



A NARRATIVE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ACADEMIC WRITING THROUGH ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK IN A UK UNIVERSITY

Submitted by Mas Ayu Kartika Dewi Mumin, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, September 2019.

The thesis is available for library use on the understanding that it is a copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of the degree by this or any other University has been acknowledged.

.....

Dedication

To my father, Hj Mumin Hj Salleh, a cancer fighter.

Acknowledgements

This doctoral journey has been one of the most challenging experiences in my professional life, not only mentally but emotionally as well. I was diagnosed with clinical depression at one time for missing my youngest son so much and endured series of anxiety attacks that at one time seemed to have controlled both my personal and professional life. But Alhamdulillah, during those times, I learned to manage them well enough to be able to submit this thesis on time.

Throughout this journey, there have been several people who guided me and gave me their support and friendship. I thank my supervisor, Dr Susan Jones and Dr Susan Riley for their insightful comments, guide and never ending support, helping me grow as both a learner and a researcher. Without these amazing duos, my experience would not have been as enriching and academically gratifying as it was.

My gratitude goes to the institution I work for, who supported me during my years of research. My colleagues were also important inspirational sources throughout this time by encouraging me to never give up. This was very important for me especially on days when I felt so emotionally beaten up.

Finally, to my family especially my husband, Amir and my children, Iman, Iris and Adrien who were unconditionally by my side every step of the way. I am also thankful to my father, my sisters and my brother who gave me endless support, especially with taking care of the children while I continued to fight this battle. I am deeply thankful for their love and faith in me. They are the best proof how deeply intertwined personal and professional lives can be and how one can become a source of empowerment and strength for the other.

Abstract

Academic writing is an essential skill for higher education and often used as a form of assessment. Academic writing is also very difficult to define due to its situated concept that varies from one academic context to another. This makes it especially difficult for international students who may have limited academic writing experience and whose first language is not English. Furthermore, previous studies often portray international students as students with deficits (Lee & Rice, 2007) due to the many documented cases reporting international students' difficulty when studying abroad, often presented as statistical or performance data and so giving a non-holistic picture.

This narrative study looked at international students' in-depth and holistic experience in conceptualizing academic writing, over 10 months period, taking into account the unique experiences of each participant. The study used blogs, and conversational semi-structured interviews as method for collecting data. These combinations were essential in order to ensure an ongoing longitudinal collection of data without being too intrusive towards the participants.

The findings show that there were many interrelated factors involved in the journey of academic writing conceptualization which were both internal and external. Internal factors included the participants' traits as a learner, their personality and motivation. External factors contributing in this study included the importance of external support that directly and indirectly determine how the participants perceive feedback, which in turn affects their writing behaviour. The importance of criticality as the focal essence of the UK academic writing was also discussed as it seemed to have an important cultural inference for some participants. Lastly, there was evidence of changes and development as well as the inability to change present and this is discussed in the study. This study concludes by providing a series of implications that could be considered not only by the UK universities and international students alike, but also for future student sponsors.

List of Contents

Abstract	4
List of Abbreviations	9
List of Tables	10
List of Figures	11
Chapter 1 Introduction	12
1.1 Background	12
1.2 Nature of the Problem	13
1.3 Rationale and Significance	15
1.4 Research Aims and Research Questions	16
1.5 Organization of Study	16
Chapter 2 The study context	18
Chapter 3 Literature Review	26
3.1 Theories that inform writing	26
3.2 Pedagogical Approaches to teaching writing in L2 classrooms	28
3.3 The conceptualization of Academic Writing	31
3.3.1 The linguistic point of view	31
3.3.2 The cognitive point of view	33
3.3.3 The sociocultural point of view	36
3.4 Academic Literacy	38
3.4.1 Major approaches that underpin academic literacy	38
3.4.2 Development of academic literacy researches	40
3.5 L2 writers and their writing challenges	42
3.6 Writing Strategies	45
3.7 Postgraduate learners as adult learners	49
3.8 Postgraduate student experiences in Anglophone countries	51
3.9 Feedback and how it can help learning	54
3.10 Perception of Feedback in Higher Education	57
3.11 Conceptual Theories that guide this research	59
<i>Sociocultural theory (SCT)</i>	60
<i>Transformative Learning Theory and Perspective Transformation</i>	63
<i>Perspective transformation as a process</i>	64
<i>Community of Practice</i>	68

3.12	Conclusive Remarks	71
	Chapter 4 Methodology.	73
4.1	Research Paradigm of the study	73
4.2	Research Design	76
4.3	Data Collection methods	80
	4.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews	81
	4.3.2 Semi-structured Conversational Interviews	82
	4.3.3 Blogs as personal academic journals	83
4.4	Participants	85
	<i>Approaching Participants</i>	86
4.5	Data collection procedures	86
	<i>Seeking approval</i>	86
	<i>Piloting the interviews</i>	86
	<i>Piloting the blogs</i>	87
4.6.	Data Collection	88
	4.6.1 Blog entries	89
	4.6.2 Interviews	89
	<i>The first interview (Phase One)</i>	89
	<i>The second interview (Phase Two)</i>	90
	<i>The third interview (Phase Two)</i>	90
	<i>The fourth interview (Phase Three)</i>	91
	<i>The fifth interview (Phase Three)</i>	92
	<i>The sixth interview (Phase Four)</i>	92
	4.6.3 Data Collection Issues that arose	93
4.7	Data analysis and how interviews become narratives	94
4.8	Role as researcher	98
4.9	Ethical considerations	100
4.10	Limitations	103
	Chapter 5 Findings.	105
5.1	Summary of the participants.	105
	<i>Yaseen</i>	106
	<i>Maria</i>	107
	<i>Lulu</i>	108
	<i>Elio</i>	109

	<i>Shaima</i>	109
5.2	A story of Marks and Progress	110
	<i>Participants' perception on marks signifying development</i>	112
5.3	A story of Learning	114
	5.3.1 Analysis on Participants' Writing Challenges	115
	5.3.2 Lulu: a gradual learning progress	117
	5.3.3 Elio: a moderate learning progress	121
	5.3.4 Other participants: a stagnated learning progress	124
	5.3.5 The lesson of criticality	129
	5.3.6 Participants perception on being a successful writer	135
5.4	A story of Interpretation	140
	<i>Yaseen</i>	142
	<i>Lulu</i>	148
5.5	A story of support	154
	5.5.1 Tutor Support	154
	5.5.2 Peer feedback and Peer support	157
	5.5.3 International students' need for academic writing support	163
	5.5.4 Proof reading support	164
	5.5.5 Sample essays as a writing reference	166
5.6	A story of Cultural Difference	169
5.7	A story of an NNES writer	171
	5.7.1 Importance of Mastery of English	171
	5.7.2 Being an Non-native speaker of English	175
5.8	A story of Externalization	176
5.9	A story of individual change	179
	Chapter 6 Discussion.	182
6.1	The changes experienced during the MSc sojourn	186
	6.1.1 Beliefs and Values	186
	6.1.2 Learning and Strategies	191
6.2	How change happens in the MSc sojourn	198
	6.2.1 Independence and dependence	198
	6.2.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic influences	202
	6.2.3 Feedback and becoming a proficient writer	209
6.3	How change can be understood	213

Chapter 7 Conclusions.	222
My academic reflection	224
My personal reflection	227
References	229
Appendix 1 Informed Consent Form	271
Appendix 2 Interview Schedule for Initial Interview (Phase 1)	272
Appendix 3 Matters Discussed for DCR (Phase 2)	273
Appendix 4 Matters Discussed for SM (Phase 2)	274
Appendix 5 Matters Discussed for IM (Phase 3)	275
Appendix 6 Matters Discussed for NEE (Phase 3)	276
Appendix 7 Interview schedule for Final Interview (Phase 4)	277
Appendix 8 Initial Organization of Findings Stage 1	279
Appendix 9 Organization of Findings Stage 2	280
Appendix 10 Final Organization of Findings Stage 3	281

List of Abbreviations

ALM	Academic Literacies Model
COP	Community of Practice
DCR	Designing and Communicating Research
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
IM	Interpretive Methodology
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NEE	Nature of Education Inquiry in Education
NES	Native English Speaker
NLS	New Literacy Studies
NNES	Non-native English Speaker
SM	Scientific Methodology
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

List of Tables

Table 1	Designing and Communicating Research Module (DCR)	20
Table 2	Scientific Methodologies in Educational Research Module (SM)	21
Table 3	Interpretive Methodologies Module (IM)	22
Table 4	The Nature of Educational Theory Module (NEE)	23
Table 5	Conceptualization of academic writing (French, 2014)	38
Table 6	Ten Phases of transformation (Mezirow, 1981)	64
Table 7	Overview of Research Design	80
Table 8.	The guiding questions that participants received as an assisting reminder	85
Table 9	Participants' actual and expected marks for all four modules	110
Table 10	Participants' writing challenges throughout the four modules	115
Table 11	Essential traits possessed by participants.	125
Table 12	Summary of participants' conceptualization of criticality	130
Table 13	Participants' perception of tutors for formative assignment	141
Table 14	Participants' perception of tutors for summative assignments	141
Table 15	Comparison of themes before and after data has been analysed	182
Table 16	Participants' learning conception categorisation using Säljö (1979) <i>and Marton, Dall'Alba and Beaty (1993) descriptors.</i>	205
Table 17	Explaining Lulu transformative learning/perspective transformation journey	209

List of Figures

Figure 1	Macro-stages in cognitive development of writing skill (Kellogg, 2008)	34
Figure 2	Mezirow's revised Transformative Learning Theory from Kitchenham (2008)	214
Figure 3	Types of reflection (Kitchenham, 2008)	217

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Academic writing has always been synonymous with higher education learning. Proficiency in academic writing is important not only for learning but also for assessment purposes because academic success is often related to students' academic writing competency (Baker 2011, 2013; Kelley, 2008). It is regarded as a form of thinking that can showcase a student's synthesizing skills in the English language as well as to demonstrate the ability to sustain arguments, both of which are crucial for academic success (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Hyland 2007). Academic writing competence is, more than being able to write in a grammatical manner it also requires the student to demonstrate his/her ability to interpret and understand the subject through a well-structured piece of writing (Irvin, 2010). It is easy to recognize certain favorable traits such as accuracy in syntax, spelling and grammar but to actually define what 'good academic writing' entails is a very difficult task (Marshall, 2007; Street, 2005; Turner, 2018) due to its "abstract and situated nature" (French, 2019, p.5).

Academic writing is probably more problematic for international students who are non-native speakers of the English language. Language proficiency is a factor in academic success (Daller & Phelan, 2013) therefore, international students who reside temporarily in the host country to acquire a degree could take longer to grasp the necessary academic skills due to their inadequate language skills (Matirosyan, Hwang & Wanjohi, 2015). However, language proficiency is only one of the many challenges international students face when studying in an English-speaking country. Apart from language proficiency, Li, Chen & Duanmu (2010) also acknowledge cross-cultural issues such as academic culture shock and transition from one academic environment to another as a factor contributing to an international students' academic performance.

Many studies credit assessment feedback as a fundamental aspect of the learning experience (Hattie & Timperly, 2007; Evans, 2013), yet results of national surveys conducted in the UK cited dissatisfaction with feedback as one of the most challenging aspects of the student experience (Bell and Brooks, 2017). Furthermore, the assumption that international students would simply grasp the educational context independently should not be expected by the host country's academics (Ali, Ahmed & Rose, 2017) and this applies to international students' perception of feedback as well. Warner and Miller (2015) stated that international students

perceive feedback differently influenced by their individualized cultural experiences and this is due to the fact that learning is a situated experience (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and not neutral and that clashes of academic and cultural beliefs are bound to happen (Warner & Miller, 2015).

1.2 Nature of the problem

The number of international students studying in the UK has increased in recent years. According to the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), there has been a steady increase of international students, specifically of non-EU countries studying in Higher Education in the UK. For the 2017-2018 UKCISA (2019), there are over 458,490 international (non-EU) students studying in the UK compared to 442,375 in the year 2016/2017. In the breakdown of the country of origin of these students, the majority of them were students from China and those who come from countries where English is spoken or used as a second or foreign language. With such increase of internationalisation there are increasing numbers of L2 students commencing studies in English. This suggests a need to examine more closely how these students perceive and conceptualize English academic writing in order to more effectively respond to their needs in terms of academic writing support.

International students often found the notion of writing assignments and assessments a novel idea (Kim & LaBianca, 2018). Although some literature has related English language proficiency to academic writing, I do not believe that was the whole story. In the plethora of international students' research, much focus was given on the negative purview such as international students struggles, difficulties with English language proficiency, problems and dissatisfaction, contradiction between east and western education expectations as well as cultural adjustments (Khozaei Ravari & Tan, 2018; Heng, 2018; Bista , Sharma & Gaulee, 2018; Jones, 2017; Bista, 2019). Bista (2019) called for the need to explore a more realistic picture of international students' experiences, not only documenting the negative side but the positive as well thus making some experiences "life-changing and transformational" (Bista, 2019, p.7).

Furthermore, in the case of postgraduate learners regardless of being international students or not, they are often perceived as more academically 'able' students with fewer problems in learning adjustment, having undergone undergraduate degree experience (Evans 2013;

Tobbell, O' Donnell and Zammit 2010). West (2012) stated that the transition into postgraduate study is often assumed as a natural progression. Furthermore, there have been reports that eighty percent of all postgraduate students feel overwhelmed with their first-year coursework (Cluett and Skene, 2006) yet little is known about what actually goes on during the postgraduate tenancy. My own experience suggests that some postgraduates came out the other end feeling satisfied while others felt relief after overcoming such a 'horrendous' experience.

Being an international student myself and as an ex-MSc student at the same university that is the context for this study, I could not help but feel inferior and treated differently from my L1 peers. Although I was educated according to the UK Education system since my primary education, my English proficiency grades were excellent and I scored an 8.5 band in my IELTS, and had a bilingual (Malay-English) academic identity, it was not enough to ensure my understanding of what academic writing meant in the UK. I could not say that I was inexperienced in academic writing as I had written a number of assignments in English during my undergraduate years in Brunei and during my Master's degree in Australia where I often received high marks and excellent grades. Therefore, it bewildered me when I received a mark of only fifty-six in my first assignment as an MSc student. I had applied all the usual academic writing skills I knew, yet it failed to make an impression. This experience triggered me to do better and discover the true meaning of academic writing in the UK. Hence, I believe it is not fair to generalize international students as weak when my own experience suggested it was really a cultural difference of opinion in the conceptualization of academic writing. From my own perspective this suggested that there may be other students who had been successful in one context but were less successful in another, implying the change of context was as significant as the ability of the student.

Although my own experience prompted my interest for this study, I would regard my experience as an unconscious process or at least unconscious at the time but raised to consciousness subsequently. Therefore, it prompted my interest to find out what happens if the experience was consciously documented in real time, at the point this transformation was being experienced. Instead of looking at international students as a deficit community (Lee & Rice, 2007), I wondered if exploration into their academic lives could show where the problem lies in grasping the notion of academic writing and the factors that could help change or transform a learner to become a more proficient academic writer. Rather than

perceiving international students simply as communities that needed help and correction by the host society (McKay, O'Neil & Petrakieva, 2018), I believe exploring and understanding international students' academic journey from a holistic perspective instead of in fragments can help build a better support system apart from the common UK universities' attempt of setting up and providing English language centres and general writing centres for international students that tends to focus on language use. Rather, they should focus on developing an understanding of what constitutes critical thinking and how this is represented in written forms.

1.3 Rationale and Significance

The research literature has noted international students' difficulty in the need to adapt from one cultural norm to another (Alsahafi and Shin, 2017; Busher, Lewis, and Comber, 2016). This encapsulates the transition to the unfamiliar academic culture of the host country and specifically for this study, the transition from one academic writing convention to the UK academic writing convention. By the word 'convention' here, I am referring to the assessment criteria of this particular university in this study only. It also needs to be acknowledged that academic writing conceptualization needs time and attention to the process recognising the contribution of many socio-cultural factors and social activity (feedback) that might or might not lead a student to change for the better.

This study will provide deep and useful insights about not only the negative experience such as writing challenges but also provide an in-depth picture of the positive traits such as resilience and of becoming a more proficient academic writer. This research will demonstrate the authentic struggles faced by international postgraduate students in order to achieve what is perceived as good academic writing by students and their tutors alike. This study can also provide possible ideas for higher education bodies as well as international student sponsors on how to better support and prepare international students upon entering a new academic culture, specifically in preparation for academic writing. Although this study cannot be generalized to a wider population, it can give a taste of what goes through the minds of international postgraduate students progressing from where they first started to their final outcome within the academic writing context. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study could serve as a point of reflection for academics, participants and myself as teachers, to be more compassionate with other people of different academic norms and contexts.

This study is concerned with international postgraduate students on an MSc programme. The MSc is a programme of study relating to Educational Research Methods and for many of the students on the course it was undertaken in preparation for doctoral study in an Education department. The majority of the students in the MSc programme were English teachers, teaching English as a second language, I have specifically selected those with a teaching background in order to compare this group of students to the current literature, as I believe these students have experience in marking English academic writing so it would be interesting to explore how they respond when, by studying the MSc, they go back to being a student themselves.

1.4 Research Aims and Research Questions

The broad aim is to look into the holistic academic writing journey of international postgraduate students in conceptualizing academic writing by noting changes and the developments that occurred throughout their MSc sojourn. It will also look at how feedback impacts development and academic writing perceptions. The broad aim will be addressed by exploring it by breaking it down into more specific aims below:

1. To explore their conceptualization of good academic writing.
2. To establish a relationship between feedback and development as a proficient writer.
3. To explore and follow any transformational/conceptual change throughout the course.

In order to meet these objectives, I shall seek to answer the following research questions:

1. How do International postgraduate students conceptualize good academic writing?
2. How does feedback help develop academic writing?
3. What and how do changes appear during the participants' MSc sojourn?

1.5 Organisation of the study

In order to answer the research questions above and meet all the research objectives I present and discuss this thesis according to the following. There are seven chapters in this thesis altogether. Following this introduction chapter that serves as chapter one, chapter two contains a description of the research context that serves to help readers familiarize themselves with the MSc programme structure and assignment demands. Chapter three provides a review of the literature relevant to the present study and introduces the conceptual frameworks that guided the research process. Chapter four outlines both the philosophical and methodological issues that have influenced the research approach adopted to meet the

objectives of the study. This chapter also gives a detailed account of the research design, explanation of data collection and analysis, and the discussion on the research limitations. Chapter five presents the findings of the data analysis which are organized into thematic stories informed by the data analysis. Chapter six provides the interpretation and discussion of the findings from the previous chapter and answering the research questions posed. Finally, chapter seven provides the conclusion to this thesis and discussion of the implications that the findings have, based on the international students' experiences. This last chapter summarizes the research findings and includes a brief reflection of the research process as well as ideas for further research.

Chapter 2. The study context.

This study is a longitudinal study following students across an academic year on an MSc in Educational Research Methods. This chapter aims to outline this programme of study that forms the backdrop to my research project.

The study is set at a UK university offering students pursuing a PhD in Education with a 1+3 years route known as MSc+ PhD. Students in this programme were required to successfully undertake five MSc components including a dissertation in order to progress to PhD candidate status. Many of the students on this route are international students who are teachers sponsored by their employers to obtain a PhD and will go back to teach. Many of them already possess a Master's degree and teach in tertiary education, hence the need for a PhD.

The university provides the students with a variety of academic help to assist their learning experience. One of the first to be introduced would be the student mentor-mentee programme where a senior student is assigned to certain students to assist with anything outside the academic purview. The students would also be assigned with an academic mentor for the whole academic year, to assist with academic matters. Besides their PhD supervisors, students will also have a supervisor for each assignment who marks and gives feedback on their written work.

The university also provides more 'external' support such as a university language center that provides academic assistance for international students. This center often assists international students who have weak language proficiency. The university's graduate office also provided tutoring and proofreading help with assignments specifically for post graduate students. However, I only found out about this tutorship at the end of my study through a colleague who was sent an email about it. I was told that they only email 'selected' students whom I assumed were regarded as academically 'weaker' than most students.

The MSc course runs for one academic year. There are three terms per academic year. In the first term, the students will study the Designing and Communicating Research (DCR) module and Scientific Methodology (SM) module. In the second term, the students will study the Interpretive Methodology (IM) module and Nature of Educational Enquiry (NEE) module.

The third term is reserved for dissertation submission. Each of the MSc modules involved two or three tutors delivering lectures, meeting for tutorials and the supervision of assignments.

For each module, there were two assignments given that needed to be completed by students, namely, formative and summative assignments with an exception of NEE that has two formative assignments to be submitted. The assignments are given in the modules' handbook so the students know what to expect before the course starts. Table 1 to Table 4 each shows the order of assignments, online activities and tutorials throughout term one and term two, respectively. From the tables below, it can be seen that formative assignments tend to coincide with the online activities and a one-on-one formative tutorial is given roughly two weeks after the formative assignment has been submitted. This session was used to discuss the feedback for the formative assignment and/or the summative assignment. There is no tutorial to discuss the summative feedback.

The students were expected to obtain at least sixty marks (low merit) to pass each module. However, in order to pass the MSc, the students needed an average of 60% for the four modules plus the dissertation. Therefore, the students needed to attain sixty marks minimum to be on the safe side. Marks of seventy is the start of distinction marks with marks of eighty and above to be considered as a high distinction.

The MSc course structure and assignments in Term 1

Due Date	Activity	Assignments	Nature of Task	Notes
Week 4	Start of group online activity		The students were assigned a group to collaboratively design a research project. This activity was intended to reflect the real world of academic research where collaboration with other researchers is common.	
Week 8		Formative Assignment: 1500 word reflective summary	Students were to write their reflection on what they have learnt in DCR and how it will impact their future research. The students were instructed to draw on theoretical models of reflective writing, justify their choice of reflective writing model in a 500 word Introduction.	After formative feedback is received, the students will write a final draft that will be included in the summative assignment

Week 10	Group online activity due to be posted online		Students can give and provide feedback on each other's research design project for the summative assignment.	
Week 11	Formative Tutorial after receiving formative feedback		The students are assigned a tutor who will guide students regarding their formative assignment and help prepare them for the summative assignment	
End of first week of second term	Summative assignment which was a portfolio task with three elements	Summative Assignment Element one (Communicating task): A lay summary of academic journal for lay audience, a reflective account	Students were expected to choose a published article in a peer review journal and summarize for a non-academic audience.	
		Summative Assignment Element two (Communicating task): A reflective account	Students were to write a reflective account about their learning so far using a justified reflective model that suits them.	
		Summative Assignment Element three (A designing task): 2500words research design	Students were to design a research using one of the designs they have learnt in DCR module that is not of their own PhD design. Students were expected to present brief ontological and epistemological assumptions and use suitable terminology related to the design chosen.	

Table 1 Designing and Communicating Research Module (DCR)

Due Date	Activity	Assignments	Nature of Task	Notes
Week 2	Start of Online Activity 1: Designing Individual Question and Scales (1 week)			
Week 4		Formative Assignment	An Introduction of the students' intended study using SPSS. The students were to provide a statement of purpose for the enquiry, a list of constructs that they needed to measure, a list of hypotheses, the design sample, a list of dependent and independent variables and lastly, the procedure the students will use to administer the instruments.	No more than 3 sides of A4 paper, Font 12 Arial. The formative assignment is regarded as Stage One in working towards the summative assignment
Week 5 to Week 8	Start of Online Activity 2: Activity broken into small tasks each relating to the week's lecture (weeks 5-8).		The students were asked to write a series of hypotheses and other students gave feedback on them.	
Week 7	Formative Tutorial after receiving formative feedback		The students are assigned a tutor who will guide students regarding their formative assignment and summative assignment	
Week 10	Online Activity 3: Students to write a conclusion based on the hypotheses students have looked at in the previous online sessions.			
Due Week five in second term		Summative Assignment: 5000 words of critical account of the investigation intended in formative assignment, including a short literature review.	By this time, the students are expected to have already executed their intended study and will have it written up journal style. Students are expected to explicitly explain their data analysis using their SPSS knowledge gained in SM.	

Table 2 Scientific Methodologies in Educational Research Module (SM)

The MSc course structure and assignments in Term 2

Due Date	Activity	Assignments	Nature of Task	Notes
Week 1 to Week 8	Group Online Activity	The students will take part in a collaborative group activity and explore certain interpretive terms such as Power, Subjectivity, Quality in Research, Ethics and Reflexivity. A simple twenty minutes presentation should be given by each group in week 8	The activity is intended to help students better understand what interpretivist research entails and how interpretivist principles happen in practice. At the very least, the students will understand one idea/issue/concept related to interpretivist research in some detail.	A log sheet recording individual work for this activity must be submitted as an appendix in the summative assignment
Week 8		Formative Assignment : 1500 word outline of the first two sections of the summative assignment	The students were expected to write 750 words of a brief outline of an intended mini research project, outlining the topic, main research questions and brief rationale. The students are expected to write another 750 words on a discussion about the nature of interpretive research and why their project might be considered as interpretive.	
Due approximately six weeks after last IM lecture		Summative Assignment: 5000 words essay addressing 'Discuss the use of semi-structured interviews in interpretive research with reference to the research literature and your own experience of conducting interviews'.	By this time, the students should have completed conducting two semi-structured interviews as intended in the formative assignment and they will need to use the experience in order to discuss the summative assignment question. The students were also briefed that they were not required to analyse the data as the focus of the assignment was the experience itself. The assignment was intended to give students first-hand experience on issues and problems often encountered by interpretive researchers.	The assignment is a form of reflection about students' experience with semi-structured interviews.

Table 3 Interpretive Methodologies Module (IM)

Due Date	Activity	Assignments	Nature of Task	Notes
Week 1 & 2	Online Activity 1: What is Educational Research		The students were given a discussion-based activity. This is where the students use a university online platform to share and discuss ideas on what educational research entails. The students were also expected to give peer feedback.	
Week 3, 4 & 5	Online Activity 2: Methodology, ethical and social context of research study		Students are to select one paper out of three and write an analysis addressing the social context, ethical aspects and methodology. This is to be posted online in order to receive constructive feedback from peers.	This will lead to the first formative assignment 1
Week 6		Formative Assignment 1 : 800 words of research paper analysis	Related to Online Activity two where students are to take into account peer feedback. The task was divided into four sections: 150 words maximum of a brief summary of the article, discussion of the content of the paper relating to the methodology, ethics and the social context and no more than 50 words of conclusion. Students were also expected to have an appendix of excerpt from their peers' online review of up to 200 words.	
Week 6	Start of Online Activity 3: Research paper analysis as a group		Students were to select a research article to be analysed as a group and discuss the aims and research questions of the study, methodological approaches used, its philosophical assumptions and how the article relates to theory and to practice	This will lead to formative assignment 2
Week 7 & week 8	First formative tutorial to discuss formative assignment feedback		The students are assigned a tutor who will guide students regarding their formative assignment feedback	
Week 9 & Week 10	Second formative tutorial to discuss summative assignment	Formative Assignment 2: Discussion on methodology and theoretical/philosophical assumption of a research study	The students are assigned a tutor who will guide students regarding their summative assignment	
Week 10	Oral presentation of Online Activity 3			The presentations form the content of the final taught session

Due approximately 12 weeks after last NEE lecture		Summative Assignment: 5000 words Comparative Analysis	Students are expected to write a 5000 words comparative analysis of two published research papers from a field familiar to the student. These papers must originate from different philosophical and theoretical assumptions. Students were expected to contrast them for, their philosophical approach, their ethical implications, the socio-political context they are in and the way they address the theory practice interface.
---	--	--	--

Table 4 The Nature of Educational Enquiry Module (NEE)

The tables above show case the different kinds of writing students were expected to write. From DCR's assignments that involved communicating tasks of writing to lay audiences and writing a reflective account as well as writing a research design, the students were introduced to a taste of educational research that requires certain portrayal of reflective and analytical calibre while being able to communicate them to people of a different background. The students were also introduced to the use of SPSS and using the student's own research design, they had to incorporate their findings and write in a more 'rigid' structured form of writing before moving on to IM's assignments which offered more 'flexibility'. Like SM, IM assignments also let students experience the use of semi-structured interviews and apply those experiences on paper, allowing more exercise of their critical ability to be showcased. The final assignments in NEE brought all previous assignments together where in depth critical insights and analysis while depicting knowledge of educational philosophy. Furthermore, NEE also encouraged the notion of group work mimicking research's in real life where collaboration and disagreements tend to occur. Additionally, the online activities and discussion sort of prepared students for this where it was intended to exercise discussion, peer feedback and enhance their research learning experience by sharing.

These assignments were all aimed to support students for their final dissertation task. All the participants in this study aimed to pursue their PhD after their MSc course so they opted to do the second option specified for 1+3 course takers of writing up a research proposal dissertation. The assignments all support towards this dissertation in terms of preparing students in all aspects of becoming a proper researcher. Based on my own experience, the assignments helped me become more critical by questioning things I often took for granted such as the vast variety of research methodology and methods and realizing that research is

although very flexible, it was difficult to fit everything perfectly in terms of its philosophical structure.

Like many of my colleagues that had acquired a master's degree, I initially felt MSc+ PhD course structure was unnecessary and would delay my research activity. It was only towards the end of the course that I realized how my conceited self knew little about educational research especially the demanding knowledge of educational philosophy and writing critically according to the university's writing conventions. I only understood its value when I compare my skills and knowledge to my colleagues studying in the direct PhD programmes at other universities and indeed there was a vast difference in how mentally and academically prepared I was compared to those colleagues of mine and I felt that I was at an advantage. Looking back, if I could turn back time, I would have lowered my ego and be more open rather than critical and condemnatory about the MSc course itself. However, regardless my appreciation of the course one thing remained unchanged which was my view about the marking system which echoed in my participants which will be presented later in the findings section.

To conclude this chapter, it needs to be noted again that the demanding tasks set for the students in the MSc with 60% marks needed in order to progress to PhD can become an emotional target for the participants. Reaching 60% marks can invite a sense of emotional relief or as an emotional barrier to some participants who were used to getting higher marks. This was why interpretation of marks and feedback is one of the important elements presented in the findings chapter, demonstrating the emotional attachments that certain participants tied to it.

Chapter 3. Literature Review.

The literature review will look at theories related to L2 writing, feedback and theories that inform the study. This chapter will start with the broad review of writing theories and writing approaches and then discuss the differences in conceptualization of academic writing. It will be followed by a section on academic literacy as it relates back to writing approaches and student learning. It will then discuss challenges faced by L2 writers and the strategies that they employed. The chapter will then narrow down to a discussion about adult postgraduate learners as they are the main participants in this study before presenting studies that involve international postgraduate experiences. It will then move on to feedback and its perception in higher education before presenting the conceptual theories that will guide this study. A conclusive remark at the end of the chapter will summarize the literature review chapter.

