) can affect one's understanding and consciousness, as proposed by Gadamer. Assuming that Gadamer's leading ideas are understood by readers, I attempt to expand Gadamer's notions of dialogue and humans' understanding/consciousness by contextualizing them in literacy learning and development, which is the focus of the present study. I propose that literacy learning and practice itself is a form of dialogue—dialogue with the Other (text) and self, regarding it as a creative process, which involves hermeneutic creativity in interpreting and responding to text presented by others or schools. Paralleling Gadamer's emphasis on dialogue to allow the Other (text) and self to

broaden one's zone of understanding, today's schools expect students to develop and broaden

their zone of understanding of text, either written or non-written text. Thus, when expanding

Gadamer's conception of dialogue to educational contexts, we can say that dialogue is prevalent

in students' learning, such as consulting teachers, having dialogue with peers, consulting parents,

family members, community members, analyzing school text, struggling with reading and

writing, and more. But students' affordance of dialogue can depend, more or less, on their

situated realities. Then, it is in question how such dialogue might occur in the processes of

literacy learning and development in L2 among ESL/ELL students.

Vygotsky and Gadamer: Implications for Researching Multilingual Learners

Cumming and Geneva (2012) observe that today's "outcomes-oriented curricula" and

high-stake assessments contribute little to advance our understanding of the complexity of

literacy development among linguistic minorities (pp. 4-5). A nod to this, from a bilingual

researcher and educator's perspective, I want to address that product-oriented inquiries into

literacy development, which is prevalent, can overshadow less visible factors in literacy

development in L2 among ESL/ELL students. In fact, it was this concern that led me to integrate

both Vygotsky's and Gadamer's approaches to examine ESL/ELL students' literacy learning in

adolescent years.

Based on my review of the literature of language and literacy development in L2,

although Vygotskyan sociocultural approaches have gained momentum in the fields of SLA and

language/literacy education in recent decades (Kucer, 2014; Weissberg, 2008), Gadamer-

informed approaches to L2 literacy are still less common. For this reason, my analysis of

research and practice in the fields of SLA, applied linguistics, and literacy education are based

more on sociocultural approaches, whereas I offer a more limited discussion on hermeneutic approaches to topics related to my current inquiry.

The Vygotskyan sociocultural approach to mental development has been an inspiration for many researchers and theorists in the fields of psychology, anthropology, applied linguistics, and education (Lantolf et al., 2015; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Mercer & Howe, 2012; Prior, 2006; Rogoff, 2003; Ruthven et al., 2017; Stetsenko, 2010; Stetsenko & Arievit, 2014; Weissberg, 2008; Wertsch, 1991). Although it has roots in Vygotsky's theories that were developed focusing primarily on children's development with the use of L1, the principles of his theories have permeated L2-related-fields, such as SLA, applied linguistics, language teaching/learning, and literacy education for L2 speakers (ESL/ELL students). Earlier studies that adopted and advocated the Vygotskyan sociocultural theory in SLA and language teaching and learning can include Frawley and Lantolf (1985), Lantolf and Pavlenko (1995), Swain and Lapkin (1995, 1998). Their contributions to researching language learners are remarkable and their works are widely read among researchers of language and literacy development in L2.

Among these socioculturalists, James P. Lantolf has continually reminded readers of the original intents and principles of Vygotsky, bringing to light differences between Vygotsky's terms and similar terms used by other scholars, such as *input* and *scaffolding* (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Xi & Lantolf, 2021). A particularly interesting line of scholarship on L2 originating from Vygotskyan sociocultural theory is Swain and Lapkin's works (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998, 2002). Their works explored the effects of mediation from the perspective of collaborative dialogue on language learners' cognition observed in their externalization (speaking, writing, and solving problems) in laboratory-like settings, highlighting language learner's changes with their language production (output) in the target language. While

Swain and Lapkin's studies presented positive effects of mediated activity among language learners, in her study conducted in a school setting, Patricia Duff (2002) demonstrated how quality of teacher instruction can promote or constrain ESL students' engagement in peer-discussion and school learning in class. Evidenced in the studies discussed above is that the directions of sociocultural approaches undertaken by researchers are diverse, permeating from the underpinnings of sociocultural theory, namely, the social or mediated action.

Nevertheless, given Vygotsky's theories of historical and cultural development of human development outlined in the previous sections, I observe a critical lack of research in the extant literature that documents the historical development of language and literacy in L2. As Smagorinsky (2011) rightly pointed out, if we want to follow Vygotsky's research approach to studying development in a strict sense, it is crucial for us to trace individuals' development *historically,* beyond observing their changes in classrooms or laboratory-like settings. This is not to say that examining how the external factors affect language and literacy learning in L2, demonstrated in Swain and Lapkin (1995) and Duff (2002), is futile for understanding L2 speakers' language and literacy development, but it is more to say that historical development during a longer period, can still remain unexplored or as a gap in the literature. In fact, this gap in the literature posed challenges with my own teaching of an undergraduate course for pre-service teachers. Regretfully, I taught pre-service teachers how to teach in the diverse classrooms without a clear understanding of the historical development of L2 literacy and without relevant sources that documented such development.

For hermeneutical approaches to L2 literacy learning in adolescent years, few sources are available in the extant literature. However, it should be noted that some doctoral studies that adopted hermeneutical approaches to topics related to language education are available in the

literature (Lee, 2011; Ogilvie, 2016; Siyaka, 2022), these studies examined teachers and practitioners in language education, not ESL/ELL students' experiences of literacy learning and development in K-12. It is hoped that the present study can contribute to filling this gap in the literature, with insights gained from my research participants, which I will discuss in detail in later chapters.

Summary

In summation, although Vygotskyan sociocultural theory and Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics were developed in different traditions, a certain degree of similarity can be found between the two theories. That is, both theories foreground the social, cultural, and historical for understanding human nature while also being grounded in theory and practice. The Vygotskyan sociocultural theory posits that human development has its roots in the social rather than an individual's head, underscoring the importance of human interactions in one's development. In educational contexts, both teachers and peers can serve as a stimulant for a learner's process of higher development when quality assistance is provided. Meanwhile, in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, it is argued that each individual has one's own history of experience, and that the individual's consciousness or understanding of the external world is affected by one's prior experience. As one's experience in life, including language, is limited, each individual can improve one's understanding of others through dialogue with the other/text and self. Although sociocultural theory has been commonly adopted for researching L2 speakers' language and literacy development, hermeneutical approaches to L2 literacy are less common.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

In this study, I interviewed two post-secondary students who had been English as an additional language (EAL) learners in secondary school in Canada. The study is an interpretive inquiry emerging from my research interest in learning *what could be helpful to EAL students*. I wished to better understand:

- *How had EAL students learned and practiced English in English-speaking contexts in Canada?*

- *How had the students experienced literacy learning in high schools in Canada?*

- *How had the students experienced literacy learning, particularly writing, in social studies classes?*

The research activities with each participant can be understood as *qualitative case studies with an interpretive emphasis* (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). The initial interview process was adapted from an interpretive inquiry protocol provided by Ellis (Ellis et al., 2013; Tine & Ellis, 2022). With the small number of participants, the research can also be understood as a pilot study that contributes to clarifying important questions and directions for larger scale studies in the future (Yin, 1994).

The methodology and design adopted in this research situate the inquiry within the constructivist paradigm with hermeneutic and narrative commitments (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). In the subsequent sections, I highlight key ideas pertaining to the following topics: the constructivist paradigm; qualitative research; qualitative case studies; qualitative case studies with an interpretive emphasis; pilot studies and exploratory interviews; hermeneutics and interpretation; interviewing; analysis; and presenting stories as research reports.

Paradigms and the Constructivist Paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994) explained that inquiry paradigms guide investigators in defining "what it is they are about, and what falls within and outside the limits of legitimate inquiry" (p. 108). They identified the four inquiry paradigms as positivism, postpositivism, critical theory[9], and constructivism. As shown in Table 1, in the constructivist paradigm, the methodology is hermeneutical and dialectical. Guba and Lincoln reviewed that in the constructivist paradigm, the goal of inquiry is to produce a more informed and sophisticated understanding than was previously held. Accordingly, the nature of analysis and interpretation in this paradigm moves beyond simply summarizing or synthesizing all data. The intent of a researcher is to gain new insights or advance their existing understanding, leading to the transformation and advancement of the researcher's understanding of the problem studied.

Table 1

The Characteristics of the Constructivist Paradigm

Term	Meaning	Underpinnings in the Constructivist Paradigm
Ontology	*The ontological question.* • What is the nature of reality? • What can be known about the reality?	• relativism • realities are intangible mental constructions, which are multiple, local, and context-specific.

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[9] Critical theory consists of three substrands, which include poststructuralism, postmodernism, and a combination of the two (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Epistemology	*The epistemological question.* • What is the relationship between the researcher and the researched? • What can be known?	• subjectivist in which findings are created • transactional/ • co-created findings
Methodology	*The methodological question.* • "How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?" (p. 108)	• hermeneutical and dialectical • inductive

Note. Adapted from *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 108-109), by E. G. Guba and Y. S. Lincoln, 1994, Sage Publications.

As highlighted by Hittleman and Simon (2006), the constructivist approach to research is distinct in multiple ways ranging from deciding a research problem to collecting data, to reporting results, and more, which are illustrated in Table 2. These research practices are prominent aspects in the present study since it is grounded in the principles of the constructivist paradigm. More specifically, the aspects that stood out in the research processes that I was engaged in are as follows.

• Developing a research problem in multiple stages

• Analyzing data requiring constant reflection and interpretation

• Reporting results where the findings and interpretations are interwoven

Table 2

Common Research Practices in the Constructivist Approach to Research

	Constructivist Approach
Selecting a problem	• Develop, change, and refine research questions during the study • Search for *emergent issues* in a situation of interest rather than selecting a problem
Formulating interview questions	• More general and open-ended questions
Selecting participants	• Purposeful selection
Select data collection tools	• S*emi-structured interview*, observations, etc. (e.g., interview questions may change responding to the situation)
Analyze data	• Constant *reflection* and *interpretation* during the study
Report results	• Including participants' narrative descriptions • Findings and interpretations can be interwoven • Addressing the author's subjectivity in carrying out the research

Note. Adapted from *Interpreting Educational Research: An Introduction for Consumers of Research* (4th Ed.) (pp. 8-9), by D. R. Hittleman and A. J. Simon, 2006, Pearson.

Qualitative Research

Merriam (1998, pp. 6 - 7) explained that the primary focus in qualitative research is understanding lived experiences as a whole from the perspective of a participant (insider's perspective or emic perspective). To achieve this, researchers adapt their research designs, being

responsive to research contexts. While there are different types of qualitative research

methodology (e.g., ethnography, phenomenology, and case study), crucial aspects of qualitative

research shared among each type include "*the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the*

researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, an

inductive orientation to analysis, and *findings that are richly descriptive*" (Merriam, 1998, p. 11,

italics original).

Qualitative Case Studies

A qualitative case study refers to an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a

single instance, phenomenon, or single unit" (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). Researchers undertake case

studies because they are interested more in "insight, discovery, and interpretation" than in testing

a hypothesis, or because it is difficult to separate phenomena variables from their context where

the phenomena occur (pp. 28 - 29). The main features of qualitative case studies that Merriam

identified include being *particularistic, descriptive,* and *heuristic*. Research knowledge resulting

from qualitative case studies is different from and more developed than the knowledge learned

from other types of research. A primary reason is that readers' interpretation is involved,

meaning that they interpret by bringing their own experiences or their preexisting understanding

to the case. Table 3 lists a number of the strengths and limitations of case studies.

Table 3

Strengths and Limitations of Case Studies

Strengths of Case Studies	Limitations of Case Studies
• Good way to study "complex social units consisting of multiple variables of	• Require time and money.

potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (p. 41).	• Lengthy findings/product (policy makers/educators may not take the time to read it).
• Real-life situations lead to rich descriptions of a given phenomenon.	• Possibility of the case to be presented in an oversimplified or exaggerated way, which might lead to wrong conclusions/interpretations.
• Insights and meanings that build on previous assumptions/knowledge.	
• Help to fuel future research by describing possible hypotheses.	
• Good for exploring innovations, evaluating programs, and informing policies.	• Investigator qualities (need to have integrity and sensitivity).
• More concrete, less abstract than quantitative studies.	• No guidelines for how to write a report and limited guidelines for analysis.
	• Biases may affect the end product as the author may pick and choose what to present.
• Good for applied fields.	
• Good for "how" and "why" questions.	• Faulted to have lack of rigor – related to the subjectivity of researcher(s).
• Good when you want to know about "process" (monitoring or explaining).	

Note. Adapted from *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (pp. 40-43), by S. B. Merriam, 1998, Jossey-Bass Publishers.

There are noteworthy values that qualitative case studies hold. Merriam (1998) posited that the research findings emanating from qualitative case studies can inform future research as well as policy and practice. Chadderton and Torrance (2011) stated that although the findings drawn from a small number of cases cannot be generalized applying to the whole or larger

population under study, such findings cast light on "more general issues" (p. 54). They also noted that such illumination is "a matter for judgement and the quality of the evidence presented" (p. 54). Meanwhile, Jardine (1998) contended that such interpretive work has a productive power, leading to the regeneration of understanding and meaning of certain experiences with which we are already familiar (p. 34).

Qualitative Case Studies with an Interpretive Emphasis

The overall research purposes or objectives play a role in shaping the characteristics of qualitative case studies, which can have an emphasis that is *descriptive, interpretive,* or *evaluative* (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative case studies with an interpretive emphasis are intended to develop concepts or theory, or support or challenge theoretical suppositions upheld by predecessors (p. 38). To accomplish this, researchers analyze data in depth. In interpretive case studies, researchers often include three or four participants to provide in-depth analysis and interpretation (Ellis, 2009). Ellis explained that in interpreting the results, it is crucial for researchers to cultivate a storied understanding of their participants' experiences first when they intend to formulate abstract categories or theory from the case studies. Jardine (1998), a hermeneutical scholar and educator, argued that interpretive work holds a pedagogic value. That is to say, when we interpret particular incidents, we attune ourselves to the incidents, engaging our own experiences and the experiences of others in an effort to understand them. In this process, we attempt to open up previously established understandings within ourselves and allow something new to unfold, thereby renewing the previously formed meanings within us. Thus, the value of the interpretive work lies not only in bringing out new meanings of the incidents or the lives of others, but also in transforming our own self-understanding, which Jardine (1998) described as the "fecundity" of interpretive work (p. 34).

Pilot Studies and Exploratory Studies

As noted by Lees et al. (2022), Malmqvist et al. (2019), and Wray et al. (2017), pilot studies have been under-reported in the literature despite their potential to improve knowledge. These scholars have argued for pilot studies to have greater visibility. Malmqvist et al. observed that "while methodological texts recommend the use of pilot studies in qualitative research, there is a lack of reported research focusing on how to conduct such pilot studies" (p. 1). They argued that pilot studies are especially important when using semi-structured interviews. Meanwhile, Lees et al. (2022) found that carrying out a pilot study serves as the demonstration of a researcher's commitment to "care for the research project and its participants," allowing the focus of the pilot study to progress "from careful to *care-filled steerage*" (p. 1, emphasis added).

Yin (1994) has explained that pilot case studies help researchers to develop good quality case studies. The pilot study can improve or strengthen the overall research design, including the methods and procedures of data collection, developing relevant questions, or providing clearer understandings of concepts used in the study. He noted that for some pilot cases, more resources can be invested in this phase than in the actual cases of a final study, particularly in collecting data. At the same time, he observed that in selecting pilot cases, researchers typically consider convenience in gathering data, easy access to the site (or participants), and proximity in distance to conduct the study. He also noted that the criteria for selecting the cases for the pilot studies do not have to meet the required criteria of the final case study design.

As pilot case studies serve as a "laboratory" for the researchers to experiment or test out their initial research plans, the nature of the inquiry is exploratory in framing research questions, theoretical presuppositions, and the procedures of data collection (Yin, 1994, p. 75). In this phase, data collection is often less focused than the final study plan. Moreover, pilot case studies

are methodologically flexible and experimental since researchers test out different procedures for

data collection in this stage until a suitable procedure is developed for the subsequent or final

data collection.

Given that the efficacy of research on issues arising in educational contexts largely

depends on research questions and approaches to interviewing, an exploratory interview can

provide researchers with an opportunity to revise their research questions or interviewing ideas

before conducting a complete pilot study or finalized study (Ellis et al., 2011b). Such an

exploratory interview can be useful particularly for beginning researchers. In Ellis et al.'s

(2011b) research, three of the authors each conducted a first interview using pre-interview

activities (PIAs) and prepared open-ended questions, and based on what they learned in their

interviews each of them wanted to shift the focus of their research questions/interests or adjust

their interview approaches. For one example, a researcher's research question prior to the

exploratory first interview was *why aliteracy became a phenomenon*. However, after listening to

a Grade 9 participant's reflection on his school experience related to reading during the first

interview session, the researcher recognized the need for re-focusing her research question,

shifting to exploring *students' experiences of reading within and outside the school* context.

Hermeneutics and Interpretation

Hermeneutics entails interpretation. Gadamer (2013) noted that interpretation is an

"explicit form of understanding," and that "understanding is always interpretation" (p. 318). In

hermeneutics, the aim of interpretation is not simply to repeat what one said, but to reveal or

bring forth its meaning and significance by relating the text to a specific situation or context

(Gadamer, 2013; Moules et al., 2015; Smith, 1991). In their writing about hermeneutics in

research, Patterson and Williams (2002, pp. 28-29) explained that 1) understanding is sought by

first exploring the internal relations among actions and events within individual cases; 2)

understanding is "analogous to the narrative conclusion of a story"; and 3) the story constitutes a

retrospective analysis of events that gives an account that makes the ending reasonable and

believable. They also argued that most generalizations must be viewed as contextually situated in

a specific time and place.

Key Ideas and Metaphors in Hermeneutics

Tine and Ellis (2022) identified the following key ideas as some of the concepts and

metaphors from hermeneutics that can be helpful in guiding researchers in the processes of

interpretive inquiry:

- interpretation as a creative and holistic activity

- importance of part-whole relationships, micro-macro relationships

- key role of language and history

- concept of "entering the circle in the right way"

- forestructure, pre-understandings, and prejudice

- approaching the entity in a way in which it can show itself

- hermeneutic circle … and its forward arc of projection and its backward arc of
  evaluation

- fusion of horizons through dialectical engagement

- inquiry as a spiral or set of loops

- [a]letheia or "uncovering"

- criteria for evaluating an interpretive account (p. 152).

Criteria for Evaluating

Patterson and Williams (2002) explained that *terminal goals* can be defined as "the ultimate aims of an approach to science" (p. 28) while *instrumental goals* can be understood as "the criteria by which specific research applications are evaluated as good or bad science" (p. 30). In terms of instrumental goals, or evaluating the "goodness" of the research as a whole, Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 5) identified the following as criteria for evaluating qualitative research that has been conducted with postmodern sensibilities: "verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethics of caring, political praxis, multivoiced texts, and dialogues with subjects." In terms of *terminal goals,* Patterson and Williams emphasize the hermeneutic approach to the goal of explanation as being about providing a better understanding of the nature and meaning of human experience in context.

Regarding terminal goals, Packer and Addison (1989) identified key ideas for evaluating an interpretive account. The primary criteria included: 1) coherence, 2) its connection to external evidence, 3) seeking consensus among different groups, and 4) its connection to future events. However, Packer and Addison pointed out that an account may not necessarily meet all the evaluating criteria addressed above at once, or it may not meet any of the criteria in a reader's first impression or evaluation even though it offers a solution to a problem in question. That is because evaluation can be influenced by the reader's perspective, hinting at no universally agreeable account. With this, Packer and Addison emphasized asking whether an account provides an answer to the concern that initially motivated an inquiry. Related to this, Ellis (1998b) proposed that to determine whether an interpretive account has yielded an answer to the initial concern, researchers are advised to ask the following questions: 1) "*ls it plausible, convincing?*"; 2) "*Does it fit*

with other material we know?"; 3) "*Does it have the power to change practice?*"; 4) "*Has the researcher's understanding been transformed?*"; 5) "*Has a solution been uncovered?*"; and 6) *"Have new possibilities been opened up for the researcher, research participants, and the structure of the context?*" (pp. 30-31).

Another aspect that needs to be considered in evaluating interpretive accounts is their generative quality or *generativity*. Citing Rorty, Ellis (1998a, pp. 9-10) explained that moving from one field to another often leads to the production of a new language or concept, and that such language enables others to understand and approach certain problems in more fruitful ways. Similar to this new language or concept resulting from crossing boundaries, hermeneutical inquiry seeks to accomplish this kind of generativity. When pursuing such generativity, although the study may not necessarily provide a perfect answer or a solution for a problem, it can contribute by offering "promising directions" for future inquiry (p. 10). Overall, Ellis's point was that generative contribution must be considered in evaluating interpretive accounts.

Entering the Hermeneutic Circle in the Right Way

Many scholars in hermeneutics (e.g., Packer & Addison, 1989; D. Smith, 1991, 2002; J. Smith, 1993) have offered in-depth discussions to bring clarity on important aspects to be considered when initiating research or "entering the hermeneutic circle in the right way" (Ellis et al., 2011b, p. 12). Ellis et al. explained that *entering the hermeneutic circle in the right way* entails: concerned engagement; humility; openness; a capacity for reciprocity and interactive, dialogic interviews; and availability to negotiation of meaning.

When Ellis (1998b) provided analyses of several interpretive inquiry studies, her advice emphasized the kinds of "entry questions" that researchers should bring into focus at the

beginning of their inquiries before they frame questions for their research participants. That is, underscoring the importance of maintaining "openness, humility, and genuine engagement," Ellis contended that researchers should direct their attention to entry questions such as: *why a certain phenomenon is occurring* and *how anyone can help* (p. 18). These kinds of entry questions do not lead directly to answers. Rather, they function as mental preparation and assurance for researchers to maintain the "relationship of care or responsibility" in their conduct of research (p. 18). Further, Ellis placed an emphasis on *simplicity* and *openness*, considering that the primary goal of the entry questions is not about attaining direct answers, but about *care* or *responsibility*, which allows researchers to enter the hermeneutic circle in the right way.

Interviewing

Narratives in Interviews

Sarbin (1986) credits Mishler for giving narrative a home in interviewing. Mishler (1986) clarified the value of treating all forms of responses to interview questions as narratives. In Mishler's argument, prevailing practices in the mainstream tradition focus primarily on standardization of asking questions and codification of interview data. A negative consequence of such practices, Mishler argued, is ignoring meaningful information that can be gleaned from the interviewee's language and responses during the interview process (p. 235). To support interview participants with the construction of their stories/narratives in fuller and more meaningful ways, Mishler suggested that interviewers should make efforts to 1) treat all forms of responses (partial, indirect, implicit, or explicit) as stories/narratives, 2) avoid cutting off an interviewee during the interview, 3) be an attentive listener, 4) give a certain degree of control to the interviewee, and 5) allow time and space for the interviewee to recall and extend responses.

In inquiries utilizing narratives, it is vital for researchers to foster an environment where participants feel invited and welcomed to tell their stories freely (Mishler, 1986). Recognizing the importance of inviting stories, a number of scholars (Chase, 2003; Ellis, 2006; Ellis et al., 2013) have emphasized using questions that invite *stories* rather than using questions that request *reports*. Chase explained that a prominent difference between inviting stories and inviting reports in an interview context is whether a participant is given a certain degree of freedom to decide or select what to talk about. When the interviewer affords the participant such freedom with a broader question (e.g., "What happened at school today?"), the participant is likely to tell a *story* in which the point of the story or the relevance of the story is clear. In contrast, when the participant is asked for a *report* (e.g., "Tell me what you did in art class today") the listener has to infer or interpret the significance or importance of what is included in the report.

Open-Ended Interviews

The purpose of open-ended interviews is to understand participants' own terms or language, and how they make sense of their own "lives, experiences, and cognitive processes" (Brenner, 2006, p. 357). The value of open-ended interviews lies in providing participants the space to convey meaning in their own language, and in giving participants agency in shaping the direction of the interview process (p. 357).

Researchers have recognized crucial factors to consider for an effective open-ended interview from the outset (Brenner, 2006; Ellis, 1998c; Ellis et al., 2013). The key ideas about the beginning of a successful interview include:

- As the beginning of an interview sets the tone for the whole interview, the opening of an interview can be tailored to each participant to establish rapport (Brenner,

2006; Ellis et al., 2013).

- While fostering rapport with the participant, the interviewer should maintain neutrality in asking questions. Praising or evaluating responses (e.g., "That's an excellent answer") might influence the participant to provide answers that the interviewer favors (Brenner, 2006; Ellis, 1998c).

- As an interview proceeds, the participant "seeks cues from the interviewer" about *how to respond* (length of answers, formality of verbal expression, and level of detail to provide) and expectations concerning the "content" of the interview discussion (Brenner, 2006, p. 362; Ellis, 1998c).

- The interviewer should show genuine interest and encourage the participant to express thoughts and feelings related to the topics in a way that the participant feels comfortable (Brenner, 2006; Ellis, 1998c).

- The interviewer should balance power relations, while aiding the "negotiation of social roles" in a unique intimate relationship, which differs from the "norms of everyday conversations" (Brenner, 2006, p. 366), in that the researcher typically encourages the participant to do the majority of talking (Ellis et al., 2013).

The initial interview in interpretive inquiry can serve as a key opportunity or new vantage point (or horizon in hermeneutics (Gadamer, 2013)) where the researcher can broaden his or her own view. Although a participant's intended meaning may not be fully expressed in the interview because of the nature of language (Gadamer, 2013; Smith, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978), the outset of the interview allows the researcher to access the participant's language, leading to interpretation and understanding of the meaning of the participant's stories (Ellis, 1998a). Ellis's statement below illustrates the value of learning the language the participant uses to

convey their ideas: "Through dialogue we develop a fuller understanding of the places we inhabit together" (p. 8).

Pre-Interview Activities

This sub-section explains the use of pre-interview activities (PIAs) and their contributions, including the necessary *beginning of the interview accomplishments* highlighted by Brenner (2006) and Ellis (Ellis, 2006; Ellis et al., 2013). A pre-interview activity is a visual representation activity that provides participants with opportunities to recall and reflect on their experiences prior to the interview (Ellis, 2006). To invite PIAs, the participants are given a selection of prompts such as requests to complete timelines, diagrams, a key word activity, "before and after" images, and more. Thus, PIAs allow participants to express their ideas or recollections in various visual representations. Typically, PIA requests include prompts related to both the "getting-to-know-you" topic and the "research" topic (Ellis, 2006, p. 118; Ellis et al., 2013), and participants are asked to complete two or more for each topic. The first interview begins by having the participant present and talk about their completed PIAs. With the PIAs used in this way, there is a supportive structure for participants to begin the interview by doing the majority of the talking and to become accustomed to providing lengthier, more elaborated responses than would typically be case in everyday informal conversations. There are multiple purposes for using pre-interview activities, including: 1) to have a better understanding of how parts of a person's experience are related to a larger whole of their experience (Ellis et al., 2013)--which is the central task in interpretation (Gadamer, 2013); and 2) to learn what is salient, meaningful, or preoccupying for participants without using a lengthy and exhausting list of questions (Ellis et al., 2013). The latter point relates to Chase's (2003) idea about how open-endedness invites stories that are meaningful to participants.