3.1 Theories that inform writing

Much of L2 writing research theories are derived from L1 and ESL theories. Of these perhaps, the closest theories related to L2 writing are theories that are those related to ESL writing which are themselves derived from L1 writing theories. Silva (1990) has outlined four ESL writing stages related to the four most influential approaches to include: the controlled approach, rhetoric approach, process approach and the social approach which correspond to four key theories in ESL namely: Contrastive Rhetoric Theory, Cognitive Development theory, Communication theory and Social constructionist theory. Communication theory is mirrored in all the approaches mentioned above as communication theory saw writing as a means of communication which is represented in all four approaches (Mu, 2005).

To briefly explain these theories, Contrastive Rhetoric Theory was introduced by Kaplan (1966). It focuses on coherent sentence construction and organisation of discourse form. This theory sees language and linguistic mastery as a form of resource for ESL writers to utilize, arrange and demonstrate in use their ideas through choosing appropriate writing conventions that might be used and understood by native speakers of English. This theory often examines the dissimilarities between native and non-native speakers of English in terms of their written texts. The theory explores and seeks to explain how these differences are linked to the “cultural differences in rhetorical expectations and conventions” (Mu, 2005, p.1).

Cognitive Development theory on the other hand looks at writing as a process (Kennedy, 1998). One of the most mentioned models that greatly influenced many ESL and L2 research

would be Flower and Hayes's model (1981). The model consisted of three steps that includes planning (pre-writing), translating (writing) and reviewing (re-writing). It was later criticised as promoting a one-size-fits-all model regardless of the skills and disposition of the writer and failed to acknowledge the impact of context or individual beliefs on a writer's writing (Flower, 1994). This theory also raised the importance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in writing. These strategies will be elaborated further in the following sections.

The final theory is the Social Constructionism Theory (SCT). While some may regard this on the philosophical level of epistemology, in this section, it is treated as a writing theory. This theory views the act of writing as socially constructed via the writer's interaction with his/her "discourse community" (Petraglia, 1991, p.38). This is especially pertinent to my own study if views about what constitutes 'good' academic writing vary across contexts. In teaching writing, Zimmerman (1993) said a social-constructionist instructor will consider aspects of the process approach (how do I write) and aspects of the product approach (what shall I write) and the zone of proximal development (how do I get better) (ZPD), as present when a writer encounters difficulty, hence forcing them to seek assistance from their instructors or their more capable peers (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). A key idea of focus here is that SCT views writing and writing quality as shaped by the context. Similarly, pedagogy will reflect this set of assumptions about what writing is for and what constitutes quality (sometimes unconsciously). It is not unreasonable for a teacher to focus on accuracy for example, if this is seen as a signifier of quality in their own context. This theory is often linked with socio-affective strategies where writers interact with their discourse community or "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) with the intention of giving and/or receiving support as well as adapting their behaviour, motivation and feelings while performing the writing task (Carson & Longhini, 2002).

Communication theory emphasises how different communicative purposes require different discourses (Mu, 2005). For example, an academic report might differ to persuasive writing and non-fiction would differ in discourse to writing a biography. As mentioned before, communication theory is visible in all four of the writing approaches identified by Silva (1990) which all consider the communication strategies that writers use to efficiently express their ideas (Cohen, 1998).

These theories show the complex nature of writing that is influenced by many aspects such as culture, language and community. The following sections will look at the theory encapsulates this study, factors that influences how academic writing is perceived and the frameworks that could guide this study.

3.2 Pedagogical approaches to teaching writing in the L2 classroom

In addition to the students' culture and pedagogical context, a student's engagement in the writing classroom is an important element for interactive and multi-dimensional learning (Biggs, 2003). There are many different approaches to the teaching of writing that learners may be exposed to. The teaching of L2 writing is mostly guided by knowledge from L1 theories of writing (Silva, 1990) L2 practitioners continue to discover for themselves the clearest and most comprehensive theory of writing pedagogy (Matsuda, 1999). There are three acknowledged writing approaches that have influence L2 pedagogic practices namely: product approach (Matsuda, 2003), process approach (Tribble, 1996) and genre approach (Hyland, 2003; Halliday, 1994). Each of these approaches differently reflects the theoretical perspectives highlighted above.

A Product approach is mainly concerned with grammatical accuracy and was dominant in the 1980s. This approach stresses the importance of form and syntax, using rhetorical drills as one of its strategies (Silva, 1990). This approach encourages learners to imitate and produce writing as closely as possible to any model given. Badger and White (2000) stated that through imitation, learners can learn about linguistic knowledge and exposing learners to native-like writing can reduce writing errors (Myles, 2002). An emphasis on the product means that assessment of writing is concerned only with the written output and so learners are required to submit their work to be graded rather than appraised (Thulasi, Ismail & Salam, 2015) with no opportunity of receiving feedback or to revise. Zamel (1982) criticized this approach by suggesting that writing is more than just learning about grammar and linguistics, imitating and planning but also the task of pre-writing and re-writing. Zamel (1982) added that the product approach delimits a learner's ability because the text they produced are often thought to mirror a learner's ability.

A Process approach is an approached introduced by cognitivists. This approach is concerned with how a learner writes rather than the product or text produced. Their main understanding was that writing is recursive rather than linear (Flower & Hayes, 1981) hence focuses on the

importance of the recursive cyclical events involving prewriting, drafting, evaluating and revising. According to Hairston (1982, p.85) “[Writing] is messy, recursive, convoluted, and uneven. Writers write, plan, revise, anticipate, and review throughout the writing process, moving back and forth among the different operations involved in writing without any apparent plan.” This means that planning is not a one-time event but occurs throughout the production of a text, making changes to the overall intentions where necessary. Unlike the product approach where pedagogy is teacher-centered, in the process approach, the teacher becomes the facilitator hence, making the classroom learner-centered (Nordin & Mohammad, 2017). This process approach advocates the idea of students finding their own voice and the importance of feedback and revisions in supporting this (Matsuda, 2003). In 2003, Atkinson argued that the process approach seems to regard itself as a model that can be generalized to everyone and fails to take into account the diverse target audience and content. Atkinson (2003) further argued that the process approach failed to acknowledge social and cultural features that could influence the different genres of writing. Cope and Kalantziz (1993) added that the process approach reduced the teacher’s authority. Nevertheless, process writing is the most dominant model in L2 writing (Joaquin, Kim & Shin, 2016).

The Genre approach was developed as a response to process writing by taking context into consideration that was previously absent in the latter approach. The genre approach emphasises on how different texts need to address a different purpose and audience and the language needed to achieve this needs to be taught explicitly. Badger and White (2000) saw it as an extension of the product approach, arguing that it regarded writing as largely consisting of linguistic attributes but placing a larger weight on the social context of writing hence, systematically addressing text and context. Hyland (2004, p.12) describes the genre approach as looking at how language is used within different contexts rather than how we generally address it and views teaching as “data-driven” rather than “intuition-driven”. This means language is used according to a particular context rather than as a general assumption from one’s impression.

The Genre approach is not limited to one set of techniques that define good writing but depends on genre and context and on the particular purpose of the text and intended audience. (Hyland, 2007). Hyland (2003) also emphasised the importance of interaction between learners and teachers, empowering teachers in their role, and supporting learners to achieve their potential. The teachers play an important role in ‘scaffolding’ their learners and because

the genre approach requires teachers to thoroughly examine student's texts for grammatical, lexical and organizational writing features, it can help them become better teachers (Hyland, 2004). An L2 writer might not know what a persuasive writing genre might look like so the teacher shows them how it is to be done according to context and a target audience. Some examples of how texts could differ due to its difference in linguistical demands that needed to match these different forms are persuasive texts, an argumentative text, a narrative writing and scientific report, to name a few. Additionally, genre approach is less concerned with the social context and how this shape writing behaviour and more concerned with textual differences although obviously the social context is (perhaps unconsciously) shaping normative expectations about different genres.

Of course, genre approach has its own criticisms. Caudery (1998) said because of learners' depending on teachers, this can be viewed as counter-productive and this approach is less likely to require learners to express their opinion. As this approach possesses certain similarities as product approach, emphasis is more on textual forms and modes of expression rather than context therefore limiting one's expression of opinion.

In relation to sociocultural theory (SCT) genre is associated with this theory as genres are "part of the social processes by which knowledge about reality and the world are made" (Paltridge, 2004). According to Miller (1984) genres are socially constructive and influence how writing is performed to fit the conventions of different writing forms. I agree with Hyland (2003) that it is not enough to teach students using the many writing approaches but the teacher needs to help frame students' understanding of both the features of the target genres and also how important context is in meaning-making. Just to further clarify, Genre is concerned with the characteristics of different texts (and is a pedagogic approach) and Socio-cultural theory is concerned with how understanding is shaped by context (and is a theoretical perspective). An example for this would be a study by Angelova and Riazantseva (1999), emphasizing the L2 learning experience. In their case, it is the political context that affects how international students write academically. Following four ESL international students of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds via ethnography methodology, it seeks to find how the participants adapted to the US conventions of writing. It was found that students coming from countries that are authoritarian in nature often avoid writing anything negative about certain political or social issues as it goes beyond their countries' ideological beliefs.

Regardless the subtle differences, these two are somewhat connected as understandings of genre can vary in different contexts, so what makes a good argument in one context may not be the same in another. The textual difference is the concern of genre (and can be adopted by pedagogy) and the social and cultural difference is the concern of SCT (this is often revealed more in implicit understandings and unconscious assumptions than in direct teaching). Basically, without knowing who the readers are and the culturally understood purpose of a particular text, this can contribute to the success or failure of a written text to communicate its message to a particular audience.

3.3 The conceptualization of Academic Writing

Academic writing is known as a significant predictor of academic performance (Li, Chen, Duanmu, 2010). It is also considered to be the main factor impacting learning and academic performance (Matters, Winter, and Nowson, 2004; Phakiti and Li, 2011). According to Raofi, Binandeh and Rahmani (2017), “writing is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon: it is more challenging for learners who write in a language other than their first language”. There is an abundance of literature citing what is regarded as good or poor academic writing. These assumptions range from a linguistic point of view, from a cognitive point of view as well as a sociocultural point of view. This section will discuss these three points of views in more detail.

3.3.1 The linguistic point of view

It is generally understood that English language proficiency could not be a sole indicator of academic success (Neumann, Padden & McDonough, 2019). However, it is undeniable that English language proficiency influences academic performance (Martirosyan, Hwang and Wanjohi, 2015). For L2 writers, their language ability is often perceived to be limited compared to that of L1 students. It is to be expected that when an international student moves to an Anglophone host country for higher education, they will encounter differences in academic context which relates to academic writing conventions.

Staples, Egbert, Biber and Gray (2016), stated that a good piece of academic writing is viewed as an extension of discourse which comprises of grammatical complexity. Older studies claimed that academic writing tends to have longer sentences and makes considerable use of subordinate clauses (Brown & Yule, 1983). Almost two decades later, Hyland (2002, p.50) also gave evidence on the widespread perception of academic writing being

“structurally elaborate, complex, abstract and formal”. However, more recent studies attempted to challenge such views by arguing that there were two types of complexity: phrasal and clausal (Biber & Gray, 2010, 2011, 2016; Biber, Gray, & Poonpon, 2011).

In a corpus study by Staples, Egbert, Biber and Gray (2016), they challenged these stereotypes and found academic writing to be complex in terms of its embedded use of noun phrases but not as elaborated in the use of clausal subordination as the stereotype had predicted. They also found that while academic writing is explicit in terms of “specifying identity of referents” (Biber & Gray, 2010, p. 18), academic writing was not explicit in its “expression of logical relation” (ibid.) This means, academic writing contained abstract condensed discourse, often beneficial for expert readers but problematic for novice readers who needed to learn how to deduce meaning from such texts. An earlier study by Taguchi, Crawford and Wetzel (2013) also concurred with Biber and Gray (2016) when their college composition program corpus study on L2 found that essay quality is related to the presence of noun phrase modification. However, they found that the highest indicator of writing quality was the reference to source text and author.

Other studies that look at the linguistic features that signal quality in a text was a study by McNamara, Crossley and McCarthy (2010). They found that the linguistic features that consistently exist in quality writing were syntactic complexity, lexical diversity and word frequency. Liu and Li (2016) found noun complexity as one of the indicators for better writing quality. Their comparative study looked at noun phrase complexity in two corpora firstly MA dissertations written by EFL Chinese students and secondly published research articles in applied linguistic journals. The findings showed the student corpus to possess shorter complex nominals and weaker noun phrase post-modifications compared to those by published writers. This study was similar to Slater (2016) whose study saw more proficient writers to possess more syntactic complexity than less proficient writers. In articulating ideas, writers need to have sufficient vocabulary knowledge and a writer’s lexical knowledge could affect their writing quality (Engber, 1995). Better writers also concentrate more on their text organization, rather than poor writers who focus more on less important surface items like mechanics and layout (Schoonen and de Groot, 1996). What linguistic analysis is demonstrating is that quality can be viewed as a consequence of sophisticated language use – although simply focusing on language features alone can mislead students into attempting to ‘sound academic’ which can lead to problems with coherence and clarity. This indicates that

lexical and syntactical variety can only ever be part of the story of developing as an academic writer.

3.3.2 The cognitive point of view

Flower and Hayes (1980) summarized the differences between good and poor writers as the differences of abilities in problem solving. Such cited problem is the rhetorical question of the text itself where writing is regarded as a “rhetorical act” (Flower & Hayes, 1980, p.369) and writers needed to “solve or respond” (ibid.) by writing something. The act of writing itself included three main elements namely, the task environment, writer’s long-term memory as well as the writing processes that contain the processes of Planning, Translating and Reviewing that falls under the Monitor (that is the writer monitoring their current progress and process). According to the theory, due to the complexity of the rhetorical problem, a good writer should be able to balance the demands of the rhetorical situation, and audience while accomplishing his or her own writing goals (ibid.) It needs to be noted that from a cognitive perspective the problem is this is as much an issue of thinking about writing strategies (especially how writers employ planning and revision) as it is about managing the text itself. One of the important aspects in this theory that was highlighted was the importance for good writers to express ideas not only in breadth but also in depth. Their writings were detailed and specifically targeting the rhetorical problem.

Such characteristic as above is often expected in Higher Education as students are expected to already demonstrate ‘knowledge-transforming’ writing (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987), simply practicing writing is not enough to develop further because in order to transform knowledge you first need to understand what you want to say. In other words, writing should become more automated which means we can do it without thinking about every detail. This is so that there can be more cognitive capacity to think about rhetorical issues and so rather than simply linking ideas together so that one idea simply triggers the next (knowledge teller) a writer can create a purpose and shape text (knowledge transformer).

According to Leki & Carson (1994), the learner needs to develop communicative competence as well as academic competence; thus, bringing together the skill of communication with the body of knowledge being developed. What is being suggested here is that it is not enough to learn to write and learn about a discipline as two separate entities; it is necessary to learn the rhetorical patterns and style of the discipline being communicated. This is similar to

findings by Ackerman’s (1991) study of analysing forty graduates’ written essays from two different discipline in the quest to relate disciplinary knowledge to writing composition. He asserted the importance of having a correct rhetorical standpoint and rhetorical structure awareness to be an important indicator of good writing as they tend to elaborate more hence portraying more knowledge about the discipline.

Kellogg (2008) wrote an article where he postulated that “knowledge-transforming” is a characteristic of an adult writer and “knowledge-crafting” is a characteristic of a professional writer (p. 3). In Figure 1, Kellogg demonstrated the cognitive development of writing skill. He explained that it would take at least two decades of growth, teaching and practicing in order to develop from a knowledge-teller and knowledge-transformer to a knowledge-crafter. This means a writer could evolve from writing about what s/he knows, to writing for his benefit and finally to writing for the reader’s benefit.

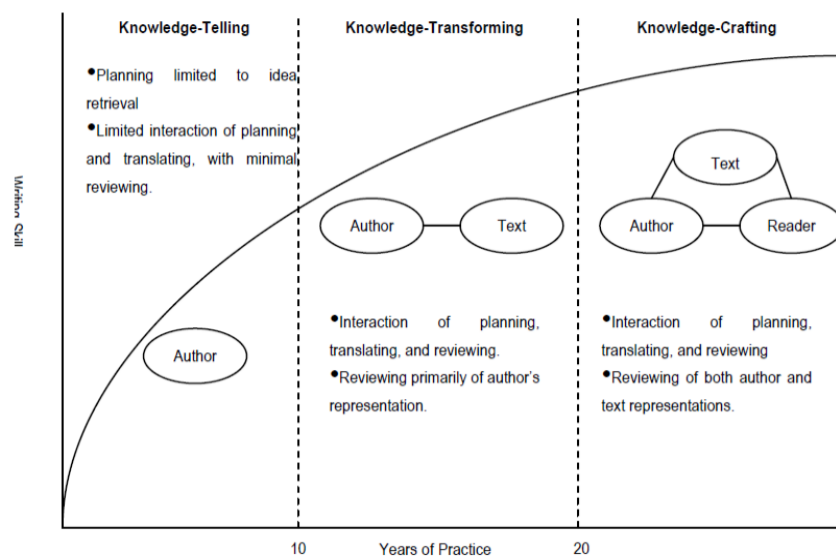


Figure 1 Macro-stages in cognitive development of writing skill (Kellogg, 2008)

Additionally, Kellogg (2008) also emphasized that expert writers are assumed to have a better working memory to be able to retrieve and use more sophisticated and less frequent words in their work and therefore are more able to write more complex sentences (Kellogg, 2008). Possession of adequate cognitive aptitude at a writer’s disposal is essential in order to accommodate “the lexical, grammatical, orthographical and discourse decision” of writing challenges concurrently (Schoonen et al, 2003). Thus development in writing is always

dependent on earlier skills becoming less cognitively challenging, through practice and automation, in order that new skills can be integrated into writing behaviour.

Other cognitive attributes also include approaches to learning as there are certain characteristics that develop that overlap with being both a good writer and a good learner. One of these characteristics is the concept of a 'deep' and 'surface' learner, concepts introduced by Marton and Säljö (1976), later known as 'learning approaches' (Webb, 1997). This dualism has often become a foundation for studies on student approaches to writing (Green, 2007). A deep approach learner meant that the learner put an emphasis on the meaning of what is learned, relating prior knowledge to newly acquired understanding and locating this in their life experiences (Haggis, 2003). Surface approach learners on the other hand are often associated with memorization techniques, rote learning strategies, regurgitation of knowledge and engage with learning as separate from their life experiences. Biggs (1988b) had also identified a third kind of approach, named the strategic/achieving learning approach which was a mix of deep and surface learning approach. This approach switches between approaches depending on the appropriate context. Ramsden and Entwistle (1981) believe that there is a strong association between students' preference for a particular approach with their perception of workload. The greater the workload the more surface the learning becomes. The quality of teaching and the teaching setting could also become factors in terms of how students access these different approaches. Good quality instruction can anticipate and promote the use of the deep approach while the surface approach is predicted to be used when bad quality teaching is involved (Lizzio, Wilson & Simons, 2002).

While surface learning strategies such as rote learning are considered less 'respectable' it does not mean it is not useful (Carter, 1987). Kennedy (2002, p. 433) argued that rote learning does not need to be synonymous with surface learning because memorization can be viewed as an introduction to deeper understanding by familiarising and memorizing texts and reflecting on them before integrating them with previous learning or experiences. In learning, English vocabulary by an L2 learner for example, a rehearsal strategy could be beneficial for the novice learners or learners who are weak in that language because they need to know simple vocabulary first before they can learn the words from context due to inadequate knowledge (Waring, 1995). In this sense metacognitive thinking might be more useful in helping students make strategic decisions about how best to learn new concepts. An idea develops further below in section 3.5.

Unfortunately, there is a biased tendency among teachers to believe that Asian students tend to lean towards a surface learning approach and consequently, would be assumed to memorise to understand (Kember, 2009). As mentioned earlier, just because surface learning is viewed to be not as valued as deep learning, it is not always ineffective and sociocultural context often plays a role. Chinese students, for example are perceived to be affected by their Confucian-based education that promotes rote learning, rather than analytical or independent learning (Chou, 2012). Chinese learners prefer fast and continuous feedback and have low acceptance for uncertainty and vagueness (Kennedy, 2002). They may well have become highly efficient learners using these approaches.

However, these misconceptions should be re-examined. In a quantitative study by Sakurai, Parpala, Phylatto and Lindblom-Ylänne (2016) using 307 students (more than half were European students), their study sought to compare Asian and European university students' approaches to learning, self-rated academic success and stress. Their findings demonstrated only a slight difference between Asian students who embrace a surface approach to learning and their European counterparts; Thus, both groups included similar ratios of deep and surface learners. They also agreed that students of both ethnic groups who adopt the combination of deep approach learning and being organized are often optimistic about study success. This was a similar finding to Green (2007) where her study of five international students of Confucian heritage culture (CHC) in an Australian university showed that the understanding of essay writing has a direct association to a student's own construction of learning, whether s/he is a surface or deep approach learner. Good writers often implement deep learning conceptions and are intrinsically motivated while students with surface learning approach produce poor essay and often needed extrinsic motivation (Biggs, 1988a; Green, 2007). Being a deep or surface learner, accordingly relates to how they are motivated and this is then mirrored in the students' ability to write as per their disciplines. Conclusively, Green found three of the five students to adopt the deep learning approach hence challenging the assumption that CHC learners are all surface learners and showed that CHC learners can adapt according to context. Thus, these studies showed that while learning approach is an important part of success, sociocultural context also plays an important role.

3.3.3 The sociocultural point of view

As this study takes on a constructivist point of view, it is only natural that a sociocultural point of view in conceptualizing academic writing needs to be put forth. From this

perspective, academic writing, what's more 'good academic writing' is very difficult to define due to its rather "abstract and situated nature" (French, 2019, p.5). In higher education, the definition is context-dependent, varies depending on academic level as well as purpose (Ivanic & Lea, 2006; Ahmed & Myhill, 2016; Turner, 2018).

A study in Egypt by Ahmed and Myhill (2016) showed the importance of the sociocultural context in influencing L2 student writing. In their convenience sampling of fourteen English majors and seven L2 writing teachers, they showed how the Egyptian educational university context was heavily relying on spoon-feeding, competitive learning and was very exam-oriented. This in turn produced writers with limited freedom of expression as certain topics are forbidden. Also, Egyptian L2 writers lack the chance to negotiate views, and were accustomed to rote-learning and conventional writing topics.

In a book by Reichelt (2009), the author further described similar differences in writing instruction in different national contexts. For example, In Poland, writing instructions were focussed on the purpose of relationship maintenance with foreign business contacts. Writing was considered as a valuable asset that could help improve grammar and vocabulary in order to maintain these business relationships. Reichelt also mentioned that in Germany, learning English was also high in motivation. Their writing instruction differs from Poland where their writing instruction was inclined towards certain academic values that accentuate the importance of German education and values critical thinking, creativity and more immersed reading.

This not only shows the various ways English language is taught and its focus but the value and position of academic writing as well. French (2019) positioned academic writing as a form of a student's professional identity in higher education. It functions as a determining factor to one's belonging to an academic community in higher education. In French's (2019) study in reconceptualising academic writing, he acknowledged academic writing to be an elusive notion to be defined and practiced yet it maintained a "symbolic significance" (p.1) and an essential practice in higher education.

Traditional conceptualization of academic writing	Problematized conceptualization of academic writing
Autonomous	Ideological
Objective	Subjective
Technicist skill set	Social Practice
Universal	Situated
Functional	Creative
Performative	Developmental
Fixed	Fluid

Table 5 Conceptualization of academic writing (French, 2014)

Cited in French (2019) study, French (2014) demonstrated his problematized version of academic writing conceptualization (Table 5) in order to view academic writing like other social practices in higher education. In this table, French deviates from the traditional view of academic writing following Street's (1984) view that academic writing in "meaning and purpose are socially constructed through negotiations of past and present members". This view also supports Kellogg's stages on writing skills (Figure 1) where academic writing could change or evolve as academic level or context evolves.

3.4 Academic Literacy

At this point, it can be observed that academic literacy plays a role in the construction of this study. Briefly, academic literacy in this context refers to a student's proficiency in reading and writing within the academic context. However, adhering to the sociocultural point of view of learning, it needs to be noted that academic literacy is more than a series of skills but is regarded as a social practice that materialized as a result of a contextualized learning environment (Porter, 2018; Gee, 2015). To have a clear understanding of the concept of academic literacy, I will briefly review the major approaches that underpin academic literacy in the following sub-section.

3.4.1 Major approaches that underpin academic literacy

Literature on academic literacy reveals a complex picture of what academic literacy actually entails. A variety of models and approaches have been developed to better define the notion encapsulating the word 'literacy', such as that developed by Street (2001). He introduced two major approaches, namely, the autonomous model and the ideological model. It needs to be

noted that the word ‘autonomous’ is often used by prominent writers in the area of literacy such as Goody (1986) and Olson (1988), and Street used it in order to show a distinction between the two models to demonstrate the differing ontological perspectives of each model.

The autonomous model as the name suggests saw literacy as a technical aspect where literacy is seen as an influencing factor on social and cognitive practices. Basically, the assumption is that once a certain skill is learned, it can be applied elsewhere demonstrating its sense of autonomy as being a separate entity.

Criticisms have been made of the autonomous model due to its assumptions that literacy can be separate from culture, power, social identity and ideologies (Gee, 1996). Examples of this can be seen in many language programmes provided at university level such as study skills programmes that present literacy skills as being autonomous and thus simply transferable to a different context without acknowledging the heterogeneity of reading and writing. Albright and Luke (2008, p.52) said that the autonomous model can be viewed as the insemination of western literacy to other cultures and can be seen as a “construction of western symbolic domination” which seemed to “legitimize western colonialism and neo-colonialism”. For these reasons, academics and practitioners turned to the ideological model of literacy (Street, 2001).

Street’s (2001, p.7) ideological model viewing literacy as a “social practice” is linked to French’s (2014) view of academic writing as discussed in the previous section. Proponents of this model such as Street (1984, 2000) and Gee (1996) choose to refer to ‘literacy’ in the plural, as ‘literacies’. This model acknowledges the interconnected nature of cultural meaning and that literacy is embedded in and related to one’s conceptualization of knowledge, identity and reality. Due to this, this model regards literacy as a social construction as the meanings of reading and writing are context dependent, hence would vary from one culture to another (Street, 1984). Literacy practices, it is argued, are often shaped by social institutions and influenced by power relations that could be more visible in some contexts than others. University settings would be an example of this, where the institution establishes what or how academic literacy should be met or assessed. Furthermore, supporters of this model developed a body of work known as New Literacy Studies (NLS) where the plurality of literacy that goes across cultural borders, and discourses as well as available technologies (Janks, 2010) were explored. The development of NLS adopted certain methodological

research influences informed by a belief that literacy cannot be easily measured or documented by just observing. Literacy is informed by social and cultural settings and accompanying social and cultural meanings (Street, 1995). This way, it can be understood that literacy is not separate or autonomous but rather involves one's conception about the meaning of literacy which may not be obvious in the first place. In this sense, literacy here encapsulates how reading and writing are conceptualized according to the cultural context.

3.4.2 Development of Academic Literacies research

According to Lea & Street (2006), academic literacies should be viewed as having more of an epistemological nature rather than any universal attempt to judge good or bad writing. Academic literacies therefore are a standpoint developed to understand academic reading and writing as well as the conception of writing within the academic context (Lea & Street, 2006). Supporters of this standpoint obtain their conception of student writing and literacy via three overlaying models that are not mutually exclusive, but each incorporates aspects of the others: namely, study skills, academic socialization and academic literacies (Lea & Street, 1998).

The study skills model views academic literacy as an independent cognitive skill that can be transferred onto a different context. Often the focus of study skills is surface language knowledge such as grammatical knowledge and comprehension as well as spelling. The main objective of this model is to rectify problems. Hence, any shortcomings can be addressed via remedial classes (Boughey, 2002) such as are often offered in universities for students whose first language is not English. Such students are taught how to produce 'acceptable' writing and to use the writing conventions of the institution (Wingate, 2015). This model is often favoured due to its cost-efficiency and lack of requirement of highly skilled instructors (Hyland, 2002). This model was of course challenged by critics who claimed that it does not consider the wider issues related to learning that could contribute to the construction of academic literacy and the varying social context that comes with it (Lea & Street, 2006).

In response to the criticisms, the academic socialization model was developed. This model views academic literacy to be attainable by immersing students in the discourse of their chosen discipline(s) as well as culture. This model is linked to the development of constructivism and situated learning (Lea & Street, 2006) and responded to the criticism of the study skills model by considering the capacity of the social context. However, this model

was also met with criticisms that it disregarded the varying attributes shaping different genre disciplines as well as not taking “genre pedagogies” into account (Wingate, 2015, p.33) as this model does not specify the particular approaches that can be used for a particular genre. Lea and Street (2006) also criticized this model for overlooking the importance of meaning as well as academic literacy and discourse within institutional text production. They believe that it should include the process of change and the relation of power instead of looking at academic literacy as a simple transfer of knowledge. Furthermore, this model assumed a fixed and non-changing context of disciplinary discourses and genres which in turn prompted the naïve perception that the comprehension of a particular academic discourse would result in academic literacy.

The third successive model that is closely related to NLS is the Academic Literacies Model (ALM). Instead of merely looking at the surface nature of academic literacy and the social context, this model perceives academic literacy issues at the epistemological and identity level, while also viewing academic literacy practices at the institutional level (Lea & Street, 2006). Moreover, it also emphasizes important elements related to academic literacy such as the relation to power, identity, authority as well as meaning-making, all addressing the shortcomings of previous models. It focuses on change of writing styles as well as genre following the associated social context via the students’ perspective. The different social contexts encountered by the students would require them to engage in an assortment of literacy exercises that suit the different settings while also taking into account social experiences and identities (Lea & Street, 2006). Unlike the preceding ones, this model does not view the process as straightforward due to the heterogenous and unstable nature of disciplinary discourses and genres. In addition, the process would also be affected by students’ role of meaning-making which often results in diverse interpretations.

While this model seemed to address all previous issues, the Academic literacies model still received criticisms for having little awareness of research and pedagogical contributions by English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Tribble 2009). Much of the models’ literature and findings tend to overlap, so Wingate and Tribble (2012) considered that both ALM and EAP should be bridged together to complement one another as an inclusive writing pedagogy. The next section will focus on writing challenges encountered specifically by L2 writers that touches on the relationship of proficiency and academic literacy.