A number of studies have illustrated the special contributions of using PIAs (e.g., Amjad et al., 2024; Cristancho et al., 2014; Ellis et al., 2011a; Ellis et al., 2011b; Ellis et al., 2013; Tine & Ellis, 2022). These benefits included: 1) enabling the participant to recall past events from over a long period of time (Ellis et al., 2011a; Tine & Ellis, 2022); 2) enabling participants to identify central ideas in their experiences (Ellis et al., 2013; Tine & Ellis, 2022); 3) providing opportunities for the participants' use of metaphors to describe and interpret the experience (Ellis et al., 2013); 4) providing opportunities for participants to produce and organize a large number of ideas on a PIA so that the visual provided a map to support the participant in talking about all the ideas in a focused, coherent way (Amjad et al., 2024); and 5) providing opportunities for participants to produce an image that holds a story (Amjad et al., 2024; Ellis et al., 2011a; Ellis et al., 2011b; Ellis et al., 2013). In the present study, I will highlight some of the notable effects of PIAs identified in previous studies that also were evident in my own research involving the participants discussed in this doctoral thesis.

The Interpretive Inquiry Interview Protocol

While varied interpretive inquiry interview protocols exist (e.g., Moules et al., 2015), the interviews in the present study began with ideas from the interview protocol presented by Ellis in Tine and Ellis (2022). The structure of this interpretive inquiry interview protocol is as follows. In the initial step, the researcher invites the participant to complete a minimum of two pre-interview activities—1) one PIA about the participant in general, and 2) one PIA about the participant's experience pertaining to the topic investigated—in advance of the interview. The participant is asked to bring the completed PIAs to the interview. The first interview begins with the participant's presentation and explanation of the completed PIAs. After this, the researcher uses prepared questions that are grouped as 1) *getting to know you questions* followed by groups

2), 3), and 4) which are two or three groups of *questions related to the research topic*. Groups of questions related to the research topic proceed from the general to the specific or from the past to the present—for example, a) about teaching in general, b) about teaching kindergarten in general, and finally c) about supporting inclusivity when teaching in kindergarten classes.

An integral aspect of the interview protocol is utilizing primarily open-ended questions. The open-ended questions are intended to provide opportunities for participants to tell stories that are salient to them, without requiring them to discuss uncomfortable experiences (Tine & Ellis, 2022). "Each question uses a key word or phrase that might trigger memories or ideas: For example, like, not like, different, same, favorite, changed, stayed the same, surprised, important, interesting, hoped for" (p. 155). Any important pointed or prying questions of high interest are only to be asked after the open- ended questions have been responded to.

Analysis

Patterson and Williams (2002) explained that hermeneutic analysis entails beginning with in-depth examination of individual interviews (p. 52). The primary goal of idiographic analysis is to determine central themes within a narrative account of specific experiences that were investigated, leading to a meaningful and effective organization, interpretation, and presentation of such experiences or situations. This goal can be achieved by taking the following steps: 1) identifying the researcher's point of view (the *forestructure* of understanding) at the outset of the analysis; 2) reading the entire narrative multiple times to have an understanding of it as a whole; 3) using the initial understanding as the basis for a deeper exploration of the individual parts; and 4) adjusting or refining the overall understanding on the basis of the detailed understanding of the parts (p. 52).

The idiographic stage of analysis is essential since it serves as the foundation for "nomothetic analysis" (across-account analysis) (Patterson & Williams, 2002, p. 53). Patterson and Williams' description of idiographic and nomothetic analysis reflects Polkinghorne's (1996) ideas about *narrative analysis* and *analysis of narratives* (paradigmatic analysis). More specifically, Patterson and Williams' explanation of idiographic analysis intersects with Polkinghorne's conviction that the purpose of a narrative analysis (analysis of an individual account) is to understand and identify the predominant themes (or meaning) of an individual's experiences, and that the analysis of each account allows the identification of the themes across multiple accounts (analysis of narratives) within a study. With case studies it is useful to recall Merriam's (1998) explanation that when using more than one case, researchers can look at similar and contrasting cases within a study, which allows them to have a better understanding of a single case.

Presenting Stories as the Results of Research

Cristancho (2014) posed a critical question about why the use of "themes" has become a predominant practice for representing the findings of studies on complex issues, underscoring the importance of considering alternative forms of disseminating the research results. She argued that the goal of (medical) education researchers is not to become "*solution-providers,*" but to become "*question-generators*" (p. 160). In raising questions, the use of themes is often ill-suited, particularly when addressing complexities involved in the problem investigated. Instead, using stories can be more effective to unravel such complexities, leading to fostering "reflective conversations" about specific issues (p. 161). While stories are one form of representing research findings, a wide range of alternative ways of representing also can be considered, such as drawings or pictures. In short, Cristancho's point was that reporting differently, such as using

stories, moving beyond reporting the research findings in themes, can have a more profound effect on presenting the complexity of the problem investigated.

How Was the Study Conducted?

In research practice, researchers carefully plan and determine the research procedures to answer their research problem. However, Gadamer (2013) warned us that researching phenomena of the human world may not always turn out in the way we planned. This was precisely my situation during my inquiry. Nevertheless, I strove to be creative and productive, reminding myself of Gadamer's (2013) advice that the human world is full of the unexpected and uncertain, which requires our *practical knowledge* and *wisdom* to deal with problems that arise in varying situations. Echoing Gadamer, Ellis (1998b), too, informed us that research problems and procedures can change, as noted above. This dissertation demonstrates the consequences of such an uncertain human world that forced me to seek practical knowledge for inquiring about my research problem, which I discuss below.

Working under Changing Conditions

The Planned

My original research plan was *investigating high school English language learners' (ELLs') literacy learning (school writing) in school in Canada*, focusing on their reflections of current experiences in school. I intended to recruit high school ELL students through a non-profit organization, which provides social services to immigrant populations in local communities. I also planned to provide literacy classes to newcomer adolescents at the community level to support their literacy development necessary for their school learning. The initial research proposal was approved in 2019 by the committee members of my doctoral thesis and the Ethics

Board at the University of Alberta. I was, of course, thrilled to conduct the research as it was

carefully planned. And then….

The Unexpected

Unfortunately, unexpected issues confronted me, changing the course of my study. It was

an unprecedented pandemic caused by Corona virus disease (COVID) in 2019[10]. Its impact was

tremendous, imposing new norms of the life world on us, such as lockdown and social

distancing, to minimize the spread of the virus. Consequently, I was unable to conduct the

research as I planned. Due to the ongoing pandemic, research activities that involved human

participants were suspended temporarily by the Research Ethics Board at the University of

Alberta. My study was not an exception since it was designed to entail close interactions with

human participants (high school students and social workers). If I wanted to pursue the research

as I planned, I had to wait until the environment was safe enough to interact with other people. I

cannot describe how devastated I was. However, responding to the new reality, I opted to pause

my research, hoping that the pandemic would end, allowing me to conduct it in the way it was

planned. So I waited, imagining *when*, not *if*, the pandemic ended….

However, almost one and a half years after taking leave from my doctoral study, strict

measures imposed on meeting people outside our homes continued, leaving me stuck in a

holding pattern. Recognizing such an issue, two committee members of my doctoral thesis

suggested that I should consider alternative ways to resolve my stagnant situation. Perhaps many

graduate students and researchers faced similar issues due to the pandemic. In consultation with

my committee members, I decided to utilize the data obtained from earlier studies[11] that I

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[10] Corona virus disease (COVID)-19

[11] These previous studies were comprised of: a) a qualitative study involving one post-secondary student, carried out in 2016 as part of the coursework in a qualitative methodology course (EDEL 665, Qualitative Research in

undertook during my doctoral program for the doctoral thesis, and conduct a new qualitative study online, which would include virtual meetings, and thus allow me to recruit post-secondary students who studied in Canadian high schools as ESL students, and who would not need my support for their literacy development. The present inquiry was born out by a combination of three studies that were spirally developed from broad to specific—English learning, literacy (writing) learning, and subject writing in high school. Figure 1 shows the spiral development of the study.

Figure 1

Spiral Development of the Study
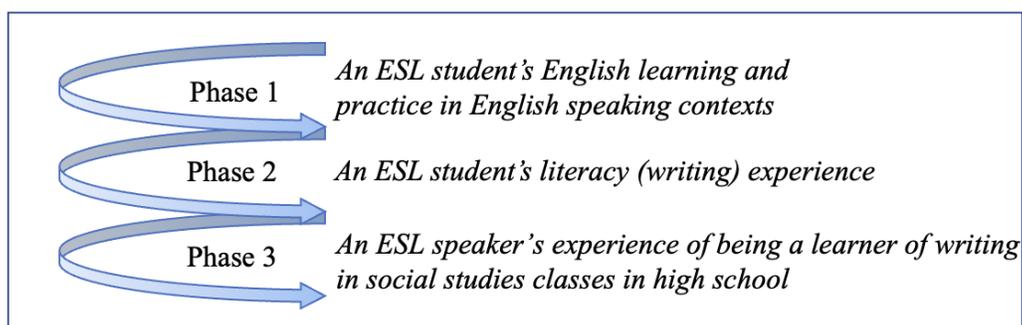
Table 5 (Timeline of Data Collection) shows other details of the data collection activities.

Table 5

Timeline of Data Collection

Phase	Participant	Participant's Student Status at the Time of the Initial Interview	Data Collection Activities
Phase 1	Jiwoo	Enrolled in an English for academic purposes	• Pre-interview activity

Education), and b) an expanded study of the coursework from EDEL 665, which included an additional participant, conducted between 2018 and 2019.

(October 2016)		course (to meet English proficiency requirements) at a post-secondary institution	• 1 interview (in-person): Focusing on the participant's *English learning and practice* in English speaking contexts
Phase 2 (May 2018-December 2019)	Jiwoo	2nd year in an under-graduate program	• 4 follow-up interviews (in-person): Focusing on the participant's *literacy (writing) experience* • E-mail communication
Phase 3 (January 2022-April 2022)	Sophia	2nd year in an under-graduate program	• Pre-interview activity • 2 interviews (virtual): Focusing on the participant's experiences of being a learner of *writing in social studies in high school* • Notes taken during the high school years • E-mail communication

The occurrences of twists and turns in the present inquiry (pre- and post-pandemic) described above were unexpected, which was a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, while these unexpected events created constraints and obstacles to my study, they offered something new. That is to say, it helped me to be more *open to the possible,* seeking practical ways to resolve issues confronting us. Because of this historical experience, Gadamer's (2013) advice

about the unpredictable nature of the human world and the need for a more humanistic approach to inquiring matters in the human world beyond the scientific, resonated with me throughout the inquiry. This allowed me to play the role of creative bricoleur in the inquiry, to which I turn next.

A Bricoleur

An interpretive inquirer plays multiple roles in research, from data collection to analysis. Although there are no strict rules or standardized procedures for a researcher to conduct interpretive inquiry as a bricoleur, the literature suggests that the key idea among studies that use interpretive inquiry is the rejection of positivist assumptions and tradition (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Prasad, 2005; Stark, 2020). Instead, interpretive inquirers adopt constructivism, believing that reality is relatively and locally constructed by actors in a society in which researchers participate in constructing and reconstructing knowledge with research participants. In the present study, while the roles I played were similar to the characteristics of a bricoleur described above, my engagement in the inquiry led me to be transformed in an unimagined way, that is to say, a writer of poetry. I incorporate my own transformative learning (poetic literacy) brought out by the inquiry into this thesis.

Research Sites

This inquiry utilized the data collected from three studies that were conducted in a medium-sized city in Western Canada between 2016 and 2022. More specifically, the first study (Phase 1) was conducted in 2016, the second study (Phase 2) was carried out between 2018 and 2019, and the third study (Phase 3) was undertaken in 2022, as presented in Table 5. All research activities addressed in this thesis took place in the same city throughout my inquiry. However, whereas two earlier studies with one participant (Jiwoo) involved face-to-face interactions, one

later study with one participant (Sophia) was conducted strictly through a virtual format (Zoom) due to the persisting COVID-19 pandemic.

The Questions

The research questions of the study evolved around my initial research interest in *English learners' experiences of language learning and practice in English speaking contexts*. More specifically, the initial research question was:

- *What was it like for EAL students to learn and practice English in English-speaking contexts in Canada?*

Using this question as the basis, I developed two holistic questions to guide data collection of the study. The two questions were:

- *How did the students experience literacy learning in high schools in Canada?*
- *How did the students experience literacy learning, particularly writing, in social studies classes?*

Participants

This thesis focuses on the learning experiences of two international students (Jiwoo and Sophia) who were enrolled in a post-secondary institution in Western Canada. Although they were recruited from different research projects—one participant (Jiwoo) in the earlier studies (Phases 1 and 2), and one participant (Sophia) in a new separate study (Phase 3)—the criteria required for participating in my research were similar. With regard to the participants' backgrounds, both of them spoke English as a second language (ESL); they had learning experiences in the formal education system in their home country, South Korea (hereafter Korea); and they earned a high school diploma in Canada. That they received their high school diploma in Canada assured that they took mandatory courses, such as social studies, which was

the content-area literacy focused upon in my inquiry. It should be noted that both participants having Korean backgrounds was coincidence. More accurately to say, the eligibility of the participants was determined based on the fact that they spoke English as a second language, not based on their cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Both Jiwoo and Sophia were in their early twenties when they participated in my separate research projects.[12] Jiwoo was a participant in my two earlier research projects: 1) *An ESL student's experiences in everyday life in English speaking contexts* (Phase 1); and 2) *An English as a second language (ESL) student's experience of learning and an ESL teacher's experience of teaching English* (Phase 2). I undertook the first research project (Phase 1) as part of coursework that required interviewing a participant by applying interview protocols taught in a qualitative research course (EDEL 665 Qualitative Research in Education) in 2016. The second project (Phase 2) was an extended study of the first study, which was conducted between 2018 and 2021.

Sophia was a participant in a new separate study, *English as a second language (ESL) speaker's experiences of being a learner of writing in social studies classes in high school* (Phase 3), which was conducted in 2022. All three research projects were approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta.

Procedures and Data Collection

As I addressed earlier in this chapter, this study utilizes the data collected in the initial exploratory study (Phases 1 and 2) with one participant (Jiwoo), and the subsequent study (Phase 3) with another participant (Sophia). Since this thesis focuses on two participants who were recruited in separate studies, it is necessary to distinguish the research activities involving Jiwoo

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[12] Jiwoo from two earlier studies (Phases 1 and 2) and Sophia from a new separate study (Phase 3)

from those with Sophia. To avoid confusion, I clarify that I use *Part A* to describe the research activities involving Jiwoo*,* and use *Part B* to refer to the research on Sophia's experience.

Part A (Phases 1 and 2: Jiwoo)

Recruitment. Part A involved the recruitment of Jiwoo, which occurred in 2016. This recruitment, in fact, commenced as a part of a graduate coursework that required conducting and analyzing an open-ended interview in a qualitative methodology course[13]. For recruiting Jiwoo, I approached one of my networks, an English for academic purposes (EAP) instructor at a postsecondary institution and asked him to provide my contact information to potential EAP participants who might be interested in participating in my study that focused on *English learning and practice in English speaking contexts*. One EAP student, Jiwoo, contacted me by e-mail, so I sent him an information letter and consent form (Appendix B), which he returned with his signed consent. Later, he was invited to and participated in an expanded study of the initial study.

Pre-Interview Activities. After receiving the consent form from Jiwoo, I arranged a meeting date for an in-person interview. Jiwoo chose to meet on campus and the interview took place in October 2016. Approximately one week prior to the initial meeting, I invited Jiwoo to complete pre-interview activities (PIA), which I sent to him by email.

Pre-interview activities (PIAs) are intended to provide participants with opportunities to recall and reflect on their past experiences prior to the initial interview. Such experiences can also be expressed visually through PIAs (Ellis et al., 2013). Following the principles of PIAs, I developed two groups of PIA prompts, which were 1) the getting to know you topic and 2) the

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[13] The course (EDEL 665) was taught by Dr. Julia Ellis.

research topic, *English learning and practice*, which are shown in Appendix D. Each group

consisted of six prompts, thus a total of 12 PIA items.

One of the examples of PIA prompts in the first topic (getting to know you) was: "Think

of an important event in your life: Make drawings to show what things were like for you before

and after the event happened" (PIA Item 2 in the first group, Appendix D). An example of the

PIAs in the second topic (research topic) was: "Make a list of 20 important words that come to

mind for you when you think about English. Divide the list into two groups in a way that makes

sense to you" (PIA Item 3 in the second group, Appendix D).

Jiwoo was asked to respond to two or more PIA prompts for each topic one week before

the initial interview. Surprisingly, Jiwoo completed all 12 PIA requests, which he explained in

detail during the first interview session for about 25 minutes. Thus, for almost the first half of the

interview session, Jiwoo did most of the talking, whereas my role as a researcher was mainly

listening to him, exhibiting my sincere interest in his stories that he was telling with much

enthusiasm and a sense of authority.

Interviews. For conducting interviews, I followed the qualitative inquiry interview

protocols described in Ellis (2006),[14] which I had learned and practiced in a qualitative research

methodology course. More specifically, in the initial interview, I used open-ended interview

questions to provide the space for Jiwoo to express his intended meanings in his own way,

encouraging him to take ownership of his narrative (Chase, 2003; Ellis et al., 2013).

When I administered the first interview, I did not have any plan to invite him to another

interview. However, as Ellis (1998a) suggested, the open-ended interview served as an

opportunity for me to reflect on my own view of English learning and practice. At the same time,

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[14] Ellis's interpretive inquiry interview protocols have been refined over the past two decades (e.g., Ellis, 1998c, 2006; Tine & Ellis, 2022).

some of the key themes that emerged from the interview data, particularly *L2 writing*, stimulated my curiosity about and desire for a further inquiry into Jiwoo's learning experiences in English. Because of this curiosity, in 2018, I undertook a research study, to which I invited Jiwoo to focus specifically on his literacy (writing) experience as an additional language learner. Fortunately, Jiwoo agreed to participate in the study, which included four more face-to-face interviews.

Thus, Jiwoo was invited to a total of five face-to-face interviews over a three-year period (October 2016-December 2019). Each interview took about one hour. All interviews were conducted in English, following the participant's language preference. While the initial interview involved open-ended questions, subsequent interviews were built on the previous interviews, entailing some semi-structured questions. In all interviews, I consciously tried to encourage him to exercise his agency in telling his stories, allowing him to do the majority of talking. All interviews were recorded in an audio recording device. The interview data were transcribed immediately after each interview.

Groups of Questions. In the initial interview, interview questions were organized into four groups, reflecting Ellis's (Ellis, 2006; Tine & Ellis, 2022) interpretive inquiry interview protocols. The four groups of questions that I used included, 1) getting to know you, 2) questions about a larger whole—*being in English classes in his home country over the years*, 3) questions about a next larger whole—*being in English classes in Canada*, and 4) questions about specific topic—*being in everyday places in Canada*. Although these questions proceeded from general to specific, the questions related to the research topic were still broad, rather than focused, echoing the nature of pilot studies described by Yin (1994).

However, in the subsequent interviews, I progressively developed questions from general (English learning) to specific (writing) over a three-year period, entering a series of loops in the

spiral, which is regarded as effective in qualitative research and interpretive inquiry (Ellis, 1998). Figure 1 shows key phases in the development of the interview questions. Among the spirally developed questions with Jiwoo, some of the important questions were transported to the later research with Sophia (Part B).

      Other Data Sources. While interviewing was used as the primary data collection, there were also other data sources. These sources included *e-mail correspondences* and *writing samples*. E-mail communication was used mainly for clarifying some of the information that Jiwoo provided during the interview sessions. However, email correspondences were relatively short without involving deep or serious questions that required lengthy answers. With regards to writing samples, I presumed that Jiwoo might find it easier for him to describe his writing experiences if he could use his own writings or notes taken from high school. Jiwoo, however, was unable to provide any writing samples or notes from his high school years. Instead, he offered some writing samples produced in post-high school, which he referenced to articulate his experiences with high school writing.

Part B (Phase 3: Sophia)

      Recruitment. Part B was the subsequent study of Part A (Jiwoo). Part B entailed the recruitment of Sophia. It should be noted that when I commenced this study, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta emphasized minimizing research practices that involved direct human interactions to protect both researchers and participants from the risks of contracting the COVID-19 virus. Accordingly, I developed the study entirely relying on virtual and electronic communication, including recruitment of the participant and data collection.

Prior to recruiting Sophia, I circulated an information letter of my study, *English as a second language (ESL) speakers' experiences of being learners of writing in social studies classes in high school* (Appendix E) to my social networks at post-secondary institutions in Canada. Since I was acquainted with Sophia through institutionally organized meetings[15] before the study and already had her contact information (email address), I proceeded to send her this same invitation letter by email. She confirmed her participation in the study by sending me her signed consent form through email.

Pre-Interview Activities. After obtaining the signed consent form from Sophia, I scheduled an initial virtual meeting (Zoom) date with her. A list of PIA prompts was sent to Sophia via email about one week before the initial interview. In the PIA activity, Sophia was invited to respond to two or more items in each group of prompts and asked to bring her to the interview.

Similar to the types of pre-interview activities (PIAs) used for Jiwoo, I developed two groups of PIAs for Sophia, focusing on 1) the getting to know you topic and 2) the research topic, *writing in English*, which are presented in Appendix G. Each topic contained six PIA requests, therefore a total of 12 PIA items. Sophia was invited to complete two or more PIA prompts for each topic one week in advance of the first interview. She completed a total of four PIA prompts, which she discussed at the beginning of the first virtual interview.

Interviews. Sophia was invited to two virtual interviews (Zoom) (January 2022-April 2022). The first interview was slightly over one hour and the second interview took less than one

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[15] The Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, formed the Student Advisory Panel for Advancing Racial Justice to foster anti-racism in 2020, inviting students to organized regular meetings at the institutional level. I initially met Sophia when I was involved in the Student Advisory Panel. As panel members, both of us had access to each other's email addresses as they were included in the emails concerning meetings organized by the University's Organizing Committee.

hour. I offered options for the interview (English, Korean, or both), and she chose English. Thus, all interviews were conducted primarily in English, with occasional use of a few words in Korean. Although the interview format with Sophia differed from Jiwoo, I maintained the same interview protocols (Ellis, 2006; Tine & Ellis, 2022) that I used for conducting the interviews with Jiwoo. The virtual interviews were recorded on my computer (both audio and visual components) and transcribed immediately after each interview.

Groups of Questions. During the phase of the study with Sophia, the interview questions were developed based on the findings of the previous research about Jiwoo's learning experiences. As a result, the interview questions used for Sophia were more refined compared to those used in Part A with Jiwoo. However, the general structure of the interview questions was the same as the structure I used for interviewing Jiwoo. More accurately to say, the questions used for the initial interview with Sophia consisted of four tiers: 1) getting to know you, 2) questions about a larger whole—*writing* over the years, 3) questions about a next larger whole—*writing in the past*, and 4) questions about a specific topic—*writing in social studies in high school*.

Other Data Sources. Just like in Part A, interviewing served as the primary method for data collection in Part B with Sophia. Additional data sources collected in Part B included email correspondences, writing samples (Social studies and English language arts), and notes taken in social studies courses in high school.

Analysis and Interpretation

For analyzing the data, positioning myself in the constructivist paradigm, I conducted in-depth analyses by means of interpretation. I intended to develop a theory of L2 literacy or identify a pattern in the developmental trajectory of L2 writing based on the results of the study.

Ellis (2009) explained that in interpreting data, it is crucial for a researcher to generate a storied and holistic understanding of participants' experiences first when planning to develop a theory or abstract categories later.

Considering these aspects addressed above, I drew upon the key ideas of *hermeneutic analysis* described in Patterson and Williams (2002), and Polkinghorne's (1995) theory of *narrative analysis*. The steps that I took for data analysis are as follows.

1) Reflecting on and identifying my point of view (preunderstanding or forestructure) of L2 literacy and writing prior to analyzing the data (I clarify it later in this chapter)

2) Reading the entire narrative and data provided by each participant multiple times, including interview data, visual presentations in pre-interview activities, e-mail correspondences, and artifacts (writing samples and notes), to understand them as a whole

3) Recursive movements between parts and the whole of each narrative, using the initial understanding as the basis for a deeper exploration of the individual parts

4) Determining a global theme and subthemes within the global theme

5) Examining similar and contrasting aspects of L2 literacy learning and practice found in the two participants, while asking *how* a specific outcome came about; *what events* contributed to such an outcome

6) Organizing the multiple elements of the data chronologically to reconfigure the data into a story, thus yielding an explanatory story

7) Identifying factors of the outcome in each story

8) Adjusting my overall understanding of each case based on deep understanding of the parts

9) Having a better understanding of each case (narrative) by looking at both cases

(narratives)

Thus, as shown above, the analytic processes undertaken in this study involved analyses within a

single narrative and across the narratives, while maintaining a hermeneutic commitment to the

research.

Writing an Interpretive Account

For writing my interpretive account in this thesis, I present the findings in *storied form* in

separate chapters (Chapter 5 for Jiwoo and Chapter 6 for Sophia). These stories are constructed

with a focus on a sequence of events related to school learning and the meanings of the events

that contribute to a specific outcome (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7), namely literacy in L2.

As these stories are presented as a part of my scholarly work in the thesis, I provide

relevant disciplinary explanations and arguments when needed. I also incorporate my creative

texts that I produced during the inquiry in the remaining chapters (5-7). Weaving my creative

text (poetry and photographs) into the thesis, I believe, enhances the level of engagement that

readers can have with my interpretive account. This demonstrates my commitment to

hermeneutics since I use my creative text as a form of interpretation of and dialogue with the text

provided by the participants. I also believe that this way of writing exemplifies Gadamer's (2013,

xxvi) assertion that philosophical hermeneutics is about something that happens to us "over and

above" our "wanting and doing" rather than "what we ought to do." As my journey of poetry

writing resulted from my forceful curiosity about literacy in L2 while enduring the unavoidable

reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, my creative texts demonstrate not only my commitment to

the hermeneutical inquiry (Smith, 1993) but also the "transformative effects of hermeneutic

practice" (Davey, 2017, p. 2).

With regard to the organization of the remaining chapters, Chapters 5 and 6 are structured mostly in line with the research questions. In these chapters (5 and 6), the main headings serve as the research questions while answers to the questions are provided under the subheadings within which additional subheadings are nested. I synthesize the findings of the two participants' narratives in Chapter 7, highlighting new insights into the development of L2 literacy gained from the study as well as implications for education and future research.

Researcher Reflections and Reflexivity

More than two decades ago, David Smith (1991), a hermeneutic scholar noted:

Any study carried on in the name of hermeneutics should provide a report of *the researcher's own transformations* undergone in the process of the inquiry; *a showing of the dialogical journey*…underscored here is a profoundly *ethical* aspect to hermeneutic inquiry in a life-world sense; namely, a requirement that a researcher be prepared to deepen her or his own self-understanding in the course of the research (p. 198, emphasis added).

This piece of advice that Smith offered to hermeneutic inquirers stayed deeply inside me throughout my inquiry. That was because although I could understand the core of his message, I was doubtful about his notion of a "*researcher's transformations*." More specifically, I was uncertain about whether such a notion is practical or realistic enough for researchers, particularly for novice researchers like me. I must say that it felt like a daunting challenge or burden to me as a novice researcher. As I had little expectation about my own transformation at the outset of the inquiry, I was quite concerned about reporting my own transformation resulting from the inquiry. I even imagined the making or faking of transformative experiences in writing my thesis later if no transformation had occurred to me. Yet, I was curious about such an unpredictable or

unimaginable aspect of transformation. Perhaps, this worry and curiosity pushed me to be more open to new possibilities that I could not imagine or expect. Such a worry and curiosity also helped me engage more deeply in my dialogues with the texts provided by the participants, while constantly reflecting on my own understanding of the life world in an effort to find myself in a new way.

Researcher Forestructure: The Place from Which I Began

Related to the previous section, when inquiring hermeneutically, it is crucial for a researcher to reflect on and identify one's forestructure or pre-understanding related to the topic investigated in a study (Ellis, 1998a; Jardine, 1998; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Smith, 1991). That is because what is familiar to the researcher opens up the (research) topic while at the same time, the familiar conceals or affects the researcher's understanding of something new or unfamiliar, as suggested in Gadamer (2013) and Jardine (1998). When disclosing the researcher's preexisting understanding or preconceptions of the topic, one's positionality and biases become transparent to readers. This allows readers to see how the researcher's understanding of the topic transformed through the engagement in the research activities (Smith, 1991). Moreover, since readers, as interpreters, inevitably bring their own prior understanding or experiences related to the study's topic to their reading (Gadamer, 2013; Merriam, 1998), reflecting on my own biases and preconceptions can encourage readers to reflect on their own horizons. For the reasons described above, I disclose my perspective or standpoint at the onset of the inquiry, inviting readers to engage.

At the beginning of the study, since I had my own experience of English learning and practice including L2 writing, I held an assumption that my understanding of L2 literacy (writing) would be relatable to my participants' experiences and perceptions of L2 literacy

learning and practice. That is to say, I presumed that linguistic proficiency and knowledge of writing conventions would be the main factors of their success or struggle in their literacy learning in L2. Such an assumption could be reassured to a certain degree by the literature related to L2 literacy and writing (e.g., Cumming et al., 2016; Leki et al., 2008). Consequently, I expected what I would hear from the participants might be aspects related to the relationship between linguistic proficiency and L2 literacy, or the relationship between knowledge about writing conventions and L2 writing.

By then, however, I had already read about the nature of language and understanding articulated by Gadamer (2013), and the sociocultural nature of language and literacy (Gee, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Nevertheless, my thinking was predominantly shaped by the characteristics of language learners, commonly addressed in studies within the fields of language education, second language acquisition, or writing studies (e.g., Leki et al., 2008). Subsequently, I failed to acknowledge them as holistic individuals (Gagné et al., 2022) who carry with them their historically accumulated linguistic and cultural knowledge (Gadamer, 2013).

As space is limited, I have shared only a small portion of my preconceptions. However, I believe that my forestructure described above can help readers understand how my engagement in dialogues with both my research participants and myself throughout this study has led to a discernable transformation and enriched my knowledge of L2 literacy. Such a transformation and new insights gained from the study will become apparent as readers progress through the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Five: Jiwoo's Story

"Writing Is What I Think": From a Newcomer's Perspective

Introduction

Note. Photo taken in 2020. Own work.

먼 길 오느라 지쳤을까 봐	Afraid of your weariness from the long journey
많이 기다렸다는 말 대신	Instead of saying I've been waiting so long
함박웃음으로 너를 맞는다.	I greet you with a smile blossom.

(A text inspired by a flower blossom, May 2020)

During a walk in an early morning in spring, a flower blossom on a tree caught my eye. Suddenly I felt drawn by something and at the same time illuminated internally. Continuing the walk under this indescribable power, I found myself searching for words to create a harmonious ensemble of language in a musical way. The irresistible force made me shorten my walk and revisit the flower blossom. Delighted to see the blossom awaiting, I took a picture of it and rushed back home. I sat in front of my computer and started to compose an unusual note with the bouncing letters to portray how I felt when I saw the first blossom on the tree. Knowing that I had enough words for the unique note, I stopped typing and uttered, "The joy gained from the blossom after the long winter, this must be how you [Jiwoo, a research participant] felt on your

journey to literacy learning in a new sense. Thank you for bringing this journey to me. I'm on it

now too." This is how the unexpected journey of my poetic literacy learning took its first step.

Undeniably, becoming a learner of the new literacy was the result of my dialogue with the text

(data) that Jiwoo provided. What a surprise!

I began this chapter with my creative texts as a means to illustrate transformative

experiences that I underwent in the process of inquiry, which can be considered as the effect of

hermeneutic practice (Davey, 2017) or ethics of hermeneutic inquiry (Smith, 1991). While it

presents only a glimpse of what emerged from my inquiry, I provide details of the findings of the

inquiry about literacy learning in a new language in the current chapter and the subsequent

chapter. I focus on one research participant in each chapter—Jiwoo in Chapter 5 and Sophia in

Chapter 6. As the present study explores phenomena of literacy learning, the structure of

Chapters 5 and 6 are organized to discuss the themes that emerged from the inquiry; that is,

Portraits (*backgrounds) of participants; prehistory of development and literacy from childhood*

to mid-adolescent years; the learning of school literacy as a newcomer in Canada; and *literacy*

learning in subjects (social studies). These themes consist of different sub-themes that emerged

from two different studies. Discussions under the main and sub-themes serve as answers to the

three research questions of the present study. Now, in the following sections, I provide key

messages sent from the first research participant, Jiwoo, who worked with me over a three-year

period (2016-2019).

Portrait of Jiwoo
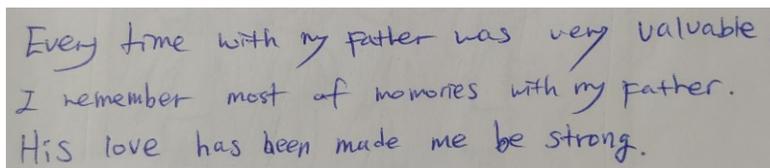
(Pre-interview activity, October 26, 2016)

"My father always told me, "Even if you're doing a small thing…if you have a certain goal, specific goal, and it'll be good for you to work on it. Keep studying"" (Interview, June 23, 2019).[16]

Jiwoo (pseudonym) was in his early 20s. He was born and raised in South Korea (hereafter Korea) until his mid-adolescent years. Growing up as a child of highly educated and socio-economically privileged parents, he received abundant love, care, and support from his parents in all aspects of childhood, including academic, athletic, and familial life. His father was a professor at a university, and his mother was owner and administrator of a private English academy in Korea. Throughout his upbringing in Korea, he had a close relationship with his father, who nurtured Jiwoo, as a parent, educator, and sharer of wisdom. His father was the most significant figure in his upbringing contributing to his development of positive characteristics, such as hard work ethic, willingness to learn from others, and openness to something new. With his parents' encouragement, Jiwoo moved to a medium-sized city in Western Canada to study at an English-speaking high school when he was in grade 10 in Korea. Having been separated from his family, he had to live in a homestay residence hosted by Korean immigrants. He studied as an international student for two and a half years at a Canadian high school, where he earned a high school diploma. After graduating high school, he took additional English courses at a post-secondary institution to apply for an undergraduate program at a university in Western Canada. When he initially participated in the research, it was immediately after he passed the highest level of English courses, which was equivalent to a proof of linguistic proficiency required for the university. Later, he was admitted to an undergraduate program, the School of Business, at

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[16] For quoting the participants' interview data, the participants' original wording is used throughout the thesis.

the university, where he enjoyed his academic success and became a student-entrepreneur near the end of the present study.

Prehistory of Development and Literacy: From Childhood to Mid-Adolescent Years

"*Forcing and repeat, memorize*" (Interview, October 29, 2016).

School functions as a dynamic community where individuals access new information and gain various experiences through interactions with teachers and peers. Although fundamental to schooling is the social (Vygotsky, 1978), the social nature of schooling can be overlooked, when placing importance more on what is to be taught and expected learning outcomes as grade levels increase. In my memories of school in Korea, school was a fun place until I felt that studying or mastering content knowledge was overemphasized by teachers for better test results at the secondary level. Decades after I was schooled in Korea, I felt sorry to hear that certain pedagogic approaches that I was familiar with still continue to exist in the Korean education system. In the subsequent sections, I provide the background of Jiwoo's earlier learning experiences to gain a better understanding of how those experiences affected his later learning in Canada.

Schooling in Korea

Jiwoo's reflection on his school years in Korea suggested that he had positive memories of and attitude toward school learning at the elementary level. It was partly because he had plenty of opportunities to be actively engaged, working with peers within and outside the classroom, such as English lessons for communicative purposes. It was also partly because he may have felt that individual academic achievement was not stressed during the years of kindergarten and elementary school.

Unlike his early childhood memories of positive and engaging experiences, Jiwoo's school learning at the secondary level, middle school (junior high), shifted to passive learning

with little student engagement. During this period, learning was a form of laborious process, yet necessary to tolerate for survival. Laborious processes meant that he had to constantly try to retain what was taught mainly by memorizing, which teachers encouraged. Jiwoo described that kind of learning as *forced learning*. In Jiwoo's words, "In Korea, teacher force us to practice, practice" (Interview, December 21, 2018). While he was resistant to that kind of teaching and learning, he was acutely aware that retaining information taught in school subjects was necessary for his survival in the Korean educational system since students' learning was measured with tests, which were mainly composed of questions which required finding right or fixed answers based on their knowledge of factual information. However, he made a point that one of the key underlying problems of rote memorization-oriented education was that teachers, too, have few alternatives in their teaching in the Korean education system.

Throughout the present study, Jiwoo did not discuss to what extent the repetitive method of studying helped him to increase his knowledge and literacy learning. Interestingly, he mentioned that he benefited in a different way from *forced learning* in that he learned how to discipline himself better. This is shown in his comments below: "…that [forced repetitive studying] teach me how to study in long time 'cause they [teachers] can force me. But even though forcing…I learned how to study long and read with much concentration" (Interview, October 29, 2016).

English Learning and Literacy Practices

Most English learners in non-English speaking countries do not have access to abundant exposure to authentic communications in English. And if they have communicative opportunities, it can be limited to artificial contexts, such as the classroom in school. For Jiwoo's case, he could learn English in both English and non-speaking contexts. In Jiwoo's learning,

English was introduced in the third year in elementary school. Since he was born to a socio-economically privileged family, his parents could afford to provide him an opportunity to learn English in an English-speaking country, Australia, for three months in grade five. Although the duration of English learning in the immersed context was fairly short, Jiwoo recalled that he gained confidence in English, particularly in speaking, believing that his engagement in soccer, as a soccer lover, helped him be good at speaking. He hinted that a social aspect of being on a team or working with teammates was a key factor in his becoming a good English speaker. In his response to a PIA item that asked him about *something important that changed things for him in learning English*, he created a diagram in which soccer is centered as seen in the image below.
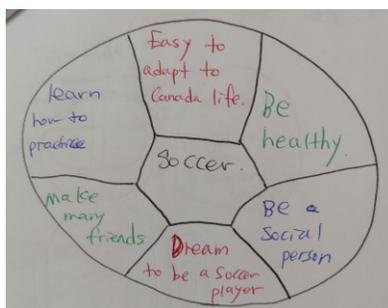
(Pre-interview activity, October 29, 2016)

He explained, "…soccer was very helpful for me to adapt to environment in Australia… That's why I draw soccer ball that shows 'be healthy and be a social person, learn how to participate, make many friends….'" (Interview, October 29, 2016). For Jiwoo, soccer games served as concrete events in which he could develop and maintain a certain *sense* of how to communicate and socialize in a new culture and language. Although his exposure to authentic contexts were limited, the sense and implicit knowledge that he gained from the everyday experiences could be internalized (Vygotsky, 2012a), networking with other dimensions of senses or accumulated knowledge.

Contrasting with his flexible and engaged learning, Jiwoo's affordance to develop a practical sense of English at the secondary level was limited. English lessons were highly teacher-centered wherein class lessons typically focused on vocabulary and grammar to help students better prepare for reading comprehension. In other words, he received significant amount of instruction related to declarative knowledge (words and grammar), which was intended to help him improve his reading skills. As English textbooks (Kim et al., 2019) used at the upper secondary level include sections designed for writing practices, I was curious about whether he received writing instruction in school and what his experience of learning how to write in English in Korea was like. Jiwoo's answer was, "…first and second [year in] middle school I didn't learn how to write. Like third [year in] middle school…I went to [a private] academy…I learned writing part at that time" (Interview, May 13, 2018). Suggested in his answer was that for literacy learning in English, in particular, writing, he did not have access to writing instruction in the formal school system in Korea. Instead, he received writing instruction at a private institution.

In summary, Jiwoo had access to real-world English-speaking contexts for a short time at the elementary level. At the secondary level, he had limited opportunities to familiarize himself with a wide range of English including written and spoken English. What he was familiar with was written text included in lessons or textbooks in school.

The Learning of School Literacy as a Newcomer in Canada: High School

"…*to feel more comfortable, I think it needs more than 2 or 3 years*" (Interview, December 21, 2018).

Normal functions that humans possess enable us to process what we see, hear, and feel. And we become accustomed to a certain pace or speed of processing information that enters our

system. But when it takes longer than the anticipated processing time, resulting in lagging behind the normal pace, it is more likely for us to feel frustrated, requiring patience and alternative mediational means to improve the situation. This section is about the complexity of learning with countless delays of processing and understanding that Jiwoo experienced as a newcomer in an English-speaking high school in Canada.

The Weight of a New Learning: New Content in a New Language

As the grade level increases, the nature of curriculum and schooling becomes more complex with specialized information, requiring not only previously learned disciplinary knowledge but also more advanced thinking and literacy skills, involving academic language (Gee, 2012; Uccelli & Galloway, 2017). When students from English speaking backgrounds do not possess these elements, school learning can pose significant challenges for their learning. Then, it is not difficult to assume that extra weight can be added when students have to learn, yet do not have fully developed English, which was the case for Jiwoo.

Jiwoo recalled that it took nearly three years for him to feel more comfortable with the content taught in a subject, social studies, in high school. His sense of new learning in a new language while working within a new educational environment was evidenced in Jiwoo's reflection on social studies classes:

> I never studied history of Canada, right? So, that was *pretty fresh* for me. And also it was pretty difficult to memorize or, like, to talk with peers. But my peers were helping me out to explain what happened in the past" (Interview, December 21, 2018).

Jiwoo's words, "pretty fresh," meant starting from the very beginning or almost entirely something new. As the curriculum was developed for local students who learned the content included in previous curriculum, it was a challenge for Jiwoo to learn new content without

background knowledge. Even though certain parts of a lesson could be regarded as declarative knowledge, it was not easy for Jiwoo to retain new information without relevant background information when studying history in particular. As indicated in the excerpts above, Jiwoo could fill the information gap between previously taught content and new content with his peers' assistance. In other words, Jiwoo drew on peers' funds of knowledge to learn new content.

Reading to Listen: Limited Listening Skills and the Role of Reading

> *I forgot what it was like*
>
> *in my first 6 months in this country.*
>
> *But you reminded me*
>
> *to trace memories of those days.*
>
> *I used to say a lot*
>
> *pardon me, excuse me,*
>
> *what did she say, what did he say,*
>
> *how do you say…*
>
> *how do you spell…*
>
> *In my faded notebook dated Jan. 13, 1998*
>
> *Many words and expressions I know now,*
>
> *but didn't know then*
>
> *caught my eye*
>
> *Premier, revenue, worried sick…*

<p style="text-align:center">(My personal notes, July 2022)</p>

Many of us may take it for granted that we can recognize and understand words that we see and hear. And many of us may not even remember or think about how we acquired language and literacy from childhood to adolescent years. I started this section with poetic notes related to grasping the sound and meaning of spoken English during my early years in Canada, which was reminded of through Jiwoo's recollections. Now I attempt to illustrate how Jiwoo navigated undetectable foreign sounds of English when learning in high school.

Jiwoo recalled that a challenge in the early period in Canada was understanding *real-world conversation*, which he never experienced except for the short three-month experience in Australia in grade five. Jiwoo compared how he felt about listening in ESL classes with regular classes since he was enrolled in regular classes that demanded less academic language in high school, was concurrently enrolled in ESL classes in the first two terms in a Canadian high school. In Jiwoo's reflection, his ability to listen and comprehend peers' and a teacher's instruction in ESL classes was adequate. In contrast, in regular classes, what he could not understand was greater than what he understood. Jiwoo's difficulty with listening in English-speaking contexts can be understood in the following excerpt.

> I was able to understand in ESL class 'cause they make the *slow speaking* for us, right? But regular class, I wasn't able to understand. But with friends, they tried to make me understand. So that's why my English at that time…was 3-4 [out of 10] because I was not able to understand *real Canadian conversation*, right? (Interview, December 23, 2019)

I was curious about how he managed note-taking and asked Jiwoo about this since he had difficulties with understanding spoken communication in class. Jiwoo's response was, "Not sure. It's 50% I think… at that time I missed very many parts because I had to think [in] Korean and

write it down. This kind of process, very complicated to take all notes." What is implied in "50%" is that he managed a bare minimum of notetaking.

Jiwoo's limited listening skill posed another challenge with his literacy learning. It occurred when listening materials were included in a literate activity. Jiwoo explained that when he had to listen to educational materials in class, he felt that he could not have a clear understanding of the text if he failed to understand some parts of the listening material. For this reason, he could not use the listening material for literate activities, such as writing, in school. Subsequently, he had fewer choices of sources for doing the assigned literate work, writing. Vygotsky (1978) reminds us that humans have innate ability to use external tools/materials to fulfill a specific goal. And here Jiwoo, too, had his own way to deal with or compromise his limited listening, which is presented in the following excerpt.

> There's a whole listening part. If I miss first part, I wasn't able to follow up…. Actually, I tried to use *many reading source*. If I missed listening source, I didn't use the listening source because it was not sure, not clear to me. So yeah, I only used the reading part (Interview, December 21, 2018).

Jiwoo's strategic approach was excluding the listening source, using only reading sources. Here, it needs to be addressed that Jiwoo's mode of voice is affirmative, showing his confidence in his strength, reading. He could not hold onto the sound of the listening material to re-listen whereas he had a better control of written sources because they did not slip away from him. That he intentionally used *many reading sources* for the literate activity can be interpreted as reading helped him to listen or compromise what slipped away from his ears, just like I tried to grasp the sound of *real-world* English with the aid of written text in my early years in Canada.

The Culture of Teaching and Learning: From an Eye Learner to a Knowledge Producer

As the present study is informed by sociocultural framework that emphasizes the historical development of a learner (Vygotsky, 1978), I invited Jiwoo to reflect on his learning experiences in a former context, Korea, and more recent context, Canada in the initial phase of the study (PIA item 2). Prominent in Jiwoo's reflection on literacy learning was gratification that came from his perceived *freedom* and *flexibility* in the Canadian educational environment for studying. Favoring Canadian educational environment over Korean, Jiwoo explained differences between the two educational contexts. According to Jiwoo, learning in Korea demanded increasing declarative knowledge primarily by memorizing what was presented in class while students had little authority and freedom in how they studied.

> …when I learned Korean, math, science, all of it, teachers let us remember this part, this part. And then like this, "you guys have to remember this. Memorize all of these by tomorrow. And then, I am gonna check it" (Interview, June 23, 2019).

Different degrees of freedom and flexibility in studying between the two countries were more explicit in Jiwoo's experience of English learning.

> Every day, remember the vocabulary [in Korea]. I felt like it's *forcing*, it's not learning of language. So that's why I think even though I spent much time on learning English in Korea, but I could not… improve the quality of English. However, when I went to Canada, it's very different. It was very funny [fun] to learn…It was not that special strategy. Just talking to people and then writing something and learn to listen. *Natural learning*. I didn't feel like forcing. Also I wanted to be *English speaker*. I wanted to learn. (Interview, October 29, 2016).

Jiwoo was gratified by the fact that he could advance his knowledge without simply memorizing. Instead, he could learn in a more *natural way*, working with peers, thus beyond learning merely by reading. Implied in Jiwoo's words, "remember the vocabulary [in Korea]. I felt like it's *forcing*, it's not learning of language," was that he realized that rote-memorization oriented language learning was too *artificial*, which did not help him move beyond consuming knowledge without any creativity. Jiwoo's reflection suggested that in Korea he learned only to consume knowledge rather than producing. On the other hand, in Canada, he felt that learning could be dynamic and flexible, allowing a certain degree of freedom and authority for learners to control their knowledge. Naturally, Jiwoo's desire to learn increased when he had more control of his learning by being engaged in sharing and producing knowledge. It was evidenced in his words, "talking to people and then writing something and learn to listen… *Natural learning*. I didn't feel like forcing. Also I wanted to be *English speaker*. I wanted to learn."

School Writing as Culture Shock

> *Who knew it would take*
>
> *this long?*
>
> *Nobody told me*
>
> *for this long.*
>
> *It's okay, I am here*
>
> *where it took me.*

<div align="center">(My interpretation of Jiwoo's words, July 2022)</div>

Studies of education and literacy inform us that school learning can be a form of culture shock (Connor, 1996; Miller, 2004). Culture shock in literacy learning can occur when students' literacy backgrounds and what is expected in school literacy are different (Connor, 1996) or

when they are unable to participate in classroom activities as confidently and equally as peers due to their differential knowledge and practice of language compared with their peers (Miller, 2004).

Indeed, in Jiwoo's case, such culture shock was pervasive in his high school learning in Canada. Coming from the Korean educational system that placed little emphasis on writing (composition) either in Korean or English education, one of the difficulties Jiwoo encountered in high school was writing. Jiwoo was not only unprepared, but also unaware of the degree to which writing was used in school learning when he was enrolled in a Canadian high school. It was, in turn, a culture shock or barrier to overcome. In Jiwoo's reflection on his English classes at the secondary level in Korea, he explicitly stated, "…in middle school…we don't actually write enough in English class or even Korean class…so *I don't really know writing part*" (Interview, December 21, 2018).

The fact that he had limited experiences of writing both in Korean and English meant that writing was certainly a new dimension of literacy for Jiwoo to learn. Jiwoo expressed his unpreparedness for writing in high school. "…it [writing] was *pretty difficult* for me…because it was *many different type of writing*" (Interview, May 13, 2018). Although he did *not* use the expression, *shock*, in describing his writing experiences, his sense of culture shock stemming from writing was suggested in the degree of difficulty he felt, as shown in "*pretty difficult*." In addition, considering that his starting point was the state of "*not knowing"* how to write*,* it can be assumed that the degree of pressure and challenges he felt could be quite a shock especially when he encountered "*many different type[s] of writing,"* as he said.

To remind readers, it took decades for me to reach an entry level of creative writing as I addressed in an earlier chapter. It was one hurdle, creative writing, that I barely jumped over

whereas Jiwoo had to jump over many hurdles during the high school period. It is this empathy that I felt about Jiwoo's learning experience of writing when conversing with him and his text.

Literacy Learning in Subjects: Social Studies

Students depend largely on teachers for their learning since teachers play a pivotal role in making school knowledge accessible in the classroom. Admittedly, certain aspects of knowledge can be delivered or taught through teachers' explicit instruction whereas certain aspects of knowledge can be learned more effectively when more time is allowed for students to learn the target knowledge implicitly. Although various approaches to teaching have been introduced by educators and researchers, less attention has been given to how students understand the effects of differing teaching practices on their learning. In the process of my inquiry, I had a privilege to learn Jiwoo's insight into teaching and learning in social studies classes and his own working theory of school literacy, which is discussed in the following sections.

Learning How to Think in a New Culture: Implicit Learning

As the present study progressed, Jiwoo could provide more details related to literacy learning and practice in high school. He was also becoming more analytical when responding to my questions. At the same time, I, too, was changing. The more I conversed with him, the more I was attuned to Jiwoo's sense of literacy. Finally, I realized that Jiwoo offered a whole new landscape of *thought* in relation to literacy, broadening my knowledge of literacy and writing. More specifically, the new landscape that Jiwoo brought forth was about *inter-relationship between learning how to think* and *how to write*, particularly for language learners, newcomers.

Jiwoo gave highest priority to thoughts and ideas in writing. For Jiwoo, the problem was not with the act of generating an idea itself, but more with acquiring a sense of cultural norms rooted and implicitly practiced in literate activities. It was precisely the pre-existing tacit rules or

common sense entrenched in the new culture he wanted to know in order to make sense of his

thoughts to his peers, seeking common ground for humanity. Reflecting on group discussion,

Jiwoo expressed,

> …[my ability of] supporting [ideas] was limited, umm, because I don't know about
>
> Canada style when I compare to my peers…yeah, *supporting*. Just I don't know how to
>
> say, like natural style, *their natural style of writing and thinking.* That was frustrating to
>
> me because I didn't have that thing…I don't know. How can I say that thing? (Interview,
>
> June 23, 2019).

Rather than saying his English was limited or he did not understand expressions or words used

among peers, he used the expressions "*Canada style"* and *"their natural style of writing and*

thinking." I interpret his expression "style" as a *schema* since Jiwoo's frustration stemmed from

his *not knowing* underlying rules for supporting ideas to make sense of his thoughts to others.

Schema refers to a mental framework used for sorting or organizing information (Ferris

& Hedgecock, 2014; Torney-Purta, 1991), which is developed on a basis of milieus of

experiences. Studies have shown that experiences in different contexts and conditions affect

mental functioning in approaching or solving problems, carrying out tasks, or interpretation of a

certain situation or text (Gee, 2012; Scribiner & Cole, 1981; Wertsch, 1991). In other words,

prior experience and knowledge pervade individuals' mental functions including processing oral

or written discourses, and expressing ideas. From this perspective, I contend that central to the

communicative issue during group discussions that Jiwoo encountered, it was more about how to

process his thinking in order to make sound arguments, conforming to the schemata expected by

his peers.

The Role of Peer Interaction in the Development of Thinking Skills and School Learning

Gee (2012) posits that the acquisition of literacy includes not only understanding text in certain ways but also talking, interacting, and thinking in certain ways, wherein attitudes and values are embedded in their social practices. From a sociocultural perspective, crucial to human development and literacy, are exposures to or being engaged in social practices. For school-aged children, school serves as an important social space, in which interactions with teacher and peers occur simultaneously, contributing to enhancing individuals' learning and cognitive development.