The insights of AL for my own research are clear, given that I have been working with students who have learned their academic literacy in one cultural context and seek to transfer this to a new context that they have yet to become familiar with.

3.5 L2 writers and their writing challenges

Academic writing at post-graduate level is a daunting task for both native and non-native speakers of English (Li, 2007; Swales & Feak, 2004). However, as acknowledged by Silva (1997), there are numerous differences between L2 writing and those of L1. To write coherently in L2 is more difficult than in L1 (Nunan, 1999). L2 writing is more challenging, because several essential abilities could be less evolved than in their first language (Schoonen et al, 2003). For example, lexical and grammatical knowledge may be comparatively limited to L1 vocabulary, causing it to be accessed less rapidly unlike in their L1. L2 writers with low language proficiency need to consciously monitor these processes as it does not come automatically unlike in L1 writers (Weigle, 2005).). Moreover, according to Weigle (2002), when assessing, L1 writers are often rated for content but L2 writers are rated for linguistic sophistication.

Challenges confronted by L2 writers encapsulate the writer's linguistic and psychological ability (Tang, 2012). English being the world's lingua franca (Tang, 2012), meant low language proficiency is linked to poor academic performance (Olivas & Li, 2006).

International students who are unaccustomed to a linguistic context will experience increases in their communicative struggle for social and educational purposes (Mulligan & Kirkpatrick, 2000). In a quantitative study involving 414 surveys directed to both native speakers of English (NES) and non-native speakers (NNES) of English it was found that about one in ten of their non-native speakers were able to comprehend the subject content as well as their tutor's intention in the classroom while a quarter of 198 NNES failed to understand the class lectures at all. Zhang and Mi (2010) throughout their two years study of 40 international students across 8 Australian universities reveal that international students do not encounter difficulties in courses that were linguistically less demanding which included the demands of their reading tasks. However, the participants revealed linguistic challenges when they encounter writing tasks. These two studies show the importance of English language for international students for better academic comprehension and to aid writing.

However, it is understood that English language proficiency and competency alone were not enough to ensure one's academic success. Neumann, Padden & McDonough et al's (2019) quantitative study on international undergraduate students in Canada reveal that language proficiency cannot predict academic success but their quantitative results also indicate that grades were heavily dependent on their participants' language ability. They highlighted that other academic skills such as ability to synthesize information to be just as important to predict academic success although instructors in their study still perceive writing skills highly as a vital skill to ensure academic success.

Psychologically, significant changes to the students' discourse exercises could be understood as taking on a new identity and they are made aware of how they view themselves and how they want others to view them (Tang, 2012). These students are also faced with the most typical and primary challenge which is adapting to their new home, and familiarising (and sometimes embracing) the social and educational cultures. Furthermore, L2 writers may also experience innate struggles such as lack of confidence in writing skills (Weaver & Jackson, 2011), academic life, social interaction and emotion (Alsaifi & Shin, 2017) writing styles (Shang-Butler, 2015; Wang & Li, 2008) apart from the lack of understanding and awareness of the English writing terms and task (Bauer & Piciotto, 2013).

One way of dealing with this is to have an Intercultural contact which is believed to be the crucial factor for international students who are encountering stressors that include language barriers, academic context adaptation, feeling of isolation, discrimination and other problems concerning the changing physical and academic context (Smith & Khawaja 2011; Yu & Moskal, 2018). A study of Chinese international students by Yu and Moskal (2018) highlighted that where they found lack of diversity in the host context, this could cause international students to be denied intercultural experiences. Chinese students who socialize only with their own culture, could result in unfairness in personal growth as well as limiting the intention of cross-cultural learning.

When L2 or ESL/EFL writers come to study in an L1 English speaking country, they will bring prior knowledge and experiences with them. The difference in writing conventions add further strain as they seek to match their own writing to the desired writing structure, style and organization of text (Leki, 1991). The academic conventions (like academic writing) in an L1 country could differ greatly to those in their country of origin. They may use

previously successful strategies but find that new academic writing conventions need an altered strategy and new perspectives. These strategies are unique to each writer and are never straightforward and students' approach to learning, rather than fixed and innate, is often active and context-related (Green, 2007). Therefore, strategies or the process employed tends to be customised to a writer as adopting new writing forms requires time to develop Kibler and Hardigree (2016).

A study by Singh (2015) on 131 international postgraduate students in Malaysia who were enrolled in programmes where English was the medium of instruction concurred with the concerns mentioned above. The participants' writings were very much influenced by their previous experiences and found that coursework students perceived more academic writing challenges than mixed mode students (course work plus dissertation). He also found due to the "language distance" (p.19) between their second or third language to the English language, Middle Eastern, African, East Asian and South Asian students encounter more difficulty than students from other countries. He also asserted that this could be due to the minimal exposure to the English language during their undergraduate studies. However, this claim can still be challenged as more than 64% of his respondents were from Middle Eastern countries.

This is not to say that L2 writers are less capable than native speakers. A comparative study by Folman & Connor (2005) between Israeli and American writers writing in their native language, assessed using a taxonomy used for research paper evaluation, showed both group of writers had low synthesizing skills and critical thinking skills. This demonstrates that similar traits can be found when writers are writing in their native language. Therefore, it would not be accurate to assume that L2 writers are less intelligent than L1 writers.

However, not all L2 writers encounter the same challenges. As mentioned earlier, sociocultural factors play a very important part for L2 learners. Not all L2 learners encounter the same cultural challenges as each other. For example, an L2 writer from a European country studying in the UK might not experience as much challenge as an Asian L2 with a Confucian Heritage Culture. The European L2 writer might experience certain linguistic problems but may not experience 'culture shock' (or even writing shock) as might an Asian L2 writer. One example would be perhaps the use of authorial identity. Hyland (2002, p.1093) claimed that an important attribute of possessing authorial identity was attaching the

use of 'I' that helped establish a relationship with readers and writer's obligation to the words. Hyland's (2002) corpus study of 64 Hong Kong undergraduates illustrated a significant underuse of authorial reference by L2 writers. This could perhaps be due to some cultural attributes of a collectivist society where 'we' is seen a more important virtue than individual aims. He concluded that the unwillingness was an outcome of the students' view of the self that was both socially and culturally constructed.

In summary, the challenges listed are just the tip of the iceberg and are non-exhaustive. This is just to demonstrate the many possible factors that accompany an L2 writer or international student upon entering a new academic or writing environment. New concerns keep emerging as new research is still looking at the negative aspect of international students' experiences (Bista, 2019). Perhaps, Hyland's (1990, p.285) assumption that "foreign-language students are often anxious about writing, and need to be encouraged to see it as a means of learning rather than demonstrating learning" has yet to be resolved.

3.6 Writing Strategies

Zamel (1984, p.198) said that "it is writing strategies and behaviours and not primarily language proficiency that determine composing skill". This is supported by Raooft, Binandeh and Rahmani (2017) who said writing strategies play a major role in L2 writing development. Some researchers even indicated that writing strategies are an important characteristic in segregating skilled and less skilled writers (Zamel, 1982; Raimes 1985; Beare, 2000). Knowledge of writing strategies is not only important for the learners, but it is also an important aspect to be acquired by language instructors for curriculum improvements and effective lesson planning (Raooft, Binandeh & Rahmani, 2017).

There are various writing strategies that have been compiled. One of the earliest compilation of strategies was by Arndt (1987) where he categorised Chinese students' writing strategies into eight categories namely: Planning, Global Planning, Rehearsing, repeating, Re-reading, Questioning, Revising and Editing. Ever since, more and more researchers suggested their own version of writing strategies taxonomies. Throughout the literature of writing strategies, Oxford's (1990) strategy system, O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) strategy taxonomy and Wenden's (1991) Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies in writing were widely cited. Apart from Cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies, Riazi (1997) added Social strategies and Searching strategies to his list.

According to Mu (2005), it is impossible to standardize writing strategies because different researchers have different ways of classifying certain strategies. For example, certain researchers looked at writing strategies as a holistic writing process (Victori, 1995) while Wenden (1991) has sub-categories under a higher order category. To avoid confusion, I will elaborate writing strategies according to their types namely: Cognitive writing strategies, Metacognitive writing strategies, Socio-affective/ Affective writing strategies and Effort regulation writing strategies.

Cognitive strategies are actual utilized strategies that writers use in writing while metacognitive writing strategies are strategies that consciously guide the writing process (Carson and Longhini, 2002). Supporting this, Hedge (2000) describes cognitive writing strategies as learned thought processes that allow the learner to execute the task they are given through different ways and metacognitive strategies to involve thinking about the ways and the reasons for learning by being consciously aware of the effectiveness of the strategies used. In other words, cognition is concerned with what is done, understood and processed while metacognition is concerned with an awareness of this so you recognise what you understand and do not understand and so you can act accordingly. Consequently, you recognise the best strategies to help you make progress and so can make good strategic decisions. It is often explained as thinking strategically about thinking. Hence Flavell (1985) suggests that good learners are those with sufficient metacognitive awareness that is formulated and derived from past experiences with cognitive activities. Some example of cognitive writing strategies as proposed by Wenden (1991) includes Clarification, Retrieval, and Resourcing among others. Examples of Metacognitive writing strategies include the conscious decision to engage in Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring (ibid.). However, Lei (2016) argues that writing strategies go beyond mental processes and is conceived as the action of socially intervened action in line with the sociocultural perspective. Therefore, this means that writing is seen as “a social activity” (Lei, 2016, p.106) that is mediated by social context.

The third type of writing strategies are the Socio-affective writing strategies. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) described this writing strategy involve a learner interacting with others in order to support each other’s learning. This will help the learner to develop collaborative skills and processes, clarify ambiguities through asking questions and using affective control (such as emotion and attitudes) to achieve the learning task (Oxford, 1990). Habte-Gabr

(2006, p.2) considers socio-affective strategies to be “non-academic in nature and involve stimulating learning through establishing a level of empathy between the instructor and student.” The learners often pursue mentorship rapport with their instructors. According to Habte-Gabr (2006) socio-affective strategies were regarded as the most effective learning strategies for learning enhancement among students and is more essential in EFL context than ESL context due to the absence of the social and cultural environment. Some examples of socio-affective writing strategies include getting feedback from teachers and/or peers (section 3.9) and asking for clarifications.

The last writing strategy reported here is Effort regulation strategy combined with metacognitive regulation. Effort regulation strategies refer to a learner’s ability to concentrate on the task involved, regulating their effort even on dull and tedious tasks while managing themselves from distractions (Corno, 1989). Pintrich, Smith, Garcia & McKeachie (1991) argued that effort regulation is not simply about a learner aspiring to complete a task but it is to be regarded as a self-management approach that also involves other management strategies such as study environment and time management. This strategy is highly linked to (and at times overlaps with) metacognitive regulation strategies such as self-regulation and self-efficacy strategies. Self-regulation according to Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997) is the way a learner handles his or her own thinking and behaviour throughout a writing task. In other words, self-regulation takes place when students set goals, monitor performance, employ learning strategies with frequent reflection of their learning outcomes that serves as an internal feedback on progress, over a period of time (Zimmerman, 2000). Self-regulation is important for academic success as well as to promote independent learning which is expected in Higher Education. An example could be independently recognising the value of checking the vocabulary used to ensure contextual appropriateness. Graham, Harris and Troia (1998) pointed out that when students are able to self-regulate, it could lead to significant improvements in four areas of student performance which include writing knowledge, writing approaches, self-efficacy and quality of writing. Self-efficacy on the other hand is a learner’s own judgement about his or her own ability in managing and performing his/her actions in order to achieve his/her objectives across different tasks and contexts (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997) students with high self-efficacy have higher work endurance, and so participate more willingly, have longer persistence and encounters fewer negative emotions when faced with challenges than students who are uncertain about their capabilities.

With all the main writing strategies listed, there are certain strategies that are believed to be associated with skilled writers. Na & Yoon (2016) studied 69 Korean undergraduate students and confirmed that skilled writers use more metacognitive strategies than less skilled writers during timed settings. Unskilled writers use more metacognitive strategies during untimed situations. In both settings, unskilled writers have the tendency to concentrate on the text preparation process while skilled writers focused more on the planning and revising stages. Pre-writing is also a treasured strategy to possess in writing tasks. A study of 513 essays by Joaquin, Kim and Shin (2016) on L2 students in a US university showed that students who pre-write surpassed students who didn't. Although their test did not specify the requirement for pre-writing, more than half of the sample chose to do so. The findings also showed that the majority of the students chose a single strategy but that there is no significant difference to those who used combined strategies. This study shows how much pre-writing is preferred and that the students chose to do the pre-writing independently – thus demonstrating metacognitive awareness of the value this strategy might have for them. So, it is not so much about the strategy but the independent choice.

'Hedging' strategy or using vague language is another characteristic that could be related to metalinguistic strategies employed by a skilled writer. Metalinguistic is different from metacognition as it involves the understanding of how and when to use a linguistic resource such as hedging. A study based on three corpora of student writing by Lee and Deakin (2016) presented the idea that successful L1 and L2 writing contains a significant number of 'hedging' instances compared to the less successful essays. Their findings also suggest that L2 students were greatly reluctant to establish their "authorial identity" (p.30) where self-prepositions like 'I' and 'my' were comparatively used more in L1 essays compared to L2 essays.

The ability to shift between strategies is also useful. As demonstrated by Beauvais, Olive & Passerault (2011) in their experimental study of skilled writers, their findings showed that students write better when a quality-based goal is set. The experiments involved the task of writing up two different genres in two different conditions. In the first experiment, the 24 psychology students were given standard goals while in the second experiment, the students were given quality-based goals. The result showed the different writing strategies employed for each genre and improved writing in the second experiment. This shows that writers try to fulfil the demand of genre and quality and it helps when the quality demands are made

explicit. This study emphasized how different tasks and different demands require different strategies in order to be executed.

The selection of a writing strategy itself is not simple. According to Petric and Czarl (2003) context, culture, purpose and stage of writing process, writer's attitudes and perceived difficulties and perceived success all donate to the employment and selection of writing strategies. There are tasks that requires metacognitive strategies such as higher education academic writing and some will only require surface thinking such as note-taking. Yet, not all writers possess the ability to practice all the strategies.

3.7 Postgraduate learners as adult learners

As mentioned previously, students bring their prior knowledge and skills when moving to a higher level of education. Experienced professionals, specifically teachers, entering a higher level of education are no different. They are noted as adult learners who bring with them their knowledge and judgements acquired from their past experiences (Boulton-Lewis, Wilss & Mutch, 1996). Being an adult learner involves a redefinition of our priorities in terms of goals, functions, methods and modes of research and evaluation (Mezirow, 1978, p.109).

In adult learning, Knowles (1984) was a leading writer who introduced the term 'andragogy' (teaching adults) to show its difference to 'pedagogy' (teaching children). Motivation, learning orientation, readiness to learn, self-concept, the need to know and the role of experience are the six key areas of learning that Knowles (1984) identified which he believes contain significant differences between adult and child learners. He said, in pedagogy, children learn what their teacher teaches them and they are ready to learn whatever is being taught. Teachers see students as dependent learners so the lessons are often subject-centred and students are relying on external motivation. Additionally, Knowles (1984) stated that children's learning experiences are of lesser value. This is because according to Knowles (1970, p.61) experience to a child is considered to be external that "affects him (sic), not an integral part of him (sic)". This differs from andragogy where adults know what they learn and they see themselves as independent learners who are accountable for their own learning journey. Adult learners' previous experiences play a role in helping them to learn and they are ready to learn what they need to know, making their lessons more likely to be task or problem-centred (Knowles, 1984; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005). Adult learners are also internally motivated (Knowles, 1984) in that they see teachers as a facilitator who they seek for guidance in becoming a self-directed learner (Merriam, 2001).

Knowles' notion was critiqued by Boulton-Lewis, Wilss & Mutch (1996) who said his claims seem to limit children's learning ability, going against a constructionist point of view. Views from social constructionism saw learning as dependent on many factors that do not attribute itself plainly to conceptualisations of specific learners (William & Burden, 1997). In other words, there are no universal truths about learning nor learners. Brookfield (1988) disputed the idea of adult learners' innate possession of self-directedness and rather sees education as helping to cultivate and improve this skill. Boulton-Lewis, Wilss & Mutch's (1996) study of forty teachers concluded that there was not enough evidence that can be claimed as typical features of adult learners. Their study showed that adult learners did not enter university readily internally motivated and autonomous, irrespective of their qualifications and experiences.

A similar outcome was found in Haggis (2002) where her study of eight postgraduates, aged between 25-44 years old indicated unique individual experience. Haggis (2002, p.218) suggested that learning is "characterized by individuals and the unique processes of meaning-making that are created by and situated within, specific social and cultural contexts" and opposed simplistic views such as those of Knowles. She rather showed how diverse each of the participants are and there are no tying features to constitute how adult learners must generally be described.

Furthermore, it needs to be noted that perception of knowledge does not only depend on the type of learner but also the surrounding context as well. This is eloquently described by Canagarajah (2002a) who termed it as 'the geopolitics of academic writing', showing the ever-changing way and inconsistencies of how knowledge is constructed and validated depending on context. Critical thinking for example, which is much valued in the Anglophone countries where I studied, is a rather "culture-specific western idea, even though it is presented in the literature as a universal norm" (Paltridge, 2004). Canagarajah (2002a) in his discussion of geopolitics of academic writing, criticised the 'centre' and 'periphery' academics where Anglophone countries like the US are often deemed superior. He gave examples such as academic paper publications for academic journals, where the most prestigious tends to be from western countries. He critiqued academic journal editors who act like gatekeepers, are hesitant to publish non-western papers due to the necessity for considerable change by the editors and in turn, the papers are turned down. This could cause further feeling of inferiority among non-English speaking writers although Canagarajah

(2001; 2002b) recommended certain strategies for L2 writers and urged L2 writers to view writing as beyond individualistic but social activity and to see it as ideological rather than formal, and context-related.

The participants that I have chosen for this study are **international postgraduates** who have had higher education teaching experiences. Their teaching experiences will certainly include assessing students' writing. I chose them because I would like to see how socio-cultural theory comes into play. Wyatt-Smith and Castleton (2005) in their study investigating the judgement processes that teachers use to appraise students' writing demonstrated the impact of contextual knowledge in formulating judgements. Teachers are guided by their own standard but are not limited to it. They can 'deviate' by putting into account students' previous performances and continuously observe students' progress over different academic tasks. A study within the Dutch school context carried out by Bolhuis and Voeten (2004) looked at the comparison between teachers' conception about their own learning as opposed to their students'. The findings showed that teachers hold a more "dynamic conception of intelligence" for themselves compared to their students. This showed teachers' positive outlook on the idea of learning throughout their profession. The study also showed that teachers possess higher tolerance for uncertainties in students learning compared to their own. The low acceptance for uncertainty to the teacher's own learning advocated for the need for a more structured support in their learning process. Sadler (2010) said that experience as a teacher can provide one with two distinctive types of knowledge. Firstly, the teacher acquires the sense of quality involving an array of different work. This helps contribute towards the teacher's conceptualization of quality. Secondly, the teacher acquires the skill and knowledge of comparability of the same quality yet different ways of implementation or the same way of execution but resulting in different outcomes in terms of quality. These two kinds of knowledge can help form and maintain a teacher's nonfigurative idea of quality.

3.8 Postgraduate student experiences in Anglophone countries

The literature below is mostly of a qualitative nature. Aligning to my study's interest in international postgraduates' experiences in the UK, qualitative studies best serve as examples owing to their effectiveness in understanding people's experience (Mwale, 2014).

Tobbell and O'Donnell (2013. P.129) said that postgraduates, having successfully completed their undergraduate degrees, are often viewed as experts who understand the educational system constraints, are independent and have a sense of academic and personal identity.

However, this was shown to be inaccurate in a study by Fenton-Smyth and Humphreys (2017) who studied 42 non-native speakers of English who were postgraduates in an Australian university. The study reported that while confidence levels vary from one student to another, it is crucial for it to quickly develop. As their academic language skills are yet to be fully developed, they require support throughout their postgraduate studies. It was argued that because many of their students could be from a learning culture different to Australia, instructors should not assume that they have sufficient knowledge to conduct research, and were inclined to sternly judge expectations surrounding academic integrity.

Postgraduate students, especially those who studied abroad in Anglophone countries will at some point have a sense of doubt and confusion in terms of their academic identity. Being a non-native speaker of English and experiencing an assumption that Anglophone countries are the legitimate owner of the language (Canagarajah, 1999) could further add to one's writing insecurities. This is best demonstrated in a narrative study by Park (2012) on a postgraduate student in an American university that draws on the important issue of the transformation of identity. The student, Xia, from China started off with feelings of linguistic powerlessness. Coming from a collectivist background that was teacher centred, Xia was met with a learner-centred context where building critical thinking was one of the key elements. Xia endured a dilemma, questioning her learning experiences and the knowledge she had gained back in China. It was only in America when her linguistic identity was transformed, that she gained confidence and established her credibility to become a TESOL teacher.

International postgraduates also face the predicament of demonstrating their individual voice and authority in their writing. Due to their culture being in contrast to the one of the host's, developing such skill could take some time. Le Ha (2009) conducted an interesting qualitative study on a master's research student at a university in Australia. The study presented her reflection as an ex-student in an Anglophone study and now as a member of the teaching staff in Australia and featured her own master's student who was from Indonesia. Le Ha (2009) studied in Australia for her postgraduate and had strong confidence in writing. She was confronted by many challenges in maintaining her voice and identity in her writing, risking being portrayed as deviating from the norms of academic writing. Her student, Arianto, on the other hand, did not start out as positive in his undergraduate years in Australia and was working as a tutor. However, his view changed as he started his master's study, being able to implement his authority in his writing, feeling liberated hence he increased his

obligation to writing. As discussed in the previous section about L2 writing challenges, Arianto faced a dilemma to uphold the standard of the institution while having the desire to cultivate a sense of creativity and voice in his students' writing.

As mentioned earlier (section 3.5), international or L2 students face a variety of challenges. One of these challenges is integration into the community. Mwale, Alhawsawi, Sayed and Rind (2018) studied five families from diverse backgrounds studying in the UK. Their findings suggest the importance of English language in not only helping them to settle down but also in terms of networking and integrating themselves in the host country. Their study also reported the participants' satisfaction with their supervisor and department but they were left disappointed by the wider university support. When they left to go back to their country, they faced the dilemma of re-integrating their experiences and knowledge to their previous workplace. Barnacle (2005) said that doctoral experience can provide students with an alteration of identity and perspective. Ali Zeilani, Al-Nawafleh and Evans (2011, p. 1) reported a study on 16 Jordanian PhD graduates who had studied in 12 UK universities. Their study reported the "profound personal transformation" experienced by the participants, who developed advanced academic skills such as critical thinking and a boost in their personal attributes such as self-confidence. When they returned to Jordan, the participants did little to exercise their newly acquired skills, views and enthusiasm.

Wang (2018), also considers academic adjustment in his study looking at Chinese international students' experiences. In the 7 month study Wang discussed the participants' coping strategies, change and growth upon entering the new academic environment and found good teacher-student relationships to be one of the factors for academic adaptation. The study also found that the more immersed the students were into the UK academic environment, the better they become at the transition. This is similar to a narrative study by James (2018) whose study looked at international students from Latin America studying in the UK. However, her study focuses on coping mechanisms that the participants use in their transition experiences. The study presented various coping mechanism such as the stability of family, friendship, prior preparation as well as "personality change" (p.50) to accommodate her transition into the new context.

A narrative study that had a similar angle to mine was by Case, Marshall and Linder (2010). Although it was not an international student study, it also considered the experience of a

teacher becoming a student again. Although the study provided many useful insights, the study for me felt rather ‘fake’. This was because one of the authors became the participant in the study, enrolling in a third-year undergraduate chemical engineering course to provide contextual student learning background where she worked as a lecturer in academic development. For me, the study does not really give a ‘real’ teacher-student experience as the participant did not experience the anxiety of being in a ‘new’ academic environment or the eagerness to learn.

The array of literature on postgraduates studying in Anglophone host countries mainly demonstrates the challenges faced by international students. Even one of the most recent studies by Eldaba and Isbell (2018) that looked at female international postgraduate students’ academic writing experience, the findings still discussed the participants’ struggles and self-doubt in their L2 writing abilities. Although some of the studies listed above did not have the intention to focus on the participants’ struggles initially, it seemed that this was an inevitable topic. This is perhaps why there is a common perception of international students as students with a “deficit perspective” often focusing on struggles and adjustments (Bista, 2019, p.6). It is also important to view international students as a heterogeneous group such as demonstrated by Heng (2019). The study found that despite the common nationality, each of the 18 participants had a unique experience studying in the USA and some experiences even intersected within students in different categories which suggests the possibility of international students from a range of different cultural contexts might yet experience the same thing. While I understand that anyone being put in a new environment cannot avoid facing challenges, I believe it is time that a study is conducted that demonstrates an authentic holistic picture of international students’ learning experience that does not view them as a homogenous group of people and hopefully talks about what can constitute their academic success in spite of the evident challenges.

3.9 Feedback and how it can help learning

Many studies identified feedback as one of the most influential mechanisms related to students’ achievement (Biggs, 2003; Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In the educational context, it is regarded to be crucial to refine one’s knowledge and procurement of skills (Corbett & Anderson, 1989; Moreno, 2004). Feedback can be used to close the gap between the current position and the improved position. It is considered as fundamental knowledge for a learner to know how they are progressing and this is where feedback plays a

major part. To do this, Sadler (1989, p.121) said that learners need to have grasped the concept of the standard level of performance, compare the current (actual) level of performance with the standard's and lastly, undertake the activities applicable to closing the gap between the current and improved level. From international students' perspectives, support from lecturers is cited as important in assisting international student learning (Kingston & Forland, 2008; Tran, 2008) and written feedback is the preferred feedback of international students (Kingston & Forland, 2008).

To be a skilled writer, a learner needs long-term developmental path with explicit guidelines (Ryshina-Pankova & Byrnes, 2013) such as feedback. For L2 writers, a teacher's feedback is valuable in developing their writing skills (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). For teachers, feedback is widely recognised as an important gauge for effective teaching (Ramsden, 2003). For students, feedback can help reaffirm the expectations of the instructor and the demands of the course (Dunworth and Sanchez, 2016) and can provide students with information about the quality of their performance which is often regulated by direct and subjective human adjudication by people such as teachers as the criteria of good quality work (Sadler, 1989). It is hence crucial for students to know the quality of their work and not just be satisfied (or is unsatisfied) with the grades.

Feedback can also help learners ascertain their readers' needs (Zellermayer, 1989). This can help learners realize whether the message they are trying to send is understood and/or meeting the expectation of the reader. Only by receiving effective feedback, can the learner know where s/he stands and how s/he can proceed to improve (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Within the sociocultural perspective, learners that received "assistance" (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012, p.18) by teachers or others that are more advanced in the field can eventually become self-regulated learners. According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) a self-regulated learner would have set goals and effective strategies as well as the ability to execute such strategies. Via feedback, the student needs to understand what good performance is in order to close the gap between the current and goal performance. Furthermore, such assistance would be most beneficial in the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). In brief, ZPD shows the differences between what learners can achieve without and what more the learner can achieve with help from someone with the expertise.

There are two approaches that are often practised in identifying errors in second language writing namely: indirect and direct feedback (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). Indirect feedback, according to Hendrickson (1984) is aimed to show an indication and the precise location of writing error(s). The teacher often circles or writes codes but does not include any correction. Ferris and Roberts (2001) said that the pedagogical justification for this is to encourage independence among writers to realise their mistakes and deciphering their writing error. Contrastively, direct feedback meant the teacher identifying the error and correcting it. Ellis (1985) however argued that direct feedback is not real feedback as it is related more toward error correction. This type of feedback has been claimed to suit beginners as the correction can serve the writer as a proper model for writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Students often regard interaction with tutors to be the most effective method of support (Malik, 2000). In his study, he found the university support scheme for students to not make much difference and he encouraged students and tutors alike to build on positive relationships with the basis of securing mutual trust. However, students need to be careful not to rely too much on or become too dependent on such support as unsuccessful interactions can have certain undesirable impact that could cause them to find support elsewhere (Yale, 2017).

Sadler (1989) also calls for students to not only depend on feedback and become consumers but to become insiders. This can be accomplished with the help of teachers providing students with an “authentic evaluation experience for students to enable them to develop their evaluative knowledge, thereby bringing them within the guild of people who are able to determine quality using multiple criteria” (p.135). This will also allow learners to understand the difficulties faced by teachers in evaluation and let learners become “insiders” and not just “consumers” (Sadler, 1989, p.135). Because of the lack of possibilities for learners to make their own qualitative evaluation, this informs a view that the skills and ability to evaluate students’ work is only possessed by teachers and are non-transferable to students (Sadler, 1989) Sadler (1989) added that to evaluate their own or others’ work does not essentially mirror a learner’s ability to produce because production and evaluation are two different set of skills. Furthermore, Sadler (1989) added that since much of a teacher’s judgement knowledge is tacit (implied) knowledge, there is a need for learners to develop a fitting amount of tacit knowledge to properly deduce statements given in feedback.

Despite many studies acknowledging the positive virtues of feedback, it has not always been viewed in such a positive light. Kulhavy (1977) for example, saw feedback as not always resulting in improvement because feedback can be acknowledged, improved or rejected by the learner. Feedback does not always mean further action will be taken. Therefore, Ramaprasad (1983) argued that feedback is not feedback if it is not used to alter the gap between the current and desired standard level. Improvement can only happen when teachers provide students with comprehensive and corrective guidance and students play their part in acting upon this information (Sadler, 1989). Furthermore, feedback was never considered to be a single event but rather as a “continuous dialogue within a cyclical assessment process” (Beaumont, O’Doherty and Shannon, 2011, p.684). In this study however, I am not interested in the effectiveness of feedback but rather on how feedback is received and perceived by L2 writers.

3.10 Perception of Feedback in Higher Education

As Ilgen, Fisher & Taylor (1979) argued, that before students even accept or act upon feedback, they need to perceive it first. Thus, it’s not fair to discuss feedback without acknowledging how students and teachers perceive it, because students’ perceptions of feedback can differ from those of the teachers. Perception in this context is not concerned with acceptance or judgments about feedback but a way of regarding what feedback is and what it is for before making any decisions or judgements about what it says.

What students perceive as feedback may or may not be the same as for the feedback giver. A study by Carless (2006) demonstrates the vast difference of perception between students and staff in a Hong Kong university. A study of 6 tutor’s feedback intention relating to the perception and usage of feedback by 19 biological sciences students by Orsmond & Merry (2011) showed students most associate feedback with developing an understanding about the tutor’s requirement. The tutor, in turn, provides feedback to students about their performance but did not provide any guideline on how to undertake and tackle future work. Students also appear to perceive that the work was external to them, using feedback in terms of what is needed to get the work done rather than what they need to take in as a learner. The lack of feedback dialogue between tutor and students causes students to be unaware of the power of feedback and so there is a risk that tutors’ feedback will never be fully used and realized by students.

Even the notion of what is regarded as quality feedback can be perceived differently. A study by Dunworth & Sanchez (2016) found that students and lecturers were aligned in features that comprise quality feedback. They investigated the perception of written feedback quality that involved both lecturers' and students' perception in three postgraduate programmes at a UK university and found a similar idea of what constitutes quality feedback and the study also indicated the importance of lecturer-student engagement during the feedback session to obtain the highest quality. This however, contrasts with a previous study by Beaumont, O'Doherty and Shannon (2011). Their study contributed to building a 'Dialogic Feedback Cycle' model after they found students' perceptions of quality feedback to be significantly different to those held by their lecturers. This gap was believed to be due to the 'spoon-feeding' culture that students encounter prior to entering university where the lecturers expect autonomous, independent learners. Their study concentrated on first year students and their lecturers where they found that previous experiences have an impact on the students' perception of quality feedback. Students expected to be guided prior to submission of assignments but lecturers rather saw feedback to be a post submission event.

It is well-known to all teachers, including those in higher education, that merely providing feedback does not necessarily produce improvement (Crisp, 2007). Most teachers know that student desire feedback but it has been documented that students are very demanding in terms of the type of feedback they feel they should receive on assessment (Price, Handley, Millar & O'Donovan, 2010). Should the demand result in anything deemed to be incorrect feedback, this could cause negative perceptions of feedback by the students. For international students, Burns and Foo (2012) claimed that even though feedback had no substantial influence on grades, their feedback intervention that targeted international students resulted in students getting involved with academic writing at an early chapter of their writing journey, hence also boosting their confidence in other academic areas.

A more recent study by Mulliner and Tucker (2017) validated a crucial dissonance between staff and students' perception of different aspects of feedback. The study involving students and instructors at Liverpool John Moores University, illustrated students' desire for individual feedback yet they felt that they were not encouraged to value feedback by the staff. Another important finding in the study is that student and staff perception on what feedback should entail, differed. Students' idea of 'detail' seemed to be limited to the written feedback received from summative assessments while staff's idea of 'detail' was not only in the form

of summative assignments but was also reflected in their formative feedback which is provided to students every day. This implied that students fail to identify all the feedback that they actually receive (Mulliner & Tucker, 2017).

To date there are scarcely any studies that can comprehensively indicate or predict perception to feedback. In a study by Ali, Ahmed and Rose (2017), despite bringing up many possible predictors for students' perception of and students' engagement with feedback, they found only the year of study to be the significant predicting element. In their sample of 447 undergraduates from a UK university, they found the more students progress in their studies, the more negative they become in their perception and engagement towards feedback. Regardless of how feedback is perceived, its power is undeniable as a source of positive booster. In Cleary's (2012) study, a participant, Jessica was a newly returned adult learner whose confidence was boosted by positive feedback. Cleary (2012) also pertained the important value of timely feedback to her twenty-four participants in the study.

3.11 Conceptual Theories that guide this research

My study looks at the journey that will be made by international postgraduate students with previous teaching experiences studying in the UK. The literature I have presented showed a crucial interplay between the influence of sociocultural factors and learning. According to Biggs (2003), studies involving student approaches to learning in the context of higher education have to be comprehended through the learner's views and not those of the teacher or researcher. The angle in my study will however include participants with teaching background who were coming back to learning. Based on my personal experience, in the process of academic transition, I anticipate that there may be a 'lightbulb' moment at some point(s) of their study with regards to their academic writing. I experienced a moment(s) of reflection where I re-assessed my views on my writing process and strategies. This study will explore whether my participants experience something similar. This is when a perspective transformation will start to occur although the outcome cannot be guaranteed to be always of a desirable one. Furthermore, following research on writing journeys should be observed within three contexts: Local, Historical and Interactive (Casanave, 1995). This means that writers, in their writing, will generate aspects of contexts themselves through their interactions with their innate resources of their own cultural history, interaction with external resources provided through social engagement or collaboration with teachers and/or other learners while also actively taking in the individual experience of socialization.

Socio-cultural theory

Socio-cultural theory (SCT), first introduced by Lev Vygotsky (1978), in its basic sense emphasized how peers and adults can affect learning. The impact of cultural beliefs and attitude on instruction and learning influences how instruction and learning take place. Bryman (2012) stated that SCT is based on a social constructivist paradigm that viewed knowledge as being socially constructed, shared and obtained via social interaction. In other words, although Vygotsky realized the importance of biological factors of one's upbringing, he also argued for the importance and impact of social factors, such as culture and teachers, to be responsible for further and more advanced development or higher order learning (Lantolf, 2000). SCT also acknowledges that learning and development occurs in two planes, namely, the social plane (inter-psychological) and the psychological plane (intra-psychological) (Wang, Bruce & Hughes, 2013). These planes show a process of the situated nature of the human cognitive development, that is not limited to social interactions. The social plane occurs as a result of one's interaction with others while the psychological plane is when learning occurs within the learner. Furthermore, within the learning context, Vygotsky (1978) said learning and development are inseparably embedded in social events and learning occurs via social interactions and social engagements in a collaborative environment that involve other people, objects as well as events.

Vygotsky's SCT has been further developed by other renowned theorists such as Lave (1988, 1991) and Lemke (1990). With such development, human cognitive development in SCT has been discussed in four aspects namely, mind, tools, zone of proximal development (ZPD) and Community of Practice. The last aspect of human cognitive development according to SCT is the CoP, where learning is viewed as a process of embracing CoP (Mason, 2007). This aspect is further developed later in this section, while the first three of these are elaborated on below.

To explain briefly, the mind, in SCT is reliant on our interaction and communication with others and such interaction and communication are also influenced by social attributes such as history, context and environment (Mantero, 2002). Vygotsky (1978) also addressed the importance of social and cultural engagement, attaching them to human development. Social and cultural engagement, which are mediated by culturally constructed tools, help support communication from the social plane to the psychological plane. Such tools could be in the form of language, materials, signs or symbols or any form of mediation or communication that could help learning and development. An L2 learner might use the English language as a

symbolic tool to obtain knowledge and clarification from the expert. According to Bakhtin (1981) cognitive development or learning is accomplished when the learner moves away from the social plane or inter-psychological (discussion with experts) to the psychological plane or intra-psychological (within the learner), a process that triggers a form of self-regulation as addressed in section 3.6.

The second aspect, ZPD, is synonymous with Vygotsky. ZPD in its simplest form is the distance between the actual development compared to the potential development. The actual development is concerned with the learner's own skills and cognitive learning efforts while the latter is concerned with its possible outcome with guidance or collaboration with an adult or more able peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Part of ZPD is the concept of scaffolding, where several definitions have been put forward. Harris and Hodges (1995) for example, define scaffolding as a gradual retraction in learning where a child steadily moves away from the adult expert figure (e.g. teachers) while transmitting an increasing sense of autonomy to the child. Bruner (1990) on the other hand defined scaffolding within theories of second language acquisition; he saw scaffolding as a form of linguistic support provided by an expert, who could be a teacher or a more able peer, to the learner. Perhaps the definition that I could best relate to in relation to this study could be that by McKenzie (1999) where he saw scaffolding as the teaching expert's way of guiding learners, ensuring that learners are on track while offering assessments for clarification purposes. Some ways scaffolding can be done are via teacher feedback as well as peer feedback which are both of interest in this study. An example of the impact of this aspect of SCT was demonstrated in a study by Shoostari and Mir (2014) that looked at ZPD and scaffolding on 30 EFL writers. Their study concluded that participants who took advantage of peers' and tutors' scaffolding displayed outstanding progress in terms of writing quality as well as application of writing strategies.

The important points of SCT are its focus on the significance of human interaction and cultural norms that shape what is learned. As previously addressed, although SCT was originally developed for the L1 context, it also made a remarkable contribution in the L2 learning context (Shoostari & Mir, 2014). An example would be in terms of second language acquisition where SCT stresses the important relationship between social interaction and cognitive development that occurs rather casually, and this includes language learning. In relation to my study, SCT is important as my study looks at international students coming into a new academic environment where they need to adapt to new academic norms while

also adapting to the new culture. Such importance can be demonstrated via a personal account and self-study by Liu (2011) as an international student from China coming into Canada to continue his studies. He stated that a learner's English language will not automatically improve just by attending classes and encountered 'culture shock'. In his account, he urged international students not to see academic and social life as separate but see them as intertwined in order to achieve English language proficiency. By understanding contextual multicultural norms of Canada, he believes a learner could have a better learning experience. He did so by volunteering and having part-time jobs in order to break out from his "traditional concept of cognitive learning" (p.82), seeking authentic social interaction as he believed that "learning socially is an effective way to break through language and cultural barriers" (p.82) that would be otherwise unattainable by just learning in the classroom.

SCT can also be linked to academic literacies theories as discussed in the literature review chapter which is pertinent to this study. Both associated culture with one's success at learning and development and both are related to the participants in this study. The plausible issue, however, could possibly be the interactive student-centred approach proposed in both theories of SCT and AL which could be typical of many UK universities that is less familiar to the participants in this study. Although some participants had a taste of student-centred learning when studying in the USA or UK, it might not be enough to give them full understanding on how learning is linked to culture or interaction. Thus, this could be problematic for the participants in my study as although they might be aware of these theories, student-centred learning could possibly be experienced differently in different contexts as Lantolf and Poehner (2004) stated that a learner's cognitive ability is not always static but rather fluid and could change via mediation. As the international students in this study embark on their journey into the UK university, they would need to adapt to the university's writing conventions and being an L2 writer, this comes with many possible challenges. While many would agree that writing should be taught as a process rather than a product, students entering a new academic environment may not be familiar with such an approach and maybe unwilling to try (Barnard & Campbell, 2005) and this could be problematic for the teacher especially if it is a large class.

Hence, this is why SCT plays such a role in this study where learning is culturally mediated. It is where the mind, the tools, ZPD and CoP all could come together in order to ensure cognitive development for the participants during their one-year MSc tenancy at the UK

university. It is also in line with narrative methodology and a constructivist point of view where the participants would likely bring with them their past history and knowledge to initially help them cope with the new learning environment and thus makes culture and interaction ever more pertinent in this study.

However, every theory is open to criticism. SCT has been criticized for a failure to address developmental processes (Chaiklin, 2003) and being more concerned with achieving goals. It disregards learning needs as well as motivational influences concerned with learning. Another criticism was SCT's inability to be applied to all social groups and cultural groups. According to Liu and Matthews (2005), learners in a social group may not have the same learning capacity, hence they may not all receive the same benefits from the learning engagements. This can be related to learners with learning disabilities who may not be able to gain or develop the same meaning as compared to those without disabilities. This was why I needed theories such as TLT and CoP to help fill the gaps in the study so it could become a more comprehensive study.

Transformative Learning Theory and Perspective Transformation

Transformative Learning theory was advocated by Mezirow (1978) and was especially formulated for adult learners. It is a process of consciously changing one's frame of reference. Frame of reference includes habits of mind and points of view. Habits of mind are expressed via a specific point of view. Frames of reference are the outcome of both culture and main caregivers such as parents and teachers. Point of view is more vulnerable to change than habits of mind (Mezirow, 1997). This can happen when we face situations where our actions do not solve the problem. We then try to shift our point of view, using another's as our point of view is "more accessible to awareness and feedback from others" (Mezirow, 1997 p. 6). In other words, transformation occurs when our established beliefs are contested. The main ingredient in Mezirow's theory is the importance of critical reflection and discourse because this is when transformation of habits of mind and points of view usually occurs (Benson, Heagney, Hewitt, Crosling & Devos, 2014). Reflection can help enable us to correct our misrepresented beliefs and faults in problem-solving while critical thinking is to critique our misrepresented beliefs (Mezirow, 1990). Mezirow (2003, p.61) stated that in order to validate a transformed frame of reference, it required a "critical-dialectical discourse". In the transformational learning context, discourse refers to a dialogue that engages the learner in the evaluation of one's beliefs, feelings and values.

In 1978, Mezirow introduced the notion of Perspective transformation to explain the change of perspective an individual might experience when they change their frames of reference after a process of critical reflection on their existing norms and beliefs. Mezirow (1990) stated that we make interpretations based on our experiences and this would help direct us in our actions. Mezirow (1990, p.7) also indicated that there are two types of learning: instrumental learning, which refers to tasks that involve problem solving and communicative learning and learning about meanings of “what others communicate concerning values, ideals, moral decision...”. Mezirow saw the latter to hold more importance in adult learning. He believes that it is during adulthood that we often reconsider our assumptions that may have produced a misleading view of reality and “there is no higher priority for adult education than to develop its potentialities for perspective transformation” (Mezirow, 1978).

Mezirow (1981) initially saw perspective transformation to encompass ten phases (see table 6) that is instigated by a ‘disorienting dilemma’ (Mezirow, 1981) but Mezirow (2000) has since conceded that it can also be a steady, cumulative process.

Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma
Phase 2	Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame
Phase 3	A critical assessment of assumption
Phase 4	Recognition that one's discontent and process of transformation are shared
Phase 5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
Phase 6	Planning a course of action
Phase 7	Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
Phase 8	Provisional trying of new roles
Phase 9	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
Phase10	A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

Table 6 Ten Phases of transformation (Mezirow, 1981)

One of the studies that has adopted this theory is a longitudinal study by Benson, Hewitt, Heagney, Devos and Crosling (2010; 2014). In their 2010 study, their study focused on the factors that stimulated the interest to pursue higher education. Their participants were students from various demographic backgrounds. The study followed the same students up to completion of their undergraduate study in 2014. Their study recognizes the impact of perspective transformation on students' decision to enrol to higher education (Benson et al, 2010) and that the reflection by the students after finishing the study indicated that the majority felt that the journey was a transformative one (Benson et al 2014).

Perspective transformation as a process

This study is informed by Socio-cultural theory. According to this theory as suggested by Vygotsky, there are three cultural and social dynamics that mediate between people, their physical world and mental world (Lantolf, 2006). These cultural and social elements form human psychological processes namely, activities (e.g. education), artifacts (e.g. books) and concepts (e.g. knowledge about reality) (Lantolf, 2006). Transformational Learning theory and the concept of perspective transformation is part of Socio-cultural theory, but is focused on the process of transforming one's view, in this case, specifically on academic writing. The participants targeted for this study are international postgraduate students who are the focus of transformational learning. Specifically, they are individuals pursuing their postgraduate studies and they possess teaching experiences. They identify themselves as teachers first and being a student second. This reflects my own experience when I was an MSc student. I see myself as a lecturer first, then a student, bringing with me my previous experiences and expertise into my learning frame. I value feedback to improve my understanding of academic writing conventions demanded in this academic institution. In doing so, I repeatedly went back to my previous writing and assessing experiences, incorporated my lecturer's feedback and underwent the process of reflection after each summative assessment and realized I had transformed the way I perceive academic writing which in turn transformed my perspective of academic writing. The process that I experienced was similar to Mezirow's ten phases of transformation, where I was initially clueless and ashamed upon receiving my first formative assessment grade, had feedback dialogues with my lecturers and used academic exemplars in my attempt to improve my academic writing. Undeniably, I was not aware of my thoughts or actions at the time nor saw them as transformational learning. Cranton (2006, p.77) said that for the person experiencing transformation it is "a gradual accumulation of ordinary experiences to a deep shift thinking,

a shift that may only become clear when it is over.” This was certainly true of my own experience.

This theory is appropriate for this study because this study adopts a social constructionism point of view where it views knowledge as human-made outcome that is socially and culturally constructed (Ernest, 1997). Learning is viewed to occur when individuals are involved in social activities as learning is viewed as a social process (McMahon, 1997). Hyland (2003, p.21) argues that writing is compelled by the array of social activity, context and relationships between the writer and reader. Therefore, it is not enough to teach L2 writers to write using the many writing approaches such as: product approach (Matsuda, 1999; Kroll 1990), process approach (Matsuda, 2003), genre approach (Hyland, 2003; Halliday, 1994) and post-process approach (Matsuda, 2003).

One of these social activities is a feedback session as feedback itself from the Vygotskian point of view is viewed as a social interaction. Social constructionism argues that meaning and knowledge are socially constructed via social interactions. Perspective transformation is especially appropriate here as it involves change in meaning-making and transforming one’s views.

My interest is the changing perspective of participants on how s/he arrived at their understanding of academic writing and how feedback can help or not help contribute to this. Therefore, the study is designed to be longitudinal and involves both elements of discourse and reflection. To Mezirow (2000), through discourse, we can understand how others understand experience and are able to understand and evaluate the motivations for their beliefs and understanding by requiring them to critically reflect on their own assumptions. At the same time the researcher reflects on any assumptions they might have about the motivations of their participants.

Using Haggis’ (2002) proposal to see every learning experience in adult learning context as unique, I will take into consideration that Perspective transformation may not be visible in this journey. As Taylor (2007) argued, the problem with longitudinal transformative learning theory is to know whether it is a transformative experience or a normal development that simply results from the passage of time or the inevitable consequences of being exposed to a new external factor. So, I will regard participants to exhibit transformative experiences if their understanding of good academic writing and the strategies of achieving it has deviated

from the way they ‘normally’ do it which resulted in a change of their frame of reference based on critical reflection and discourse. Where the transformation occurs, I need to consider if it was primarily caused by a disorienting dilemma or gradual change. We say it is transformative if it results in the re-examination of habits of the mind that transform their point of view.

Perhaps a similar study to the study I plan to do would be that of Gill (2007). His study was a longitudinal holistic study of Chinese international students and he used Transformational Learning Theory (TLT) to track and understand changes that these students experienced during their MSc sojourn in the UK. Furthermore, Gill used a case study using ethnographic and narrative research methods that also aimed to gain a continual reflection from the participants which is similar to my research design although I will be using blogs to achieve this. My study also differs in terms of the focus of the study where he focussed on the intercultural learning experiences while mine would concentrate more on academic writing.

In summary, perhaps why I was attracted to TLT was because it fulfilled the criteria experienced during my own MSc experience as well as the intention for this study. Firstly, TLT was especially relevant to adult learners in higher education. Secondly, TLT was especially concerned with a ‘disorienting’ dilemma that occurs in the learner. Thirdly, TLT was keen on ‘transformation’ which is more towards progress and development which is aligned with my objective of looking at transformational changes. All three aspects were personally experienced by myself when I was an MSc student and I was curious if other international students could have experienced the same dilemma, have their perspective changed and be transformed and progress into becoming a more successful learner.

This is not to say that this theory is universally accepted in research contexts similar to mine as it does encounter many criticisms. According to Howie and Bagnall (2013), there are four types of criticism for this theory. Firstly, some critics do not question the accuracy of TLT but pointed out some possible missing elements. Taylor and Cranton (2013) outlined provoking aspects such as experience, empathy, inherently good transformation, desire to change and methodology. They were raising issues on how learners can experience, in a sense on how to encourage experiences that can potentially lead to transformative learning as well as the role of empathy that they felt was salient in fully understanding TLT. While they do not condemn TLT, they were encouraging TLT to improve its direction. Another notable

criticism came from Boyd and Myers (1988) who criticized Mezirow for focusing too much on a rational approach and ignoring other psychological aspects such as imagination and emotion. Learners could make irrational and intuitive decisions that do not necessarily follow Mezirow's given phases.

The second type of criticism was a "chicken or egg" question that suffers from "circular causality dilemma" (Howie and Bagnall (2013, p.10). This means the argument is rather futile in deciding which event comes first. An example of such criticism is the absence of theory of social change in TLT (Collard & Law, 1989; Clark & Wilson, 1991; Inglis, 1997, 1998) that contributes to the argument whether one event needs to occur before the other. Merriam (2004) was also categorised under this type of criticism when suggesting the need for high level of cognitive function in order to engage in transformational learning. This would need the learner to be able to critically reflect and engage with rational discourse. This again contributes to the argument whether transformational learning would only occur after acquiring high level of cognitive functioning or if transformational learning would occur first.

The third type of criticism was more towards the rejection of the theory rooted in the differences of philosophical attachment. Newman (2012) for example, argued that TLT was better off as a conceptual metaphor as he believed TLT was simply good learning. He questioned why the adult education community gave TLT such prestige and notability, as if contributing to a universal truth. The last type of criticism was concerned with aspects or application of TLT and questioning the individual elements that makes up TLT. One such criticism was from Brookfield (2000) who commented the possible aimless meaning of the word 'transformative', given the nature of such a word is often associated with good and positive changes. He questioned if a learner were to experience a rather negative yet perspective-changing experience, would the word 'transformational' still be suitable?

Taking into account of all the numerous criticisms, it does make me nervous to rely on TLT as part of this study's framework. Looking at the criticisms put forward, I could understand the concern but I believe I have experienced TLT during my MSc tenancy and only stumbled upon this theory while doing my background reading on adult education. It took me by surprise at how well TLT 'fit' into my experiences. However, I am aware of the subjectivity of experiences and not all learners will experience the ten phases as put forward by Mezirow in order to achieve transformational learning or simply to succeed. This why I have stated

that I choose TLT as one of my conceptual frameworks. Unlike SCT, TLT may not be as well theorized, but I would not object to its absence or contribution as it would all depend on the data. The extent to whether TLT is valuable in this study would depend on the data collected.

Community of Practice

The sociolinguistic lexicon ‘Community of Practice’ (COP) was coined by Lave and Wenger (1991). It refers to a group of people who share the same learning objective within the same domain (Wenger, 2011). COP is a socio-cultural theory that believes we learn from our communities (O’Donnell, Tobbell, Lawthom and Zammit, 2009). Lave and Wenger (1991) support the notion that learning is always contextual and is reformulated as an ongoing continuous process and not a one-time event. Additionally, Wenger (2000) affirms that community of practice is not the same as a geographical community or communities of similar interest because communities of practice hold a shared practice. For example, someone living within the same community is not in community of practice if they do not share the same interest and form of practice. Communities of practice are for example doctors, academics or financial communities.

Characteristics of CoP can be regarded to encapsulate three aspects, which are the domain, the community and the practice. The domain here refers not only to people with common interests but with common aims as well. It is not enough being a part of the CoP as silent members but they need to have a common practice as well. This particular community would engage in joint activities or discussions where they devote time to help one another. The community would pass on information and eventually build relationships over time. This information is exercised as CoP members are practitioners of their shared interests. The key idea about CoP is not just that people develop a shared set of aims and practices and work as a community, but that the way they work together becomes normalised and seen as natural, such that other ways of working seem inappropriate.

In a study by McDowell and Montgomery (2009) of international students in Northumbria University, the participants were found to have formed their own CoP with shared aims and interests. The purpose for such CoP was as a “reconstruction of social capital” (McDowell & Montgomery, 2009, p.2) lost during the international students’ transition to the UK. This social capital replaced their social support back home via a network of international students who shared similar motivation for success, giving them not only academic support but

emotional support as well. The participants were purposeful in their choice of friends and often shared a common topic of discussion, hence demonstrating international students' adaptability and changing nature of self when transitioned into a new CoP.

However, this is not to assume that any community represents any kind of ideal (which is why foregrounding an idealised view of community can be misleading), only that individuals get drawn into a way of doing things. Moving between CoPs can therefore be disorientating and even invisible to some. In Kim' (2011) study of international students studying in the UK, he demonstrated how certain cultural practices as well as activities were not as transparent as it seemed. Kim (2011) stated that the participants' limited English language competence restricted their interactions and made them feel excluded. This, together with other aspects of their learning environment such as classroom interaction, limited cultural knowledge as well as their relationship with others influenced their learning experiences.

Cai et al (2019) in their study of international PhD students also mentioned that CoPs are not necessarily explicit to the participants. While they have identified four communities, all adhering to Wenger's (2010) CoP framework, many of the participants did not acknowledge many of the communities even after the successful doctoral journey. This exemplified the notion of the implicit nature of CoP to some international students; although CoP should not be regarded as a "panacea" (Cai et al, p.28) for all international students studying in higher education, its benefits were acknowledged and well-documented in many CoP studies using the CoP framework.

Within the educational context, according to a Community of Practice framework, learning is an extension of identity. Identity in a community of practice is understood as participation in practices inscribed by the communities to which an individual belongs. Wenger (1998, p.154) claimed that "identities are defined with respect to the interaction of multiple convergent and divergent trajectories". O'Donnell & Tobbell (2007) said that upon a learner's admission to a given community, they are regarded as peripheral participants and could become full participants when an associated identity shift is achieved. Learning involves increasing participation in CoP as newcomers engage with older members to hone their skills and knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In transition, there is a foregrounded view of identity because the novel practice encountered would demand a learner's practice resulting changes in identity trajectories (O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007).

However, one needs to be cautious when assuming the pre-existence of CoPs in one's organization (Gourlay, 2011). In his study of assessing the experiences of five new lecturers, he found that rather than a smooth transition into the new CoP, they were met with feelings of isolation, confusion and diminished confidence. The existing cultural practices exercised by the university made it very difficult for the new lecturers to cross the boundaries in order to become a full-fledged community member and 'forced' some members to remain a peripheral member.

This theory is beneficial in this study especially when studying the transition of individuals moving from one familiar CoP to an unfamiliar CoP (studying in the UK). It can help us understand the importance of such support and whether its presence or absence was realized and how it affects the participants in this study.

3.12 Concluding Remarks

After putting forward the range of literature in the above sections, I can conclude that this study will be informed by Sociocultural Theory (SCT) which is under the umbrella of social Constructionist Theory. SCT views learning as occurring when individuals are involved in social interactions such as writing because learning is viewed primarily as a social process rather than an individual process (McMahon, 1997). Prior (2006) stated that this involves a dialogic process of intervention and that language is a way to mediate higher level thinking skills (metacognition). Writing is a social activity that is compelled by a specific context for specific audience (for reader-writer relationship) and where communication is deliberate (Hyland, 2003; 2007).

Much of the literature above looked at international students in a deficit manner. International students were often subjected to research about English language proficiency, academic writing struggles as well as academic transition experiences. In order to better serve the diverse international students population, I would agree with Bista (2019) that this starts with understanding international students' experiences especially in understanding what constitutes success in their academic transition into a western academic context. This study will look at all these factors with the conscious understanding that one's transition into western academic context will be regarded as an adaptation rather than solely due to low levels of linguistic ability. This study will fill in the research gap by giving an in-depth and

holistic insight into international post graduate students journey in conceptualizing academic writing and discovering how feedback can help the participants become a proficient writer. It will not only unravel authentic issues and dilemmas faced by the participants but also hopefully highlight what they did in order to achieve academic success via academic writing. This study will also take on COP and TLT as the conceptual framework to track and explain change as well as describe the participants' transition into the new academic environment. As mentioned before SCT will act as the theoretical framework as it matches the aims, research paradigm and research design for this study.

The literature review above has supported the need to investigate the academic writing journey of international students in a holistic manner. This study will provide a deeper understanding on how international students conceptualize academic writing, focusing on its comprehensive nature of experience, rather than looking at international students as a community of deficit. The literature review also supported that there is not enough study that specifically looks at how feedback is related to academic writing development that is longitudinal in nature and that considers not only perception of feedback but interpretations and the emotional weight it carries. Lastly, as international students engage in academic writing development, the literature above exhibit studies on writing seem to lack in considering when these developments of changes occur during the students' tenure in a certain academic programme. My study aims to meet all the objectives above by looking at the study horizontally according to themes but also vertically according to each participant in order to pinpoint the development and/or change that occur.

Chapter 4. Methodology.

This study intends to explore international postgraduate students' conceptualization of academic writing and how feedback functions in their writing development. I also intend to explore any changes that occur throughout the study. I am aware that a practising social researcher such as myself has a responsibility in engaging with philosophical and methodological matters as well as justifying reasons for using narrative inquiry as a methodology with specified methods.

This chapters are organized as follows. After this brief introduction, section 4.1 will provide the ontological and epistemological beliefs that support this methodology. Section 4.2 describes the research design used in this study in order to answer the research questions and accommodate the research aims. Section 4.3 describes the data collection methods and 4.4 describes the participants involved in the study. Section 4.5 explains the piloting procedures while section 4.6 describes the actual data collection that occurred. This inclusion of interviews in different phases is important as each interview or phase could have a slightly different aim or issue that had arose. Section 4.7 discusses the steps taken to analyse the participants' narratives. Section 4.8 describes my role as the researcher where my reflective view can be found and how certain issues with the participants were dealt with. Section 4.9 describes steps taken to help ensure the research remains ethically conducted, avoiding harmful repercussion for the participants. Finally, section 4.10 provides a description of the study's limitation.

4.1 Research Paradigm of the study

The educational philosophy that guides this study is essential in helping me to be more consistent and more thorough about the learning and teaching exchange occurring in the study. According to Elias and Merriam (1980) it helps researchers to be more comprehensive and be mindful of what we do as well as the reasons why we do it. By describing my own personal educational philosophy for this study, I can share an insight into my own beliefs and values on the academic transactions in this study.

This study looks at human knowledge and experiences hence it cannot be understood in the same way as one would for natural sciences. Humans construct meanings and operate according to the interpreted meanings (Hammersley, 2013). Therefore, to achieve the aims of this study, to gain deeper understanding in my participants' journey and how they construct

meaning, I have chosen narrative inquiry as a methodology which falls under the interpretivist paradigm.

Interpretivism embraces the idea of subjectivity, recognises multi-realities and understands that meanings are socially constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Interpretivist research such as this puts an importance in attaining deeper understanding of certain phenomenon and of the complexities attached within its unique context (Creswell, 2007). In other words, interpretivist studies look not only at human events, but also take the social context into account. Therefore, interpretivists postulate that reality is internally constructed by people, but that this construction is mediated by cultural and social elements (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This resonates well with this study as the ideas and meanings about academic writing created by the participants had cultural and social influences that were formed in different cultural contexts then developed within a new context. This study aims to explore this transition and changing perspective, aware that future contexts and perspectives could change with more academic writing exposure. The study does not aim to fix this experience but to represent it through different experiences of it. This means the conceptualization of academic writing is a socially constructed idea and this aligns well with this study's philosophical ontology. It also reflects the idea of writing as social practice as articulated by the ideological model within the field of Academic Literacies (Street, 2001).