Prominent in Jiwoo's reflection on high school experiences was the importance and benefits of working with peers. Peer interaction within and outside classrooms played a significant role in the development of Jiwoo's thinking and writing skills. Conscious of his weakness in supporting ideas, Jiwoo appreciated opportunities to be engaged in peer discussion, wherein he could familiarize himself with varying worldviews in the new culture, which could be extended even after class. Jiwoo's appreciation of peer interaction was evident in his reflection. "…I was able to take a look Canadians' point of view and their thinking. It was very different from my ideas. So I was like 'yeah, this is very good idea.' At that time, I thought like this" (Interview, December 21, 2018). Suggested in the excerpt was a cultural difference in thoughts and worldviews between himself and his peers. "It was very different from my ideas" could be not only variations of idea, but also the values and beliefs reflected in the ideas of his peers, just like Gee's (2012) arguments about literacy and Discourses. Gee (2012) reminds us that exposures to varieties of discourses help individuals gain meta-knowledge, which expands cognitive capacity, when they are conscious of what they already have, and what they are trying to do or attempting to acquire.

As Jiwoo had limited exposure to sociocultural experiences in English speaking contexts and his learning experiences at the secondary level in Korea was teacher-centered, his access to peers' thoughts itself was valuable in his new learning, which can be easy for teachers or local students to forget or ignore. Although peer interaction did not offer overt teaching of how to think and negotiate in the new culture, it can be assumed that Jiwoo could gain the tacit knowledge of how to think and communicate in new ways through peer interaction. The informal tacit knowledge and learning of how to think could be preserved (Vygotsky, 2012a), and equally recycled in writing, since the act of writing cannot be possible without thinking.

Moreover, Jiwoo placed high value on peer discussion and peer support in his literacy development, which he juxtaposed with teacher-talk in terms of the benefits and degrees of comfort and affordance he felt. Jiwoo stated,

…teacher discussion is very important but I think peer discussion is more important, making more confident. …teacher is familiar but *peer is more familiar*, right? Because of their *help* I was able to, to be more familiar…yeah…after class we can talk about the discussion [we had] in class. *Even after class*… (Interview, December 21, 2018).

Implied in the excerpt was that the accessibility of peer activities became a source of support or assistance with his literacy development. His notion of *familiarity* could mean both the psychological and the physical. First, the psychological familiarity could mean that he felt closer and more equal with peers than teachers at the intellectual level in terms of knowledge and discourses he possessed as a learner. Second, the physical familiarity could mean that he felt closer with peers physically than teachers since peers were present and available when he needed assistance in learning and literate practices. In contrast, the teacher's help or assistance was

distant or less available because of the nature of the classroom environment wherein the teacher's time and attention was distributed to multiple students. As argued by Vygotsky (1978), timely assistance allows individuals to be more capable in solving problems, which can be internalized, leading to independent development. Jiwoo's expressions, such as "their [peers'] help" and extended discussion "after class," can be regarded as the timely assistance which enabled him to expand his capacity to think and actively adapt his thought processes to the new cultural context.

The message from Jiwoo was that being a newcomer and language learner posed extra layers of challenges in learning at the upper secondary level. However, an unexpected resource that benefited him was the support he received from his peers, both within and outside the classroom setting.

False Belief of Writing: Performing Language at the Cost of Ideas

The present study is informed by the sociocultural framework that contends that the human mind is a by-product resulting from contact with the external world (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). For this reason, I want to remind readers that in Korea, Jiwoo's most familiar form of text was written text in English textbooks, which were prepared for English learners. Presumably, his familiarity with written text continued in his learning in a Canadian high school. However, it is known that written text at the upper secondary level demands increased knowledge and use of complex sentence structure, difficult vocabulary, and dense phrases (Jourdain & Sharma, 2016; Uccelli & Galloway, 2017). It was possible that these features of written text in school affected Jiwoo's perception of academic writing.

Recalling his writing experiences in English, Jiwoo expressed that he had an assumption that good academic writing should consist of advanced vocabulary and long sentences. He tried

to include those elements in writing consciously. Thus, he was linguistically conscious when writing. His assumption about good writing and his linguistic consciousness as an L2 writer is shown in the following excerpts,

> Before, I was thinking that *long English sentence* is…very good English. That's why I was trying to write very long sentences (Interview, May 13, 2018).

> In high school I used very complicated vocabulary and very complicated word… I used very long sentence. Like, I didn't have to do that. I can make it shorter (Interview, December 21, 2018).

I wondered how teachers' advice/feedback or writing instruction affected Jiwoo's literate behavior, which was a by-product of his assumptions or prejudice of good writing. What surfaced in Jiwoo's reflection was that there was little change with his own belief of good writing in his writing practices in high school although he received both general and detailed advice for writing from two subject teachers, namely, an English language arts teacher and a social studies teacher. Jiwoo explained that when he asked two teachers for advice about writing, the two subject teachers had a shared view of writing. Their common advice was, "Writing is like what you want to say or what you're thinking" (Interview, December 21, 2018). That is to say, the two teachers centered on *thought* for writing in their subjects.

Despite their shared view of writing, Jiwoo explained that their feedback on his writing in the two subjects was starkly different. From a student's perspective, Jiwoo felt that his English language arts teacher's feedback focused more on linguistic elements. Jiwoo recalled, "…in English class when I write a sentence, English teacher can correct my writing: "You can write shorter" or "You can make clear"" (Interview, December 21, 2018). In other words, the English language arts teacher's feedback on Jiwoo's writing centered around corrective feedback,

economic writing, and clarity of writing. On the other hand, in Jiwoo's understanding of his

social studies teacher's input on his writing, demonstrating subject knowledge was prioritized to

grammatical correctness and the structure of writing (e.g., including introduction and body

paragraphs). Jiwoo stated,

> In the social class they didn't correct structure and any other things…even grammar
>
> thing. The social class [teacher] fix right or not, like this, "Oh, this is the fact at that
>
> time". Or "This is not the fact. This is wrong." And then, "I agree with that", yeah, like
>
> this…Even though I get bad grammar, [I got] better [marks] even though I have many
>
> grammar error, [it] doesn't matter. Yeah, it matters but not that much, I think, yeah.
>
> (Interview, December 21, 2018).

From a researcher and educator's standpoint, I assume that an English language arts

teacher's suggestion for economic writing, and Jiwoo's assumption of good writing and literate

behavior with complicated words and long sentences might be related. However, suggested in

the above excerpts is that Jiwoo did not recognize the positive relationship between the teacher's

advice to write shorter and Jiwoo's habit of writing with long sentences. And presumably,

Jiwoo's non-economical writing continued in social studies since the teacher's input focused

mainly on content knowledge, paying little attention to the literate behavior presented in Jiwoo's

writing. Support of this analysis was found in Jiwoo's explanation of his changed understanding

of and attitude toward writing after graduating from high school.

Looking back on his writing practices in high school, Jiwoo hinted that he was over-

conscious of performing language at the cost of his ideas when writing in high school. It

appeared that Jiwoo upheld his false belief of good writing until he took English language

courses at the post-secondary level where he received explicit instruction for writing with

multiple individual feedback from English teachers. He explained that when he took the English courses, he learned that long sentences and difficult vocabulary might not necessarily contribute to producing good writing. He also realized that it could be less effective for conveying his intended meaning because it was more likely for him to make more errors when he used difficult vocabulary or sentence structure for writing. Jiwoo's renewed sense of writing was presented in the following excerpt: "I was thinking, "this is pretty simple English and simple sentence"… I felt I saw different practice of English" (Interview, May 13, 2018). Indeed, he was surprised in a positive way to know that his struggles with lengthy sentences and words were unnecessary.

Working Theory of Writing: Writing as Thought

In Jiwoo's learning in Canada, one of the most significant dimensions of literacy was writing, which emerged from the initial meeting with him. Jiwoo's accumulated reflection on learning in the Canadian school system disclosed his own working theory of writing. In Jiwoo's account of writing, the importance of *thought* was deeply seated, wherein writing was viewed as a bearer of thought and meaning. His notions of the matter of thought in writing were expressed in different ways, yet, not always obviously and explicitly. It was more like he was working on his own analysis and synthesis of writing, which I interpret as Jiwoo's conceptualization or working definition of writing. He offered his general sense of writing in North America, connecting with thinking. "…like in North America when you write personal writing or some writing, we have to write our thinking, right, writing what I think, right? That's why writing [is] thinking. Writing style and thinking style are very similar (Interview, December 21, 2018). The excerpt suggests that Jiwoo observed a similarity between ways of thinking in English and writing in English from an L2 speaker's perspective, realizing a cultural difference between L1

Korean and L2 English. He hinted that ways of thinking were reflected in writing, which was clear for him to identify as a newcomer.

However, it was not straightforward or easy for him to articulate his idea of the link between thinking and writing by relating to concrete contexts and examples. He searched for the right words (Vygotsky, 2012a) to explicate his nuanced sense of writing and to lay out every word toward the whole of the meaning of writing (Gadamer, 2013). Jiwoo gave *story* as an example for explaining what writing is about, and therein emerged his comprehensive concept of writing.

His abstract idea about writing, in a nutshell, could be brought forth when I asked him for a further explanation of the relationship between story and writing during the interview. The conversation between Jiwoo and myself is below:

R (Researcher): When you talk about stories, are you talking about reading stories or listening to stories?

J (Jiwoo): Umm, I can't say, I can't select one because *listening* is also…. Teachers say to students, "Please *watch* a movie and *write* your feelings about the movie," right? Maybe *all of viewing, listening, or book*….

R: Then…that kind of thing [viewing, listening, or book] is related to *thinking skills* or…. (interrupted by J).

J: I think so. *Yes, that is what I wanted to say*. Yeah, thinking skill and thinking part. *Writing is what I think and write on paper or computer*. Yeah, thinking skill, thinking part, yeah (Interview, June 23, 2019).

Jiwoo characterized *writing as thinking* based on his literacy practices in the classroom in high school. From the perspective of a learner who came from a different educational system and

culture, he perceived that a common aspect among writing tasks responding to each literate activity was formulating and presenting thoughts. This led him to form a general concept of writing. However, rather than his conceptualization of writing being complete, he was in the initial stage of forming this new working concept during his engagement in the interview. Thus, he was still in the process of forming a concept of writing based on his hermeneutic understanding of literate activities in school learning. At the same time, he was also processing how to render his understanding into a verbal expression.

Nevertheless, I could sense the meaning he was pointing to. I assume this could be possible because I was bound to our own community of a "conversation" (Gadamer, 2013, p. 387). The dialogue above presents this critical moment when the two of us were engaged in externalizing and articulating his shared idea with finite language together. My attempt to reinstate his words for clarification ("that kind of thing is related to thinking skills…") and his immediate interruption to ascertain his idea by recollecting my recast of his words ("I think so…thinking skill and thinking part. *Writing is what I think and write on paper or computer…*") demonstrate the evidence of our "common language" (Gadamer, 2013, p. 386) or our mutual understanding of what writing was to Jiwoo.

I was astounded by the fact that our conversation lent his conceptualization of writing as thought. For me, his characterization of writing was thought-provoking since I had never thought about writing in the way Jiwoo perceived. That is to say, until I met Jiwoo, my understanding of writing was associated with the literature related to literacy and writing, wherein writing is often characterized as a mode of communication that requires specific discourse style and form distinct from speech (e.g., Ong, 2012; Olson, 2008; Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002; Vygotsky, 2012a, b). As Ong (2012) asserts that writing restructures one's consciousness, I was expecting to discover

how writing affected his thinking or organization of his thoughts through during the inquiry, not his offer of a new concept of writing from a newcomer learner's perspective. Jiwoo's conceptualization of writing as thought indeed consolidated the significance of learning how to think for his school learning and writing.

Summary

Although Jiwoo learned English for several years, his English learning took place primarily in classroom settings in his home country (Korea) prior to his high school life in Canada. Accordingly, learning in an English-speaking high school posed many challenges, from the understanding of real-world English to the learning of new content in a new language. Despite his limited English, he could quickly adapt to the new learning environment partly because of his sociable character and partly because of peers' sufficient support within and outside the school. From a newcomer learner's perspective, the culture of teaching and learning in Canada offered more freedom and possibilities to know and mature as an adolescent learner than his prior learning in Korea, which he enjoyed and appreciated. However, since he had little exposure to writing, the amount of writing required in school learning was a culture shock for him. In terms of learning to write, he was concerned more with how to think in new cultural ways than with written products, which was affected by his implicit understanding that all literate activities in class, including writing, were linked to the development of thinking skills. Such hermeneutical understanding led him to propose an idea that writing is a by-product of thought.

Chapter Six: Sophia's Story

More than a Language Learner: Striving to Be a Competent Writer

Introduction
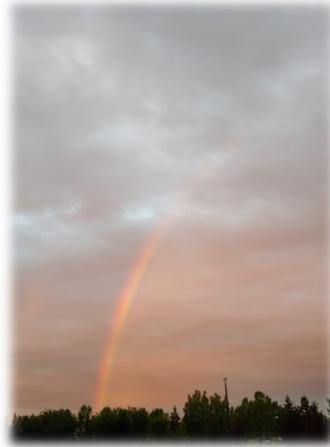
Note. Photo taken in 2022. Own work.

A splendid dawn brought hues of the rainbow

Against the murky clouds.

A step backward to see the whole of it

A step forward to get closer to the hues

Here I am, seeing you from afar.

(My personal notes, July 2022)

When new norms and reality were imposed on us in early 2020, many of us hoped that we could go back to normal life sooner. Experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic was not our choice or will. And there was absurd distance that we had to endure for quite a period. Perhaps many of us had a humble hope—seeing each other in person freely sooner than later. It was this unprecedented and unforeseen historical context that I was in when the present inquiry was

designed and conducted. Returning from an almost one-and-a-half-year-long leave, I felt

fortunate that I could continue my study and conduct research even though I could meet a new

research participant, Sophia, only on the virtual format. *Rainbow* in my personal notes above is a

metaphor for the thankfulness about being able to proceed with my inquiry, recruiting a new

participant, Sophia, during the pandemic. Rainbow also represents the nature of temporariness or

impermanence that makes us want to prolong its short-lived beauty. Regretfully, it resembles my

interaction with Sophia. That is to say that we could see only from afar, except for one incident

when we briefly saw each other at a store with masks on, as a cashier (Sophia) and as a customer

(myself).

This chapter is about Sophia's literacy learning experiences. It should be noted that the

structure of this chapter parallels Chapter Five, consisting of the following themes: *portrait*

(background) of the participant; prehistory of development and literacy from childhood to mid-

adolescent years; the learning of school literacy as a newcomer in Canada; and *literacy learning*

in subjects (Social Studies). Readers should also be reminded that these themes comprise sub-

themes that emerged from conversations with Sophia. Discussions under the main and sub-

themes serve as answers to three research questions of the present study. In the following

section, I provide the background information of Sophia followed by her early literacy learning.

Portrait of Sophia

Sophia (pseudonym) was in her early 20s and a second-year undergraduate student

majoring in education at a university in Western Canada when she participated in the present

study. She was born in South Korea (hereafter Korea) as a daughter of highly educated parents.

As her father was a professor at a Korean university, who had expertise in Western philosophy,

Sophia benefited greatly from her father's cultural capital, including his academic knowledge in

his field, opportunities to live abroad, and comprehensive knowledge pertaining to school literacy expected in Western contexts. When she was in grade 4, Sophia and her family moved to Canada to accompany her father, who had a two-year academic engagement in a Canadian university. Sophia's family's moving to Canada afforded her to study in the Canadian education system in grades 4 and 5, leading to her becoming a bilingual and biliterate—Korean and English. Later, Sophia returned to Korea with fond memories of lived experiences in Canada when her father's duty in Canada was finished. She continued her education from grade 6 to grade 9 in Korea. However, aspiring to better opportunities for self-development, she was attracted more to educational experiences in Canada than in Korea, which her parents could support by having the whole family move back to Canada where she could study at a Canadian high school as an international student. Sophia's high intrinsic motivation for self-development and hard work ethic rewarded her a high school diploma in three years. Nevertheless, dissatisfied with her high school grades, she re-took high school courses required for applying at a university in Canada. Her upgraded grades helped her to pass the gate and enter a university program, Education, in which she became an active student of education for promoting anti-racism.

Prehistory of Development and Literacy from Childhood to Mid-Adolescent Years

"I wrote, like, a poem in English and I also wrote like a poem in…Korean" (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Migration is a global phenomenon today. While there are various reasons for migrating[17] (Kingma, 2006; Salma, Hegadoren, & Ogilvie, 2011), when a family migrates, parents typically bring their children with them to a new country, wherein they resettle. For children, resettlement

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[17] Reasons for migrating to a new country can be political reason, economic reason, career/business reason, employment, educational reason, and accompanying a partner or family (Blythe & Baumann, 2008; Kingma, 2006; Salma, Hegadoren, & Ogilvie, 2011).

means not only experiencing a new home environment but also entering a new community of

learning and socialization, which occurs in a new culture and language. Ultimately, children's

smooth adaptation to the new environment can be the utmost concern for migrant parents (Shin,

2010). Likewise, it is salient for educators to have a good understanding of how these children's

new experiences impact their learning in order to provide adequate care/support for the lives of

students since caring is inherent to their work (Mackay & Sutherland, 2012; Smith, 1983, cited in

Carson, 1986). As I traversed between two countries (Korea and Canada) with my own offspring

when they were little, I, as a parent and educator, have always been curious about their

reflections on their transnational experiences outside the home environment. The present study

was an opportune moment for me to find an answer to my curiosity, through my encounter with

Sophia in particular. In what follows, I provide details of Sophia's transnational experience as a

school learner and its subsequent effects on her language and literacy development as an

emergent bilingual.

Transnational School Learning

Moving to a new country can be an adventurous event or fun event for a little child when

adequate protection and care are ensured in her new journey. Sophia's transnational experience

began in grade 4 when she came to Canada with her whole family. One might assume that

language could be a factor that hindered her from adapting smoothly to the new environment,

both in educational and social aspects of her life since she came from a non-English speaking

country, Korea. Surprisingly, however, language was not an issue in Sophia's case although her

English was limited. Reflecting on her first two years in a Canadian elementary school, Sophia

stated,

> …younger children have, don't really think about how…that person is that

different…they didn't really have anything against me. I just had a *good time*. It's, I had

many friends. I had no problem communicating really… I was always kind of a *reserved*

kid but I had fun with my friends. I even had a birthday party…like, 10 friends came… I

just had no problem, not either socializing or even with schoolwork. It's almost safe to

say that I had *no problem with study* (Interview, April 25, 2022).

Suggested in the lived reality in the life of the transnational learner is that the age of innocence

allowed her to have abundant opportunities to participate in social activities, freely interacting

with peers, which served as settings for learning how to communicate in English. It can also be

interpreted in a more linguistic term as the advantage of being in an "early appropriation of

language" (Lantolf, 2011, p. 25), yielding to the acquisition of the new language with little

conscious effort. Presumably, she could operationalize the implicit cultural and linguistic

knowledge that she acquired through informal peer interactions in literate activities in class or

vice versa. Her statement of "*no problem with study*" may mean that from a learner's

perspective, she did not feel inferior to her peers in terms of academic literacy and academic

performance after a certain point during the two-year period.

Another notable aspect suggested implicitly in the excerpts is evidence of parental

support/care for her engagements in social activities. Her birthday party, to which nearly a dozen

children were invited, is the evidence of parental care that helped her adapt to the new

environment smoothly even though she was a quiet child as seen in her expression, a "reserved

kid." Thus, in the case of Sophia, while entering a new community of learning at an early age

enabled her to enjoy not only a pleasant socialization process but also to pick up and practice the

new language naturally, vigilant care of her parents ensured her smooth journey in Canada.

After the two-year-immersed learning in Canada, Sophia returned to Korea where she studied the entire middle school (junior high) curriculum including English as a foreign language. As her English was already fluent and superior to her peers, she was given opportunities to demonstrate her fluent English in class, such as reading English text to the whole class, which she enjoyed and took pride in. However, except the enjoyment in English classes, she felt a sense of disquiet about studying in the Korean education system mainly because of the issues pertaining to test-oriented teaching and learning, which was similar to Jiwoo in the previous chapter. It was this dissatisfaction that made her seek possibilities to *learn differently*, which led to her return to Canada for high school. Sophia explained her situation below,

> *I was the one who wanted to come back* because I felt like in Korea, I wasn't really doing a great job in terms of school… *it wasn't working for me*, I guess, in terms of studying and my friend group. Yeah, so I was, like, "Oh, I can't do this. I have to go to Canada".
> So it was kind of *escape* almost, I guess (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Her expression, "*I was the one who wanted to come back,*" shows her agency, taking an initiative (van Lier, 2008) and actualizing her "rational point of view" (Ahearn, 2001, p. 114) on the two different educational environments while demonstrating her awareness of the responsibility for her action. Canada was her *escape* from her perceived constraints in Korea to her flight of growth as a curious individual, to a land of hope for new opportunities.

Early Literacy Learning as an Emergent Bilingual

"How many languages do you speak?"

"Two. Korean and English"

"Oh, two?"

"I know lots of Korean, so I can speak Korean even when sleeping"

"Oh?"

"I know lots of English too, but sometimes I don't know some words"

"Oh! You're rich though, don't forget"

(My imaginative conversation with an emergent bilingual child, re-thinking about my child's and Sophia's childhood, August 2022)

When children go to school, they already bring with them to the classroom their spontaneously acquired prior knowledge and experiences, such as the laws or rules of a culture and language use (Vygotsky, 1978). For Sophia's case, she brought her naturally acquired Korean as well as literacy skills in Korean to her grade-four classroom in Canada. In addition to Korean, she also had some knowledge of English, which was accumulated from her early learning in Korea, rather than an absence of English knowledge. Although artifacts produced in her early literate activity were unavailable, Sophia's positive memory of her writing project in grade 4 and her homeroom teacher, who she identified as one of her memorable teachers, revealed the degree of her intrinsic motivation for literacy learning and practice and her way of meaning-making as an emergent bilingual, exercising her authority/ownership of two languages. According to Sophia,

> …when I first came to Canada…like, grade 4, I wrote, like, *my writing skill in English was pretty limited* at that time. But he [homeroom teacher] really liked my writing and he encouraged a lot. Like, one thing that I remember was, I was, like, creating a book activity and so I wrote, like, *a poem in English*. And I also wrote, like, *a poem* in English, I mean *Korean*. And he really took the effort to read it although he didn't know the language, yeah. So he was like, "Oh, it looks really pretty and I really appreciate that you wrote in Korean" (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Although it was not explicitly expressed, for Sophia, a teacher's acknowledgment of her poetry writing in two languages meant more than just feedback. It was a reward for practicing her freedom of expression and aesthetic and intellectual sense of words/language. Undoubtfully, Korean was a better-known language for Sophia, whereas English was a new language with which she just started to latch on meanings of words in a different cultural sense. Although her senses of the two languages might have been different, Sophia's self-sense of linguistic identity was an emergent bilingual, as presented in her bi-literate behaviour of writing a poem. Since English entered her pre-existing system of linguistic consciousness, which was Korean, Sophia did not or could not abandon or hide Korean. Consequently, she re-structured her linguistic enterprise by exhibiting bi-/multi-lingual habitus in a creative text. Although the direction of cross-linguistic transfer in Sophia's poetry writing is unidentifiable due to lack of physical evidence, it would be plausible to say that Sophia's process of meaning-making took place depending more on Korean than English, when considering the fact that she already had culminated implicit knowledge of how to use language for expressive and communicative purposes in Korean. Support of this argument can be Lantolf's (2011) notion that consciousness occurs primarily in a speaker's first language, and a tendency documented in studies is that emergent bi-/multilinguals can often express their ideas and emotions more freely and accurately in their mother tongue than a new language (Benson, 2013; Fu, 2009; Kiramba, 2016).

The Learning of School Literacy as a Newcomer in Canada: High School Years

The world that gave me bountiful memories of

fun with my friends,

Where has it gone?

(My notes evoked by Sophia's later experiences in Canada, August 2022)

It has long been argued that language and literacy are by-products of cultural practice in varying contexts from Vygotsky (1978) in the early twentieth century to today (Park, 2018; Read & Spooner, 2017; Smagorinsky, 2011). Agreeably, adequate exposure to language and literate uses in the target language is crucial for the development of language and literacy (Benson, 2013; Gee, 2012; Lantolf, 2011) whether it is in L1 or L2 contexts. An underlying assumption behind these sociocultural thoughts of language and literacy is that it is paramount for individuals to understand shared values of the community and the meanings of semiotic signs in the given environment in order to communicate effectively. Then, it is a question of how an individual might experience one's sense of language and school literacy after being absent for a prolonged period from interacting with members of the target language community, which was the case for Sophia. In the subsequent sections, I discuss what Sophia's language and literacy learning in school was like when she returned to Canada after a-four-year residency (grades 6-9) in Korea.

The World of English from the Eyes of an Emergent Bilingual: A Gulf between Childhood English and High School English

In Sophia's early learning, English did not pose any challenges to socializing or school learning in Canada. Back then, she had pleasant interactions within and outside school that enabled her to develop English effortlessly or almost non-consciously, just like many young children (Krashen, 1982). However, returning to Canada after a four-year of residency in Korea created a new reality. The world of English that Sophia saw as an adolescent was starkly different from the world in her childhood memories, which included her sense of familiarity, confidence, and comfort level that she used to have. The impact of her perceived disparate

worlds of English on her social and academic aspects of school life was profound. Sophia's renewed sense of English was illustrated in the following excerpts.

> *I couldn't speak a word*…because I was so, you know, self-conscious about myself because the level of English was so different from elementary school English. So, communication, those slang that the Canadian students pick up. And just, you know, connotation, I guess, from talking…I just didn't know any cues. I didn't understand any social cues or slang. So, that was really difficult for me, and I was really not confident. My self-esteem was just really low at that point (Interview, April 25, 2022).

Implied in *"I couldn't speak a word"* is that Sophia felt helpless in interactive situations or that she could not respond actively to communicative situations, because she was unaware of cultural references/cues that her peers used, just like the ESL students in Duff's (2002) study. In this sense, Sophia became an emergent bilingual again—this time, as a self-conscious speaker and learner who lost her confidence in English.

Having heard about her lack of confidence and low self-esteem, I was curious about her overall *understanding in academic contexts in high school,* which prompted me to ask her about this. Interestingly, Sophia's response was,

> I understood mostly everything [academic English]. In grade 10, I would say 80%. Grade 11, 12, 90-100%…it's funny because I had *no problem understanding academic English*, but with *social, social science* or *social talking* situations I would not do as great (Interview, April 25, 2022).

As suggested here, Sophia had well-developed English, which enabled her to understand most of the text used in the classroom. It should be noted that school learning at the upper secondary level entails not only new content with factual information, but also difficult concepts and

technical terms, which can even be a challenge for many local students who were born and raised in English speaking contexts (Hillocks, 2006; Troia, 2007). Taking these into account, we can assume that Sophia's intellectual ability, too, was sufficient for her grade level. Nevertheless, her unawareness of sociocultural consonance inhibited her being a responsive communicator, engendering the loss of her confidence in English and low self-esteem in school. Sophia's words, "social science or social talking," might mean situations where meanings were constructed, such as social studies, requiring socio-cultural knowledge, which she missed out between grade six and grade nine. It is this that made me re-think what being a newcomer and emergent bilingual might mean for adolescents at the secondary level.