This study adopts an idealist stance where reality is viewed to be a creation of human experience, existing as much in the mind of individuals as having an external reality. This means that reality is viewed as multiple, stimulated by context which includes not only the participants' experiences and perception but the social context and the participant's interaction with the researcher (Ponterotto, 2005). Therefore, 'truth' in idealism is concerned with the different ways of developing internal realities due to the historical and social variances a participant has encountered (Smith, 1983).

MSc modules showed that learning is not seen as pouring knowledge and understanding from the tutor perspective to the student perspective (as if it had an external reality), but that interpretation and previous experience will always influence both teaching and learning and so the course is dependent on the internal realities of both teachers and learners. In other words, the learners and teachers have their own sets of realities that guide them in perceiving

and creating meaning which might match or contrast with one another. In line with the philosophical view of idealism, the role of the teacher in the MSc course took a central spot, as someone who leads and facilitates students onto the right path (Klemke, Kline & Hollinger, 1986). As a facilitator, the teacher will not play the complete authoritarian role but rather as a guide and role model (Crook, 1998). The teacher analyses and discuss ideas with students in order to guide students to a higher level of awareness. This means that the knowledge and understanding that is already in the students' minds will interact with new ideas and concepts and it is the teacher's role to understand how this interaction can both help and hinder new thinking. The role of the teacher is to create a learning environment that helps to bridge the gap between what is known and new knowledge. Relevant to the sociocultural theory put forward in the previous chapter, idealism operates within this zone of proximal development (ZPD) to develop students' intellectual potential by scaffolding learning (Azadi, Afghari and Hadian, 2020). The MSc modules, in accordance with the idealism stance sees the educational process as 'holistic' aimed at strengthening critical thinking and introducing extensive ideas and views instead of limited skills. Hence, in my own MSc experience I perceive my tutor's function as someone who stimulates thoughts rather than merely giving information and, in my case, ultimately transformed my academic views as a whole. I mention this here because it is likely that the teaching I experienced has informed the approach I have taken to this study, so not only is the MSC the focus of my research, but it has also influenced the way I have come to think about both teaching and research.

This study's epistemological assumption or how knowledge is known, is influenced by social constructionism and social constructivism. These terms are often used interchangeably however, I believe that they are different from one another. Social constructionism focuses on social context being the centre of the creation and conveyance of meaning-making and the latter focuses on the individual at the centre of meaning-making within a social context (Crotty, 2003). Another important feature of interpretivism in this study is the strong notion of reflexivity. The researcher is not separate from the study, making the relationship between the researcher and participant intentional. In the bid of understanding my role as a researcher, I needed to possess a certain amount of reflexivity to help my research to be critical of my thoughts, attitudes and reaction towards my participants and the study as a whole (Holloway & Biley, 2011). I bring my own interpretations which are moulded from my own experiences while acknowledging my participants' experiences through reflexive analysis in order to contribute to the "validation of the work" (Creswell, 2007: 206).

Social constructionism, social constructivism combined with researcher's reflexivity together shapes this study into an intimate cyclical relationship between the participant and the researcher, influenced by the social context. This is why I cannot simply choose between social constructionism and social constructivism as my epistemological stance as both are heavily intertwined in the study. Epistemologically, knowledge derived from this study is neither neutral nor universal but rather impartial and contextualised for each participant. Each participant creates meaning influenced by their own experiences and how they react with the current academic context. For example, in this study, evidence of social constructivism is present in how the participants tried to make meaning about academic writing within the UK academic context. Similarly, this study also shows evidence of social constructionism where participants convey the importance and impact of social context in their meaning-making processes. Therefore, regardless of the epistemological term used, both epistemologies are in line with this study that looks at five different individuals studying in the MSc programme in a new social context who each socially construct their own meanings and realities.

In short – this study is informed by a view of academic writing as social practice and as a socially constructed phenomenon, thus I will explore it through the individual experience of students aiming to master academic writing as they transition into and through a new social context. It is their subjective experience, mediated through my own reflexive analysis that will form the basis of the study. The details for how this intention will be realised follows

4.2 Research Design

This research aims to understand how international postgraduate students conceptualize academic writing over a period of time and to uncover the effect of feedback. Due to the study's interpretive nature, it is understood that the essence of meaning being produced is "situated" (Hammersley, 2007: 291). This means that the findings of the study may or may not be generalizable beyond the specific context as interpretive research is recognized to be "temporary, time-and place-bound nature of knowledge" (Guba, 1990: 77). This means while it is true that this research is concerned with a particular context, that does not mean it won't have wider relevance and resonate with other studies to add to knowledge. particularity in terms of its contribution to make as well as generalisability – the fact that something is generally true does not mean it is actually true for everyone.

This study is also equipped with a complementary framework that is also central to this study as mentioned in the previous chapter, which is transformative learning theory (TLT), where the dilemma of academic writing as a social practice could develop into a transformation of learning. Other than my proclivity for incorporating story-telling in an academic context, the longitudinal and developmental nature of meaning-making of the phenomena being studied and in light of my views of social reality, I believe this warrant for narrative inquiry as the best suitable research design for this study.

Narrative inquiry, rooted in hermeneutics and phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that collects forms of narratives, may they be verbal, written or visual. Both narrative inquiry and phenomenology are concerned with participants' experiences and so they are often seen as somewhat similar. According to Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012) phenomenology is interested in uncovering the meaning of experience for the participant and requires the researcher to detach themselves from the phenomena being studied as well as from the person experiencing the phenomena. However, narrative inquiries differ in that the researcher is not only interested in experiences, but also how people make sense of their experiences and the plot they create in telling and retelling their story, or the connections they make between events that are regarded as having a semi-causal manner in terms of how the meaning attached to these experiences develop (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is because the narratives are connected to their history and context. Furthermore, unlike phenomenologists, narrative researchers are not viewed as separate from the process nor the stories but are actively involved in a "discursive accomplishment" and in the process of meaning-making (Reissman, 2003, p.709).

The main focus of narrative studies is to understand how people attribute meanings to their experiences, thus providing deep comprehension and understanding with regards to the intricacy and complexity surrounding human lives (Josselson, 2006). While phenomenology is more concerned with the crux of the lived phenomenon and focuses on studying several individuals with common experience, narrative research studies one or more individuals with the need to tell the stories of these individual experiences that at times could be unique to one another (Creswell & Poth 2018). This view concurs with Webster and Mertova (2007) that saw narrative inquiry supplying researchers with a rich framework to explore human experiences and activities as portrayed and illustrated through the participants' stories. Trahar (2014) also added that narrative inquiries fit well with research in international higher

education teaching and learning as narrative inquiries can help address both the “complexities and subtleties” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.1) of human experiences.

Furthermore, according to Connelly & Clandinin (2006: 479), narrative inquiry is “the study of experience as a story”. To conceptualize ‘academic writing’ does not happen overnight and it is not a linear process, therefore an insight into how this development unfolds is necessary. This study is not only interested in the outcome but on how that outcome was achieved and this differs from one person to another considering the cultural differences between my participants from one another and also with myself. This brings me to my two main reasons to why I choose narrative inquiry as a methodology. Firstly, it is because of my chosen participants who are international postgraduates with a teaching background where multiplicity of identities was engaged. The participants not only represent themselves as MSc students but also as learners and members of academia. This is best described by Connelly & Clandinin (1990, p.2) that “education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other’s stories”. Thus, my participants create and re-create their understanding according to their experiences and interaction but they are not necessarily uniform. Narrative inquiry can help my study with participants who come from many different contexts (personally, socially or academically) whose conception of the world could differ considerably from mine (Trahar, 2011a). These different cultural reference points are likely to impact on how they story their own lives, the purposes and messages they infer and communicate through relating the stories, and so the analysis is concerned both with the events they record and the manner of the telling. Moreover, it can help me understand better my participants’ collective experiences while maintaining individual variances (Trahar, 2013b). This is entwined with my second reason for choosing narrative inquiry where I chose it so I can intentionally use it not only as a research tool but also as a learning tool for my participants in discovering their own ideas and their developing understanding about academic writing in their current social context. As my participants narrate their thoughts and ideas, they can consciously trace and re-trace their development and progress. This then, will bring to consciousness their own changing perspectives, and they will be able to comment on this change.

Using narrative inquiry, can help to “uncover and interpret the meanings behind individual experiences” (Nolan, Hendricks, Williamson & Ferguson, 2017, p.745). Drawing from this study for example, using this methodology helped me identify meanings that my participants

had created that they may not be initially aware of. It also helped illuminate the areas where development and change took place in my participants' lives with minimal intervention. Regardless, the time-consuming and complex process of data gathering, analysis and interpretation, narrative inquiry has the ability of being both holistic and precise in documenting my participants' MSc academic writing journey allowing for "private reality as it is brought into public sphere" (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p.490).

Having explained why narrative inquiry is the best methodology for my study, perhaps the obvious question that one might ask is what makes my study a narrative one and not simply a qualitative study? Which boxes have I ticked to ensure that my study has the essence of being a narrative one? As explained earlier about what counts as a narrative, I believe that my study involves a "dialectical relationship between knowledge, audience and context" (Stephens & Trahar, 2012, p.60). This means that what is being told relates to how it was told as well as the intended audiences and the context in which the narrative occurred. As Carr (1986) stated, narratives are not affiliated with short-term, rudimental experiences and actions but, like my study, they involve long-term, more substantial sequence of actions, experiences and events because all events are viewed through the prism of later experience. My participants would look at their history and create meanings and thus interpret how past experiences help shape their current (as well as the possible future) conception. In addition, this relates to and aligns well with Clandinin & Huber's (2010) conceptual framework for narrative inquiry that involves the presence of temporality, sociality and place, that together distinguishes it from other methodologies. Temporality here refers to the recognition addressed towards the past, current and future of people, and the places or experiences being studied. It needs to be remembered that although knowledge from the past is collected, it is not always about the information about the past (Bochner, 2007) but rather how it informs the current experience or even perhaps the future. Sociality refers to the social environment in which the experiences were or are occurring, whether they be "cultural, social, institutional or linguistic narratives" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p.4) as well as the relationship between the participants and the researcher where the latter could not be removed. Place, on the other hand, refers to the actual "physical and topological" (ibid., p.4) perimeter in which an event or experience took place, as our identities are linked to these places. These three components of narrative's conceptual framework are present in my study where past current and the possible future, social environment involving culture, social and institutional perception, as well as linguistic expressions, were examined with much consideration for where these

experiences took place. One consequence of this is that accounts of previous learning and academic writing will be retold through the prism of current learning and experiences of academic writing. Thus it is possible to understand not only what has happened in the past but how that past has come to be understood.

The research aims of this study are as follows:

1. To explore students' conceptualization of academic writing.
2. To establish the role of feedback in developing a proficient writer.
3. To explore and follow any changes during this period.

To fulfil the objectives above, I intend to answer the following research questions:

4. How do International postgraduate students conceptualize good academic writing?
5. How does feedback help develop academic writing?
6. What and how do changes appear during the participants' MSc sojourn?

4.3 Data Collection methods

The research questions were investigated in four phases (see Table 7) using two methods namely interviews and blogging. The first phase aimed at building a rapport, constructing participants' academic background and obtaining participants' conceptualization of academic writing prior to starting MSc programme. Phase 2 (Term 1) and Phase 3 (Term 2) are aimed to look at the perception and development of academic writing as well as their interpretation of assignment feedback. Phase 4 (Term 3) was designed to recall and summarize the participants' academic writing journey on the MSc, focusing on their 'final' conceptualization of academic writing and their ideas on the value of feedback.

Phase No	Subject	Objective(s)	Instrument(s)
Phase 1	Initial Interview	To establish rapport with participants	Semi-structured Interview
		To learn about their academic history	
		To establish their understanding about academic writing prior to starting MSc	
Phase 2	Designing and Communicating Research (DCR) module	To collect data on their perceptions of the module, academic writing and feedback	Semi-structured conversational Interview and Blogging

	Scientific Methodology (SM) module		
Phase 3	Interpretive Methodology (IM) module		
	Nature of Educational Enquiry (NEE) module		
Phase 4	Final Interview	To summarize participants' 'change and development' and conceptualization of academic writing and feedback	Semi-structured Interview

Table 7 Overview of Research Design

For the data collection process, it had been divided into four phases. The phases were necessary for my participants' and my own convenience of identifying the stage of data collection. Phase One comprised of one interview with each participant with the objective of building an initial relationship and obtaining their academic background and to establish their early understanding about academic writing and this took place before the start in the first week of the MSc programme. Phase two and Phase three on the other hand, took place during the MSc programme with the focus on the four module assignments and feedback. Phase four which was the final phase of data collection focuses on the main themes throughout the three phases and tying up loose ends by revisiting ideas and concerns raised across the whole of the year study.

4.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The purpose of this study is not to reduce or simplify meanings through data collection but to allow different data points to be concerned with complexity and is concerned therefore with the interpretation of meaning. To obtain this, I decided to use semi-structured interviews in Phase One and Phase Four and semi-structured conversational interviews in Phase two and Phase three. Interviews are widely used in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012) because interviews can reveal deep-seated beliefs and feelings from the participants unlike other methods such as questionnaires (Wragg, 2002).

For Phase One and Phase Four, semi-structured interviews were used for different purposes. In Phase One, semi-structured interview was employed as it was the first meeting between the participants and myself and building rapport was the key purpose as it could help yield

better responses from participants (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). To do this, I came up with questions that related to my participants' demographic information, academic background and initial conceptualization about academic writing. Having certain themes to be covered and suggested questions to follow, the participants were eased into the research without being too probing too quickly.

Semi-structured interview was also employed in Phase four as a way of getting more uniform answers from my participants. Trust and relationship had been established by this point therefore, I felt more able to control the direction of the conversation making these final interviews more targeted to key ideas emerging from the previous conversations. I did not want my participants to sway from the questions as much as they did in Phase Two and Phase Three where semi-structured conversational interview was used. This combination of free-flowing and more tightly targeted conversation made for a balance of approaches with different affordances for the overall design.

4.3.2 Semi-structured Conversational Interviews

In Phase Two and Phase Three, semi-structured conversational interview was mostly used. After the rapport-building initial interview in Phase one, it was important to have an informal atmosphere so the participants would feel at ease telling their stories and opinions and to lessen the "asymmetry of power" (Kvale, 1996, p.126). This is why I have slightly deviated from the semi-structured interview in Phase One to a semi-structured conversational interview where the latter could enhance "response accuracy by allowing unscripted exchanges" between the researcher and participants to give clarification to a specific term used (Currivan, 2008, p.152).

Semi-structured conversational interviews differ in terms of "standardizing the meaning of questions, not the wording or exact procedures to administer the questions" (Currivan, p. 152). This was beneficial in cases where my participant like Maria whose English language was not as competent as the other participants. This method of interview was also particularly helpful when my participants come across terms like 'criticality' which seem to have a different meaning for different participants and myself included, requiring a negotiation of meaning to take place. Additionally, as mentioned before, I have tried to build rapport with my participants from the first interview and using semi-structured conversational interview helped serve this purpose where my participants felt comfortable to discuss extensively about

a particular matter and at times, off-topic matters in an attempt to reduce any notional hierarchy between researcher and participant (Roulston, 2012). So, this helped establish trust which helped ensure a smooth discussion with the participants.

4.3.3 Blogs as personal academic journals

This study also needed to capture evidence of thoughts that might reveal change and development in each participant. However, due to the longitudinal nature of the study, and the gaps in between each interview, a less invasive method of collecting data was needed. I turned to using personal blogs using Windows One Note as a blogging platform that my participants could use as their online diary. One Note is readily available for students studying at the university so it did not require any downloading. According to Yang (2009), blogs are a platform where individuals share certain updates on selected topics. Blogs are typified by their ability for real-time interaction, publishing, archival features and the ability to receive comments from readers with an option to pursue the topic further. These features were consistent with the features provided by Windows One Note where my participants could share their blog entries with me which they have written often in a chronological manner and allowing for further discussion for clarification if necessary.

The main purpose for using blogs in this study is to serve as the participants' personal academic journals in order to capture the participants' thoughts and feelings in between each interview. This is an important aspect in a narrative inquiry study as journals can help secure fragmented experiences in order to understand the experience as a whole (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Furthermore, blogs can grant a researcher access into the lived-experience of the participants over a time period with little interference (Wilson, Kenny & Dickson-Swift, 2015). This offers participants the freedom to discuss matters according to their own prioritized focus. Additionally, the perception of privacy could perhaps motivate blog-writers to discuss their experiences more candidly (Nardi et al., 2004).

Another crucial benefit for both the researcher and participants, was that blogging can be used as a form of reflective exercise. This can be confirmed within the existing academic literature on blogging as a resource used in the realm of education which has been positively accepted as a form of reflective journal in areas such as teacher training (William and Jacobs, 2004). Moreover, reflection is a crucial process to enable deeper understanding of one's own practice and in further honing one's work (Schon, 1983). In this study, the form of reflection

did not pertain to any specific model of reflective, making it of a less constructed nature. However, as the participants had already engaged with the different reflective writing addressed in the DCR module, they were welcomed to use them. Nevertheless, a series of guiding questions (See table 8) were supplied (but not limited to) and I emailed individual participants four times during Phase 2 and Phase 3, during which the four modules take place. I emailed the participants these guiding questions as a reminder, twice per module, usually at the beginning and at the end. I tried to promote a sense of reflection to my participants by fashioning the guiding questions to derive from Bailey, Curtis and Nunan’s (2001) reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action which was originally focusing teachers’ reflective thinking and examination about teaching. Reflection-in-action in this study refers to the way the participants continuously look at their thoughts about their assignment and academic writing and make suitable changes where necessary whilst reflection-on-action in this study refers to how the participants plan their writing and evaluate their writing afterwards both before submission as well as after receiving summative grade and feedback. Hence, the blog served as the participants’ own personal academic journal.

Item No	When participants are expected to blog	Some pointers given:
1	When they look at the formative and summative assignment questions (when they are ready to do them).	Some discussion points could be your thoughts and feelings about the question, what it's asking you to do, how you will execute the task, what kind of strategies you might be using, comment and compare between the two questions, the challenges you think you might face etc.
2	Before submission of summative assignment	Some discussion points could be discussing what you have done, how formative feedback has/has not helped you with the summative, any thoughts about the usefulness/effectiveness of the feedback session or formative assignment, any comment about what can be improved, your grade expectations and why you think you deserve it etc.
3	After receiving the online summative feedback and marks	Discuss your thoughts and feelings about the marks and feedback received, the improvements that you could have done better, how this particular assignment can help with your future assignments, dissertation or even your future career etc.

Table 8. The guiding questions that participants received as an assisting reminder.

4.4 Participants

The main criteria required for this study included international postgraduate students with teaching experience. The reason why I opted for participants with teaching experience was because I wanted to create a new angle for this study. While many studies concentrated on either undergraduate or postgraduate students, I wanted an academic writing perspective from international postgraduate students who had teaching experiences as they would provide richer accounts on the conceptualization of academic writing being experienced teachers who may or may not have assessed academic writing themselves. The participants possess a range of one year to ten years teaching experience in English language subject with the exception of one participant who taught social science (Maria).

During the selection for participants, I sought help from my second supervisor who contacted the Director of MSc. The Director of MSc provided us a slot during the MSc Introductory week where I shared my research idea via a power-point presentation to the MSc students who were present that day and asked for volunteers towards the end. I felt that meeting them face to face was important to assure them that I was an aspiring international student just like them, having studied the MSc myself, and to answer any questions that they may have directly before they decide to volunteer as I am aware that longitudinal studies can be regarded as demanding for some people. I provided them with the reasons why I believed my study is important, a realistic assessment of what being involved required of them but also how I believed they could benefit from it. Initially, ten people signed up but two had to be removed for not having teaching experiences. A further three participants removed themselves in the middle of the research citing similar reason of being academically overwhelmed. So, in the end, there were five participants.

Elio, Lulu, Maria, Shaima and Yaseen had shown serious commitment toward their MSc studies and had continuously expressed their passion for learning and personal development. More detailed profiles of each participants are provided in the findings chapter. The diversity of each academic journey contributes to the richness of this study. It is understood that this study does not represent international postgraduate students as a whole, however, I believe the participants provide valuable insight as individual students who had teaching and marking experiences who need to adjust to the contextual and academic demands of a new study environment.

Approaching Participants

My first contact with my participants was during my pitch presentation during the MSc introductory week where the volunteers provided me with their name, phone number and email. I then made email contact with them, attached a brief description of the study and provided them with details on how the data collection will be conducted and what tools will be used, for them to consider before committing to the research. I also attached the informed consent form (Appendix 1) for them to read before proceeding any further. The consent form described the participants' rights in the research study such as guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. The form also informed the participants regarding their rights to withdraw from the study at any time and the option to review their transcribed interviews. The participants were given the freedom of deciding the date, time and venue for each interview session.

4.5 Data collection procedures

Seeking approval

In order to conduct the interview, I had to obtain approval from Exeter's Graduate School of Education ethics committee. No other written approval was needed as the initial meeting (pitch presentation) with participants was arranged by my supervisor and director of MSc which was fitted into the MSc Introductory week in St Luke's campus. Therefore, there was no issue about interfering with the participants' academic schedule.

Piloting the interviews

According to Sampson (2004) many UK institutions overlook the importance of piloting to assess for researcher's risk. These risks vary from one research to another, but in this study, the risk originated from my own amateurish skills as a researcher so I had to do my due diligence so the interview would run as smoothly as possible. According to Tashakkori and Teddie (2003), pilots are valuable irrespective of the paradigm chosen and it can help detect weaknesses. Once these weaknesses are identified it allows room for corrections to be made before the actual study is conducted (Kvale, 2007).

Due to the nature of the interviews being tailored specifically to each individual participant, I could only pilot the first initial interview and the final interview. The initial and final interview were of a semi-structured nature where certain flow was expected and prompts were readily available. These piloting sessions were with two fellow colleagues on two separate occasions. There were two prominent feedback issues that helped me revise my line of questioning. For the initial interview (Phase One), the feedback was concerning my lack of

experience in interviewing where my questions were structurally awkward and some were regarded as leading questions for example by starting question by saying ‘Many people would agree...what do you think?’. This way of questioning could unintentionally mould the content of the response (Kvale, 1996). I restructured the flow of the interview and re-worded my questions to be more neutral. The copy of this initial interview schedule can be found in Appendix 2.

For the final interview (Phase four), the interview questions were piloted twice with two colleagues, different from those in the pilot for initial interview (Phase One). Upon completing the final interview questions based on recurring themes in Phase One to Phase three, I sent it to both my supervisors for their feedback. Once again, one of the feedbacks issues required me to re-word my question as it seemed leading. Although they thought I needed to restructure the line of questioning, it was not a major correction as it only required that I move certain questions around to give it a better flow. Once amendments were made, I commenced with my second pilot involving the same two colleagues from the first pilot. There were no further changes made as they felt the line of questioning was well-ordered. They however suggested one final question of: ‘Looking back at your experience, what would you advise yourself back then if you could do it differently?’. I originally thought that this question was redundant however, the more I thought about it, I could see the rationale was to invoke a deep reflection in the participants about what they thought they could have done to induce a better outcome and this question was included at the last minute. The finalized version of the final interview (Phase four) can be found in Appendix 7.

Piloting the guiding questions for the blog

Due to its personalized nature, blogging was hard to pilot. Its nature of possibly having unique entries that vary from one participant to another meant expectations were almost impossible. The only area that was ‘piloted’ were the instructions, guiding questions and suggestions on when the participants were expected to blog. The feedback I received was that my instructions and suggestions were reasonable and should not burden my participants. Before the participants proceed with their blog entries, the participants were given a short tutorial using One Note. I personally helped them create their One Note blog and requested the participants to blog at least three times at the minimum, suggesting three important events which were: upon receiving the module assignments (formative and summative), before submission of summative assignment and after receiving their summative assignment marks

and feedback. The participants were briefed during the interview that the blog should contain (but was no limited to) their thoughts and feelings about the assignments in the modules, about what they have done to fulfil the assignments' demands and about their summative marks and feedback. The participants were also told that if they wish to blog more than the three events requested, they are welcomed to do so as they were encouraged to treat the blogs as their personal academic diary. The participants were also assured that the only people to have access to their blogs were the individual participants themselves and myself as the researcher.

The piloting for the guiding questions to be sent to participants involved the same colleagues used in the interview pilot. The common feedback was that the questions were too generic and my colleagues suggested that I break the questions into three separate events and hence resulted in table 8 as previously discussed. It was also agreed that the frequency of emailing participants as gentle reminders to blog was to be reduced to four times in each Phase 2 and Phase 3 (twice per module) which was considered less intrusive than the original six times which my colleagues regarded as 'badgering'. Common vocabulary was also assessed to ensure the words used meant the same to each participant (Denzin, 1989) as it's harder for participants to contact the researcher spontaneously compared to face to face interviews.

4.6. Data Collection

The data collection normally started off with raising issues the participants have raised in their blog entries with an exception to the first interview which was more as an introductory format. The interview schedule can be viewed in Appendix 3, Appendix 4, Appendix 5 and Appendix 6.

4.6.1 Blog entries

The participants were expected to blog at least three times per module as indicated in table 8 (page 78). There were times that the participants were so engrossed with their emotion that they were reluctant to blog, hence it required certain persuasion by reminding them of the importance of this raw emotion in contributing to the study, although I was always mindful of their right to privacy and reminded them of this. As mentioned before, the blogging guidelines were emailed to the participants at the beginning of the research study and

reminders were sent twice during each module. These two reminders were sent three weeks into the module and before submission of the final summative assignment. Each participant was reminded that the questions were merely guidelines and they can blog more if they wanted to. Lulu, Shaima and Yaseen were quite active at blogging their thoughts and feelings unlike Elio and Maria whose reasons will be explained in the following section.

Each blog entry was recorded using Microsoft's One Note and checked weekly. To make it interactive, I also added some comments or questions in order to generate a clearer response and better insight of the aims of the research. At the end of each module, after receiving their final blog entry for their summative feedback, these entries were compiled, electronically saved and printed and then stored in a safe place, accessible only by me.

4.6.2 Interviews

The first interview (Phase One)

Before proceeding with the interview, I took ten to fifteen minutes for a One Note tutorial session with my participants. During the tutorial, I explained why One Note was used, how to use it and help the participants create their own blog pages. Before the interview, I made a special effort of making the participants feel at ease with me. The role I wanted to play was not only that of a researcher but I wanted my participants to view me as their equal academic counterpart. For the initial interview itself, I first sought their permission to record and explained to them their rights to stop the interview where they see fit. All of the participants agreed to meet with me at the university campus café, where there was a relaxed ambience and 'distractions' that helped in making the interview session feel less formal. The duration of the semi-structured interviews ranged from forty minutes to an hour. All interviews were conducted in English as that is the language that we share. All the participants were competent at conversing in English language with an exception of Maria who needed me to fill in the vocabulary gap every once in a while. The first interview was aimed to establish rapport and collect personal past academic information such as academic writing and teaching experiences.

The second interview (Phase Two)

As a reminder, Phase two contains two interviews called the second interview and the third interview. For the second interview, a semi-structured approach was still used. The interview took place roughly three months after the initial interview. This interview serves to explore the participants' thoughts and feelings about Designing and Communicating Research (DCR)

module, writing assignments and feedback. The interview was purposely held right after the participants received their summative feedback in order to capture their raw emotional feelings about the feedback and grades they have received.

Data collected in the first interview and from blog entries were analysed before this interview session. This allows for tailored questions for each individual and can be regarded as an extension of their blog entries which describe their start-to-finish journey with the DCR module including but not limited to their thoughts and feelings about the module, the formative assignments, summative assignments and learning prospect. Data from their first interview serves as background knowledge about the individual participants and help shape important aspects of the participants as academics.

For this interview session, the participants can be seen feeling more at ease with the interview questions although stopping themselves from time to time and think about what they were saying while looking at my recording device. The date, time and venue option were selected by the participants and in the end, they all elected to have the interview at the university campus café. The interview duration ranged from forty minutes to just less than an hour.

The third interview (Phase Two)

The third interview was the start of using conversational semi-structured interview. This was needed in order to ensure better flow of the interview into becoming conversation-like. This third interview was reserved for the Scientific Methodology (SM) module. This interview was regarded as part of Phase two as it is taught in the same semester as DCR. The interview session took place about two weeks after the second interview, following the release of SM's summative grade and feedback.

This interview serves to explore the participants' thoughts and feelings about the SM module, writing assignments and feedback. The interview was purposely held right after the participants received their summative feedback in order to capture their raw emotional feelings about the feedback and grades they have received.

Data collected in the second interview and from blog entries were analysed at face value due to time constraints in between interviews before this interview session. This allows for tailored questions for each individual and can be regarded as an extension of their blog

entries which describes their start-to-finish journey with the SM module including but not limited to their thoughts and feelings about the module, the formative assignments, summative assignments and learning prospect. Like the second interview, the participants seemed more comfortable and open, judging from the fluidity of the interview session. The interview session felt more like a conversation between colleagues than between a researcher and a participant where the participants can be seen expressing their thoughts and emotion without much prompting. The date, time and venue option were selected by the participants and in the end, they all elected to have the interview at the university campus café. The interview duration ranged from twenty minutes to thirty-seven minutes.

The fourth interview (Phase Three)

The fourth interview was a conversational semi-structured interview which was reserved for the Interpretive Methodology (IM) module. This interview was regarded as part of Phase three as it is taught in the following semester after DCR and IM. The interview session took place about two and a half months after the third interview, following the release of IM's summative grade and feedback.

This interview serves to explore the participants' thoughts and feelings about the IM module, writing assignments and feedback. The interview was purposely held right after the participants received their summative feedback in order to capture their raw emotional feelings about the feedback and grades they have received.

Data collected in the third interview and from blog entries were analysed before this interview session. This allows for tailored questions for each individual and can be regarded as an extension of their blog entries which describes their start-to-finish journey with the IM module including but not limited to their thoughts and feelings about the module, the formative assignments, summative assignments and learning prospect. Like previous interviews, the participants have regarded me as their colleague as much as a researcher. They expressed themselves more openly and were less concerned about my recording device. The date, time and venue option were selected by the participants and in the end, they all but one elected to have the interview at the university campus. Lulu was back in her home country, finishing her dissertation from home. Therefore, the interview was done online via FaceTime. The interview duration ranged from twenty-seven to thirty-eight minutes.

The fifth interview (Phase Three)

The fifth interview was a conversational semi-structured interview reserved for the Nature of Educational Enquiry (NEE) module. This interview was regarded as part of Phase three as it is taught in the same semester as IM. The interview session took place about one month after the fourth interview, following the release of NEE's summative grade and feedback. This interview serves to explore the participants' thoughts and feelings about NEE module, writing assignments and feedback. The interview was purposely held right after the participants received their summative feedback in order to capture their raw emotional feelings about the feedback and grades they have received.

Data collected in the fourth interview and from blog entries were analysed before this interview session. This allows for tailored questions for each individual and can be regarded as an extension of their blog entries which describes their start-to-finish journey with the NEE module including but limited to their thoughts and feelings about the module, the formative assignments, summative assignments, and learning prospect. In this interview I believe I have clearly established a rapport with my participants, due to the mutual non-existing awkward feelings. The date, time and venue option were selected by the participants and in the end, all but one elected to have the interview at the university campus. Lulu was still in her home country so we opted to use FaceTime once again. The interview duration ranged from twenty-seven minutes to thirty-eight minutes.

The sixth interview (Phase Four)

For the sixth and final interview, I reverted back to semi-structured interview. This is because the questions guiding this interview were similar for all participants unlike the conversational semi-structured interview which was tailored for each participant. This interview served as a summative and closing interview that examines, recaps and concludes the participants' thoughts and feelings about academic writing with relation to the assignments and feedback. This interview was regarded as part of Phase four. It is a separate kind of interview, unlike Phase two and Phase three where the focus was mainly about writing assignments and feedback.

The interview questions attempted to tie loose ends and answer research questions. The questions not only looked at the horizontal journey of each participant but also focussed on arising themes across participants. During the interview, the participants were also asked to elaborate about their best and worst academic writing pieces throughout the MSc programme.

The interview session was purposely held roughly two weeks after the fifth interview in order to allow enough time to quickly analyse data from the fifth interview at face value and construct questions tailored to each participant. The time allowance also gave the participants a 'breathing period' to think about what they wanted to say in the final interview. Most of the participants were able to be interviewed within two weeks after the fifth interview except for Maria because she wanted to complete a certain dissertation task. The meeting with Maria was then held four weeks after the fifth interview in the university campus. Lulu was also still in her home country so we opted to use FaceTime again to communicate.

The interview duration ranged from fifty minutes to 120 minutes. Some participants skipped questions they felt they had expressed clearly in previous interviews, while some participants took more time to strengthen their viewpoints by providing examples of what they had said.

4.6.3 Data Collection Issues that arose

There were generally no problems that occurred except for sending friendly reminders for the participants to blog. The reminders were sent via email and were strategically timed. For example, sending it on the third week when the modules started and a week before summative assignment submission, to avoid being too bothersome. The only expected pattern that indeed happened was the decreasing amount of blogging by the participants. The participants blogged more in Phase two than in Phase three especially after the submission of the NEE summative assignment. The majority of the participants cited that their upcoming dissertation needed more attention. Therefore, blog entries for NEE had the least entries compared to the other three modules.

Towards the third phase, Elio requested for his blogs to be turned into short interviews as he felt he could express himself better when meeting face to face. So for the third phase, I met Elio once the before summative submissions of IM and NEE to capture his thoughts and feelings. For things that he might forgot to mention, he would write a line or two in One Note. These blog interviews last for 15-20 minutes each time and took place within the university campus at a time chosen by Elio.

For the interviews, there were few problems that arose. The only challenging issue was perhaps, scheduling a convenient time with the participants and ensuring that it did not take place too long after the summative feedback had been given.

4.7 Data analysis and how interviews become narratives

Data analysis was performed in between each module interview. This was done in order to put forth themes and issues that seemed important for the participants. As each participant focused on a different set of themes and issues, it resulted in a customized set of interview questions for each participant. I have to admit, there were times when I felt that I was rushed to transcribe and analyse the data before the next interview was due. However, I ensured that I took a second listen and re-read my transcription once the data collection was completed in order to build a strong findings chapter.

As a reminder, the blogging activity was done according to the participants' own pace using Microsoft's One Note application. Although reminder emails were sent, some participants blogged more frequently and with more things to say than other participants. For example, Lulu was more of a keen blog writer compared to Maria. As an indication of the ratio between the data from the blog and the data from the interviews itself, I would estimate that the blog forms just 20% of the data and the remaining 80% were from the interviews as the latter method gave more detailed and comprehensive sets of data.

Both the blog entries and interview data were thematically analysed using NVivo, a software that helps a researcher to derive common (or uncommon) themes across the data. The two sources were analysed in the same way: for each blog entry, the texts were simply copied and pasted onto NVivo where I looked closely at the themes that arose from each participant. On average, I copied and analysed four times per module as participants often blogged according to the prompted intervals, with the fourth time for my own satisfaction for thoroughness. This analysis also served the purpose of developing guideline topics for each participant for the following interview(s). As I mentioned before, each participant had different issues and concerns so each interview, apart from the first and last interviews, were tailored to the individual participant.

The interview data was transcribed individually. As the interviews were done after their blog entries for each module, I tried to find any justification for their blog entries. Hence, the

analysis was centred on ‘what’ was being said rather than ‘how’, although certain non-verbal gestures were included to give more context. The transcription was not done verbatim so the ‘noise’ like “Umms” and small talks were not included or analysed when using NVivo.

After the end of the data collection period, I took a second look at the data from the blogs and interviews and tried to merge recurring themes that may have had a double entry. This was necessary to avoid redundancy. I also tried to link and establish factors that each participant believed had a profound impact in their understanding of what shaped their academic writing journey. In the end, from the thematic analysis using NVivo, I found many themes that may not have been shared by all the participants, but which I determined were of incredible importance to certain participants.

Once the NVivo analysis phase was completed, there was a question of how to represent the stories as text. In Appendix 8, the spider gram shows my raw initial findings straight from themes derived via NVivo that I manually divided into four major themes. One of these themes includes factors that participants perceive are related to determining academic writing quality where the participants expressed the importance of language and writing support in order to write well. The second theme is feedback which is further divided into three areas: perception, tutor feedback and peer feedback with the tutor feedback having the most important impact. The third theme concentrated on the participants as learners as well as individuals. Input on their conceptualization of learning, personality, individual background as well as their change and development are all located under this theme. The last theme ‘MSc Modules’ relates to the module itself in terms of each module’s writing challenges as perceived by each participant, the skills each assignment was assessing as well as how the content of the modules can help participants with their academic writing. However, at this point, I realized that there were just too many themes to be discussed and this prompted me to have another look at these themes and devise a way that I can portray my themes more eloquently and this resulted in the spider gram in Appendix 9.

Based on these themes, I initially arranged the findings chronologically. I attempted to exhibit these themes by writing the participants’ before (prior to MSc) and after MSc. I first gave a summary of my participants’ characteristics to share certain background about them before introducing the participants’ initial perception on good academic writing, feedback and writing challenges they were about to face. I then moved on to feedback as this

was supposed to serve as a bridging aspect between the before and after MSc. And lastly, I discussed the participants' academic writing conceptualization after MSc. However, after revisiting the data again, I realized that writing chronologically seemed to suggest a rather negative ambience surrounding the MSc course, informed in part by the unsettling consequences of the first sets of marks and feedback. Furthermore, the feedback theme that I hoped to become the connection between perspectives before and after the MSc did not serve its purpose but rather presented the tutor (as the source of feedback) as a focal point which was not intended. I felt that the participants' dependence on the tutor and how this relationship impacted on the participants' perspectives was very important and should be a standalone theme in its own right, but writing chronologically seemed to imply a cause and effect relationship that served as a reason for such negativity. There was also an imbalance in discussing the important issues which were mostly presented towards the end of the findings. In other words, when presented in chronological order the most salient themes lacked the visibility they deserved as they were under represented in the early sections of the findings chapter.

With visibility of the themes in mind, I restructured my writing thoughts and data organization completely and looked at the data in a more micro aspect, requiring in depth thoughts to try to connect the unique participants with one another while ensuring their individuality. Once again, the findings chapter underwent major amendments and restructuring, informed by the analysis process and in order to better foreground how change occurred theme by theme rather than moment by moment. Indeed, lateral thinking skills such as this process required was a skill that I had yet to acquire as a researcher. I did not come up with the idea of calling my themes 'stories' until towards the end of the findings chapter when I came across my saved folders labelled 'Lulu's story', 'Yaseen's story' and so on. Hence, instead of individualizing my participants, I toyed with the idea of individualizing the themes and the word 'story' was incorporated into the findings chapter. In retrospect this decision is entirely in sympathy with the narrative approach taken.

To achieve the final outcome for data presentation in the findings chapter, I deconstructed the themes, removing them from the neatly arranged spider gram. I analysed the sub-themes which were specific to each participant and tried to find similar grounds throughout the themes and across the participants, making it not only a vertical or horizontal thematic analysis but a cross-sectional one instead. This task was time-consuming and frustrating

especially when procrastination kicked in. Re-arranging the sub-themes was challenging and so was coming up with the names of each stories. I wanted the name of the stories to encapsulate everything that I was about to discuss and while it seems straightforward now, the mental exhaustion from deconstructing and rearranging the sub-themes sometimes took over, causing unnecessary delays. For example, my participants were all giving some kind of explanation and expressing their feelings about the feedback they received and they were quite specific when venting their emotions of sadness or anger. Instead of describing specific feelings or vaguely calling it ‘thoughts about feedback’, I can see that it was more than just a thought or feeling but rather a personal interpretation and emotional reaction which resulted in a section called the ‘Story of Interpretation’. Almost the same mental process occurred when coming up with ‘the Story of Externalization’ where I tried to explain what might be driving my participants’ complaints. The rest of the stories were more straightforward, informed by the sub-themes collected. In the end, I decided to approach the findings by presenting the data into eight stories that represents eight important themes as presented in Appendix 10: Marks and progress, Learning, Interpretation, Support, Cultural Differences, NNES Writer, Externalization and Individual change. These themes incorporate all the four earlier themes presented but has been designed into in a more sophisticated presentation because the focus was now on thematic visibility and the individual themes, and how they changed over time rather than on the passage of time itself – which rendered some of the themes lost. I also still included the summary of participants which will be presented in the findings chapter so readers can not only learn about the participants’ background, but also realize their unique traits as a learner.

In order to discuss about the changes that occurred in the study, I have chosen to use Mezirow’s (1978, 1991) Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) framework. Using the ten steps of TLT, I can analyse the participants’ narrative in a vertical manner where I look at the participants’ changes individually unlike the thematic analysis of analysing the narratives more horizontally and according to common themes. This framework suits my research paradigm and was especially developed for adult learners. I understand that I cannot be too eager in categorizing or arranging changes to fit with TLT hence it was treated with caution and any claim will be backed up with sound justifications.

4.8 Role as researcher

Before conducting each interview, I equipped myself with the necessary skills and knowledge about conducting interviews. During the first interviews, I prepared my questions and the flow of the interview was structured around my questions and prompts. However, I was not fully prepared for the upcoming interviews. Although I came prepared with my semi-structured questions which I had designed around my research questions, and participants' blog entries and I was well aware that it would be a conversational interview, nothing prepared me for receiving five different responses, five different concerns and five different interpretations. I had to re-word, and re-shuffle my questions as the interview went along, trying to be in the same frequency with each participant. It was different for the first and final interview which were more structured than the tailored conversational interview version as the latter invited questions specifically for an individual participant.

The blurred position of myself as both a researcher and as an academic colleague also quickly came into light. At the beginning of the research, there were still awkward tensions between the participants and I, so the line between researcher and participant was quite clear. However, as the study progressed, the line started to soften hence re-affirming my conversational interview approach. Although I wanted my participants to feel comfortable around me and see me as their colleague rather than a researcher, I had to pull myself back at times and remind myself of my position as a researcher. This was quite evident when my participants started uttering their dissatisfaction towards certain aspects of the module which I have also personally experienced, that could lead the research interview into an opportunity for academic gossip had I not been able to control my urges. Elio, in particular, contacted me sometime after the second phase and requested to meet for 'module pointers'. Although I felt inclined to share my knowledge and experience with Elio, I held back because I did not want my input to give Elio any advantage over other participants which in turn might affect my research data. I resolved this problem by emailing both my supervisors who shared the same idea and I sent him a screenshot of my conversation with my supervisors so I can let Elio down more easily and not raise a conflict that could result in a tense atmosphere.

Perhaps the most difficult issue I had was selecting appropriate data to be presented in this study while ensuring my participants' anonymity. As I mentioned before, as the participants started to accept me as more their colleague than a researcher, they started to divulge some 'private thoughts' of a critical nature regarding their tutors, colleagues and the university itself. These 'private thoughts' were not a smear campaign but rather utterance of frustration

towards certain individuals and at times, the university itself. While these concerns may well have been valid, it put me in a dilemma on how best to reveal them without compromising my participants' trust on their anonymity because certain stories they told could easily be traceable and reveal their identity. This required me to treat the matters carefully and re-check with the participants, to ensure I had not violated their anonymity.

Another issue worth mentioning was the problem with the language barrier. This specifically applies to Maria who speaks little English. During the course of the interviews, Maria, several times, had to look at her mobile phone to translate words that she wanted to use. Her blog entries, pushing grammatical mistakes aside, were vague most of the time hence required clarification during the interviews. While constant patience and empathy was needed, there were times when I could not help myself helping her with the vocabularies that she seemed to be struggling with. I felt that I knew what she wanted to say and I wrestled with myself as to whether I would be 'putting words in her mouth'. Restraining myself from doing so was frustrating at times as it made the interview much longer and run less smoothly. However, I needed to remind myself to respect Maria as someone who struggles with the English language yet was still willing to help me with my study. After all, she could regard me as someone with whom she can practice speaking English with.

Towards the end of this research, while writing the findings and discussion chapter in particular, I started to wonder if I was writing about five stories or six-- the sixth story being my own. As I immersed myself in the analysis of the data and discussing possible explanations for issues raised in the findings, there were times when I felt I was advocating not only for my participants but for myself as well. As portions of the data seemed to echo my own experiences and concerns, I could not help 'hearing' and 'justifying' my experiences in this thesis as a confirmation for myself as a researcher that narrative inquirers "cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p.4) especially for such a personal study like this. Chase (2005) also stated that in narrative studies, different stories could unfold yet these stories are co-constructed with the researcher such as myself, becoming an active participant in meaning-making.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were always prioritized to reassure the participants' privacy and state of mind. Some of the most important ethical consideration related to this study include the

need for researcher's honesty, objectiveness, integrity, mutual respect and ensuring confidentiality (Gajjar, 2013). While these qualities sound fair enough, it was quite tricky to maintain in this study.

One of the frequently recurring aspects of this research that I had to ensure was the participants' consent. Informed consent is socially constructed and the meaning changes over time especially in terms of the hierarchical role that has now become "more fluid and multifaceted" (Miller & Boulton, 2007, p. 2204). This was evident in my interactions with my participants where boundary was easily blurred had the research focus failed to persist. Informed consent should not be treated as a one-off act but rather as continuous process where consent needed to be renegotiated as uncertain or unexpected consequences or details could surface (Munhall, 1988). Although it was easy to get participants to consent at the beginning, I had to continuously re-check and renegotiate consent with the participants especially during the data analysis stage with matters that could be deemed sensitive or that has the possibility of being traced back to them, risking their anonymity.

Ensuring anonymity on the other hand, is closely regarded to confidentiality (Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charles, 2008). However, the use of anonymity does not entirely resolve the issues concerned with confidentiality as confidentiality is concerned with the researcher's discretion of not disclosing whether deliberately or accidentally, any information gained from the participants that could jeopardize the participant's anonymity. As mentioned in 4.8, where keeping my participants anonymous while ensuring confidentiality and gaining consent at the same time, was a very tricky task for me. Revealing data without revealing identifying markers required constant adjusting to ensure the participants' consent.

This, of course, became an ongoing ethical issue that I had to continually assess and reassess. Although I did not reveal the name of the university or the tutors involved, it would not be difficult for those enrolled in the same programme to recognise them, especially when I gave a pitch presentation earlier on while attempting to recruit participants for this study. Although I am confident that none of my participants 'hung out' with one another as they each have their own set of friends, I know they could have mentioned my study as well as their academic concerns to their friends who could also be their MSc colleagues. I could imagine topics about tutors and about the feedback they received to surface, which could lead these friends/colleagues to trace the tutors in my study. While it is likely that the tutors were a

topic of conversation amongst students anyway, I was mindful that my own study should not create a context for unfavourable comparison, especially if tutors could be identified from contextual detail in the study.

Hence, when discussing anything about the tutors, I removed certain identifying markers such as their gender. Throughout the findings chapter, I tried to neutralize the gender by using s/he or him/her. I also referred to some of the tutors as 'one of the tutors', 'the tutor' or 'this tutor' to avoid them being easily recognisable. Although in some paragraphs I specified the name of the module, it was for the purpose of showing progression and I tried very hard to protect the tutor's identity by not putting any individual characteristics that could reveal their identity. Furthermore, as the data for this study was collected a couple of years before this thesis could be uploaded to the university's thesis collection, the people in this study, whether directly or indirectly related, would be increasingly less likely to remember the tutors' characteristics and the modules they taught on, thus further reducing the potential for identifying individuals.

Neutrality was another ethical consideration that needed a lot of effort. From early on when I started the study, I kept on reminding myself to be neutral with my participants. I also made a conscious effort to not offer my opinion as it could sway the direction of my study and make the data's validity questionable. However, as I began to indulge in the data collection practice, I realize that the utopian idea of being completely neutral was hard even when you are consciously reminded. As the nature of the study was rather long-term and involved gaining your participants' trust to be open with you, the researcher-participant boundary began to blur as the participants began to open up and mutual trust began to build. The more I met with my participants, the more they treated me like one of their peers and this had the potential to cause a certain ethical breach if I were not careful. There were also multiple times when I had to hold my tongue and stop myself from offering opinion especially on topics that I was passionate about, however, they were not always successful.

There were also some moments of weaknesses especially at the beginning of the study where I directed the study according to the research questions instead of letting the data pave the way. I was hungry for some concurrence with my own experience with my participants that my impatience became apparent. I could clearly perceive how my questions put certain hesitant pressure on my participants and might have influenced them towards my direction.

Although this pressure started to fade as I started to understand what ethical research really meant, the experience helped me to be more careful with my line of questioning and become more considerate towards my participants and avoid causing my participants to feel the need to express distress in order to please me in my desire for emotively charged data.

Another ethical consideration that was by far the most challenging throughout the study was ensuring confidentiality. The participants were all in the same MSc cohort so they knew one another and may have caught a glimpse of one another's meetings with me. All the participants were fine with other participants knowing their identity except for Yaseen. Yaseen was very adamant about her confidentiality and so measures were taken to ensure this. This included having to deny her participation when asked by any of the other participants. Yasmeen and I have changed certain information about her and removed any identifying traits in the summary. However, I still fear that the participants who are eager to read this study will be able to solve the puzzle and successfully guess the inconspicuous participant, Yaseen, who actually stood out in this study.

This required certain measures such as checking with the participants. Whenever certain issues that I felt were sensitive or unclear were raised, I ensured that I contacted my participants to obtain authorization. The most common medium was via Whatsapp application, Facebook (for Maria only) and face to face meetings for Yaseen. This process was mostly straightforward with all the participants except for Yaseen. With Yaseen, we had to work and re-work certain issues portrayed in this study to ensure confidential information remains confidential. I believe what matters with regards to confidentiality is the participants' level of comfort and agreement when certain personal issues are being brought to light for the sake of one's research. I worked hard to ensure this level of comfort was sustained throughout the study by member checking aspects of the thesis with participants.

4.10 Limitations

Like many interpretive studies, narrative studies often encounter the problem of ensuring its validity. There are no specific measures that can be applied to show its validity because in the case of this narrative study, validating knowledge claim is rather an "argumentative" process (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.476).

The concern for validity in my study would be perhaps, in terms of the participants' honesty or dishonesty when sharing information. While I will never know if my participants had intentionally deceived me, I prefer to believe that the narratives that emerged during the interviews and in their blog entries mirror the participants' actual thoughts, feelings as well as perceptions based on the experience that they have encountered. I did not intimidate them nor intentionally make them feel uneasy as the nature of my study needed me to acquire their trust and confidence in me. My aim was to be valid in the sense that the experiences recorded here are authentic, authentic to the experiences that they record but also carry echoes of authenticity for other students on a similar journey.

Instead of judging the participants' honesty or dishonesty, my concern was more towards the participants' contradictory statements. As Trahar (2009, p.1.) states, memory is often selective and "plays tricks on us" and this seemed 'normal' especially with narrative research that tends to look at the past. Although clarifications were attempted, the participants at times seemed to 'forget' what they had said earlier and their reaction towards certain events showed a contradiction of what has been said earlier and/or even later in the study. For example, Lulu said that marks did not matter to her, yet when she received an undesired mark, she broke down. Another example was when Yaseen said that she wanted to learn more about research but contradicted herself when she was given assignments that she had no experience doing and not of her interest. This creates a confusion of how I was to interpret and explain their stance on certain issues. However, it needed to be noted this contradiction was not a problem but rather an inevitable aspect of human nature (Berliner ,2016). It is only human to not being entirely consistent and when change is being recorded, this becomes an inevitable form of authenticity. Berliner (2016) also pointed out that having contradictions in oneself helps one to grow and mature as it challenges one's ontological expectations that one initially has. Perhaps, contradictions here should not be treated as dishonesty because sometimes we do not know ourselves as well as we thought.

Perhaps, it can be argued that validity can also be questionable in terms of my interpretation due to my own subjectivity. It is understood that narrative researchers need to face the challenge of the reader's acceptance of the evidence's validity as well as accepting my interpretation as the researcher. It is therefore essential that I structure my argument where readers can follow the evidence and interpretation and let them make their own judgments on the validity of the claim (Polkinghorne, 2007).

Despite the limitations of my study that I have listed, I believe I have approached the study the best way possible in order to serve my aims and answer my research questions.

Approaching the study using a narrative within a longitudinal study was an ideal way to track change and development, while securing the participants' personal narrative in depth, understanding their actions. Trahar (2014, p.222) also once stated that narrative inquiry offers "snapshots" of the participants' lives that were told during a specific time and place and within a specific contextual setting. This study offered snapshots of my participants' struggles with their conception of academic writing, creating meaning from their experiences. The limitations were mostly inevitable due to the study's interpretive nature that involves human participants.

Chapter 5. Findings.

The findings chapter will present stories from the narratives told by the participants. This chapter will begin with a short summary of the participants and eight stories where each story will touch on a specific theme that emerged from the analysis of their blog entries and the interviews. These stories have been arranged not by hierarchy of importance but rather aimed to give a good reading flow. The findings in the stories have been arranged both topically while some according to participants in order to achieve the best thematic visibility.

‘A story of marks and progress’ needed to be presented first in order to show the participants’ overall achievements and perception of marks and development before looking at their perception of learning in ‘A story of Learning’. ‘A story of learning’ will present interpretations on the participants’ learning challenges, learning progress, development of criticality and what they believe successful writers need to possess. ‘A story of interpretation’ will come next and this is where the participants’ interpretation of feedback is demonstrated. This is then followed by ‘A story of support’ and ‘A story of cultural difference’ as the external influences on the participants’ learning perception. The latter is strongly related to the next story ‘A story of an NNES writer’. ‘A story of externalization’ will focus on external entities that participants use to account for their difficulties. This chapter will then be closed by the last story, ‘The story of individual change’ that is not necessarily related to being an academic writer.

The research questions will not be explicitly answered in this chapter but will be answered in the Discussion chapter instead. This is because the findings demonstrate the array of stories obtained during the data collection and analysis and the emphasis in this chapter is concerned with how my participants represent their experience. The Discussion chapter on the other hand draws out the implications of this experience in relation to the original research questions after the finding’s interpretation has been explained.

5.1 Summary of the participants.

The summaries are descriptions of the participants’ demographic and academic background which includes their IELTSs English proficiency grade. I have also included an outline of their individual characteristics, some as they described themselves and some based on my own interpretation after analysing their interviews and based on following and spending time with them during the study. It is hoped that this section will become a good backdrop against which to understand how individual students articulate the issues that arise in the following sections.

Yaseen

Yaseen is a woman from one of the Gulf countries aged between twenty-eight and thirty-five years old. She has nine to ten years teaching experience, teaching the English subject at a University in her home country. According to Yaseen she was happy to teach any component of the English language except for writing because she has little experience of learning it

herself. Nonetheless, Yaseen considered herself a stellar student who was used to receiving excellent grades.

Yaseen did her masters in another English-speaking country for two years and has not been studying in a formal education setting for seven years since her masters. Yaseen claims that she had zero experience of writing in the English language prior to her masters. She claims that in her undergraduate years, although examinations were in the English language, they were only expected to write short answers and not in the form of essay-writing assignments that Yaseen believes encapsulate the essence of academic writing. The English language is considered to be a foreign language in her context so she was *“thrown and just started writing”* during her masters. She reveals her academic writing experience in an Anglophone country to be traumatic and has caused her to have a lasting negative connotation when she encounters the word ‘feedback’. Yaseen chose to do her MSc and PhD in the UK *“because I want to be a researcher and I know that they really focus on research skills in UK”*.

From my observation after reading her blogs and meeting Yaseen six times for interviews, Yaseen presented herself as a very insecure and wary person. Yaseen was aware of it and described herself this way at least once in each interview or blog entry. The tell-tale signs were obvious from the beginning of the interview when Yaseen said *“I think you notice I’m insecure?”* and *“I’m always doubtful, it’s in nature you know. I’m not sure...I’m always unsure”* which became an anticipated habitual remark to be uttered by Yaseen in each interview session.

Another distinctive belief held by Yaseen was her idea about her own learning during the MSc year. Yaseen had a very strong conception in Term 2 that she was not learning but merely writing assignments to pass the course: *“...I just follow their instruction so there is a big gap in learning and doing an assignment...”*

Maria

Maria is a thirty-year-old woman from Turkey. She has six years of teaching experience in a secondary school in Istanbul, teaching social science. Maria has chosen to study in the UK because she thinks it is easier to be accepted in the UK compared to other countries. Maria entered this academic institute with a 5.5 English IELTS, which would be considered low, and so had to undergo a pre-sessional course offered by the university to be in the MSc.

Maria said she wanted to pursue PhD at the same university but changed her mind and left to do her PhD at a university in London.

Maria had no experience reading, writing or speaking with academic English until 2016. She attended an English course in Turkey for one year as a preparation to start her further studies. The next 'English course' that Maria experienced was the said pre-session course arranged by the university where Maria said she practiced further academic English in reading and writing as well as learning writing strategies. Maria also possesses experience in conducting research and presenting at conferences in Turkey and she feels that "...this is a bit [of] advantage for me"

During her initial interview, Maria was confident that she was a good academic writer. In spite of her confidence, Maria stated from early on that her English language problem was a communication barrier and this issue continued until the end of this study that could contribute to her feelings of isolation from her MSc colleagues. However, for someone with low English language proficiency and competency, Maria managed to pass (marks above 50) all the MSc modules suggesting strengths in other academic areas.

From my personal observation after reading her blog entries and interviews with Maria, I could see her English language improving. There were fewer pauses and Maria started using correct vocabulary although she still had her Turkish-English dictionary application on her phone in case she needed to translate more difficult words. Perhaps, our meetings could be regarded as somewhat formative and supportive examples of peer contact and opportunities to discuss her experiences over the year. Nevertheless, Maria to me was an aspiring student in the beginning who was held back by her own struggles with the English language.

Lulu

Lulu is a twenty-nine-year-old Saudi woman who had three to four years of experience teaching English. She specifically taught reading and writing as she considered this her area of expertise, having graduated with her Masters in composition writing in a university in the USA. Lulu obtained her bachelor degree in Saudi Arabia and in the initial and subsequent interviews considered herself as a stellar student who had a four out of four GPA from the USA and had never received marks below seventy. In terms of writing, Lulu saw herself as an "*average (writer), but a quick learner*". She came into the programme with 7.0 overall IELTS score for English Language.

Lulu chose to study in the UK “...because I have different experience in two different countries, so I realized that in the states even if I continue my PhD there, I don’t think I will develop my writing like it will develop here because over here they expecting you to be a complicated in your way of thinking...” She also chose the UK so she can be academically “independent”. During the initial interview, Lulu mentioned that she does not have much experience with academic writing except in the USA. Even teaching in Saudi, she only encountered essays and not well-researched academic papers. Lulu also theorized earlier on in the study that good academic writing must have a well-structured outline, something she taught her students. Lulu’s methodical approach to writing assignments was also evident in Lulu’s blog entry where she writes her outline and refines them before actually writing “...as I have explained before I am more of an organized person, and I believe in writing as a process not as a product” and “I don’t like to revise a complete product” (Blog Entry 29 November 2017).

I relate much of my own MSc experience to Lulu’s as we seemed to experience the same dilemma at almost the same phase. Although our issues of concern were different, there were many similar quotes of frustration and moments of realization that Lulu uttered that made me reflect back to my own experience. I could regard Lulu as a typical example of academic writing progress which was developed with the aid of tutor’s feedback and self-realization as well as hard work. I note this empathy with Lulu here, in the spirit of reflexivity, care was taken to recognise and manage this empathy when analysing and presenting Lulu’s experiences.

Elio

Elio is a twenty-four-year-old man from Algeria. He came to study in the UK with a 7.5 overall IELTS score and he had one-year teaching experience. Elio taught general English to adult learners in a private school. Elio has a Bachelor in literature and civilization and a Masters in applied linguistics, both obtained in Algeria. Elio did not choose to come to study in the UK but it was rather a contract where the “best ones” get sent to the UK while the second best went to Jordan.

With regard to experience with academic writing, Elio was better equipped than other participants as he started during his Bachelor degree years. For his own writing Elio said *“my writing is very linear and systematic I think this has to do with the way I live as well, some people like to write everything down and then they delete the unnecessary parts, but for me I write the things I would like to see in the writing up in a systematic way and orderly* (Blog entry 6 October 2017).

A certain trait that is unique about Elio was his way of approaching a module. Elio’s approach towards an academic module was to address it *“...as a person, what he really likes and what he really looks for...”* This way, Elio will be up close and personal with embracing the module, aiding his learning. Nonetheless, it seemed that Elio managed to adapt himself well into the programme throughout the study.

Shaima

Shaima is a thirty-fiveyear old woman from Kuwait who has nine to ten years of experience teaching English in a middle school. She was also the head of the English department for the last three years prior to coming to the UK. Shaima was the only participant who had prior UK learning experience, obtaining her first Masters at the same institute a year before joining the MSc programme. She was also the only participant who was self-sponsored.