A Choice from No Choice in School Literacy

In English speaking contexts, there is a tendency that students who came from non-English speaking countries, or whose home language is not English, are placed in English as a second language (ESL) class. Alvin Ma, who was born and raised in Canada, was such a case (Ma, 2022). Although he felt that he was a fluent speaker and proficient reader of English, Ma had to sit in classes designed for "additional English language instructions" when he was in grade 4. For his school decided what he had to study in school, he had no choice but to sit in English classes. Resembling Ma's case, I, too, heard directly from parents with minority ethnic backgrounds that their children were pulled out of regular classes and placed in ESL classes although they were fluent in English. Surprisingly, Sophia was another case who took ESL courses even though it was unnecessary for her learning in high school.

Sophia had a unique status in high school. That is, although she did not feel that she had problems with listening and reading comprehension skills in school learning, she was encouraged to take ESL courses by her school. In Sophia's words,

…to be honest with you, the school wanted more ESL students registered and ESL

classes because they would get more budget if they have more ESL kids. So they would

make us do level tests, so called, level tests every year. And then they would suggest

us…to take ESL, and…you know, take that *extra time* (Interview, April 25, 2022).

When I found out that she took ESL courses every year, I could not understand why she

had to do so because I had an assumption that her English proficiency was sufficient to

understand both English-medium instruction and written materials used in class, which she

clearly stated, as shown in the previous section. In addition, I was uncertain about why she had to

register in ESL courses even if academic advisors suggested her to take ESL courses since to

certain extent, she had control over what course to take in high school. For the aforementioned

reasons, I needed her explanation of her reasons for taking ESL courses throughout her high

school years. Sophia revealed,

…it just didn't really matter. I just said I wanted *extra time* and they [academic advisors]

will put me in an ESL class, so the ESL class. It wasn't really leveled…because there

would be kids that just came to Canada like just weeks ago and I would be sitting there

too. So, for me, it was really good (Interview, April 25, 2022).

Sophia's notion of "extra time" did not mean extra classes that could help her improve her

English. Instead, it was beneficial in two different ways. First, registering in ESL classes allowed

her to take an additional spare session for her academic timetable/schedule, which was restricted

to mainstream students. As the spare session was free of lessons, she could do her own studying,

utilizing as extra time to study. Second, although it was not significant, ESL classes served as

space where she could ask the ESL teacher questions related to writing in English when the ESL

teacher did not have any materials left to teach. Thus, registering in ESL classes was Sophia's

creative way of mediating time, demonstrating her self-management of time and studying. Therefore, *time* was the primary motivating factor for Sophia for registering in ESL classes, not learning. Implied in her words, "there would be kids that just came to Canada like just weeks ago and I would be sitting there too," was that Sophia was acutely aware that she could benefit little from ESL courses in terms of the content taught. Sophia's expression, "it was really good," meant that taking ESL courses was good in the sense that she was able to work on other literate projects, with the ESL course functioning as *spare time* or *extra space*.

Given that registering in courses was her responsibility, taking ESL courses was Sophia's own choice in a strict sense. However, Sophia's choice to register in ESL courses can be also interpreted as a choice made from no choice because it was a form of her *survival* in the Canadian education system. At the same time, her notions of an ESL class—a means for securing additional budget at the institutional level and a one-size-fits-all ESL class—made me question the truth and purpose of ESL classes at the secondary level.

Resisting the Identity of the ESL Student: Burnout from Reaching up

"I just didn't want to stay as an ESL student or international student" (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Researchers of literacy and education are increasingly aware that learners are cognitive, social, and cultural beings (Delpit, 2009; Gee, 2012; Graham & Harris, 2013; Kucer, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 1992; Park, 2018; Richardson & Flowers, 2010; Smagorinsky, 2011; Villava, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). Taking a sociocultural approach to education, Gibbons (2009) proposed that one of the viable ways to promote learners' high quality intellectual development and literacy is offering them intellectual rich literate opportunities, which should be established with teachers' high expectations and strong support. Then, from the standpoint of

language learners, it can be natural for them to expect age-appropriate pedagogy and guidance

for their learning, so that they can maximize their intellectual development. This section is about

this age-appropriate pedagogy and equitable educational environment that Sophia hoped to have

in high school.

Sadly, reality was against Sophia's ideal or hope. That is to say, Sophia alluded that a

deficit view based on linguistic prejudice (Delpit, 2009; Hawkins, 2004) was prevalent in school,

which she resisted and tried to escape from. According to Sophia,

> … they [ESL teachers] have a tendency to treat…ESL students…*as if they were talking
>
> to babies or like children*. So, it's just we're not fluent in English, it doesn't mean that we
>
> are not thinking at the same level as other students…they tend to treat us like babies.
>
> They tend to, tend to *control* us in some aspects. But I think it would be better if they
>
> treat us as, like, *just students who need extra help* I think … (Interview, January 22,
>
> 2022)

From a cognitively maturing adolescent learner's perspective back then, being treated like a child

or baby was intolerable. As suggested in her use of the pronoun, "we," she identified herself as

one of the ESL students. However, critical here is that Sophia re-established the language of ESL

students; lacking linguistic facility does not equate to ESL students' intellectual ability; ESL

students should be understood and treated as "students who need extra help," not as young

children/babies. Sophia's reconceptualization of ESL students serves as advice to ESL teachers

who are uncritical about their own language use/practice in the classroom. This

reconceptualization, indeed, calls for the critical need for equitable education beyond *control* or

management of students with baby-talk.

While baby-like treatment was a problem with teachers' pedagogic approach that should be improved, planning and managing an academic schedule was students' responsibility by large. With regard to managing school life, Sophia centered on enhancing possibilities to succeed academically. Studying as an international and ESL student in the Canadian education system meant that Sophia had to work up by moving from lower-track courses (e.g., mathematics 10-2) to higher-track courses (e.g., mathematics 10-1), which left her with little break from studying throughout the school year, and little time to participate in activities beyond the classroom. Her student life encased/entrapped in schoolwork is illustrated below.

> I was busy catching up with Canadian courses. Like, I had to take summer courses every summer because I was taking Math 2 [Mathematics-2, a lower track course] as an ESL student. So I wanted to move up to Math 1 [Mathematics-1, a higher track course]. So I was really busy with that (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Although Sophia made her way out by continually pushing herself in high school, one return of her investment was *burnout,* even today, in her life as a post-secondary student.

> …now I'm really *burnt-out-feel-like*. Cause still, from that high school experience, I feel like, I, yeah, sometimes I feel like it's *harder to move on*. It's *harder to try harder anymore.* It's like I reached that point that I can't work harder... (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Writing as a Burden: Shifting from Writing as an Enjoyable Daily Activity to a Task to Complete

Russell's (1997) study on the relationship between writing and diverse settings (e.g., school settings and non-academic settings) demonstrated that context shapes writing development, changing people as writers at the same time. In the previous chapter, I discussed

Jiwoo's experience of school writing in Canada, which I associated with a form of *culture shock* mainly because of his limited exposure to writing instruction and practices in his prior education. Jiwoo and Sophia share the same linguistic cultural backgrounds. However, it is unsound to presume that their prior literacy learning and practices resemble each other when taking into account possibilities of differing literate experiences and actions at the micro-level (individual level), as shown in studies of literacy (Russell, 1997; Yi, 2007, 2010).

For Sophia's case, writing in high school was an enormous burden, from which she literally suffered. It is not an exaggeration to say that it nearly traumatized her since its side-effect is still lingering, as shown in her words, "now I'm really *burnt-out-feel-like,*" which stemmed from her high school writing experiences. How she felt about writing and why she felt in such ways were captured lucidly in her response to one of the PIA items (Item 3) that invited her to list 20 important words that came to mind when thinking about writing in English, which are shown below.
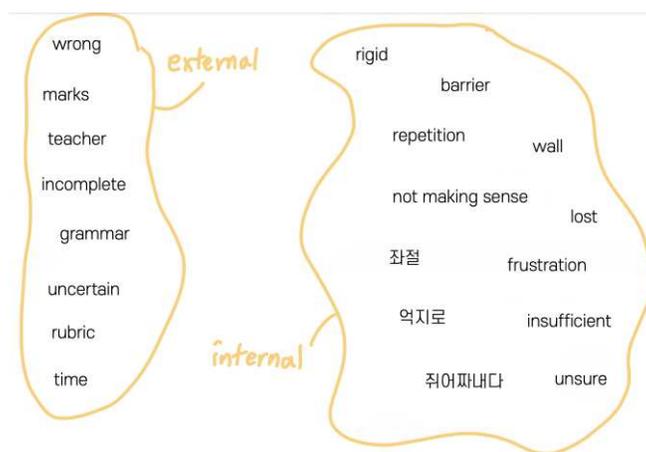
(Sophia's response to PIA Item 3, January 22, 2022)

The majority of the words that Sophia listed pertaining to writing were negative. While she primarily used English during her participation in the present study, Sophia used Korean in order to bring to the surface her deeply engraved painful memories and feelings, which are

shown in 좌절 (despair, frustration), 억지로 (being forced), and 쥐어짜내다 (squeezing out, wringing out). I did not ask her why; I did not want or need to, because I could understand and feel her anguish of writing. These Korean words led me to think of Vygotsky's (2012b) theory of *thought*, which he compared to "a cloud shedding a shower of words" (p. 266). I support Vygotsky's proposition of thought. Here, however, my irresistible thought about Sophia's case is that although she had a variety of thoughts (clouds), presumably in Korean, the clouds (thoughts) could not turn into a shower of words, requiring another step—a tactful conversion of the mode of language, from Korean to English. In other words, her clouds (thoughts) were caught/trapped in her inverting or translating process because of the lack of language facility in English, or more precisely school-based discourse. That was why she used the expression, 쥐어짜내다, which both literally and metaphorically translates to *squeezing/wringing out* words. Sophia's explanation of her response to the PIA discussed above is as follows, "I wrote 좌절 [despair], 억지로 [being forced]. And another thing I wrote was 쥐어짜내다 [squeeze/wring out]. So I don't know the standard word [in English], but I felt like, I had to… *force myself to write*, almost. So, 쥐어짜내다 [squeeze/wring out]…" (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Subsequently, writing in English was both painstaking and frustrating for Sophia, contrasting with her prior literacy experiences in Korean. Based on her narrative, Sophia relished reading in Korean, which could contribute to the development of her writing, as scholars of literacy have argued (Kucer, 2014; Shanahan, 2016). It should be noted that writing used to be Sophia's "daily activity" when Korean was the medium of language for writing. The difference between Sophia's feeling about writing in the two languages was clearly shown in her response to PIA Item 2 ("In Korean, writing was like..." and "Writing in English is like…"). Sophia characterized writing in Korean,

It [writing] came naturally for me because I loved reading since I was young. So, so I liked writing as well. I just liked expressing my thoughts after I read something. So, in that way, it was pretty natural for me. It *didn't cost me effort or time*…I would write diaries too when I was young… it was like *a daily activity* for me. Yeah, yeah, it didn't feel like I was writing something, you know? Yeah, because I was always writing something (Interview, January 22, 2022).

On the other hand, her feeling about writing in English was, "It's like *a task, something that I have to complete*" (Interview, January 23, 2022). Therefore, writing remained unchanged as a by-product of culture, but the shift in language projected different qualities of light, as in the light in day and night.

Sophia's love of reading and writing in Korean led me to ask about her writing activities and exposure to writing instruction in Korea. Similar to Jiwoo, Sophia's learning how to write came from outside school contexts, but this time, in a small study group[18] for two years (grades 8-9).

…in Korea, I did like a small study group, so that there's, like, one, one teacher and another student and me. We would talk, like, weekly. We would meet and we would talk about a book that we read. She [the teacher] assigned us a book, or we would go watch a movie sometimes, and we'd write about it after that. Yeah, it was pretty structured writing…but that didn't really feel like *homework* for me. I remember that I enjoyed it, actually. So, yeah, I think that helped me a lot in terms of writing structured essays in Korean (Interview, January 22, 2022).

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[18] In Korea, private education in out-of-school contexts is prevalent (Shin, 2010).

As she indicated here, Sophia had pleasant memories of literate activities in Korean, which involved viewing, reading, talking, and writing, in which she could enjoy her freedom of her expressions in the language and culture where she lived. Although she had to follow instructions to complete the literate activities, it did not feel like homework or a task to complete.

Yet, writing in English for schoolwork was different. Sophia encountered multiple barriers that limited her opportunities to express her thoughts freely; she had to be conscious of *rubrics* that would determine her grades; she had to complete the task under *time pressure*; and she had to *squeeze/wring out words* and organize them properly even though she was *uncertain*. Being caught in this kind of educational reality generated a helpless feeling in Sophia, which was portrayed vividly in figurative expressions.

> …in terms of writing…I felt like I was, like, *pounding on a wall*; that's not… it's not gonna break. It felt like a wall that I can't like jump over, or like, I can't overcome. So that really was difficult for me because I felt like there's nothing that I could do about it…. There was nothing I could do at this moment. There's, yeah, I think that feeling really slowed me down because I knew, I knew that there was nothing I can do…at that moment (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Here, I have to say that it was an agonizing moment for me to listen to her difficult experiences. Nonetheless, I could not pause my hearing, which continually echoed inside me.

Literacy Learning in Subjects: Social Studies

"Component of life that is impt [important] for me is constantly moving, growing, learning, learning about the world and myself, improving myself because I feel anxious if I don't" (Sophia's notes in email communication, May 6, 2022).

While literacy learning occurs across the curriculum, the dimensions of literacy skills expected differ in subjects and across nations to a certain extent (Moje, 2007; Olson, 2008; Park, 2018). When moving from one country to another, some learners find limitations in transferring their prior literacy skills to new educational contexts (Park, 2018). However, some learners may welcome learning unfamiliar dimensions of literacy skills, taking them up as a new opportunity for self-development. In fact, learning in a new way for self-development was a key motivating factor for Sophia's moving to Canada.

In what follows, I discuss Sophia's literacy learning in social studies. It should be noted that although the interview questions for the present study included broader questions (involving general writing experiences) and more specific questions (focusing on writing experiences in social studies), there was a tendency that Sophia's responses to these questions were not exclusively separate from other subjects, such as English language arts. In addition, as Sophia's narrative was unfolded, other aspects (e.g., reading comprehension) of literacy came out naturally. For this reason, the findings presented in this section overlaps with her writing experiences in English language arts to a certain extent.

Consciousness of Language and Idea: The Art of Finding the Right Words and Connecting Ideas in Writing

In the previous section, I discussed Sophia's perception/feeling of writing in general based on how she felt about writing in English in comparison with her earlier experience of writing in Korean. My interpretation was that her struggle in writing was rooted in the translation process—converting verbal thoughts in L1 (Korean) into written language in L2 (English). This section extends the issue of translation discussed earlier, highlighting its interrelated aspects; her

consciousness of how to display ideas with adequate/right words or expressions; and *diversifying*
verbal formulations while maintaining the same or similar meanings.

Sophia was highly conscious of word (a sign, symbol, or language) and meaning (idea or inner speech) when writing in English. More precisely, she wanted to express her thoughts in English as close as her ideas developed in Korean. It can be understood that for Sophia, writing in English was primarily translation of verbal thought developed in Korean, just like Vygotsky's (2012b) assertion that when learning a foreign language, a language learner uses "word meanings that are already developed in the native language and translate them" (p. 169), and Lantolf's (2011) presumption that a language learner's operation of consciousness occurs primarily in her first language. The aforementioned ideas of Vygotsky and Lantolf are reflected in the following statement of Sophia.

I think it's *more slow* when I'm writing in English because…I have to find the *right words to express*. But I can *never find that exact word*, right? So, it takes me a while to find that word… if I'm expressing the same content, it's much shorter in Korean, it's much more concise. But in English, it's, it feels like I have to write more. It's a long sentence in order to express in the same way…because *I think Korean words* (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Sophia's notions of "the *right* words" and "the *exact* word" invite us to ask ourselves what they might mean since translation itself can be understood as interpretation and re-creation of text, as Gadamer (2013) argued. From a bilingual's perspective, I turn to philosophical discussions of language proposed by Gadamer (2013) and Vygotsky (1998, 2012b) in order to reach an adequate understanding of Sophia. Gadamer (2013) explained that word, *onoma* in Greek, refers to "proper name" (p. 423), and that the rightness or adequacy of the word can be

"judged from the knowledge of the thing it refers to" (p. 425). Gadamer's proposition was that

"the right word" is not merely copying a word with its meanings stated in the dictionary, but a

speaker's proper application and use for something that is being referred to, drawing from one's

hermeneutically accumulated knowledge/truth of the word. Similarly, in his theory of language

development, Vygotsky (1998, 2012b) argued that as a child matures, the child's knowledge of

language and meanings of words change, rising to a higher level, while meanings of words also

alter in contexts. This hermeneutic and dynamic nature of language, Gadamer's and Vygotsky's

sense of language respectively, convinces me to think that Sophia's expressions, the "right" word

and the "exact" word, meant a word (proper name) that fit the object/thing that Sophia referred

to, not "an absolute perfection of the word" (Gadamer, 2013, p. 428). In Sophia's growing sense

of culture and language, translating her thoughts in Korean into English was only an imperfect

similarity, therefore, unsatisfying. This led her to seek a "more precise" English word when

writing.

    While the above is a case of translating thoughts developed in Korean into English,

reversal translation (from English to Korean), too, was necessary for Sophia when specialized

discourses/terms, often abstract, were introduced in subjects. Sophia provided a concrete

example of her translation process from English into Korean when studying in social studies.

    When it [a discipline related term/s] was first introduced to me, it was, of course, new

    and I had to study them. Usually if I translate the social [studies] terms [into Korean], like

    sovereignty, for example, in Korean, that is something that I already know because I have

    that education in Korea…But if I just look at the English words, I don't know what they

    mean. So yeah, I had to do that extra work. But *when I start using them…they mostly*

    make sense. So that's what prevented me from having a low mark (Interview, January 22,

2022).

As suggested above, exposure to discourses and terms in social studies was one step toward learning, not an arrival to the learning. The learning required a higher level of cognitive operation, an application to a concrete situation. Sophia's notion, "when I start using them…they mostly make sense," demonstrates that she had to go beyond possessing declarative knowledge (knowing the meanings stated in the dictionary) in order to gain a practical sense or proper understanding of the meanings/concepts of the words. I presume that use/application of the new terms/concepts could be in speaking, writing, or even in reading school text.

In addition to her effort to find a compatible word in the two languages and using subject-specific terms/concepts in writing, another aspect of writing that Sophia tried to improve consciously was *diversifying written expressions while maintaining the same or similar meanings.* It is widely agreed that patterns of language use become diversified increasingly as individuals mature (Bhatia, 2002; Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Myhill, 2008, 2009; Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002; Vygotsky, 1998; 2012a, b). Just like these studies, Sophia had a tendency to diversify patterns of her written discourse, resulting in adding an additional layer of challenge to her writing. Sophia's effort is shown in the following excerpts.

> …I would structure the sentence in one way and then I would flip it around because, like,
> *I don't like the sentence structure repeating again and again*. It's like, I don't like that
> sentences, all begin with like, "I think", "I believe", something like that. So, yeah, it takes
> me a while because I like to…*make the sentences different*, I think, yeah, yeah
> (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Informed by the premises of sociocultural theory, I interpret this kind of Sophia's literate behavior as evidence of traits of an intellectually mature and capable learner and writer, which

can be understood as self-regulation (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015). *Self-regulation* refers

to a cognitive ability deployed by "individuals who have internalized external forms of

mediation for the execution or completion of a task" (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015, p. 210).

In other words, self-regulation is a process that increases voluntary control over one's thinking

and action, which was clearly shown in Sophia's case.

Sophia's deliberate effort to use additional linguistic resources, however, made me

wonder what motivated her to do so since it is certainly a higher literate practice beyond the

elementary level of writing (Myhill, 2008, 2009), which certainly was a decelerating factor of

her writing. I came to an understanding that it was the effect resulted from school instruction,

teachers' writing instruction in this case. Support of this argument is an artifact that Sophia

provided; it was a piece of note that was produced in a social studies course in high school. The

artifact shown on page 177 was part of a writing sample that Sophia shared in digital format with

the document title, "Source Analysis Writing Assignment" (Email communication, May 11,

2022).

The document consisted of three sections—writing prompts with three sources selected

by her social studies teacher, Sophia's written response to the prompts containing the teacher's

feedback, and writing instructions taken in class. When analyzing Sophia's note presented on

page 177, it is reasonable to assume that the upper section of the note demonstrates a set of

registers that could help students accomplish the expected writing in the social studies, serving as

useful models of registers (e.g., "It possesses the belief that-" and "it is in support of -ism"). The

bottom section of the note appears to be the components required for the source analysis

assignment, reflecting the key components required in high stake exam, Alberta provincial exam

for social studies (Alberta Education, 2017a, b). From an educator's perspective, the list of

various registers can be understood as thoughtfully prepared resource or guided assistance of

teachers to support students' development of disciplinary literacy. However, for Sophia,

expanding linguistic repertoires to meet the expectations of writing in social studies or

diversifying the formulation of written language while maintaining the same or similar meanings

did not easily come since such school language was different from the nature of oral language

used outside school contexts (Schleppegrell, 2012) and her means of language in thought

(presumably Korean).

Linguistic registers useful for expository writing

Components required for a writing assignment, a text/source analysis

(Sophia's notes: Part of writing instructions provided for a source analysis assignment in Social

Studies 20-1)

Limited Socioliterate Opportunities

Students' literacy learning and development cannot be understood only by cognitive

factors and school instruction. A bulk of studies show that social relationships affect literacy

learning and development among multilingual adolescents in schools (Duff, 2002, 2005; Leki,

2006; Moje, 1996; Villava, 2006; Wilson, 2013; Yi, 2007). Social relationships include not only

teacher-student relationship and peer-peer relationship, but also relationships with their family members and community members. In a review of multilingual adolescents' writing development in the U.S., Jennifer S. Wilson (2013) explored the relationship between social factors and literacy learning and development by introducing a term, *socioliterate relationships*. Taking inspiration from Wilson's study, in this section, I illustrate socioliterate relationships uncovered in Sophia's account of literacy learning in high school.

At the outset of the present inquiry with Sophia, I had an assumption that she would bring forth her relationships with teachers and friends in high school, similar to Jiwoo in Chapter Five. When the initial interview began with her responses to the pre-interview activities, however, Sophia's experience of school literacy and its interrelated issues, such as difficulties with writing and her ways of dealing such difficulties, were unpacked without my initiation of direct questions to probe those topics. When I heard Sophia's difficulties with writing, I prompted questions, such as "Can you tell me a little more about that? In what way was it [writing] difficult? Why was it so difficult?," as a form of active response to her narrative (Interview, January 22, 2022). In turn, the information related to sources of support for writing assignments in content areas, social relationships with her peers, and her strengths and weaknesses in literacy skills came to the surface.

Sophia identified near the void of close peer relationship as one of the key factors that made her writing experience more difficult. It is not surprising when considering the extant literature that highlights the role of peer interaction in human development including cognition, language, and literacy (Cervetti et al., 2014; Duff, 2017; Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 2002; Vygotsky, 1998; Wilson, 2013). Vygotsky (1998) elucidated that crucial in adolescents' development is active participation in social and cultural life, which demands different concrete

expressions and dialectical thinking with abstract concepts. Unlike Jiwoo's case in Chapter Five, Sophia could not find her social entry in school, thus, lacked dialectical practice, which could serve as the dyad for practicing dialectical thinking (Vygotsky, 1998). Sophia lamented the lack of peer relationship for literate activities.

> …it was writing in English that really challenged me. But underlying [factor] was that I didn't have many friends in school. I didn't really belong. I didn't feel like I belong. So it was the underlying component that I felt like I had to work harder…it would have been much easier…*if I had friends, I could talk about it… I didn't really have anyone* that helped me in writing in high school (Interview, January 22, 2022).

As peer interaction and peer support were limited, I asked Sophia how she dealt with problems that arose from writing assignments, assuming that seeking teachers' assistance/advice would be common in school. Although she approached teachers, her use of teachers' support varied, depending on teachers' pedagogic approach and her academic performance. Sophia's descriptions of ESL teachers' advice are shown below.

> I had ESL class but…they [ESL teachers] said there weren't anything they could do for me. They didn't say that, but they were like, "Oh, yeah, you have to just keep writing. Just practice. As time passes, you'll get better" or "You just have to have more good grammar" or…just didn't help me practically in that moment (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Apparently, Sophia sought help more from English language arts teachers than social studies teachers. Her main reason was that the results of her writings in social studies, based on grades, were satisfactory, which was superior to the grades of writings in English language arts. Sophia explained,

I didn't reach out that much to the social studies teacher because my grades were like

mediocre [average]. It was like *OK*, if it was, like, bad, maybe I would have gone more,

but it was, like, mediocre. So I would go to English teachers more than social studies

teacher... (Interview, January 22, 2022).

It should be noted that Sophia's intended meaning in the expression, "mediocre," was *average*,

or "OK" (not that bad) rather than "not that good," which was confirmed by Sophia in a follow-

up interview. Here, we can ask why Sophia's self-perceived degree of difficulty with writing and

her actual grades for writings in social studies were less concern for Sophia and why her grades

for social studies writing were not bad. Might there be any source of support for writing?

Surprisingly, the most accessible source of support appeared to be her parents, in

particular, consulting them for the content of writing. However, it is important to note that this is

my own interpretation from a parent and educator's perspective, which is inevitable, as Gadamer

(2013) predicates human understanding and consciousness of being affected by one's history and

experience referring to "hermeneutically effected consciousness" (p. 312). Unquestionably,

Sophia's retrospective account was narrated from the standpoint of a student, therefore, Sophia's

interpretation of the phenomena of the world. With this, I submit that the following statements of

Sophia can be interpreted differently by readers from the standpoints of educators in particular

when taking into account Gadamer's (2013) notion of hermeneutical nature of understanding.

Hence, the following excerpts of Sophia invite readers' hermeneutic imaginations for

interpretation and understanding.

I just did it [writing] myself, I think. I, yeah, I don't know what I, yeah, I just, it was just

me. And *I don't remember anyone helping me*. It was, maybe I talked to my parents about

it, but they didn't help in terms of English, but maybe the *content wise* I would ask them,

like, "What should I write about…this topic?" But yeah, yeah, *I didn't receive much help*

(Interview, January 22, 2022).

From my parent and educator's perspective, I recognized her parents' feedback on the content of

her writing as valuable literacy support with my presumptions affected by my pre-understanding,

fore-understanding, or prejudice (Gadamer, 2013). I had an assumption that many writers

including Canadian-born and raised mainstream students, advanced writers, and even

seasoned/experienced academic writers, hope to receive the kind of feedback that Sophia's

parents provided, when writing; I had an assumption that what Sophia's parents offered was the

very kind of literacy support that parents, as non-experts, can provide. However, Sophia was

uncertain and hesitant to include her parents' listening and feedback in the category of *literacy*

support, which is shown in the interview excerpts, "I, yeah, I don't know what I, yeah, I just, it

was just me. And *I don't remember anyone helping me*". Sophia's hesitation and denial of

parental literacy support complicated my understanding of her recollection, evoking me to

explicate the finitudeness of her speaking and understanding (Gadamer, 2013).

With multiple revisits of the entire text of Sophia, I arrived at a possible answer for my

curiosity of the reasons for Sophia's hesitation. It should be noted that during the initial

interview, Sophia made it explicit that talking about writing assignments to her friends would

have helped her just a few minutes before she discussed consulting her parents in brainstorming

phase of her writing assignment. Consulting her parents involved *talking*. Since the nature of

communication with her parents and peers remained the same, the act of talking, it was possible

that she felt controversial in her views of *talking*—talking with parents versus talking with

friends. Yet, situated in the interview context that required her immediate response, little time

was allowed for her to logically process her thoughts and ascertain, resulting in multiple restarts

with a rushed conclusion, the exclusion of parental literacy support. It was also possible that

parental support must have been under-recognized in her mind since displaying her ideas in

English was her predominant concern, which cost significantly more time and effort than

brainstorming and planning by means of talking with her parents. That was why she said, "I don't

remember anyone helping me*"* and "I didn't receive much help." What was unsaid could be, "I

don't remember anyone helping me *[produce writing with feedback on my written English]"* or

"I didn't receive much help *[with the product of writing itself]*." Presumably, she hoped to

receive feedback on both content and language. Although feedback on the content was available,

feedback on her writing, which was most needed, was unavailable except for teachers' comments

and grades for writing assignments, therefore, no source of help in the production process of

writing.

Differential Competency: A Proficient Reader and Thinker, Yet a Struggling Writer

School instruction induces the development of specific cognitive skills among individuals

(Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Vygotsky, 2012a, b). Inherent to the school-induced

developmental skills are discipline-specific literate skills, which progress from early functional

literacy skills (word-recognition, basic comprehension, and writing) to more sophisticated

literacy skills in later learning (analyzing, reasoning, evaluating, interpreting, inferring,

reporting, recounting, and perspective-taking for writing) (Bazerman, 2016; Khote & Tian, 2019;

Norris & Phillips, 2003; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). However, as the attributes of advanced

literacy in the later years of school learning do not automatically appear (Christie, &

Derewianka, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), and these literate skills are less likely to

develop evenly (Schleppegrell et al., 2008), the onus of literacy development is placed not only

on teachers but also on students. Likewise, this uneven flow of literacy development was a daunting issue in Sophia's literacy learning in high school.

Although struggle with writing was predominant in Sophia's reflection on literacy learning in high school, other interrelated literate skills of Sophia could be elicited, including her strengths and her preferred literate activities. This allowed me to have a better understanding of constraints and opportunities in Sophia's learning. Given that the production of writing is part of the writing process (Hayes, 1996, 2006; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Peregoy & Boyle, 2017), which was Sophia's weakness, I was skeptical about her lack of confidence in the entire process of writing, suspecting differential competency in literate skills. For this reason, I invited Sophia to reflect on her self-perceived strengths and weaknesses in the whole process of writing or literacy practice in social studies. Her response was,

> My strength would be that, like, I can *analyze a source pretty easily*…right off the bat. It's not a hard thing for me. I know what's going on. I know what to write about. So, yeah, I think that's my strength. But my weakness would be that I, like, I can't really organize that information as much as I would want it to be organized (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Sophia's own evaluation of her strength and weakness inspirited me to think that she was not a struggling student, but a confident and analytical thinker, which is precisely what is expected by educators, meeting the goal of the curriculum (Alberta Education, 2005). I interpreted her wanting to organize content/ideas as strong evidence of self-control or self-monitor of her cognitive activity (Lantolf, 2011), self-regulation (Graham & Harris, 2013; Santangelo, Harris, & Graham, 2016) or control of expository text in the continuum of writing development (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016), rather than regarding simply as her weakness. This thought led me to

further my question by asking about her favorite literate activity in social studies. Sophia explained,

> …when I was given the *freedom to research about something* that…I think that was the favorite assignment, yeah. I didn't, *I didn't hate writing in social studies I got* because they give me a source that I could analyze, and I was often very interested in the sources, like the pictures or cartoons or like excerpts of, like, the historic speeches… because I was personally interested in them…but if I wasn't interested in them, and then I would have hated social studies writing as well, yeah (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Sophia's enjoyment of the freedom to research assures self-control or self-regulation. Notable here is that Sophia did not "hate writing in social studies" because of her interest in the types of text that she had to analyze where she could bring her critical perspective toward texts.

Delineating School Writing: A Bilingual Learner's Perspective

Writing serves different purposes in varying contexts (Scribiner & Cole, 1981). Meanings and expectations of writing, too, differ depending on writers' prior experience, their role/status as writers, or situated reality, in which writers are (Kibler, 2011; Lea & Street, 1998; Park, 2018). Although I had the knowledge of the literature of writing, I did not realize that my understanding of writing was *prejudiced* and *finite*, just like Gadamer's (2013) assertion of finiteness of human knowledge, until I met Jiwoo, the research participant in Chapter Five. Jiwoo conceptualized writing from a language learner's perspective, bringing a new light, which awakened my forgotten prejudice shaped by the literature. Inspired by Jiwoo and remined by Gadamer, I put conscious effort to heed Sophia's perception of the nature and role of writing in educational contexts during the present inquiry.

For characterizing writing in social studies, Sophia centered on incorporating perspectives into writing, therefore, *perspective-taking writing*.

> I felt like in Canada, social studies was more like, more related to perspectives. So, you have to *incorporate a lot of perspectives*, like the author's perspective or someone that opposes to the source. That person's perspective or someone who agrees to that source perspective, right? So, that was *a new thing* for me, in writing in social studies (Interview, January 22, 2022).

From a newcomer's perspective, incorporating perspectives into writing was a new aspect of disciplinary learning, which was distinct from her prior learning in Korea. When asked *the role of writing in social studies*, Sophia responded,

> I think it [writing] mainly demonstrates your ability to interpret the source or, like, understand historic events…. And I think social studies is about, if the student knows how to study social studies, and *how to view social events*. Like, I think when you look at the writing [a student's writing], you know whether the student has that eye. Like, how perspective, critical perspective, like, that student is able to analyze and see the main point, I guess. Like, like, what is the problem? Like, what is the common theme? (Interview, January 22, 2022).

As I felt that Sophia had confidence about her knowledge of the social studies writing, I invited her to share her sense of good writing in social studies.

> I think making connections is important in social studies writing…if there's like two events that seems really irrelevant, feels like they are different events, but then you analyze it and you see that there is a common theme in that event. And pointing that out,

and then adding your insight to it. I think that makes for good social studies paper, yeah.

(Interview, January 22, 2022).

A Learner's Message to Teachers for Literacy Instruction in High School

In teaching and learning, the historical nature of the relationship between a teacher and students is predominantly an expert/knower-novice/learner relationship, which is premised in an assumption that teachers play a role in making new knowledge accessible to students (Biesta, 2016; Johnson, 2009; Olson, 2008; Smagorinsky, 2011; Vygotsky, 2012a). In this expert-novice relationship, a great degree of authority is given to teachers for determining what students should learn and how it should be taught (Biesta, 2016; Johnson, 2009), whereas little attention is given to students' perception of teaching and learning. Grounded in sociocultural theory, Johnson (2009) postulated an idea that teachers should be understood as learners of teaching, who learn from human relations, and that students are exponents of teachers' learning source. Agreeing with Johnson's notion of intersubjectivity of teachers as learners, I now turn to Sophia's message or plea to teachers, which can serve as a new guidance for teaching emergent multiliterates' literacy learning in school. It should be noted that the following messages of Sophia were not Sophia's responses to the pre-planned interview questions. Rather, they emerged as part of our conversation in the process of the inquiry.

As Sophia repeatedly expressed that she did not receive much help for writing from teachers, I asked her what kind of support or assistance she would value if teacher support were available in social studies. Sophia stated that *teacher-student conference* or *one-on-one conversation* would be appreciated.

I think *one-on-one conversation* with the social studies teacher, and just was going through the paper together…because it's different when you receive a paper and that you

[the teacher] write something on it, right? Maybe you don't understand what she wrote as

fully. So, you go to talk to her, and it all makes sense. So yeah, I think just talking about

what I did wrong and what, what would make more sense if I did. So, yeah, I think that

would help (Interview, January 22, 2022).

From a student's perspective, teacher feedback on writings of students fails to communicate

effectively with students. This is ironic in a sense that although the purpose of teacher feedback

is to support students to improve their written communication with imagined audience, teacher

feedback itself needed improvement for a clear communication with students.

Moreover, building on her notion of the need for one-on-one conversation, Sophia

suggested an alternative pedagogic approach to writing instruction in social studies.

I think, just maybe *talking more about how to think like a social scientist* would've

helped better than *just talking about textbook content*. I don't know what that would mean

specifically, though. Like, like, *social studies thinking is different, very distinct*, in my

opinion…many students fail to acquire in the end. I think that's why social studies, it's

difficult for a lot of students (Interview, January 22, 2022).

Much is said in a critical way in Sophia's text above. First, Sophia problematizes social studies

teachers' narrow focus on the *content* as subject specialists. From the standpoint of a student who

was required to write in other school subjects, teachers of social studies should go beyond

textbook content by guiding students to grasp the culture of thinking embedded in social studies.

Sophia made it explicit that "*social studies thinking is different, very distinct,"* hinting socio-

cultural nature of literacy and writing (Bazerman, 2016; Beach et al., 2016; De La Paz &

McCutchen, 2016; Moje, 2007, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). From an educator's

perspective, my understanding of Sophia's preference of disciplinary-thinking-skills-focused

feedback to content-focused feedback is her subtle criticism of the flaw of teaching practices within the Canadian education system in terms of focusing mainly on content; it was possible that in Sophia's view, little attention was given to how to promote students' higher cognitive development, therefore, the process of developing disciplinary thinking skills at the cost of content. Second, it is suggested that from a learner's perspective, although disciplinary thinking and learning is distinct, it is elusive for many students to grasp. As such a point was made in her extended discussion of teacher feedback and support for writing in social studies, it can be understood that since learning "how to think like a social scientist" is one step toward literacy learning in social studies, teachers should assure that students develop such disciplinary thinking skills, which can allow them to transform into writing.

Summary

This chapter provided rich stories of Sophia's literacy experience in a Canadian high school. As she had proficient English skills (listening and speaking) resulting from her immersed school learning in Canada at the elementary level, her understanding of English-medium instruction in classrooms was less of a problem in her new learning. However, returning to Canada as an adolescent newcomer created unexpected challenges, such as self-consciousness of her lack of sociolinguistic knowledge, her sensitivity to the lack of belonging among her peers, the lack of peer support, and her identity as an ESL student who was given a deficit view rather than a view of a student needing extra support. With regards to school learning in a new language, the most challenging dimension of literacy was disciplinary writing for Sophia. Contrasting with her positive memories of L1 writing in her home country (Korea), composition-oriented writing required in high school was an unbearable burden that depleted her energy and self-esteem. One of the key factors for her difficulties with school writing was converting her

ideas developed in L1 into language for an English-speaking audience. Meanwhile, for social studies writing, she held a view that learning how to think like a social scientist would be more beneficial as a student than just being taught subject-related information. Overall, Sophia, as a developing writer, hoped to learn how to think better to become a more successful writer in social studies while exhibiting her desire for linguistic flexibility and her intensified sensitivity to the differences in form, discourse style, and meaning between L1 (Korean) and L2 (English).

Chapter Seven: Bringing the Stories Together

Thinking and Understanding in New Ways

Introduction

Note. Photo taken in 2022. Own work.

If you ask me I'd tell you

Each of us has growing treasures

Countless sprinkles being shaped within us

Appear mysteriously only when asked

Each question gives a gentle shake, casting light on them

Intriguing colors and shapes brought by the light

That began with your question

Become visible to our mind

Ready to be transformed anew

To cherish the evolving life of our treasures

(My personal composition inspired by a home-made snow globe gift from my little one, December 2022)

As this study was guided by the principles of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, I attempted to understand the phenomena and

development of literacy in a new language historically while being engaged in dialogues

externally and internally throughout the study (2016-present)—external dialogues with my

research participants and scholars, and internal dialogues with myself and texts. This dialogical

journey with constant re-interpretation permitted unexpected new meanings to be disclosed,

through which I could gain a deep sense of lesser-known characters of literacy development in

L2. At the same time, the conversations allowed me to experience "transformative effects of

hermeneutic practice" (Davey, 2017, p. 2) within myself, enriching the linguistic resources of my

own in a new literate sense, that is, poetry writing. The poetic note above and the poetry

embedded in the previous chapters illustrate the effect of the ongoing dialogues on my own

being as a researcher of literacy. However, I admit that the course of my poetic literacy

development as a mature adult is certainly different from the nature and conditions of literacy

learning that the research participants experienced.

This leads me to return to the research questions addressed earlier in the study and

recapitulate the participants' insights into literacy learning in a new language and educational

environment. In this study, three research questions were developed from general to specific:

- *What was it like for EAL students to learn and practice English in English-speaking*
  contexts in Canada?

- *How did the students experience literacy learning in high schools in Canada?*

- *How did the students experience literacy learning, particularly writing, in social studies*
  classes?

As the present study is a qualitative and interpretive inquiry involving a limited number

of participants, the findings of the study cannot be generalizable or pinned down as specific

solutions for a problem. Nonetheless, the rich stories of the participants' learning experiences invite us to rethink what we know about language and literacy learning in L2, stimulating our hermeneutic imaginations to improve learning conditions in diverse classrooms. As shown in the previous chapters (5 and 6), although the participants had a shared linguistic and cultural background (Korean), there were salient and important differences in their processes of language and literacy learning and practice.

Having discussed the detailed stories separately in Chapters 5 and 6, in this chapter, I synthesize the phenomena of language and literacy learning revealed in the two accounts. This allows me to highlight lesser-known and seemingly ignored changes and phases involved in the developmental processes of L2 literacy, particularly learning to write in English in social studies. I present their L2 writing development in social studies during high school with the use of a flowchart, which can be used for future research attempting to develop more refined models of L2 writing development. Drawing on the new insights from the participants, I also recommend alternative teaching practices that need to be considered for supporting adolescent bi-/multi-linguals' literacy learning and practice in school. Finally, in closing, I discuss my overall reflection on this hermeneutic inquiry and suggest areas that need to be studied further in the future.

The Effects of Varying Individual Factors on Literacy Learning in a New Language

The nature of literacy learning and practice in L2 revealed in the study was complex, nuanced, and multi-faceted, more so during the high school years. The participants' school learning was affected by not only what they learned and how they learned, but also by the affordance of resources including cultural and linguistic tools, socioliterate relationships, and educational conditions. Because of the varying factors, their courses of literacy development in

English differed in some ways although certain aspects of literacy learning and practice in L2 were similar. As Vygotsky (2012b) urges us to trace an individual's historical development for a proper understanding of their current development, I proceed with a discussion of the relationship between the participants' prior learning and their new learning in the following section.

Prior Language and Literacy Experiences in New Learning

We often encounter studies on the linguistic proficiency needed for school learning among newcomer students, and the role of L1 literacy in their literacy performance in L2 (Cummins, 1981, 2008; Hakuta, 2011; Collier, 1995; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Influenced by these studies, I had an assumption that there is a tight relationship between linguistic proficiency and language learners' school learning prior to the present inquiry. I still do not reject such a relationship entirely.

Based on the analysis of the participants' retrospective accounts, their proficiency in English and literacy skills in L1 were quite different from each other at the beginning of their high school years in Canada. With regards to English proficiency (listening and speaking) in a linguistic sense, Jiwoo's English was insufficient for him to study in English-medium lessons, especially in listening (approximately 50% comprehension of spoken text by his estimation). Consequently, Jiwoo had difficulty in accessing and processing necessary information in spoken text including materials used in class and classroom instruction. On the other hand, Sophia, who was a second-time newcomer to Canada, was a proficient listener, speaker, and reader. Accordingly, accessing and processing spoken English text including classroom instruction and peer talk was generally not an issue for her although there was a slight gap in her comprehension of certain expressions. Therefore, it can be said that there was an apparent difference in English

proficiency between the participants, and that Jiwoo's difficulties with adapting to the new learning was more pronounced in the initial period than Sophia because of his limited English.

When considering the pre-existing differential linguistic skills in L2, it is easy to assume that Jiwoo's learning in the new educational system could be harder and slower than Sophia's. But the findings of the study challenge such a logical assumption, inviting us to raise a question: Why was it that Jiwoo could engage in interpersonal events smoothly as a novice English speaker whereas Sophia, as a more capable English speaker, could not participate in the community of practices with peers? An answer to the question can be their differing *social style* or *uptake* of cultural and social events.

Although Jiwoo and Sophia had a shared linguistic and cultural background (Korean), their ways of responding to activities occurring around them and constructing their identities were different, reflecting their natural tendencies of behavior developed throughout their childhood. That is to say, Jiwoo was highly sociable and interactive from the elementary to high school years. He was not hesitant to reach out to peers for their assistance or advice when needed. Instead of hiding his weaknesses, he admitted his lack of understanding of a certain topic or event and sought more knowledgeable peers' assistance by inviting them to his inquisitive world in playful ways as if passing a ball in a soccer game. In turn, they shared what they knew with each other, mutually benefiting.

On the other hand, Sophia's social style was relatively "reserved," just like her own characterization of herself, rather than sociable or interactive. Sophia kept her thoughts within herself, rather than sharing with others. However, one aspect to be considered for understanding her behaviour is her social status, an adolescent newcomer and emergent bilingual. Here, we need to think about what it might mean to be an adolescent.

Adolescence is a distinct developmental period when individuals begin to construct their identities, participating in various forms of cultural life (Cumming & Geva, 2012; Vygotsky, 1998). It is a period when they decide on their entry to social events while seeking social groups which give them a sense of belonging (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Vygotsky, 1998). Perhaps her social style did not help her to become an active participant in social activities. At the same time, as shown in Chapter 6, Sophia could not find any group to which she could belong, leading to a difficult entry to the adolescent English world. It is doubtful. As opportunities to adopt and practice varying communicative conventions to negotiate meanings in concrete situations were limited, her language learning and practice occurred mainly through reading and writing privately. Thus, use of previously developed reading skills for her new learning was similar to Jiwoo, whereas she relied mainly on written materials for problem-solving related to school learning rather than more knowledgeable peers' support.

To sum up, the impact of linguistic proficiency and prior literacy experience on the participants' new learning was more profound in their early period of their new school life, particularly for Jiwoo. However, in their later phase, the characteristics of their language and literacy development were determined more by their social style and types of engagement in social events.

Literacy Learning in Social Studies from the Standpoints of Newcomers

While literacy skills expected in content-areas differ, how certain subjects are taught and learned, too, varies across nations (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016; Franquiz & Salinas, 2011). For this reason, scholars have raised awareness of the need for detailed reports on students' differing educational experiences and expectations in their learning in new educational environments (Kibler, 2011; Park, 2018; Smagorinsky, 2011).

In the present study, it was found that learning social studies in the Canadian educational system produced both challenges and opportunities for the newcomers. Challenges in the participants' new learning were mainly related to a knowledge gap between what they learned in their home country and what they had to learn in Canada in terms of the socio-cultural and historical knowledge necessary for learning new content and subject-specific terms and discourses. Subsequently, learning new content without relevant background knowledge necessitated additional work and effort to keep up with their peers' knowledge.

Despite these challenges, new learning in social studies in Canadian settings was welcomed by both participants. That was because it offered opportunities to broaden their worldviews, to know, and to be in new ways, which was clearly shown in Sophia's words,*"constantly moving, growing, learning, learning about the world and myself, improving myself"* (Chapter 6). Both participants acknowledged and appreciated the fact that in social studies learning, they were encouraged to evaluate meanings of events and texts produced by others in critical ways by taking perspectives, instead of giving trust or passively accepting them as *the* truths and facts, with the endowment of a certain degree of freedom and ownership of knowledge, which was starkly different from the way they learned in Korea. Instead of learning only to find *the right* answers, their new learning in Canada enabled them to develop *new habits of mind* through learning how to analyze and interpret texts, and present their understandings of them in their own language (either spoken or written).

Through these new learning processes, without actually knowing it, they were already growing into the new culture of knowing and being, which can be supported by Vygotsky's (1998) assertion that experiencing or exposure to the external is essential for "growing into a culture" (p. 34). For the participants as newcomer students, growing into the new culture of

learning meant that they had to not only comprehend and internalize new sources of inputs, but also learn to externalize them in particular ways both in spoken and written language, beyond reproduction or copying others' text. Comprehending external sources or inputs was less of a problem for both participants since they already had developed such a skill in their prior literacy learning in Korea. But a shared problem for the participants was expressing their thoughts to English speakers because their thinking was habitually operationalized in L1, as described in Chapters 5 and 6. For example, reflecting on his experience of his notetaking in class, Jiwoo noted, "I had to think [in] Korean and write it down" (Chapter 5) while Sophia expressed her feeling about writing in English: "In English…it feels like I have to write more…because *I think Korean words*" (Chapter 6).

In the process of overcoming such an issue, for Jiwoo, peers' speech during group discussion often served as sources for his learning of the communicative rules in English. As verbal errors were more permissible in peer discussion and peers were supportive with his clarifying questions pertaining to the content taught in social studies, he could be engaged in active listening, and thinking and expressing his thoughts in class and beyond. Importantly, he observed that literate activities in social studies encouraged students' learning of active thinking skills. These experiences led him to think that learning in social studies was more about learning to develop active and reasoned-thinking skills in disciplinary ways, which was a new thinking skill for him. It was new in the sense that he had to develop his thoughts conforming to new cultural norms in English speaking contexts; it was also new in the sense that his learning of domain-specific thinking skills was different when compared with his prior learning in Korea. Interestingly, from Jiwoo's perspective, the role of peers was greater than the role of a teacher in social studies although the expertise that teachers shared could not be ignored.

On the other hand, Sophia's process of learning how to think and communicate in new cultural ways in social studies projected a different picture. Unlike Jiwoo, her learning occurred more individually than relationally, relying on teachers more than Jiwoo did. Yet, this does not mean that she was a passive learner and uncritical thinker. From the eyes of this multicultural learner, developing thinking skills in a disciplinary way ("*like a social scientist*" in Sophia's words) was critical in social studies classes in Canada. But she did not feel that content-focused lessons ("*talking about textbook content*" in Sophia's expression) helped her to advance her thinking skills required in social studies at the level that she wanted. At the same time, she did not see peers as a source of support for her learning like Jiwoo did. Thus, there were discrepancies in her learning needs and the support available to her. Nevertheless, as a student, she did her best by working harder not to lag behind her peers, desiring to rise to a higher level intellectually and defying her prescribed status as an ESL student, which tended to result in being treated with a stigma of intellectual deficiency.

In short, both participants perceived the development of new thinking skills as a critical aspect of literacy in social studies in Canadian high school. However, a notable difference between the two participants' learning was in the degree of their engagements in socializing processes, in which a dialogical way of learning could occur, affecting directly and indirectly their learning. For this reason, in the following section, I discuss to what extent dialogue as a cultural tool affected their literacy learning and practice and what kind of dialogue they could afford during their learning in social studies classes.

Dialogue and Literacy Learning

Class or group discussion is commonly used at the secondary level in Western countries. As social studies aims to foster students' understanding of multiple perspectives of events and

social issues (Alberta Education, 2005) rather than a monological view, creating an interactive classroom environment would be beneficial for many students. The benefits of interactive learning are widely known wherein a sociocultural approach to literacy learning provides a theoretical foundation for promoting such practice (Beach et al., 2016; Englert et al., 2008). Despite the benefits, studies have informed us that caution should be taken when teaching students from diverse backgrounds since not all students can actively participate in interactive learning (Duff, 2002, 2005; Weissberg, 2008).

Likewise, the present study exemplified two contrasting cases in terms of their adaptation to and benefits from interactive learning. Clearly, Jiwoo, whose social style favored intersubjective learning, greatly benefited from peer interactions and dialogues, and he had little difficulty adapting to interactive learning in social studies classes. Timely support for his learning came from peers, who were his dialogue partners, rather than teachers. Subsequently, his learning could progress at a rapid pace.

On the other hand, it was suggested that Sophia's benefit from interactive learning was minimal, inviting us to examine critically why this occurred. As discussed earlier, Sophia's learning and social style favored working alone over dialogical or collaborative learning. It is known that abilities and comfort level to participate in social interaction differ among students, and that interpersonal activities may not work well for some students (Weissberg, 2008). It has also been argued that individuals' communicative competence fluctuates within individuals depending on contexts or events (Hornberger, 1989). Similarly, for Sophia, interpersonal communication was not her area of strength and she did not feel accepted by her peers in the social world. As she saw her identity threatened by unfamiliar social discourses and subcultures of the adolescent world, Sophia opted for a safer form of dialogue.

In a normal sense, dialogue takes place between two or more people. But the modality of dialogue found in Sophia cannot be understood in the conventional sense of dialogue. As Gadamer (2013) elaborates internal forms of dialogue in a philosophical sense, which is comprised of dialogue/conversation with text and dialogue/conversation with self as an effort to advance one's understanding of others or text, I find Gadamer's notion of *internal dialogue*, also found in Weissberg (2008), suitable for describing Sophia, whose dialogue inclined toward self. This leads me to discuss in what ways Sophia's internal dialogue occurred in the context of literacy learning and practice in social studies.

In the case of Sophia, while dynamic social contexts were less accessible, individual literacy tasks given by teachers served as a safe space where she could converse with self and with others' text internally. That is to say, individual literacy tasks assigned by teachers allowed her to invest more time in consulting written materials (e.g., textbook and notes taken in class), researching, planning, and rejigging her thoughts. In these processes, her engagements in dialogues with others, such as peers, were minimal. Yet, she could be seriously engaged in internalizing external materials or cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978, 2012b), such as concepts and domain-specific ways of thinking (De La Paz et al., 2017; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). Referencing others' text is compatible with *dialogue with others,* similar to Gadamer's (2013) notion of dialogue. At the same time, mental activities involved in monitoring and controlling her own thinking and writing can be understood as *dialogue with self.* These dialogues (consulting others' text and dialogue with self) allowed Sophia to grow into the new linguistic and literate communities (Gadamer, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978, 1998, 2012b) internally rather than externally. It has been argued in many studies that internal processes are crucial for improving one's thinking and literacy skills (Beach et al., 2016; Olson, 2008; Weissberg, 2008). Thus, it can be said that

for Sophia, internal dialogue could be an advantage for her literacy learning at the upper

secondary level.