Shaima obtained her undergraduate degree in Kuwait. She decided to come to the UK because she felt that she needed *“an intensive (learning) atmosphere”*. According to Shaima, her only academic writing experience was when she was briefly posted in the USA but it was mainly to write on reflective journals. Apart from that, she only discovered academic writing in the UK.

Shaima said her MEd helped equip her for her MSc and she was supported by her supervisor who seemed to be sympathetic towards the ESL learner’s challenges. Additionally, unlike the other participants, Shaima kept mentioning that she was never an A grade student. Furthermore, Shaima said she never cared for the grades but was only concerned with learning. She was also quite vocal about the difference between learning in Kuwait and the UK and how she was trying to adapt.

5.2 A story of Marks and Progress

In this study (or any study about students' development), marks were often cited as one of the indicators of progress, particularly for Yaseen and Maria. This section will discuss the participants' progress or lack of progress. The explanation for this will be discussed in the next section about learning.

As a reminder with regards to marks, 50 is considered to be a pass for MSc but for students wishing to progress to PhD, they need to achieve at least a 60. A mark between 50-60 would indicate good knowledge of the material, a mark between 60-70 would indicate evidence of criticality and a distinction would indicate originality and independent thinking. A low 60 was the average for the course so that any mark above 65 would be considered better than average. Indeed, to get into the 60's writers have to demonstrate some evidence of criticality, and none of the participants (with the possible exception of Maria) would be seen as weak students but the following sections' descriptions of the participants will be thinking of them in terms of progression over the year and two students progressed more than the others as indicated in the table below.

The table below (table 9) shows the participants' marks throughout the four modules. Beside each module column are marks that participants expected to get, prior to receiving their summative feedback and marks. The marks in red indicate those under the passing mark of sixty. The dash (-) denotes that participants either said that they did not have any expectations for the specified module or answered with an inconclusive gesture when asked.

Summative Assignment Marks	DCR	DCR Expected Marks	SM	SM Expected Marks	IM	IM Expected Marks	NEE	NEE Expected Marks
Yaseen	65	-	68	70	68	70	68	68
Elio	67	70	66	69	72	70	72	60
Lulu	57	70	61	65	70	65	78	70
Maria	60	63	58	NA	62	NA	58	60
Shaima	65	70	62	58	66	NA	66	NA

Table 9 Participants' actual and expected marks for all four modules

This table shows not only the expected versus actual marks but also the 'progress' of each participant. Progress here is measured not in terms of obtaining a merit or distinction but any change in marks through the course of the two terms. With that definition in place, it can be observed that Lulu made more obvious progress compared to other participants. From failing

to achieve the progression mark in her DCR assignment, Lulu steadily progressed in the second term, earning herself two distinctions in IM and NEE. Lulu initially had quite high expectations at the beginning of the course and adjusted her expectations once she received her DCR marks. Lulu received her first distinction in IM and secured another distinction for her NEE assignment.

One can argue that Elio showed progress as well however, it was more subtle and less dramatic than that of Lulu's. Elio's progress did not show a major jump, but nonetheless it can be regarded as a minor progress. Unlike Lulu's steady expectation of marks, Elio's expectation decreased towards the last assignment, perhaps indicating a doubt in his writing ability.

Perhaps the participant who made the least progress was Maria who initially started at sixty marks. I viewed this as quite a strong start for someone who has limited English language competency and her DCR expected marks was also a sign of confidence. However, as Maria found the assignments becoming "*harder*", she stopped having expectations and only wanted to pass. In the end, Maria barely moved on the scale.

In the case of Yaseen and Shaima, it can be surmised that their progress was somehow stagnated. Although both participants started out strongly with a mark of 65, they failed to show a higher improvement in their marks although they both have expressed their improvement within the knowledge content. Both Yaseen and Shaima seemed to "*be stuck in the sixties*" range of marks. I believe that this is not necessarily a bad achievement but not being able to show much progress seemed to affect their self-efficacy as a learner.

Participants' perceptions on marks signifying development

At certain points of the study, the participants all cited their views about their interpretation of the marks that they received and their connection to academic development.

Yaseen, more than other participant, talked about the importance of marks for her as a learner. For Yaseen, she felt that she was an academic product of her previous education system that glorifies marks and had less emphasis on learning. This led Yaseen to believe that 'good' grades were a synonym for development which was why she was anxious when she received merit marks and not distinction marks that she was used to:

Yaseen: For me they (marks) are number one for me with everything because this is the system the educational system I graduated from. Marks is number one, nothing else matter for me even the education I get at the end of the day, in the end of the year does not matter much as the marks so it's ok to get A but not really knowing everything what you studied like yeah for me this is number one just need to get As no matter what.

Yaseen further elaborated that she had been indoctrinated with the notion that receiving an A grade means you are a very good student and to receive a C grade meant otherwise. She believed that she knew how to write well but when she came to the UK University, writing well meant writing to please the tutor. If it did not conform to the tutor's standards or own viewpoint, it was likely that students will not receive the marks they desire.

Yaseen's statement about marks and grades was different from her initial stance where she felt deep learning mattered to her the most. Her stance changed in term two when she said she was no longer in the MSc programme to learn but to write assignments. Perhaps, Yaseen was initially trying to be more immersed in learning but could not do so without tying her motivation to her 'negative' perception of marks that she had received.

In agreement about the importance of a grade to show development was Maria. Much of her perception of summative feedback was related to the marks that she received. Maria felt the marks she received would reflect her achievement and academic progress. However, in the final interview, Maria claimed that although she may have not acquired the marks she aspired to achieve, she felt that her academic writing and English language competency have developed quite well. She reasoned that previously she struggled with every single word or tasks given. Towards NEE assignments, the final ones, she said she felt calmer and could think "*more properly*".

Lulu, in her summative feedback interviews appeared to show how important marks were in defining her writing success. Lulu said everyone who knew her recognized her as a determined learner and that she should not be 'shaken' over the marks she received.

However, marks did seem to impact Lulu's idea of academic development:

Lulu: But then I have my grade in front of me, so...so that's why I feel that was unfair. I don't want to take a distinction but at least something that I deserved, at least.

There was a contradiction in the NEE and final interview when Lulu was asked how she saw the relationship between marks and progress. Lulu said that she believed that marks and

development were two separate entities. In her NEE interview, she strongly indicated that her ability and confidence to be articulate in current educational issues as “*the best indication of progress because marks are just numbers*”. Lulu reasoned that academic writing was related to content therefore, she judged being articulate in content was an indication of development. Lulu gave an example about when she first enrolled in MSc where she did not have the confidence to discuss the topics in class. As she advanced in the MSc, she felt her confidence increasing and started to participate in discussions involving educational dilemmas, a topic that she used to think was very challenging to have an opinion about.

Shaima once said that she did not want to be “*boxed in*” by the marks that she received. Perhaps this was why she was on the fence regarding this issue. She acknowledged the importance of marks and grades as indicators of progress and what students needed to improve on. However, Shaima felt it was ignorant to regard marks to be the only emphasis of development. Shaima felt the feedback she received was also important in indicating her academic development. She related this back to the summative feedback she had received and commented how the feedback seemed to change from something simplistic such as being “*chatty*” and writing clarity to more sophisticated comments about her ability to showcase criticality.

Elio on the other hand said marks and grades “*to some extent*” indicate progress. He went back to his summative feedback as examples of marks fitting the effort that he had put in. He acknowledged that earlier in the MSc, his writing lacked depth and criticality but when he put in more effort, he started to receive distinctions. He also recognised that the comments he received evolved from comments about styles and terminology in DCR to emphasis on semantics in IM and NEE.

However, Elio said one cannot rely on marks to measure students’ knowledge and ability due to subjectivity of the assignments themselves. He argued that just because a student did not receive a distinction did not mean s/he was unintelligent. He rationalized that sometimes it could be due to many reasons such as the tutor’s unprofessional nature (as Elio believed he had experienced in SM) or an international student’s struggle with the language barrier. From the data, it can be inferred that the way participants regard marks and progress reflected their philosophical stance. Participants like Yaseen and Maria who seemed inclined towards science and numbers could not help themselves in quantifying development, associating it

with the marks they received. A few times during the study, Yaseen and Maria expressed their uneasiness towards subjectivity and preference for an absolute objective answer.

Elio and Lulu also expressed their tendency of thinking and behaving like an interpretive researcher. They welcome subjectivity, hence it comes as no surprise that their views about marks and progress were open and subjective. Although Shaima shared the same notion as Elio and Lulu, there was no evidence of Shaima's philosophical tendency, therefore, perhaps, it is safe to say that she did not equate marks to academic development.

5.3 A story of Learning

This section will present findings on participants' narratives on what they learnt about academic writing (the text), personal strategies input (the writer) and the development of criticality throughout their MSc journey.

An analysis of the participants' writing challenges will be discussed in 5.3.1, followed in 5.3.2 by a more focused exploration of the participant who progressed the most, Lulu, and how the events and obstacles that she encountered helped her to academically evolve in order to progress. In 5.3.3 I will also discuss another participant's learning progress (Elio), how he is different from Lulu and how this difference perhaps contributed to his moderate progress. 5.3.4 will present the rest of the participants who were not as progressive, and it will explore their academic writing views and possible reasons for their lesser success. After discussing the learning stories of the participants, 5.3.5 will explore the idea and importance of criticality as perceived by the participants. This section will then end with the participants' thoughts of what makes a successful writer.

5.3.1 Participants' Perceived Writing Challenges

Table 10 shows the participants' writing challenges. The challenges in the 'Initial interview' were those that participants expected during the MSc course. The rest of the challenges, classified according to module, are academic writing challenges that they face with each assignment as they were derived from each module interview in Phase two and Phase three. In these interviews the participants were specifically asked about their writing challenges and difficulties. This is important in order to show the academic writing concerns that participants had initially and then how they developed throughout the course.

Participants' Writing Challenges	Initial Interview	DCR	SM	IM	NEE
Lulu	American Slang, Register	NIL	NIL	Demonstration of criticality	Feeling satisfied with what has been produced
Yaseen	Criticality and Pessimism	Writing process: Where to start	Unsupportive tutor	NIL	Writing process: Not knowing where to start, pessimism
Elio	Writing Introduction	Writing process: Editing, APA reference	Unsupportive tutor	Demonstration of criticality	Feeling satisfied with what has been produced, clarity of idea
Maria	Writing in UK convention	Writing in UK convention, understanding task, reading	Understanding task, word count	Writing competence, writing structure	Subjectivity, hedging
Shaima	Register, Rhetoric, Grammar	Topic Coverage, Criticality	Clarity of Ideas	Demonstration of criticality	Writing Process: Not knowing where to start

Table 10 Participants' writing challenges throughout the four modules

In the initial interview, Lulu's writing concerns were related to her tendency to use American slang and her range of vocabulary choices for different purposes. As Lulu had expected, her DCR and SM feedback contained comments about her American slang although she did not realize that it would affect her mark tremendously. However, in the DCR and SM interview, Lulu made no mention of any writing difficulties.

In Lulu's IM assignment she cited criticality to be a challenge. Lulu said it was during this time that she started to uncover what it was that tutors were looking for in her writing. For NEE, it was evident from her interview that Lulu seemed to have grasped what tutors wanted to see in her writing and that her only concern was the decision of whether she was satisfied enough in order to hand it in.

Yaseen's initial writing challenge included her self-proclaimed personality of being a pessimist where she often viewed everything negatively. Her pessimism continued throughout her MSc. According to Yaseen, even when a tutor commented on her formative assignment positively, Yaseen perceived it rather negatively. Perhaps this was why she also had problems with almost all her tutors, since at certain points with each assignment she had negative comments about them. Yaseen also cited 'Not knowing where to start' twice throughout her MSc, blaming the fact that she was never taught formally how to write an academic piece. In IM, Yaseen declined to comment because she seemed to have felt

defeated and demotivated, judging from her non-verbal gesture. Holistically, Yaseen's challenges seemed to remain constant.

Elio specified 'writing introduction' as his major hurdle in the initial interview. His challenges changed in DCR citing continuous editing to be his biggest problem which is similar to one of his NEE challenges of 'feeling satisfied' over his written production. I say it is similar because Elio continued to edit until he felt satisfied with the final outcome before he submitted his work to his tutor. In IM, like Lulu, Elio seemed to have started to realize the importance of criticality that was much sought after by his tutors. In one of the modules, Elio elaborated his struggles with his tutor's perceived nonchalance and lack of engagement although he later said it was a "*learning experience*". From Elio's data, it appeared that Elio evolved his challenges from 'petty' challenges of writing an introduction to the more 'serious' challenges that could make or break his writing such as criticality and clarity (which will be discussed later).

In the case of Maria, her initial challenge was adjusting to the university's writing conventions and it remained the same throughout. I consider the same because her challenges in all the assignments required Maria to be able to follow the university's writing convention such as writing structure, adhering to the word count as well as the use of 'hedging'. Maria also experienced a language barrier, making it difficult for her to understand and execute the assignments. In the last assignment, Maria acknowledged that her difficulty in executing the assignments had something to do with how she viewed the world to be black and white. Maria found it difficult to argue from a more nuanced position as she was educated as a science student.

Shaima's initial challenge was from what she observed after studying at the university for her MA. However, when she started the MSc, her challenges were no longer related to the minute detail such as grammar but more towards her presentation of criticality, clarity and whether she had covered certain topics enough. Perhaps, in the case of Shaima (and Maria), linguistic problems ceased to exist because she employed university approved proof readers for all four assignments to look at her grammar and language structure.

In summary, certain challenges, such as in the case of Lulu and Elio seemed to develop with time. Lulu and Elio clearly understood the importance of clarity and criticality. In the case of

Yaseen, her writing challenges seemed to remain the same, as she has yet to overcome her own pessimistic nature. For Shaima and Maria, they managed to remove linguistic obstacles by employing proof readers so they can concentrate more on other writing difficulties.

5.3.2 Lulu: a gradual learning progress

As mentioned earlier, Lulu was the participant who progressed the most, who started out by failing to achieve the progression mark for her first assignment. At the start of the course, Lulu had the tendency to externalize her problems with academic writing. Lulu blamed her tutors' inefficiency, the marking system and her own previous experience that led to her failure to achieve her desired marks. As a graduate of a US Master's programme, Lulu was used to the American writing conventions and "*slang*". This was apparent not only in the feedback she received but also in our interviews where she spoke using American accent and slang:

Lulu: ...because in the (united) states it really focus on giving us huge portion of reading, so that force me to think like that, to use that word, the more you read, I don't know the word just be within you, so it comes to you naturally.

This was why Lulu mentioned in the initial interview that "*having academic vocabularies*" was her main challenge and following the UK academic writing terms was "*the main difficulties that I faced through writing*". Lulu mentioned this crippling problem time and time again throughout the study, in her interviews and her blog entries. However, once Lulu was able to grasp the UK academic jargon, she managed to show significant improvement in her writing.

In her earlier summative feedback, Lulu acknowledged her American slang and how her use of "*phrasal verbs the American way*" had brought her down. Apart from that, Lulu was the only participant to have reported not experiencing any writing difficulty. Perhaps this was why she was surprised with the marks she received, because she had the confidence that she had good writing skills, but felt discouraged when she saw her marks, blaming it on the tutor for making her feel that way:

Lulu : I think that I have the ability to write but now that s/he's (tutor) making me think that I don't have the ability to write. I don't have the ability to think and I don't have the ability to link things together. So everything that I felt that I have, she's making me feel the opposite.

Lulu continued to complain strongly about the perceived marking injustice and also how the DCR assignment did not allow her to show her critical ability, hence costing her marks:

Lulu: ...blame assignment, I mean the whole DCR, you don't show that much criticality in it because they are, there was no discussion part

Lulu's emotional outburst however, caused her to try a new strategy which she started in term two. Following one of her tutor's comment about her American slang, Lulu started a word bank. She used the word bank to write academic terms or phrases that she deemed useful and could be used in her assignments. When I asked if Lulu felt she needed to brush up her writing skills, her writing confidence remained intact:

Lulu: I have ability to write and that's a good thing because I've been hearing other students that they suffer when they write so at least I have the ability to write. Just focus on the vocabulary and Lulu, you'll be fine.

In the SM interview, Lulu declared that she believed her writing problem was not how she writes but "it's about how you link the ideas of what you want to write about". As Lulu immersed herself more in the MSc course in term two, she also developed another interesting strategy where she consciously wrote by putting herself in her reader's shoes. Lulu clearly wanted to write persuasively and obtain her desired mark so one way to do this is to write how her markers wanted to see it or at least are used to seeing it according to the university's writing conventions, distinguishing herself from other students in her cohort:

Lulu: ... I could have done it like any other students and simply present the results and say that they are useful or not or whatever. But I have to read other things to have some kind of idea of what teachers really need. I put myself in a native teacher position, okay.

Lulu applied her new found strategies in term two and it appeared that she was able to interpret her feedback more positively. Instead of externalizing the problems as Lulu did in term one, in term two, she responded to the feedback by understanding what she needed to get right, although she struggled to ensure she interpreted the feedback correctly. Lulu took the feedback she received and sought to operationalize what her tutors wanted by improving her academic writing skills which included honing her criticality skills. Lulu attempted to follow one of her tutor's advice in giving her certain guidelines on how she could strengthen her paper further by using evidence found in research articles. In Lulu's IM formative and summative assignment, for example, she attempted to show her critical ability by exhibiting

her critical understanding of IM terminologies more explicitly. Lulu explained that using the right term or vocabulary without inviting criticism or questions from the tutor was tough but she was glad that her tutor had noted it earlier in the formative feedback:

Lulu: Because the tutor emphasised that some of the vocabularies for example, authentic. Authentic experiences. If you read the first feedback from the first formative assignment, all her comments are like what do you mean? Why? How? What do you mean? How? I don't understand? What authentic? How authentic do you think this is interpretivism? You think all interpretivism are like this?

Therefore, it was in term two that Lulu demonstrated her ability to not only write according to her tutor's expectations, but also according to the university's writing conventions. When I asked Lulu what she thought she had done differently to secure distinctions in both IM and NEE, Lulu explained that ever since IM, she had finally understood what was required and expected of her as an MSc student, instead of putting the blame on things that were external to her academic writing progress. She kept on coming back to her previous feedback especially DCR which seemed to have quite an impact on a stellar student like Lulu:

Lulu: I read the previous one (feedback) like the one for DCR and the one for SM and I read the one for IM I wanted to see that the progress I went through and the differences between the 3 papers so I make sure the comments I had of the previous one I don't repeat it in the last ones.

When I asked Lulu why she thought that none of her writing challenges related to her writing ability, she explained that she believed it was because she brainstormed and had a clear mind-map that she held on to while writing up her assignments. Lulu added that even when she had completed her assignment, she would go back to her mind map and see if she could re-write it another way, for her own satisfaction before actually handing in the assignment.

Lulu also credited the importance of knowing the prominent book writers in her research area and not to rely solely on research articles. She said that she followed one of her tutors' advice of using "*pioneer sources of the field*" which meant that Lulu started opting to original sources, taking out library books and purchasing books. Lulu remarked that she "*...didn't want to repeat the same mistake because I didn't understand the situation with DCR.*" By the time she completed her NEE summative assignment, Lulu seemed to have developed an air of academic maturity when she acknowledged her previous academic writing ego and recognized the presence of her IM and NEE writing challenges.

Towards the end of the study, I asked Lulu what she felt were the common writing conventions in the four modules. Lulu was quick to answer “*connectedness*”, demonstrating her ripened academic writing understanding. Lulu elaborated that the four assignments were interconnected to one another, that in terms of writing, one assignment needed to acknowledge the skills learned from the other assignment. Lulu believed that without writing, DCR, SM and IM, she would not be able to tackle NEE. Therefore, she saw the MSc assignments as an exercise of building skills towards the last assignment (NEE) and preparing them for their dissertation.

What I found interesting was that although Lulu stopped externalizing her problems, it did not stop her from finding external measures to help her discover more about her academic writing problems. In term two, Lulu admitted to using proofreading services for both IM and NEE assignment, hence did not receive any comment about her ‘American slang’. Lulu explained that the proof reader revealed to Lulu about her weaknesses in her writing expression:

Lulu: ... to be honest I sent it to the proof reader I realise that there are some areas I don't know, where I express myself incorrectly ok or like many non-native students .. to have too long sentences or I express myself too late in the sentence. I had to be sure with the tense are OK overall. Regardless of the language itself, she really enjoys reading the content because the feedback from the proof reader was only regarding language but not the content, they (the proof reader) didn't change anything,

Lulu also acknowledged that the proof reader also commented on her voice’s visibility in the paper. The proof reader told her there were some parts where she explained too much while there are certain areas that required more clarification. This made Lulu realize the importance of having a voice in her work and made amendments where she saw fit and in the end, Lulu was glad that making her voice visible paid off in the end.

Lulu was adamant that she was not reliant on the proof reader alone. Instead, she still took into account the feedback she received from her tutors especially where the feedback was similar. She narrated how her one of her tutors suggested in the tutorial about her conclusions but she did not do as told because she had no idea how to execute it and decided to see if the proof reader felt the same way. Indeed, the proof reader offered Lulu similar comments, forcing Lulu to re-evaluate her decision.

5.3.3 Elio: a moderate learning progress

The reason why I chose Lulu as the leading example in this section about learning is quite clear. Elio's story of progress in his learning provides a contrast to Lulu's. While Lulu's marks improved considerably, Elio's showed only modest change. Another reason why I chose to focus on Elio here, apart from his modest progress in his marks, is to show and compare Elio's journey to Lulu's, and perhaps explain why Lulu was able to surpass Elio's achievements.

In the beginning of the study, Elio disclosed that writing the introduction was his major writing challenge. He believed that the starting point is crucial because *"these are the first few words that the readers are going to read"*. Elio described that he would painstakingly structure and write and then re-write his introduction until it achieved the effect that he wanted for his readers:

Elio: If you grab his attention from the beginning, and then there this flow and transition of this ideas and everything, he is going to read them till the end, you know, but if your introduction is just confusing or crap the just going to skip or something.

Elio firmly believed that good structured sentences can help his readers understand the message he was trying to convey. Elio said he sometimes has too many ideas and struggles to emit them clearly into his writing. This made Elio *"... feel I am just making nonsense and that's a challenge for me especially in the University, yeah especially in the university"*.

From early on, Elio seemed to exhibit a sense of academic maturity. Elio expressed his need to become an autonomous learner and not to rely solely on the tutor for his academic development. . He believed in the value of autonomous learning but that it needed to be balanced with tutor's guidance. In Elio's words, *"assistance is good, guidance is good but it shouldn't be like, you know, too much"*.

Elio's was conscious about his academic writing and monitored what was working for him and what was not. In each feedback interview, Elio would continually voice out certain assumptions that could make or break his work. In DCR interview, Elio surmised the style of academic writing that his UK tutors look for that he would apply for his next assignments:

...actually British lecturers do not look for a fancy language as we, non-native speakers, thought of. All what matters is clarity and a good style of writing which is understood and simple. This is my new rule for the next modules.

(DCR Blog Entry)

In Elio's case, his academic progress where he started to obtain distinction marks was similar to Lulu's as it happened in term two. It can be speculated this could happen because the participants had adjusted better to the course's expectations and/or in Lulu's and Elio's case, they have met the 'right' kind of tutor who they both perceive as genuinely interested in helping students develop their writing skills and gave the kind of constructive feedback that they yearned for. In his IM feedback interview, Elio demonstrated a clearer understanding on how he can exhibit himself as a better academic writer by acknowledging the importance of feedback given by the tutor and he felt that his one of his tutors helped him clarify his points in order to be a better writer:

(It's) someone else reads your work and gives your feedback helps you to re-consider some ideas and stuff to polish them later ... I went through the feedback and indeed some arguments would be stronger if I develop them further.

(IM Blog Entry)

Elio did not have such a positive relationship with two of his tutors so perhaps this was why he did not seem to care about his academic development during certain modules. For one of the assignments, Elio claimed that he "*followed the assignment blindly*" due to the absence of his tutor's support and so he hoped for the best:

Elio: I have no idea why or how or for what reason was just following so I didn't feel like I was productive, well I was productive but my mind those like how can I explain, my mind was controlled you do this blindly.

Furthermore, Elio said he also struggled to demonstrate the elusive notion of criticality. Elio said he thought that he understood what to do but to actually demonstrate the skill explicitly was harder than he had thought. For NEE, Elio was shocked to discover that he had obtained another distinction. Elio admitted that NEE received less attention than the three previous assignments because he was juggling it with his dissertation and seemed demotivated by his one of his tutors that he perceived as "*unhelpful*".

Clearly, Elio's relationship with his tutors contributed to his desire for progress. Unlike Lulu, Elio's attempts to grasp the concepts of academic writing was not as 'desperate'. This is not to say that Elio did not take his academic writing seriously, he was just not as motivated as Lulu. This is evident from his expressions and the tone of his voice during the interview as well as his body language which was completely the opposite from his IM interview session. Furthermore, Elio did not display as much excitement about writing as he did for IM and his disclosure of only expecting 60 marks (Table 9) is further proof of his declined motivation.

Although Elio, in term two, managed to demonstrate his capacity to evaluate his writing and assess it against what he aimed to achieve, his learning was filled with scepticism and uncertainty for not only his tutors but also his own writing. Perhaps this can be taken as evidence of academic maturity that leads to increased sense of criticality. However, Elio seemed to worry too much and too much of this seemed to hinder him from achieving a higher academic progress.

For Elio's IM assignment for example, he said that he started to not just write, but write with justifications. Elio said regardless of his difficulties, he will always ensure that he was writing with coherence and cohesion and demonstrate his critical ability explicitly. He believed that this was the hardest task he had to endure for IM. In his IM blog, Elio added that he still struggled with his editing stage, being content with the final product and being fully satisfied before sending it in:

Yeah the writing up was a bit quite challenging because you write something and then you delete it and then you write it again and then you include another something else. It's quite challenging, it's not challenging like you don't know what you are doing. It's just like challenging that you have to be satisfied, like when you write it you say ok this is good, or this is rubbish so yesterday I didn't say it's rubbish, so I was quite satisfied but still it's not like the final version yeah

(IM Blog Entry)

Another example of Elio's scepticism and uncertainty can be seen in his concerns for his NEE writing where he felt his writing challenge has shifted from being about writing introductions to being satisfied with what he has written (table 10), specifically whether his justification about certain issues was enough to convince the tutor. Elio rationalised that because NEE was not a "linear" module and very philosophical, subjectivity was in play. Elio added that while the philosophical view he chose for NEE was clearly demonstrated in his head, he wondered if the tutor would see it the same way. Elio said he did not want to seem superficial in his writing. He wanted to be critical and show that he was indeed an academic.

Elio also expressed an interesting viewpoint about the writing modules' writing conventions. For Elio, it was a distinctive criterion of the UK universities to not only expect their graduate students to be able to write critically but also expect them to adhere to a specified university writing convention. Elio said, if he was to compare a UK written product to an American

written product, there would be a tremendous difference from argumentative structure to choice of vocabulary.

Despite Elio’s conscious understanding that he developed about academic writing, as mentioned before, his progress was rather modest. Perhaps Elio needed to acquire more confidence and self-trust as showcased by Lulu. I can also postulate that perhaps, Elio’s progress and Lulu’s could have been somewhat similar had Lulu not employed a proof reading services. Elio did not use a proof reading service in any of his assignments and there seems to be no evidence that language was a problem for him as throughout the course, he implied that his main concern was his content. Had Lulu not used such a service, perhaps her progression could be as moderate as Elio’s.

5.3.4 Other participants: a stagnated learning progress

For the other three participants, Yaseen, Shaima and Maria, their learning progress seemed either slow or static, in spite of achieving marks in the 60’s, which would indicate some level of criticality they were not able to develop this further, and this reflected a lack of positivity both about themselves and about the course. This is not to undermine their writing abilities as Yaseen can be regarded a student of high merit and Shaima a merit while Maria was rather borderline in terms of progression. They have all passed the MSc, given the passing marks of 50, though progression to PhD requires 60 marks minimum. Table 11 below summarizes the four areas that the data reveals to be essential in having the right approach to progress as an academic writer based on my own self-assessment during interviews as well as based on their blog entries rather than solely relying on their marks alone.

Lulu and Elio, as described above, possessed all the criteria although Elio may have had less optimism and self-confidence compared to Lulu. The other participants lack in three or more criteria which perhaps inhibited academic progress.

	Self-assessment of Content Knowledge	Self-assessment of Academic Writing skills	Self-assessment of ability to articulate criticality	Self-assessment of display of optimism & self-confidence	Self-assessment of evidence of self-regulation

Lulu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elio	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (But less than Lulu)	Yes
Yaseen	Yes	Yes	Some	No	No
Shaima	No	No	Some	Some	No
Maria	No	No	No	No	No

Table 11. Essential traits possessed by participants.

From the data of the study (table 11), it was clear that Yaseen’s focus was clouded by her attention on her marks. Yaseen externalized her problem (blaming the marking system), and tied her emotions and relationship with her tutors into her feedback interpretations which, regardless her demonstration of criticality and some self-regulation attributes (page 140), possibly caused her to fail to develop further. In spite of achieving marks of 68, which would indicate an ability to be critical, Yaseen showed no evidence of being able to articulate the academic criticality (page 117) that was demanded from the tutors, nor did she talk of strategies she might employ to develop it and her display of insecurity and pessimism seemed to be a paramount and an unavoidable topic of discussion in each interview. I do not wish to elaborate much on Yaseen here because I have written a fair amount of discussion about her in the later sections which will support my claim.

For Shaima, as I have mentioned earlier, I had initially assumed she would have a leading advantage compared to the other participants. Her one-year experience on the MA at the same university seemed enough to give her a good head start especially with her exposure to UK academic writing. Based on my self-assessment of Shaima using data from her blogs and interviews, I perceived Shaima to demonstrate an absence of content knowledge, academic writing skills and grasp of criticality and certain display of optimism and self-confidence as well as some effort of self-regulation.

As a writer, the first interviews indicate that Shaima’s initial writing challenge prior to the MSc was similar to Lulu’s and included register, rhetorical and grammatical aspects. Being an EFL student, Shaima was concerned about the use of proper vocabulary because she tends to use “*a lot of not sophisticated words*”. Shaima was also concerned with her ability to show cohesion and coherence and structuring her writing to achieve the clarity sought by the markers. Rhetorical aspects such as making persuasive arguments also worried Shaima as she

did not have much experience in writing such pieces. Shaima summarized her problem as “...*how to deliver the idea from my head, to transform the idea from my head to the paper clearly*”. This clearly shows Shaima’s doubt as an academic writer that she needed to resolve.