When Disciplinary Writing Was New

A negative effect from my learning experience of L2 writing as an adult and the

knowledge accumulated from my readings related to writing studies was that I was

unconsciously isolating writing from other factors that could influence writing, which continued

until the present inquiry commenced. When Jiwoo unraveled his experience of L2 writing in his

high school years, I was quite surprised by the fact that his account of writing was somewhat

different from the literature of writing in terms of his stance of writing and the changes related to

writing over time. As many scholars have argued that writing, as a cultural tool or technology,

affects mental processes, restructuring the organization and flow of information (Emig, 1977;

Olson, 2008; Ong, 2012; Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002), what I expected to discover in Jiwoo's

account was his behavioral change, such as his attention to the organization of the information

for effective communication, keeping the whole text in mind (Olson, 2008) or writing strategies

to improve the quality of writing (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016). Instead, what he offered in

the study was his own conceptualization of writing from the perspective of a novice writer and

cross-cultural learner, which could be possible because of his awareness of differences in cultural

and academic norms between Korea and Canada. Later, after I met Sophia, it became clear to me

that too many studies failed to address cross-cultural learners' perspectives of school literacy,

particularly at the secondary level, and their qualitative changes in the process of L2 writing

development beyond reporting changes in textual features (e.g., Christie & Derewianka, 2008;

Myhills, 2008; Schleppegrell & de Oliveira, 2006). My aim in this section has been to elucidate

the historical development of writing of the research participants, who were cross-cultural

learners and emergent multilinguals, beyond conventional ways of studying writing development, in which textual development is focused (Beach et al., 2016; Slomp, 2012).

The Significance of Learning to Think in Discipline-Specific and Cultural-Specific Ways to Write

One may assume that if the object of a study is writing, research should focus on writers' written products. In fact, many studies related to writing-to-learn, content-area writing, and writing development of school-aged learners have identified trajectories of writing or effective use of writing as a tool for learning and communication within certain discourse communities, investigating observable behaviors such as learners' performances in writing tasks (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016; Englert, Oklolo, & Mariage, 2008; Graham & Harris, 2013; Myhills, 2008; Reynolds, 2005; Reynolds & Perin, 2009; Schleppegrell & de Oliveira, 2006). These studies have been useful for developing pedagogic approaches to writing. Nevertheless, we need to be mindful that if we attend only to the current abilities of learners, we may not be able to see and understand the whole of their development (Vygotsky, 1997, 2012a, 2012b). It is also important to recognize that although a certain development is the object of a study, the targeted development cannot be perfectly separated from the entire continuum of development since it is a certain part of development within an individual, affecting and being affected by other development within self (Hornberger, 1989). And sociocultural studies of writing remind us that writers' perspectives on and values about writing differ, affected by their culturally valued practices (Kwok et al., 2016; Scribner & Cole, 1981), suggesting that their historically accumulated experiences have an impact on their perspectives of writing.

In the present study, the fact that Jiwoo and Sophia came from a non-English speaking

country where writing was not emphasized invites us to probe how they perceived writing and how their perceptions affected their take-up of social studies writing. This will, I believe, allow us to rethink the nature of L2 writing development, particularly qualitative changes occurring over time. As we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, for Jiwoo and Sophia, learning to write in social studies meant more than the act of writing. Their reflections on writing experiences pointed to the significance of *learning to think in new ways—discipline-specific* and *culture-specific* (I will elaborate on this later). They perceived literacy tasks entailed in the social studies curriculum as a space for them to adopt and adapt alternative worldviews critically and creatively rather than as a space wherein they were forced to be uncritically absorbed into a single ideological and cultural system, which was prevalent in Korea, as suggested in Jiwoo's reflection on his prior learning in Chapter 5.

Woven in their accounts, although not explicitly stated, was that they enjoyed opportunities to learn and think in multiple different ways, which were not afforded to them in prior learning in Korea. The different ways of learning and thinking by engaging in various literacy activities (e.g., *analyzing* and *evaluating* sources/texts beyond reading the textbook, and *making arguments* in speaking or writing beyond taking notes) that they celebrated were similar to what the social studies curriculum attempts to promote, that is, students' development of thinking skills that are desirable in a multicultural, pluralistic, and democratic society (Abbot, 2014; Alberta Education, 2005; Lee et al., 2021). The learning of how to think in new ways, subsequently had a special resonance for Jiwoo and Sophia, serving as an intrinsic motivation for them to exploit and adapt to the new culture of learning.

Importantly, their adaptation to the new culture and their acquisition of new "intellectual tools" (Case & Wright, 1997, p. 41), including the thinking skills required in social studies

writing, were spread out throughout the curriculum. Thus, with regard to writing, the whole processes of learning and procedural knowledge developed in social studies enabled them to learn to write rather than to be taught explicitly. At the same time, they were acutely aware that certain thinking skills were crucial in social studies writing. It should be noted here, however, that they did not explicitly express their recognition of the importance of thinking skills in social studies writing, nor did they explicitly provide concrete examples of literacy activities requiring specific thinking skills that they felt essential for social studies writing. Instead, it was expressed partially and in an indirect manner, *pointing to* their intended meaning of thinking skills in their stories, which requires inference or interpretation.

In interpreting the meaning of a person's text expressed in language, Gadamer (2013, pp. 429-430) argued that the person's point or "unitary meaning concerning things" can be properly understood by looking at the context to which it refers or how the meaning is built up, rather than single words. In a similar vein, Mishler (1986) and Polkinghorne (1996) have stressed that when analyzing interview data, it is crucial to understand the core meaning or point of an individual's story, considering the discourse context and part-whole relationship of the data within an individual's full account. Informed by these studies, I attempt to infer the meaning of *thinking* or *thinking skills* by examining how *thinking skills* in relation to social studies writing were expressed and built up in their accounts.

I argue that the importance of thinking skills in social studies writing was suggested in both participants' accounts although the degrees of explicitness varied. It was illustrated in Jiwoo's conceptualization of writing in social studies, "Writing is what I think" (Chapter 5) and Sophia's suggestion for an alternative pedagogic approach to social studies writing, "*Talking more about how to think like a social scientist* would've helped better" (Chapter 6). Although

Jiwoo's conceptualization of writing as *thought/thinking* sounds broad and general, his view of *writing as thought* was expressed during his discussion of social studies writing. He perceived all literacy activities in social studies, including writing, as opportunities to practice his thinking skills, while being conscious and observant of the norms upheld by the members of the English-speaking community. In other words, for Jiwoo, thinking skills meant the *capacity to solve problems adhering to both the disciplinary tradition* and *the norms of the English-speaking community*.

Likewise, Sophia's inclination toward the learning of *how to think like a social scientist* instead of *textbook content* was also expressed during her reflection on social studies writing in English-speaking contexts. Although she could not explain explicitly the attributes of the thinking skills that can be exhibited by a social scientist, she had a sense that thinking skills required in social studies were distinct. This was shown in her statement, "*social studies thinking is different, very distinct*, in my opinion" (Chapter 6).

Thus, we can infer that the meaning of thinking (skills) suggested in both participants' accounts points to *discipline-specific* or *disciplinary thinking* skills, which are critical aspects of *disciplinary literacy* (Barber et al., 2018; Booth Olson et al., 2017; De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016; De La Paz et al., 2017; Moje, 2007, 2015; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, 2012). Disciplinary literacy, as discussed in Chapter 2, entails multiple aspects, including discipline-specific types of text, terms, and concepts, and disciplinary ways of thinking, reading, knowing, and communicating (Moje, 2015; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). Some of the essential thinking skills that were addressed in studies focusing on the teaching and learning of social studies (De La Paz et al., 2017; Moje, 2007; Monte-Sano et al., 2019) and Alberta Education (2005, 2017a, b) include 1) the ability to evaluate assumptions, claims, or texts

grounded in reasoned thinking, and 2) developing and supporting arguments by providing specific examples or evidence.

When closely examining Jiwoo's and Sophia's accounts, both participants hinted throughout their accounts that the disciplinary thinking skills described above were what they felt important in social studies writing. *Hinting* or *pointing to the direction of disciplinary thinking* was their way of confirming that disciplinary thinking (skills) was central in their literacy learning. As Mishler (1986) cautioned, we cannot expect participants to provide explicit answers or expressions as narrators and tellers of stories. In such a case, the researcher must interpret, which Mishler described as an "interpretive problem" (p. 238). Similarly, Ellis (2006) emphasized that when researching children or youth, it is crucial for the researcher to try to understand the core meaning of the participants' thoughts and experiences by attending to the participants' language and discourses, and their "most common forms of everyday sense-making" (p. 117). In the present study, the inferred meaning of thinking (skills) in Jiwoo's and Sophia's accounts may refer to *disciplinary thinking*, when taking into account Jiwoo's view of writing as thought situated within social studies and Sophia's recognition of the distinctiveness of thinking in social studies.

Therefore, for Jiwoo and Sophia, to write in social studies was to appropriate new cultural tools (concepts, content knowledge, and newly learned disciplinary thinking skills) in multiple contexts (e.g., different modes of text and literacy activities) beyond the production of words. Perhaps, this was the biggest surprise for me in the inquiry. More accurately to say, I was surprised by the degree of their sensitivity to new disciplinary thinking skills for writing beyond language, writing strategies, or knowledge about writing. Certainly, I was reminded that writing is not just about the mere production of written language, but involves writers' mediation of their

own linguistic resources, and the application of subject matter knowledge and discipline-specific thinking skills, as suggested in the rubrics of social studies writing (Alberta Education, 2017a, b).

The learning of disciplinary thinking is a requisite skill for all learners at the secondary level (De La Paz & McCutchen, 2016; Shanahan, 2016), whether characterized as L1 or L2. However, considering the fact that the dimensions of cognitive skills and literacy skills emphasized in their prior learning differed from their new learning in the Canadian education system, the degree to which the participants, as newcomer students, had to adapt to the new disciplinary thinking skills required in the Canadian high school curriculum was likely greater than for their peers. These skills included interpreting text and applying concepts taught in social studies to reasoned arguments in their writing. Despite such challenges, Jiwoo and Sophia became capable learners in social studies, as suggested in their accounts.

Admittedly, demonstrating certain subsets of literacy skills (e.g., how to make and support an argument) in writing fulfills only part of what is expected in social studies writing (Alberta Education, 2017a, b). And the delicate interlacing of multiple components has more potential to be qualified as successful writing (Hayes & Flower, 1980; Crossley, Roscoe, & McNamara, 2014; Smit, 2007). However, in school contexts, students grasp what constitutes good writing based on their own writing experiences in content areas, wherein interdisciplinary differences exist, and on their teachers' feedback of their writings (Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2015, 2018). This was the case for Jiwoo and Sophia, who understood what was expected in social studies writing tasks, and followed their teachers' suggestions and advice. They also took into account the nature of social studies courses as well as their perceived goal of literacy activities in class, which was linked to inculcating certain thinking skills. As a consequence of these observations, their sensitivity to new reasoning and thinking skills was heightened, contributing

to maintaining their writing up to standard. Although it is difficult to trace all changes in their

cognitive skills that occurred over time, their development of new reasoning and discipline-

specific thinking skills required in social studies was a critical change in their development.

Presumably, Jiwoo's and Sophia's newly acquired thinking skills could be used in their writing.

Or put another way, if one asks whether meeting the writing standards expected at their grade

level could be possible without their new disciplinary thinking skills, the answer to the question

would most likely be *no*.

Then, how should we understand Jiwoo's and Sophia's development of new disciplinary

thinking skills in relation to their writing development? I attempt to answer this question by

recruiting ideas from critiques of writing assessments (Crossley et al., 2014; Slomp, 2012) and a

sociocultural approach to writing development (Beach et al., 2016). It has been shown in a

number of studies that there is neither a unified method to determine good writing nor a univocal

view of good writing and assessing writing development (Crossley et al., 2014; Slomp, 2012;

Wilcox & Jeffrey, 2018). In his discussion of issues related to writing assessments, Slomp (2012,

p. 86) noted, although "metacognitive knowledge and process knowledge" are important aspects

of writing, these are ignored in product-oriented assessments of writing, focusing on textual

features. At the same time, high-stakes writing tests affect pedagogical practices relevant to

writing at the secondary level, including types of writing included in the regular curriculum and

one's guidance for students' writing (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Slomp, 2008). Meanwhile, what

is emphasized in a sociocultural approach to writing is students' metacognitive knowledge of

differences in discourse communities and rhetorical contexts, in which the communicative norms

expected by the audience change (Beach et al., 2016; Slomp, 2012). What is more important in a

sociocultural approach to writing development is the degree to which students adopt and adapt

their knowledge acquired through certain social practices to specific writing contexts (Beach et al., 2016). Taken together, writing development should be understood beyond textual development by paying attention to the different kinds of development of student writers.

It should be noted here that while exposure to certain contexts and situations is crucial for one's understanding of the external world (Gadamer, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978), being immersed in new educational environments does not guarantee individuals' full engagement in learning (Duff, 2001; Selimos & Daniel, 2017) or their development of certain skills (Ahn & Jang, 2022). However, in the present study, Jiwoo and Sophia developed new disciplinary thinking skills required in social studies within a narrow window of time. Importantly, their newly learned discipline-specific thinking skills were likely to be internalized, although patterns of their application or externalization of such cultural tools to writing tasks differed because of intertwined external and internal factors. A point I want to make here is that Jiwoo's and Sophia's development of new disciplinary thinking skills can be considered as their long-term development of writing, since social studies writing without such thinking skills is unlikely to meet the expected standards of the discipline, which was suggested in many studies emanating from educational contexts in the U.S. (e.g., Booth Olson et al., 2023; De La Paz et al., 2017; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). We can infer this kind of development by comparing their earlier and later stages of thinking skills based on Jiwoo's and Sophia's retrospective accounts.

From this point of view, I argue that *learning to think* in discipline-specific ways in English-speaking contexts was a necessary transitional phase of the development of writing, or at least an important step toward writing skills development. Applying the concept of development established by Vygotsky (1978), we can call the phase of learning to think *historical development of L2 writing* in the cases of Jiwoo and Sophia. I am acutely aware that many

researchers of writing ignore this dimension of development in L2 writing studies. But my position is that we should not fail to recognize acquiring new thinking skills as a leap in the process of L2 writing development particularly in secondary schools where students are expected to develop certain *habits of mind* with specific thinking skills (Olson, 2008) while learning new academic content.

The Effects of Focusing on Disciplinary Thinking Skills on the Development of Writing Skills

Given that disciplinary thinking skills were a central concern for both participants in social studies while explicit instruction for writing were not available to them in social studies, the consequences of such learning experiences in their learning of how to write in social studies and in their development of writing skills need to be discussed.

One of the consequences of disciplinary thinking-skills-focused learning and writing with little explicit writing instruction in social studies was the hindrance to the participants' transfer of writing skills and writing development across the curriculum, although they developed a sense of how to write in social studies itself, applying discipline-related concepts to writing. This was more obvious in the case of Jiwoo, who focused primarily on content (ideas) and integrating discipline-specific information in writing tasks in social studies. There was evidence in the data that his attitude toward social studies writing was influenced by his social studies teachers, even though their evaluations of and comments on his use of language of writing were minimal. Jiwoo clearly showed that language was not a priority for his social studies teachers: "Even though I get bad grammar, [I got] better [marks] even though I have many grammar error, [it] doesn't matter" (Chapter 5). Nevertheless, his social studies teachers' advice helped him to improve his understanding of the components to be included in writing assignments, such as the difference

between factual information and argument in writing. Accordingly, he tried to adhere to his social studies teachers' expectations of other aspects of writing.

But a negative consequence of such literate behavior was that Jiwoo unfortunately failed to transfer his writing knowledge acquired outside social studies. More specifically, even though he received extensive instruction related to how to communicate in written language (e.g., the structure and clarity of writing, and economic writing) in English language arts, Jiwoo did not transmit such learning to social studies writing, contrasting with the assumption of the transfer of communication skills found in the Programs of Studies in Alberta (Alberta Education, 2015a). Jiwoo's failure of applying transferable aspects of writing that he already learned elsewhere to his writings required in social studies illustrates a discrepancy between learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978), and difficulty with knowledge transfer that learners often encounter (Johns, 2008; Kibler, 2011; Slomp, 2012; Smit, 2007; Troia, 2014). If there was improvement, it could be minimal, as suggested in his reflection on his social studies writing, although his disciplinary thinking skills continued to mature.

Interestingly, however, the findings suggest that a higher degree of writing-skills transfer and writing-skill development occurred in the case of Sophia. For instance, she stated, "I think that [out-of-school-writing classes for two years] helped me a lot in terms of writing structured essays in Korean" (Chapter 6). To expand on this point (writing-skills transfer and writing-skill development), I recruit Ravid and Tolchinsky's (2002) notion of *linguistic flexibility* occurring in later language development beyond preschool ages. Linguistic flexibility, characterized by Ravid and Tolchinsky (2002), denotes one's awareness of different linguistic features, such as formality, discourse style, registers, appropriateness of words in contexts, different modalities, lexical density, and control over "linguistic variation" (p. 420). But two conditions are necessary

for linguistic flexibility to take place: one condition is *access* to linguistic resources; and the

other is *control* over one's linguistic output (Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002).

For Sophia, in terms of access, she had relatively more resources to access and import to

her writings than Jiwoo, ranging from advanced English, and previously acquired writing skills

in L1 to writing resources provided by her social studies teacher even though she had limited

access to explicit writing instruction in social studies. In terms of control, whenever

circumstances allowed, Sophia consciously tried to diversify her expressions beyond basic

linguistic properties of writing to improve the quality of her writing, instead of repeating the

same expressions. This was clearly shown in her statement, "*I don't like the [same] sentence

structure repeating again and again…*I don't like that sentences, all begin with like, "I think," "I

believe," something like that" (Chapter 6). In addition, Sophia paid close attention to features

affecting *effectiveness* of communication in written language, such as rhetorical appropriateness,

accurate use of language to convey intended points and meanings beyond dictionary meanings,

which was evidenced in her search for *right* words. In short, in the case of Sophia, access to a

wider range of linguistic resources and conscious effort to control her own language practice in

writing by seeking appropriateness can be regarded as a sign of growing maturity of writing

skills.

Therefore, it becomes clear that the facts that social studies writing was a new literacy,

and that explicit writing instruction were not available in social studies, remained the same to

both Jiwoo and Sophia. However, there were salient differences in terms of the underlying

conditions for their access to and internalization of cultural tools, consisting of both their prior

knowledge (pre-existing linguistic proficiencies in English and writing skills in L1) and current

knowledge (information or resources related to writing provided by their social studies teachers).

In the case of Sophia, her prior and present experiences allowed her to confer a general

advantage on the transfer of writing skills, and linguistic flexibility or writing development.

Conversely, Jiwoo, who learned English mostly in non-English speaking contexts, and who did

not learn and practice composition-oriented writing in L1, failed to internalize and transfer basic

writing skills in English that he acquired in other subjects to writing tasks in social studies,

which is hardly surprising. These facilitative influences inform us that the participants'

performances on writing tasks and their writing development were affected not only by their pre-

existing linguistic and literate abilities, but also teachers' pedagogic approaches to writing.

A Visual Representation of the Development of L2 Literacy (Content-Area Writing)

Derived through the Analysis of the Retrospective Accounts

As the present study is exploratory in nature, drawing upon the participants' retrospective

accounts of L2 literacy learning and practice, generalizations based on the findings cannot be

made. However, the insights gained from the participants' accounts of the study allow us to have

a new understanding of lesser-known dimensions and phases of L2 writing development during

the adolescent years. While there are various theories and models explaining language and

literacy development in L1 and L2 (e.g., Christies & Derewianka, 2008; Collier, 1994; Connor,

1996; Cummins, 1979, 1981; Graham, 2018; Hayes & Flower, 1980), to my best knowledge,

learning to think in new ways (discipline-specific and culture-specific), which was revealed in

the present study, has not clearly been recognized as an important phase in the process of L2

literacy development among school-aged learners. The most significant aspect of literacy

learning in this study was thinking in new ways rather than a language problem, although

linguistic proficiency (flexibility) was a factor of the participants' difficulties with school

literacy, specifically content-area writing. Hence, to consolidate the importance of the learning of

how to think in new disciplinary ways in the English-speaking contexts, I created a flowchart that highlights the process of writing development in a content area (social studies). This flowchart, illustrated in Figure 2, provides an outlook of L2 literacy (writing) development derived from the present study, which can serve as a resource that could inform future research examining the development of L2 writing in subjects with a larger number of participants.

Figure 2

A Flowchart of the Development of Content-Area Writing in L2 Derived from the Study
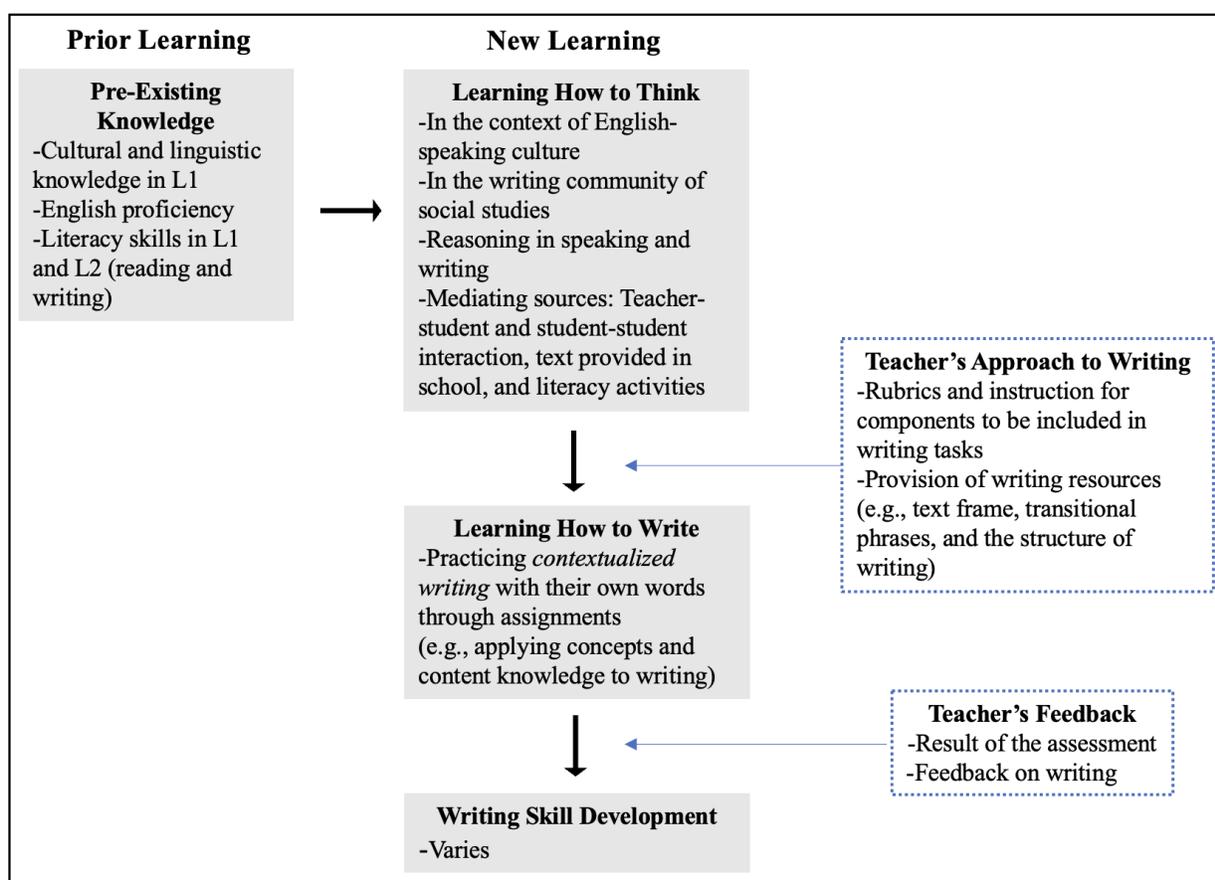
Phases of Content-Area Literacy Development in Social Studies

The flowchart above illustrates three major phases of content-area literacy learning in L2—1) *learning how to think,* 2) *learning how to write content-area writing*, and 3) *writing skill development*.

Learning How to Think in New Disciplinary Ways

The *learning of how to think* is the initial phase, which is shown at the top of the middle column in Figure 2. This phase illustrates the participants' adaptation to and adoption of their newly perceived ways of thinking and knowing as newcomer learners. More specifically, as the context of their learning shifted from L1 contexts to L2, their exposure and adaptation to the culture of learning and teaching in English-speaking contexts was unavoidable. The exposure to the new educational environment inevitably created opportunities for the participants to develop *the schema of thinking and reasoning skills demanded in L2 contexts* and *in the community of social studies*. While the degree of such development could be more or less, their development of such procedural knowledge was a critical dimension in both participants' literacy learning since the culture of teaching and learning in social studies in Canada differed from their prior learning in Korea. However, it is easy to dismiss this dimension of development since it is unlikely to be directly observed. To complicate the matter, there were multiple sources that helped the participants to learn how to think in culturally different ways. For example, the external sources that mediated their development of thinking skills appeared to be teacher-student interaction and peer-peer interaction, a wide array of learning materials provided by their teachers, and literacy activities used in class. While multiple sources mediated their thinking, the effects of the external sources on the participants varied, depending on their social style and preference of learning, which affected their sociocultural processes. It should be noted that their development of learning to think in new disciplinary ways was a continuum of L2 literacy learning, which continued throughout their social studies courses by advancing to a higher level.

Learning How to Write

The next phase is the *development of a sense of how to produce social studies writing* by applying new concepts taught in class to writing. That is to say, it was the phase where the participants obtained implicit knowledge about how to contextualize writing in social studies with their own words. In this phase, the participants' primary concern was a clear understanding of the components to be included in a writing assignment and how to incorporate specific concepts into their writing since disciplinary writing was new for them. However, while both participants followed their teacher's expectation of writing (e.g., the rubrics of writing assignments), their writing practice was affected by their teachers' approach to writing including their teachers' provision of writing materials (e.g., text frame and transitional phrases as seen in Chapter 6).

Writing Skill Development

The findings of the study suggest that writing skill development occurred after learning how to think in new ways and how to write. As the present study did not analyze the participants' writing samples from the earlier to later phases, it is difficult to identify their development of writing skills or *techniques of writing* (Beach et al., 2016). Nevertheless, based on the analyses of the participants' narratives, the advancement of their techniques or skills of writing occurred last, which was highly variable because of multiple factors (e.g., their L1 writing experience, their social studies teachers' approaches to writing, the results of the assessment of the participants' writing, and teachers' feedback on their writing).

In the flowchart shown above, the learning of disciplinary writing as part of schooled literacy cannot be possible without learning how to think in new cultural ways, which was the initial phase, leading to increased competence in later phases. Yet, this dimension of

development can be easily ignored when teaching EAL students or researching their

development of L2 literacy. Nonetheless, the participants' narratives in the present study

encourage us to recognize the fact that learning how to think in new ways was one of the most

significant aspects in their development of disciplinary writing.

Implications for Education and Research

In this study, I inquired about the nature of language and literacy learning and practice in

English, focusing on former EAL students' literacy learning experiences in social studies during

their high school years in Canada. The L2 writing development described above was drawn from

the developmental processes that were experienced in common by the participants. However, the

findings of the study demonstrate the impressive complexity of language and literacy

development in L2. While the newcomer students' new cultural experience itself served as a

foundation for new higher forms of development, as Vygotsky (1978, 1981b) repeatedly has

reminded us, the patterns of their historical development of language and literacy were shaped by

both the internal (individual variables) and the external (socio-literate relationships and

pedagogic practices). Such complexity discovered in the study can help induce renewed

understanding of L2 literacy development beyond the deficit perception of English learners (de

Jong & Harper, 2005; Kibler et al., 2018; Park, 2018), inviting us to be cautious when we make

pedagogical decisions in secondary settings. The question then becomes how to implement such

decisions. As a hermeneutic inquirer, I have an obligation to seek out answers for the how,

responding to the voices of Jiwoo and Sophia.

The participants' texts have left two images on me, offering different pedagogical

implications. The first image is of the participants, namely their pursuit of learning to think in

new ways, which was a significant change in their process of academic literacy development in

L2. The second image is of developing writers struggling on the edge of the culture of school writing without sufficient tools, particularly Sophia. Held by these images, I had to seek alternatives while drawing on ideas from previous studies.

First, I want to invite readers to the image of newcomer learners who desire to acquire new cultural ways of thinking, more specifically, thinking in discipline-specific ways in English-speaking contexts. This is indeed the key insight drawn from the participants of the study. Too often educators and researchers have focused on English learners' observable behaviors and current performance, comparing with mainstream English-speaking students (e.g., Reynolds, 2005), while ignoring their less observable changes and their historical development. In the present study, narrowing the focus of research questions from general to specific allowed me to trace the participants' developmental processes of L2 literacy, specifically content-area writing (social studies) and discover the phase of learning how to think in new cultural ways. It also allowed me to understand how important the development of new disciplinary thinking skills is for their learning at the secondary level. As it is easy to overlook this dimension of development, the findings of the study encourage us to rethink what writing might mean and what learning to think in order to write in subjects might mean for EAL students in their school learning.

The participants offered a view that writing at the secondary level is not a separate line of development isolated from new disciplinary thinking skills, which aligns with the findings drawn from intervention studies in secondary school settings in America[19] (De La Paz et al., 2017; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). As cross-cultural learners, they needed to have a wider view and understanding of the cultural landscape of a discipline nested in the English-speaking community prior to their entry to the passage of writing. However, while the participants' intrinsic

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[19] For more detailed information of the findings of these studies, refer back to Chapter 2 of the present study or De La Paz et al. (2017) and Monte-Sano et al. (2019).

motivation to acquire new disciplinary thinking skills were the same, what benefited their development of such thinking skills differed because of their differing social styles and their classroom underlife.

Many educators and researchers hold a view that an interactive classroom environment can contribute to the fostering of students' understandings of differing perspectives, thus creating sources for their potential development of different ways of thinking (e.g., Beach et al., 2016; Mote-Sano et al., 2021). Nonetheless, an implication of Sophia's account is that intersubjective literacy activities may not necessarily benefit students like her, who are less sociable, unless the appropriate quality of support is provided during such intersubjective activities. On the other hand, an implication of Jiwoo's account is that a socialized educational environment can be crucial for some students' development of discipline-specific thinking skills. This may be the case because the amount of necessary assistance to support an individual student's development of such thinking skills can be higher when working with peers than with the teacher. The two participants' contrasting experiences in interactive classrooms remind us that it is important for the teacher to ensure meaningful and productive interaction, taking into consideration the dynamic relationships among students, and the types of mediation that newcomer students need to support the development of the new disciplinary thinking skills required in the curriculum in the host country.

Second, the image of developing writers illustrated in the study calls for the critical need for improving educational conditions for all learners including newcomer students. As the findings of the study were derived from a small number of students, no generalization can be made. However, the void of explicit instruction related to content-area writing revealed in the study is concerning. That is to say, while writing is used as a tool for assessing students' learning

in school (Olson, 2008), some newcomer students may not have abundant exposure to writing

instruction and practice even in their native language, as shown in Jiwoo. The lesson learned

from Jiwoo's account of writing was that it is too simplistic and overly optimistic to assume that

students can transfer writing skills learned from one discipline to another, unlike Alberta

Education's (2005) expectation. The study confirms the need for the explicit teaching of writing

outside English language arts if we want newcomers to be more successful in their academic

performance. This leads me to think that it could be possible that Jiwoo's writing skills could

have improved more, and that Sophia's suffering from writing could have been reduced if more

explicit instruction for writing had been provided.

At the same time, the study showed that teachers did have a direct influence on the

participants' learning and practice of writing in social studies, demonstrating the importance of

the teachers' role in the participants' progress and transfer of writing across the curriculum,

which many scholars have emphasized (Dockrell et al., 2016; Graham, 2019; Moje, 2015).

Considering the participants' resilient and positive attitude toward their new learning shown in

the study, it was likely for them to follow their teachers' guidance if more writing instruction had

been available. Importantly, the effects of classroom instruction on students' literacy

development have been shown in many studies conducted in educational contexts (e.g., Booth

Olson et al., 2017; Booth Olson et al., 2020; Monte-Sano et al., 2019). If we look at this

relationship between learners and pedagogic practices in a positive way, it is imperative for us to

seriously consider implementing teaching practices and curricula that can support all students'

meaningful learning and their literacy development in secondary school settings where diversity

is the norm today. But as it has been discussed in many studies, accomplishing this is not a

simple task, requiring conversation and collaboration among multiple groups of people,

including learners, school teachers, school leaders, teacher educators, and researchers (Dockrell et al., 2016; Graham, 2019; Moje, 2015; Monte-Sano et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2018).

The present study reaffirms the need for such dialogues, particularly dialogues with learners. The findings drawn from the conversations with the cross-cultural learners of this study encourages us to rethink and explore further the nature of L2 literacy at the secondary level, attending to student experience and voice. The study suggests that if we, as educators, want to understand learners' experiences and perspectives of L2 literacy more fully, it is crucial for us to deliberately listen to or read the language and discourses used by the learners. Unless we are attuned to their own ways of sense-making, central meanings of their experiences can be unrecognized or dismissed (Ellis, 2006). A case in point in the present study was the participants' preoccupation with disciplinary thinking skills in social studies writing.

Indeed, the cross-cultural learners' insight into social studies writing, namely, their framing and identification of what counts as social studies writing, pushes us to think and treat newcomer learners beyond mere *learners of language* (English), challenging the prevailing assumption, stigmatization, or implicit representation of them as *deficient* learners (Bale et al., 2023; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Gagné et al., 2022; Kibler et al., 2018). Yet, their desire for and awareness of the need for linguistic flexibility for more sophisticated and advanced subject writing (e.g., "It [language] matters but not that much," noted by Jiwoo, and Sophia's plea for treating them as "*students who need extra help",* not "babies") brings us to the question of how best to support developing multilingual literacy, recognizing the assets that they bring to the classroom instead of focusing on their linguistic shortcomings. Perhaps such support can be possible when we have genuine *concern* or *care* for the learners (Carson, 1986; Ellis, 1998a) as *whole* persons and learners rather than just *language* learners. Although there have been some

efforts among educators, researchers, and institutions to put such an equity-focused idea into action (Gagné et al., 2022; Monte-Sano et al., 2019), much work still needs to be done, which overlaps with the question of how to establish a more equitable environment within diverse classrooms and in larger society.

The present study can be understood as one of these efforts, attempting to shed light on the phenomena of L2 literacy, which has long been under- or misrepresented (Brooks, 2015; Kibler et al., 2018). While the study, I believe, contributes to advancing our knowledge about the lesser-known aspects of L2 literacy, it raises important questions to be inquired. That is to say, in this study, I attempted to uncover the significance of the participants' literacy experience with their school learning by listening to their said and unsaid words. Listening to and interpreting their rich narratives allowed me to enrich my knowledge of L2 literacy development, particularly writing. However, as the findings drawn from the study relied on their retrospective accounts, close investigation of their behavioral changes and their immediate reflections on their daily literacy practices (e.g., writing assignments) throughout the high school years was not possible. Although their historical development of writing could be outlined in the study, the process of L2 writing development presented in this study invites further discussion and exploration. And the phenomena of learning to think and write in new ways remain to be more fully understood in future research.

Moreover, the research results presented in the study are based on relatively academically successful scenarios, given that the participants were admitted to one of the reputable universities in Canada. They appeared to have a strong foundation of L1 literacy, which could serve as a resource from which they could draw (e.g., reading proficiency in L1). Interestingly, both participants came from socio-economically well-established families, as inferred from the fact

that both participants could afford to study abroad and receive a fair amount of support (intellectual, psychological, and financial) from their parents. These are exceptional aspects and privileges that are often absent among many newcomer students.

The point I want to make here is that we need to also explore how socio-economically less privileged students with weak L1 proficiency might experience their learning of L2 literacy in secondary school settings. But as highlighted in the study, it is crucial for us to understand these learners' literacy experiences holistically, instead of focusing on their unpolished and incomplete verbal expressions, or observable attributes. To this end, I have tried to demonstrate how this can be achieved with an interpretive approach by offering the stories of two newcomers' literacy learning in Canadian high schools. I sincerely hope that these stories presented in the study can foster fruitful conversations and questions about how to approach L2 literacy as well as how best to support maturing multilingual learners, thereby creating new possibilities of teaching and conducting research with these learners.

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Appendix A

Assessment Criteria for Social Studies 30-1 and Social Studies 30-2

	Written Tasks	**Assessment Criteria**
Social Studies 30-1	1. Interpreting three sources (a political cartoon, a written passage, and a photograph) to demonstrate students' understanding of their link to a topic in the exam and explaining relationships among the three sources	• Interpretation of sources • Explanation of the relationships of the sources • Communication: vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar
	2. Analyzing a written source and writing an essay responding to a writing prompt	• Analysis of sources • Argumentation • Evidence to support a position • Communication: organization, syntax, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary
Social Studies 30-2	1. Identifying and explaining one visual source, and supporting the response	• Interpretation and support • Communication: organization, syntax,

		grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary
	2. Interpreting multiple sources and defending a position	• Interpretation of sources • Defense of position • Communication
	3. Writing a response to a written prompt by analyzing multiple points of view on the topic and defending a position	• Analysis of sources • Argumentation • Evidence to support a position • Communication: organization, syntax, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary

Note. Adapted from *Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing: Social Studies 30-1 and 30-2,* by Alberta Education, 2017a, 2017b.

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate in Interview Activity (Research Ethics ID: Pro00000096)

October 25, 2016

Dear _____,

I am writing to ask whether you would be interested in participating in an interview with me on the topic of "An English as a second language (ESL) student's experience in English speaking contexts".

I am currently working to complete the requirements of a philosophy of doctor (PhD) degree in the [the Department of Secondary Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. I would like to do the interview to complete a course assignment in a research course I am taking as part of this graduate program. I will give an oral report on the interview in my research class. This will be my only public presentation about the interview.

If you were interested in participating, our interview activity would have three parts. As part one, I would ask you to do a pre-interview activity in which you would make a diagram, time-line, or other visual representation about some of your experiences related to the interview topic. As part two we would meet for approximately one hour to discuss the visual representation and to use some of my interview questions to invite your reflections and memories about the interview topic. Two sample interview questions are: If you had an extra two hours every day, what would you like to do with your extra time?; What are some of the parts of learning as a language learner that you like best? The interview would be scheduled at your convenience. As part three, after I had studied the audio recording of the interview, I might ask you to clarify one or two points from our discussion.

Your participation is voluntary. If you consent to be involved in this interview activity, your anonymity will be maintained. You would be free to withdraw at any time. If you decide to withdraw your participation after the interview, any data collected from you would be withdrawn from my interview activity assignment. An audio recorder will be used to record our interview and I will transcribe the recordings. I will use a pseudonym to represent you in all work that is written about the interview and I will keep your audio recording, visual representation and transcripts locked in a secure place for a minimum of five years following completion of this research activity.

I do not foresee any harm resulting from this activity. Instead, people often find the opportunity to reflect on their experiences to be beneficial. I would share with you the notes I write to clarify themes or insights I develop in my analysis of the interview.

If you have any further questions about the interview activity, please feel free to contact me at (780) 904-0825, my research course instructor, Dr. Julia Ellis at (780) 492-0932, or the Chair of the Department of Elementary Education, Dr. Maryanne Doherty, at (780) 492-2146. Please complete the attached consent form to indicate your decision. If you are willing to participate, please return the consent form to me. Thank you for considering this request.

Yours sincerely,

Sung Kyung Ahn

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form (Research Ethics ID: Pro00000096)

Project Title: Interview Activity for Research Course Assignment

Investigator: Sung Kyung Ahn

_____   **No**, I do not choose to participate in the interview activity.

_____   **Yes**, I agree to participate in the interview activity.

I give my consent to be interviewed for this research course assignment. I understand that the interview will be recorded on tape. I understand that only the investigator, [course participant's name] will have access to the audio tape and transcripts of the tape. I understand that the information I provide will be kept anonymous by not referring to me by my name or location, but by using a pseudonym. I understand that the information I provide may be used in an oral report in the research class but that my name will not be used. I understand that I will be asked if the visual representation I draw can be used in the oral presentation and that my decision about this is strictly voluntary. If I wish to see any speaking notes written from the findings of this study, I am free to contact [course participant's name] at any time and copies will be provided.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, to refuse to answer specific questions, and/or to withdraw my participation at any time. I understand that participation in any aspects of the study is voluntary and that my interview activity has three parts: doing a diagram or drawing, an interview of one hour or less, and follow-up questions for approximately ten minutes.

I understand that there will be no risks involved in this study. I may, in fact, benefit from reflecting upon my experience.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Name of participant (Please print)   _____

Signature of participant   _____

Date   _____

Appendix D

Pre-Interview Activity (Research Ethics ID: Pro00000096)

Interview with an English as a Second Language (ESL) Student: His Experiences in English Speaking Contexts

Purpose of the interview:

My research interest is in <u>the area/topic of an ESL student's experiences in everyday life in English speaking contexts?</u> More specifically, I am interested in how he experiences his everyday contexts and activities and what it is like for him to communicate in those contexts and activities. In our interview, I hope to learn something about how he experiences his everyday contexts and activities and what it is like for him to communicate in those contexts and activities. There are two parts to the interview:

- Pre-Interview Activities (PIAs) and
- Open-ended Questions

Pre-Interview Activities (PIAs): About You as a Person in General

Please **<u>complete two or more</u>** of the following visual representation activities and bring them to our interview. Please use pens, pencils and preferably colored markers on blank paper. We will begin our interview by having you show me and tell me about the ones you completed.

1.	Think of **an important activity that you do**. Make drawings to show **a "good day" & a "not so good day"** with that activity. Feel free to use thought or speech bubbles.
2.	Think of **an important event in your life**: Make drawings to show what things were like for you **before and after** the event happened. Feel free to use thought or speech bubbles.
3.	Draw a picture or diagram of **a place that is important** to you. And use key words to indicate the parts of the place or what happens in each of the parts.
4.	Think of **an activity that has been an interesting part of your life** for a long time. Use colours to make three drawings that symbolize how your experience of that activity has changed over time.
5.	Draw **a schedule for your day, week, or year** and use different colours to indicate how time is spent. Make a legend to explain the colours.
6.	Think of **a component of your life** that is very important for you (for example, sports, money, teaching, home, relationships with a particular person, travel). Make **a timeline** listing critical times or events that changed the way you experience it.

Pre-Interview Activities (PIAs): About the Topic of the Research

Also please **<u>complete two or more</u>** of the following visual representation activities and bring them to our interview. Please use pens, pencils and preferably colored markers on blank paper. We will begin our interview by having you show me and tell me about the ones you completed.

1.	Draw a diagram or images to show where your support or support systems come from for communicating in English.
2.	Please complete the following two sentences: In Korea, learning and practicing English was like_____ In the current English speaking context, learning and practicing English is like_____
3.	Make a list of 20 important words that come to mind for you when you think about learning English. Divide the list into two groups in a way that makes sense to you. (Please bring both the original list and the two smaller groups of words to the interview.)
4.	Think of something important that changed things for you in learning English. Use colors to make three drawings that symbolize how your experience of communicating in English has changed over time.
5.	Make a timeline listing key events or ideas that changed the way you have experienced using English or communicating in English over time.
6.	Make two drawings showing what it is like for you to communicate in English: 1) in an activity or setting where you are <u>happy </u>with your current English learning; and 2) in an activity or setting where you were <u>not so happy</u> with your current English learning. Feel free to use thought or speech bubbles.

Appendix E

Information Letter (Research Ethics ID: Pro00114850)

Proposed Title: English as a Second Language (ESL) Speakers' Experiences of Being

Learners of Writing in Social Studies Classes in High School

Principal Investigator: Sung Kyung Ahn

PhD student

Department of Secondary Education

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB

Email: sungkyun@ualberta.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Bill Dunn

Professor

Department of Secondary Education

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB

Phone: (780) 492-7453

Email: wdunn@ualberta.ca

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in this research study about ***English as Second Language (ESL) speakers' Experiences of Being Learners of Writing in Social Studies Classes in High School*** because you, as a newcomer, went to an English-speaking high school in Canada. This research is conducted for my doctoral dissertation.

Purpose of the Study: From this research, I wish to learn about your experience of literacy learning (writing) in high school in Canada. This study attempts to contribute to the understanding about how best to support students' learning, particularly students with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in school, by listening to your voice about literacy learning in English.

Participation: If you wish to participate in this study, please return a signed consent form by mail with your address written on the envelope. Or you can send a photo of your signed consent form to me by email. I would appreciate receiving it before November 25, 2021.

Your Role in the Study: If you participate in the study, your roles involve **three parts**: 1) pre-interview activity, 2) (virtual) interviews with me, and 3) your writing samples from high school (if you have any). For **Part 1**, I would ask you to do a pre-interview activity in which you would make a diagram, timeline, or other visual representation about some of your experiences related to the interview topic. This may take 10-15 minutes. I will provide sample answers for the pre-interview activity to give a sense of what they might look like when I send you the pre-interview activity document one week before the first interview. You can use both your home language and English. For **Part 2,** we would meet (virtually) for approximately one hour to discuss the visual representation and to use some of my interview questions. The (virtual) interview will be decided upon according to your and my available times. During the interview, I would invite you to think about memories related to the interview topic. I would ask you to share your thoughts and new experience of being a learner of writing in school subjects in Canada. Two sample interview questions are: What are some of the parts of school life that you liked best?; Can you tell me about how you felt when you had to do (writing) assignments in social studies? The (virtual or face-to-face) interview will be recorded on my iPad or computer. After I analyze the audio (and/or video) recording of the interview, I might ask you to clarify some points from our discussion if I have any questions. We can communicate through email, text message, Google Meet, or Zoom, which can be decided according to your and my available times. If we communicate via Google Meet or Zoom for follow-up questions after the first interview, it may take 10-15 minutes and you have the option of turning off video. For **Part 3,** at our initial

interview, I might ask you to provide your writing samples from school if you have any. You can provide your writing samples in your convenient time. Your writing samples would help me to better understand your experiences as a learner. The study activities may take a minimum of 90 minutes.

Benefits: This study may provide you an opportunity to understand your path of literacy learning in English better by reflecting on your past experiences. But it is possible that you may not feel you benefit directly from participating in the study. You may feel satisfied or proud of yourself by knowing that the research findings will contribute to the development of sources related to ESL speakers' literacy learning in school.

Risks: I do not see serious potential risks. You may feel discomfort if you recall negative experiences in high school. In this case, you do not need to answer questions that may cause discomfort. Those questions will be avoided accordingly.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The information that you will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this research. The only people who will have access to the research data are my supervisor, Dr. Bill Dunn, and myself, Sung Kyung Ahn. I may give an academic presentation at a conference and have the research findings disseminated through a book or academic journal. Your answers to open-ended questions may be used as quotes and in the way you expressed. But anonymity is guaranteed because I will not reveal your name (personal information) or your school (name and location).

Data Storage: Your writing samples (if you provide any) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta for a minimum period of 5 years. An electronic copy of the interview data and electronic communication data (email) will

be encrypted and stored on a password protected computer in the Department of Secondary

Education at the University of Alberta.

Compensation (or Reimbursement): This study does not involve any compensation (or

reimbursement) for your participation.

Voluntary Participation: You do not have an obligation to participate. If you choose to

participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. You would be

free to decide not to participate at any time during the interview or within one month after I

finish collecting the interview data and writing samples. If you withdraw from the study, any

information collected from you would be withdrawn from my research.

Information about the Study Results: If you wish to see any notes written from the findings

of this study, you are free to contact me. I will provide you with an electronic copy of a

summary of the findings.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or require more information about the study

itself, you may contact me by email sungkyun@ualberta.ca, or my research supervisor Dr. Bill

Dunn by email wdunn@ualberta.ca or by phone at (780) 492-7453.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of

Alberta. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or how the

research is being conducted you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

Please keep this Information Letter and Consent Form for your records by downloading or

printing.

Appendix F

Informed Consent Form (Research Ethics ID: Pro00114850)

Project Title: English as a Second Language (ESL) Speakers' Experiences of Being Learners

of Writing in Social Studies Classes in High School

Investigator: Sung Kyung Ahn

_____ **No**, I do not choose to participate in the research.

_____ **Yes**, I agree to participate in the research.

I give my consent to participate in this research. I understand that only the investigator, Sung

Kyung Ahn, and her supervisor, Dr. Bill Dunn, will have access to the audio/video file and

transcripts of the tape (video). I understand that the information I provide will be kept

anonymous by not referring to me by my name, location, or my school name, but by using a

different/fake name. I understand that the information I provide may be used in a report at a

conference or in a book, but my name will not be used. I understand that my visual

representation and writing samples can be used in an oral presentation, and that my decision

about this is strictly voluntary. If I wish to see any notes written from the findings of this

study, I am free to contact Sung Kyung Ahn and an electronic copy will be provided.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and to refuse to answer

specific questions. I understand that participation in any aspects of the study is voluntary, and

that my involvement in the research activity has three parts: 1) pre-interview activity, 2)

(virtual) interview, and 3) my writing samples from high school if I have any.

Name of participant (Please print)   _____

Signature of participant   _____

Date   _____

Appendix G

Potential Questions: Pre-Interview Activity (Research Ethics ID: Pro00114850)

Purpose of the interview:

My research interest is in <u>ESL students' writing experiences in school.</u> More specifically, I am interested in <u>how ESL students experience their writing in English, and what it is like for them to learn how to write in social studies</u>. In our interview, I hope to learn something about how an ESL student experiences her/his everyday contexts and activities and what it is like for her/him to write critically in social studies.

There are two parts to the interview:

- Pre-Interview Activities (PIAs) and

- Open-ended Questions

<u>**Pre-Interview Activities (PIAs): About You as a Person in General**</u>

Please **complete two or more** of the following visual representation activities and bring them to our interview. Please use pens, pencils and preferably colored markers on blank paper. We will begin our interview by having you show me and tell me about the ones you completed.

1.	Think of **an important activity that you do**. Make drawings to show **a "good day" & a "not so good day"** with that activity. Feel free to use thought (or speech) bubbles.
2.	Think of **an important event in your life**: Make drawings to show what things were like for you **before and after** the event happened. Feel free to use thought (or speech) bubbles.

3.	Draw a picture of **a place that is important** to you. And use key words to show the parts of the place or what happens in each of the parts.
4.	Think of **an activity that has been an interesting part of your life** for a long time. Use colours to make three drawings that show how your experience of that activity has changed over time.
5.	Draw **a schedule for your day, week, or year** and use different colours to show how time is spent. Make a list of colours and explain how you use the colours.
6.	Think of **a component of your life** that is very important for you (for example, sports, money, learning, home, relationships with a particular person). Make **a timeline** listing important times or events.

Pre-Interview Activities (PIAs): About the Topic of the Research

Also please **complete two or more** of the following visual representation activities and bring them to our interview. Please use pens, pencils and preferably colored markers on blank paper. We will begin our interview by having you show me and tell me about the ones you completed.

1.	Draw a diagram or images to show where your support or support systems come from for writing in English.
2.	Please complete the following two sentences: In_____(a country name), writing was _____ In the current learning context, writing in English is _____
3.	Make a list of 20 important words that come to mind for you when you think about writing in English. Divide the list into two groups in a way that makes sense to you. (Please bring both the original list and the two smaller groups of words to the interview.)

4.	Think of something important that changed things for you in writing. Use colors to make three drawings that symbolize how your experience of writing has changed over time.
5.	Make a timeline listing key events or ideas that changed the way you have experienced writing over time.
6.	Make two drawings showing what it is like for you to write in English: 1) in an activity or setting where you are <u>happy</u> with your current learning to write in social studies; and 2) in an activity or setting where you are <u>not so happy</u> with your current learning to write in social studies. Feel free to use thought (or speech) bubbles.

Appendix H

Potential Questions: Interview (Research Ethics ID: Pro00114850)

<u>**Groups of Open-Ended Questions:**</u>

<u>**Group 1: Getting to know you questions:**</u>

1.	What would you like to be really good at doing?
2.	If you had one week off from school each month, what would you like to do with your extra time?
3.	If you pick one thing that you wouldn't have to worry about anymore, what is one of the things you might choose?
4.	What are some of the things you like about being your age? And what are some of the things about being your age that you don't like so well?
5.	Have you ever done anything that has surprised other people?
6.	Can you think of any time when you've felt something was difficult to do? And can you think of something that slowed you down? What did you do when it happened?

Group 2: Questions about a larger whole—Writing over the years:

1.	What kind of writing did you learn in middle school in your home country? What was similar to (or different from) your writing in English now?
2.	What were some of the activities you liked better in your early writing experiences in your mother/first language?
3.	What were some of the activities you did not like so much in your early writing experiences in your mother/first language?
4.	Looking back over your years in writing, can you think about 2 or 3 teachers who you cannot forget? What made them stand out for you?

Group 3: Questions about a next larger whole—Writing in the past:

1.	When you started writing in English, what were some of the things that were different from your writing now?
2.	When you started writing in English in Canada, what were some of the things you liked about writing?
3.	What were some of the things you liked and you did not like so much about writing in your mother/first language?
4.	What were some of the things you liked and you did not like so much about writing in English?
5.	When you started writing in school in Canada, what were some of the things you found difficult (or easy)?
6.	Looking back over your writing experiences in Canada, can you think about 1 or 2 teachers who are memorable? What made them stand out for you?

Group 4: Questions about the specific topic—Writing in social studies today

1.	What are some of the things you want to know about writing in social studies?
2.	What are some of the things that are not as easy or pleasant for you to do in social studies as a student? (You can think about any activities related to writing.)
3.	Since you started learning in social studies in Canada, what are some of the things that have become easier for you to do in social studies?
4	How do you feel when you get writing assignments (individual and group) in social studies?
5	How do you decide how to write in social studies (individual and group writing)?
6	What do you do when you have difficulty with writing in social studies (individual and group writing)?
7	When you think about writing in different subjects, what are some of the things that are similar to (or different from) writing in social studies?
8	What do you think the role of writing in social studies is?
9	Can you tell me how your social studies teachers teach how to write?
10	What are some things that you learned in social studies in your home country that you can use in studying in Canada?
11	In what way do you feel good or not good about writing in social studies?
12	What do you think your strengths and weaknesses are in social studies writing?
13	When you need support with writing in social studies, where does the support come from?
14	What kind of support or assistance do you value in social studies?
15	What do you think about the English way of writing in social studies?

16	What are some of the things that you want your social teacher to try in the future to improve your writing?
17	What are some things that you might want to try in the future to improve your writing?