From the moment Shaima first received her DCR summative feedback, she demonstrated how easily comments can impact her self-confidence. Shaima discussed that the DCR summative feedback caused her to feel demotivated and doubt her own abilities, feelings that she carried forward into her SM and IM assignments. In her SM interview, Shaima discussed how she worked on her SM assignment simultaneously with her DCR assignment and she disclosed that she did not feel confident at all. In her blog Shaima wrote comments like, “*my discussion section was a joke, I did not make sense at all*” and “*It was a total mess. I did not understand a thing from those tests*”. While this may indicate her sense of where her strengths and weaknesses lie, it is worth bearing in mind that Shaima did achieve a merit for these assignments.

In the IM interview, Shaima disclosed that she did not have any mark expectation for IM and just wanted to pass because she had lost faith in herself as a learner who seemed overwhelmed with the academic pressure that she was experiencing:

Shaima: Yeah I thought that I’m not doing good so why to bother you know?... It’s silly, just do your work, do your things that you usually do, I don’t know why I’m so sensitive maybe because of the pressure at the time I don’t know I didn’t take proper break for a very long time.

Shaima’s comments above were evidence of how brittle her confidence was as a student and therefore, as a writer. Shaima accepted her fate as a student who was “*stuck in the sixties (marks)*”. However, Shaima affirmed her stance that marks did not define her. What mattered to her was learning. She said she was never a stellar student and was never competitive with her colleagues except with herself. Shaima said if she were in for the marks, she could simply buy assignments “*like everyone else back home*” but instead “*I’m here to learn*”.

In terms of our discussion of her written text, Shaima often discussed her writing concerns as discussed in the previous section. Her concerns were more towards the language side of writing and perhaps, it can be argued these can be regarded as Shaima’s self-awareness and so helpful in order to resolve her writing problem. This makes it difficult to draw conclusions as to whether Shaima had a sense of optimism and confidence as a writer, as her comments as a writer did not support it, yet her perception of problems with her writing seemed to point to

the other direction. But, judging from her lack of comprehension insight on how to tackle her problems, I would have to lean on the judgement that Shaima was unable to be precise about what she needs to attend to.

Further supporting my view, Shaima also stated that her writing concerns were whether she had covered the issues enough and whether she had demonstrated her level of criticality enough. Shaima said synthesizing the information was a demanding task, showing her developing understanding of what constitutes criticality. She said that she tried hard to show criticality in her writing and avoid writing as if it was a summary. She found it difficult because there was “*no scale*” to tell her such thing and what she might regard as enough could be different from her tutor’s opinion as she was “*not at that level yet*”. Shaima also discussed about her writing challenge that was related to her writing ability to show clarity of ideas. She said she tended to write with “*double-barrel meanings*”, making her message vague, perhaps making no sense. Shaima said she felt frustrated because often it was clear in her head but it became the opposite once transferred onto paper. She said on paper, her ideas were all over the place and incomplete, losing their intended flow. Shaima asserted that she needed a writing model to follow as her guidance to write because “*otherwise, I am not sure of anything*”. Hence, despite being aware that criticality was an aspect she needed to develop, Shaima kept on pondering about her problem in each interview and did not provide any strategies for how she will improve her academic writing.

Perhaps, the sole evidence of Shaima’s strategic thinking was with her use of proof-reader. Shaima used the proof-reading services for all her assignments, hence, Shaima did not receive feedback pertaining to language and her feedback was all with regards to the content of her assignment. This showed Shaima’s reliance on proof readers to give her feedback on the language area while relying on tutors to give her feedback on the content area, which might be viewed as a strategic decision.

Maria also used the proof-reading services like Shaima, but unfortunately, they did not seem to have the same impact in terms of learning progression. Maria did not possess any of the necessary criteria needed in order to become a ‘successful’ writer. I believe that Maria’s lack of competence in the English language contributed to Maria’s deficit in all the criteria. I believe it was hard enough for Maria to grasp the much-needed communicative competence when speaking to me in the interviews, raising doubts as to her abilities when writing in a

new writing convention that needed quick adaptation in addition to the demands of writing in such a way as to provide evidence of criticality. Both the data and my impression in the interviews suggest that while Maria started out quite confident, her confidence quickly diminished following the marks she received yet, she could not seem to shake her unrealistic marks expectations to match the quality of writing that she was producing, which was already with the help of a proof reader. This suggests that with higher levels of criticality evident in her writing Shaima was better able to learn from the support of a proof reader than Maria, because, in Maria's case the proof reading was compensating for both language and how ideas are encoded in language.

Maria's perception about the text that she produced all related to her mastery of the English language. For DCR, for example, Maria understood and accepted her tutor's comments about her misuse of certain terms and vocabulary and this marked the beginning of Maria's self-confidence decline. In IM, Maria said she had learned to accept the reality of receiving lower marks here (in the UK) and felt happy with feedback she had received, where she remarked that she had realized her "*significant mistake*":

My feedback is more clear rather than previous feedback that generally good comments are written. I have realized my significant mistake. For that also I want to thank the tutor marking.

(IM Blog Entry)

In the interview, Maria also added that one of her tutors said Maria needed to show more evidence of critical writing. In response, Maria changed her proof reader from a British proof reader several times. She said she changed them because each proof reader corrected her paper without understanding what Maria was trying to say. This shows Maria's dependence on proof readers to fix her language and how she somehow feels they can help her reveal her critical writing.

Apart from the use of proof readers, another strategy that Maria employed was looking at Turkish texts about the academic terms and ideas. Maria said she did so because reading in the English language confused her and referring back and forth to the dictionary was a hassle. Furthermore, certain academic terms needed more explanation than a simple Google search and this requires deep understanding that she had yet to possess.

What I also found interesting with regards to Maria’s motivation to learn was tied to the marks that she received. As mentioned before, Maria regarded her marks her benchmark and synonymized it with her accomplishment and development. Another interesting remark was also Maria’s demand for encouragement in the feedback in order for the feedback to be regarded as good feedback. This echoed with Lulu’s and Yaseen’s appeal for appreciation. In summary, Maria was a hard participant to understand and interpret unlike the other participants. I had to rely on her expression and tone of voice to understand her emotions during our meetings, other than repeatedly having to reiterate what she had said in order to confirm her original intention. It was understood that this was due to her restricted ability to speak in English, using correct terms unless assisted., this is why much of Maria’s thoughts cannot always be supported by direct quotes as some words could be misconstrued due to the absence of tone and facial expression. Indeed, Maria’s lack of English language competency played a big role in Maria academic learning journey. Moreover, although Maria, like Yaseen and Shaima, made the least progress compared to Lulu and Elio, the next sections will show the differences in how they regarded criticality and the criteria they expressed for how to be a ‘successful’ writer each of which contributed to how the participants’ developed as writers.

5.3.5 The lesson of criticality

Criticality has always been perceived as the essence of academic writing with the MSc cohort as it was mentioned in every interview. The participants were introduced to the concept of criticality from the beginning of their MSc tenancy. For some of the participants like Yaseen, Elio and Maria, it was the first time that they had encountered such a concept, although according to the participants, most of the MSc cohort struggled with the idea. While it may sound feasible enough when tutors talk about it, to execute and demonstrate it seemed to be especially challenging for the participants.

Lulu	Linking Ideas, Connectedness
Yaseen	Presence of Voice
Shaima	Justification of Ideas , Mastery of English Language
Elio	Attention to detail, To question everything, Presence of voice and firm justified opinion

Table 12 Summary of participants' conceptualization of criticality

The table 12 presents a summary of the participants' perception and understanding of the term 'criticality' and what needed to be done in order to demonstrate it. From the participants' views, it can be seen that ideas about criticality are subjective to each one of them and they all felt the importance of demonstrating criticality. From the above data, Elio and Lulu who made more progress over the year (based on their marks) than the other participants, linked criticality to the semantics of their writing instead of focusing on the syntactical aspects. This indicates that criticality is not an easy concept for students to grasp and understand and so is likely to take practice in order for it to be developed. When Lulu was first asked about the concept of criticality in the DCR interview, she responded by saying that criticality was about "*how you link ideas*". She explained that it was more than just show and tell, but the student needed to put themselves in the reader's shoes and write about what mattered to the reader. When asked if she was able to demonstrate such skill in the DCR assignments, she said due to the absence of a discussion part as part of the set task, she could not and added "*maybe in the reflection task*" where she supplied her chosen model with justifications.

In the SM interview, Lulu said she was not able to show her critical skills due to the nature of the assignment being a scientific writing task. In the IM interview however, there seemed to be a 'spark' in Lulu's enthusiasm when we touched on the topic of criticality. Lulu's eyes lit up when she expressed her confidence in displaying criticality in her writing. She credited her previous American learning experience where she was "*trained enough*" with critical thinking. She assumed she was more confident than most of her colleagues because she knew what to write about:

Lulu: It's about I think it's there throughout the paper. It's what you choose, it's what you exclude and include in the paper. It's not about listing things, it's about figuring out the areas where you can oppose ideas with each other ...you list things and you critic them at the same time but sometime you list them and then stick to whole new paragraph to say the opposite and by doing so you're actually showing your criticality in both...if you simply understood it what criticality is all about, evaluating something and what and how can you analyse something and you realise that criticality is there.

Towards the end of the study, in the NEE interview, Lulu added a new element on what criticality could also include—sources. Lulu said criticality was not only evident in the

writing itself but also in terms of the sources you choose to cite in the paper. Lulu went back to her DCR feedback comment and finally understood what the tutor meant about the use of sources. Lulu understood that the ideas of different sources needed to show some kind of “*connectedness*”. She also compared her NEE writing which contained six different sources for a small section which she did not do in earlier assignments and she said this was how she showed her critical thinking “*by showing that you actually read something*”.

Sharing Lulu’s focus on criticality to be perceived in terms of its semantic demands was Elio. Elio who from the beginning of the study labelled himself as a “*descriptive*” writer, was very concerned with grasping and applying the concept as he believed that showing criticality was easier said than done. Elio tried to show his critical side by comparing reflective models in the DCR and justifying them the best he can. However, Elio believed that at this point, he was still “*discovering*” what criticality meant in his writing.

In the SM interview, as mentioned earlier, Elio was demotivated when talking about his SM assignment. He said that he did not feel that he had shown criticality in his SM writing. He elaborated that he “*did not realize*” that he had to use criticality to link his hypothesis to the analysis and literature review, although he felt he was critical separately in each section. Elio was more enthusiastic talking about criticality in the IM interview because it was where he believed his “*criticality developed*”. He justified this by saying that IM helped him to stop writing superficially and understood why certain interchangeable terms need not mean the same thing. Elio said he “*paid attention to every single detail in IM*”.

As the study came towards the end, Elio summarized that criticality was not to take things at face-value, but “*to question everything that is questionable*”. This showed Elio enforcing the importance of the meaning of criticality was not only a matter of what was written but how the text was constructed in order to make critical thinking more visible. He also asserted the importance of having a voice in the writing, to show your firm stance on the matter in question.

Elio’s and Lulu’s perception on criticality was not shared by the other participants. Yaseen often conveyed her uncertainty about what is implied by criticality. She saw criticality as simply criticizing something and did not see it as an act of judgement or weighing things up or making connections between ideas. Yaseen was having trouble understanding the logic of

having to “*criticize*” published articles by someone like her who had not reached such academic level:

Yaseen: What do you mean by criticality? Should I criticize what they want, someone else’s writing? That’s something that I feel I cannot really do because they have got this you know, they got the degrees and research published and I come in say something it doesn’t make sense to me and then what kind of knowledge do I have to criticize someone else’s work? I have to reach this level so I can you know, say I think you didn’t do it right it’s better this way you know I don’t know I don’t even know what criticality is.

Yaseen also presumed that perhaps the reason why many of her colleagues and herself struggled with the idea of criticality was because they came from an academic background where they “*tend to be just descriptive*” and was not exposed to critical writing as much as the local students.

In the SM interview, Yaseen once again questioned what is meant by criticality. According to Yaseen, her DCR tutor commented that she lacked criticality while her SM tutor commented that her assignment showed “*excellent display of criticality*”. Yaseen seemed bewildered with what she had done differently and started guessing. She assumed she was considered critical in SM because she managed to show the study gap in the literature review. Yaseen continued, that if this was the case, it was hard to show criticality in DCR as there was no section for discussion that could lead to a conclusion like SM.

Yaseen did not comment about criticality in NEE but she gave a short comment about it in the IM interview. She said, from the three assignments she had experienced (DCR, SM and IM) she understood that being critical meant “*to have a voice*” and to show a firm position. Yaseen said she demonstrated criticality in IM where she started with a firm opinion and elaborated with more different views and concluded by bringing them back to her original stance. Yaseen’s obvious frustration with the concept and difficulties putting it in to words should be weighed against the fact that she consistently achieved marks in the high 60s which would indicate she does show criticality in her writing, even if she does not know where or how this is achieved.

For Shaima, I had assumed that she would possess the ‘advantage’ of having experienced the university’s writing conventions and expectations when she attended her MA in the previous year. However, despite the experience, in her DCR interview, Shaima was still confronted

with “*to what extent do I need to be critical*” thoughts. Shaima argued that this was a problem for her because her idea of being critical enough may not be the same view as of her tutor’s. Shaima understood that to grasp the idea of criticality, was a development that she needed to secure. She also credited her exposure on criticality in her MA to help her trust herself in her writing.

In the DCR interview, Shaima revisited the roots of her difficulty to cope with the concept of criticality. She said she was so used to “*obey and be silent*” and to only speak when spoken to by the teachers. She concluded that this was why she had difficulty to think critically and this affected her ability to demonstrate criticality in the SM assignment. In the IM interview, Shaima continued to display her struggle, although she invested so much time reading up about critical writing. Shaima said she felt that she has written a summary report instead of being critical in the IM assignment. She also said that she tried to find a reason why she might “*lack this skill*” and reasoned that it was because she had been told over and over again by tutors about its importance but was not shown how to execute it.

For NEE, Shaima seemed finally able to grasp the idea of criticality. She said that all these times, she tried to play with the language and use phrases related to critical writing. It was not until her NEE tutor briefed her on what criticality meant and that it was more than aspects of linguistics. Shaima now understood criticality to be justifications of ideas and not merely reporting them.

Shaima also acknowledged the importance of English language competency in order to demonstrate criticality. Shaima believed that incompetence could cause a student to fail to understand critical sentences and failure to write critical arguments. She also thought that although criticality and language proficiency are separate skills, she said it was an interrelated aspect for international students studying in the UK. She concluded that without a good command of English, she would not be able to use the language properly in order to transfer critical thinking from her head onto paper.

Shaima’s understanding of criticality clearly develops a little over the year but consistently pertains more to the syntactical nature of writing. This notion was relatable to Maria’s perception of criticality in academic writing. As Maria came to the MSc programme with limited English language competency, it was no surprise that Maria grappled with the idea of

criticality. In the DCR interview, Maria said she tried to show criticality, however, it seemed that her tutor said she did not write enough to show this. Maria said it was hard for her to elaborate her point because of the word count limit. Here, Maria seemed to associate criticality to the quantity written instead of writing concisely and efficiently.

This was a similar situation for SM. In the interview, Maria said she tried to show her critical ability in the discussion and framework of her study as well as the result. Maria said she tried the best she could but it seemed that she needed to develop the skill more as there was no acknowledgement about criticality from her tutor. Maria said she tried to showcase this skill again in IM assignment. She said she attempted to show different opinions about interpretivism and included her own opinion towards the end. Once again, she was not sure if she had depicted enough criticality as there was no comment about it in her feedback. Like Shaima, Maria saw the important role that English language competency has for students like her at this level. Maria blamed her English language inadequacy as the cause of her failure and for misunderstanding certain academic terms and concepts. She believed that she possesses critical skills but failed to demonstrate them because of her inability to write concisely, being overly dependent on elaboration when writing.

In summary, the participants have shown an array of different understandings about criticality with little commonalities. Lulu believed it was about linking ideas, using credible sources and the ability to connect ideas. While Yaseen thought it was about having your voice in the writing and Shaima thought criticality was about making sound justification of ideas. Elio on the other hand said criticality was about the attention to minute details, questioning everything there was to question and also portrayal of your voice and opinion in your writing. All of these viewpoints do capture something of what criticality means, however Maria did not provide much insight about what she thought criticality entailed but focused on the importance of English language mastery, as, to a lesser extent, did Shaima.

5.3.6 Participants' perception on being a successful writer

As it has been acknowledged, almost all the participants in this study had no formal academic writing background until their masters. Maria not only had no formal academic writing background but as mentioned earlier, she did not learn the English language until a year prior to joining the MSc programme.

During the first phase of the study, the participants were asked about their interpretation of what good academic writing entails. The participants' initial description seemed superficial. The participants' comments were limited to language register such as formality and vocabulary, overall organization and structure and grammatical attributes such as punctuation.

Yaseen described good academic writing as “*very formal*” and one needs to be “*very selective when it comes to words*”. Yaseen felt that academic writing is not like writing essays or stories. Academic writing needs to have credible academic source and organisation:
Yaseen: I have to be very precise, organized, I cannot just write whatever comes in my head, I just have to think about it and a source for it and apply.

Lulu shared Yaseen's view of what good academic writing needed to have and the need to follow a clear outline. Lulu likened the way she teaches her students essay writing to how academic writing should be written. Lulu elaborated extensively how she taught writing throughout the initial interview and repeatedly stressed the importance of outline:

Interviewer: So when you look at...when you mark the writing is there anything that you particularly look at to address whether is a good piece or poorer piece

Lulu: As I told you I given them an outline. The girls should know that, at the beginning they should have like introduction then conclusion in between they have should have some body... this is the basic.

Like Yaseen and Lulu, Elio shared the same basic fundamentals of good academic writing. Elio also believed that academic writing need not be “*sophisticated*” but it differs from other forms of writing in its “*structure*” and “*...how you formulate the idea, it's how you show evidence, how you back up your argument*”. Elio added that a good piece of academic writing should read like a story where everything is connected like a plot:

Elio: ...the best way to do this it's, just like a story, it's just flow of ideas and you just relax to read this so for me the best piece/piece of writing would something like story base, you've got like the introduction you got this assimilation, the concept and everything and you move slowly and smoothly to the next idea, you know your body and everything and then it develops then it's just climax and it could be two arguments, opposite arguments, this views said this, another views argue and then you've got your conclusions could be oppose or reflections, how your position within the story.

When the participants were asked about poor academic writing, they acknowledged the opposite perspective of their previous good academic writing description which not only included grammar and structure but the importance of punctuation and spelling as well. This

was best summarized by Elio:

Elio: Sometimes I come across very poor pieces of writing. You know there were components which qualify as a bad piece of writing could be you know there is no introductions, you know the reader is just lost so the writer just tackle directly the points and directly the climax as I said, and there is no point, there is no clarity so there is random ideas, there is no punctuation and punctuation is very, very important in academic writing because really it helps...they are very important for me, the full stop, the punctuation, semi colon, the colon and everything is very important, the flow of ideas, you know the transition from one idea to another, it was really bad. It was really bad. So even the spelling, the handwriting, we got to write not to type, but to write, the handwriting was horrible but I can understand well because running of the time. What else, you know there were no flow ideas, punctuation it wasn't there the spelling, you know, no structure.

These descriptions of how 'good' academic writing should look like were understood to be due to limited exposure to academic writing. As the participants immersed themselves in the MSc, their conceptualization became more complex and better articulated. Towards the end of the study, the participants were asked what it took to become a successful writer. Their responses were complex, having interrelated factors in determining an academic writer's success.

Lulu's idea of academic writing has shifted from her prior first interview in which she focused on 'what' academic writing entails to the above final interview where she talked about 'how' to achieve it. As shown before, in between the interviews, in what seemed to be the peak of her frustration after receiving feedback on SM assignment, Lulu listed the criteria needed to achieve a particular grade:

1. *The tutor*
2. *Their specialty*
3. *Objectivity/subjectivity while correcting a paper*
4. *Academic vs slang words*
5. *Criticality*
6. *The writing should neither be too complicated nor too simple*
7. *Cohesion*

(SM Blog Entry)

The criteria Lulu mentioned in the initial interview and the criteria listed from her SM blog were somehow show blended together for Lulu's final assumption of what makes a successful writer. In the final interview, Lulu credited reading skills, highlighted the importance of feedback from tutors and the use of proof reading service. This was apparent in

Lulu's journey where 'improvements' started showing in her marks when she started to apply her tutor's feedback to her following writing pieces and started using proof readers, transitioning from 'what' makes a successful writer to 'how' writers can become successful:

Lulu: For me personally I think like reading number one reading the more you read the more you'll be familiar with academic writing and the second thing is having second opinion about the way that you write anyone who's more experience someone who has some experience in this field what else, and the proof reader to be honest. Having someone who will not give you a grade, but give you like real opinion about your writing really develop the way that use to see your academic writing and the mark that you get from them of course.

Shaima on the other hand, maintained the importance of grammatical clarity and "understanding the outline of the assignment". Shaima thought it was important that students realize the difference of each task and their expectations in each assignment in order to give appropriate information to the reader. Shaima also noted that she had to do multiple revisions to hone her clarity of writing as she had experienced occasions where her perception of clarity could be different to her tutor's and proof reader's. Hence, Shaima also credited feedback from her tutors and proof reader to help her realize her mistakes.

Shaima also noted that a writer needed to be "courageous". She explained that a writer needed to be audacious on changing what s/he had written. Shaima said sometimes it was hard to let go of what has been written especially when you try to match to the word count, however, Shaima learned that it was about the quality and not quantity that mattered:

Shaima: ... be courageous when you write the whole thing because it's not that hard to delete and rewrite the whole thing and I'm literally doing that now with my dissertation. I deleted the whole thing on literature review because I was not convinced and I did that with IM as well. I was not convinced of some part and I delete them, totally write something new. When the first time I was like concerned more about the word count and I want to finish but now I'm really concerned more about finishing something that represents me aside from the grades and how important the grades are but I'm convinced about my work I think it's the most important thing.

Last but not least, Shaima talked about the importance of writing practice because "every assignment is not necessarily linear". Shaima noted that only with writing practice will a student ever get used to the writing convention set in a particular institute as the institute programmes are not custom-made for the student, but the student needed to adjust to the institution.

Elio came forward with another unexpected criterion of having your own writing style as a contribution to writing success. While academic characteristics such as the need to be “*persistent*” was an expected answer from Elio, he also believed that having the right writing style can set you apart from other writers. According to Elio, academic writing was a continuous development and in order to have his own writing styles, he used academic articles as his writing ‘models’ and kept practicing. For Elio, the more you read, the more you can absorb the ‘voice’ of academia:

Elio: I think we don't reach that stage of successful academic writer it's because I just notice you have your own standard, your own writing convention. Of course you've got the universal the writing convention but you got your own style, your own touch, for you maybe it successful like this is how academic writing should be... I would say practice as well as modelling and practice...when you read about other people, you know, pieces of writing and then you process everything in your mind then you start writing with your own style, your writing if you do that more regularly, you would reach, you know, your objective which is being successful academic writer.

Although Elio had achieved high merits and a distinction in his assignments, he did not regard himself as a successful writer yet. He did not believe that academic writing skills can be grasped within months of being in the MSc:

Elio: Because as I said, you can't reach that stage in a couple of months. That's true, my academic (writing) has developed that of course but you know I still need to, you know, improve in terms of style, in terms of you know how to connect ideas and stuff like that so I would just say it's an improvement instead of a successful academic writing I can't just say oh yeah I'm a successful academic writer, I don't need you, you know, to correct my assignment, I don't need your feedback because I'm successful you see what I mean? So I would just label it as an improvement, academic improvement yeah.

Unlike the rest of the participants, Yaseen felt the question on what determines a successful writer to be the most difficult question and requested to answer it in the last part of the final interview. Yaseen was uncertain and kept on repeating that she was not sure about the answer to this question. In the end, Yaseen made a similar claim to Elio's where she saw reading to help inform writing. She acknowledged that “*paying attention*” to how writers write could help her write better:

Yaseen: ...actually it doesn't need working hard it just comes with the reading and the writing it just comes so it's just like a cumulative process and maybe some of basic attention to how other writers write that can help because I can find myself very interested on how some other people write and how... it's not how they write actually, it's how they think about writing and how they approach it.

Yaseen also mentioned what she viewed as innate ability for example being gifted, having self-awareness and being resilient. However, Yaseen believed that those without innate ability can also become successful writers with no “*hard work*” and just practice. For Yaseen, acquiring the right techniques and become self-aware about your own writing could also be the necessary criteria to become a successful writer.

Yaseen used a lot of modal verbs such as “could”, “would” and “maybe” showcasing her uncertainty about her answers. Yaseen reasoned that she could not give a definite answer to this question because she believed that there is no such thing as a successful writer. She considered every piece of writing has “*room for improvement*” and “*it’s not like science*”, due to its subjective nature of interpretation:

Yaseen: ...I don’t know I never like writing because I told you because is not something clear like black and white no it can never such because it also subjective everyone evaluate it from their own view I have a problem with everything that is not black or white, that’s not $1 + 1 = 2$ I don’t like this one at all and it’s not because I’m science, (it’) because I’m very logical thinking of my life for very long logical structure so writing is not my kind of thing but it is necessary anyway.

Maria, is perhaps the one with the least communicative competence among the five, and who time and time again mentioned her English language skills as a barrier for her to write successfully. Therefore, this did not come as a surprise when Maria mentioned her own English language incompetence as a setback to grasping the writing standard expected in the MSc programme:

Maria: If I think you being good academic writer first of all I think you should have the language for example I can be maybe write better academic article in language in English. Maybe, it’s more difficult because for example I use. Some work I check dictionary but sometimes they not cover each other the meanings maybe I should use different words but I cannot arrange it exactly the language is very important.

Maria also believed that one needed to have critical thinking skills and to be well-informed about certain subject matter to “*gain perspective and its [sic] support writing*”. Maria stated that being critical should not only be in the form of the ideas portrayed but also the use of the right vocabulary. For Maria, it was important to have enough “*academic words*” to be used effectively in order to show knowledge credibility while being articulate in the subject area. From the extracts, it can be concluded that each participant seemed to have a different set of ideas when it came to what a successful writer needs to possess. From grammatical and

language competency to innate writing ability and the more sociological dilemma of Yaseen's difficulty with the term 'successful writer', it can be deduced that each participant had different priorities, and that they are not necessarily contrasting ideas because at various points in each participant's interview during the study, they have each mentioned similar criteria to one another yet did not elaborate further.

5.4 A story of Interpretation

This section will deal with how students interpreted and responded to feedback as well as the role of feedback in influencing their developing understanding. It is important to present these findings to show how feedback contributes to students' conceptualization of academic writing as well as what they perceive is needed to become a proficient writer. This section will also acknowledge the students' interpretation of learning which relates to how they decipher feedback they received to inform wider learning beyond the immediate demands of the assignment

The findings for formative feedback are presented separately from findings for summative feedback because they differ in terms of the purpose of feedback. For some participants, they do not share the same tutor for formative feedback and summative feedback. Furthermore, for some participants, their tone and focus in the interview changed in the summative feedback when compared to the formative feedback. This therefore requires that each participant to be reported individually to aid logical train of thought and readability. I have also organized feedback to come after the story of learning to show its interrelated nature, of how views about feedback can affect the participants' learning.

The formative feedback was given to the participants usually two weeks after their formative assignment submission. The formative assignment was usually part of a task addressed in the summative assignment. After the written formative feedback was given, the participants were provided with a short one-on-one tutorial with their academic tutor to discuss the feedback and the demands of the summative assignment. It should be noted that for formative feedback, the participants mainly discussed it in their blog entries, prior to submission so these thoughts were then elaborated during the module interviews after submission.

Formative Feedback	Yaseen	Elio	Lulu	Maria	Shaima
DCR	Negative	Neutral	Negative	Neutral	Negative
SM	Negative	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative
IM	Positive	Positive	Positive	Neutral	Positive
NEE	Negative	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative

Table 13 Participants' perception of tutors for formative assignment

Summative Feedback	DCR	SM	IM	NEE
Yaseen's perception of feedback	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
Yaseen's basis of perception	Feedback + Tutor + Marks	Feedback + Marks	Feedback + Marks	Marks
Elio's perception of feedback	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Elio's basis of perception	Feedback	Feedback + Tutor	Feedback + Tutor + Marks	Tutor
Lulu's perception of feedback	Negative	Positive	Positive	Positive
Lulu's basis of perception	Feedback+ Tutor + Marks	Feedback + Tutor	Feedback+ Tutor+ Marks	Feedback+ Tutor+ Marks
Maria's perception of feedback	Neutral	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Maria's basis of perception	Feedback + Marks	Feedback + Marks	Feedback	Feedback + Marks
Shaima's perception of feedback	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Positive
Shaima's basis of perception	Feedback + Tutor	Feedback	Feedback + Tutor	Feedback + Tutor

Table 14 participants' perception of tutors for summative assignments

The tables show the participants' perception of their tutors for formative and summative feedback. As formative assignment did not hold enough 'importance' as did summative assignment, the table (table 13) shows the participants' perception of the tutor only. For the summative feedback, the participants' source of perception was more detailed and visible as data was extracted from blog entries and elaborated during interviews. Table 14 shows the participants relate the basis of their feedback either on the nature of the feedback itself, the tutor who gave the feedback or the marks they received or a combination of two or all three criteria.

There are two clear contrasts between Lulu and Yaseen where Lulu perceived much of her feedback more positively than Yaseen. Because of Lulu's positive academic writing development, it can be construed that having an optimistic perception could help lead to a better academic development. This is why I have picked them to be discussed further in this section.

For participants who have a balance of both positive and negative feedback perception throughout their MSc assignments such as in the case of Elio, marks did not seem to play a role in his judgements but he was rather depending heavily on his relationship with his tutors. Maria, on the other hand, was neutral to start with although in her interviews, she put emphasis on the importance of marks. Therefore, it can be assumed that her perceptions of feedback in IM and NEE towards the end, were related to the marks. Shaima on the other hand was also more positive towards the end once she understood the difference between criticism and constructive feedback.

Yaseen

There were two contrasting interpretations of feedback that I would like to highlight. The first is the case of Yaseen. Before elaborating more on her MSc feedback experience, it needs to be noted that in Yaseen's initial interview, she revealed a rather negative experience she had when she was studying for her Master's in an Anglophone country, causing Yaseen to struggle with her coursework assignments. Yaseen reported that she had never received feedback prior to her Masters and when she did, it left such an impact on her:

Yaseen: ...after the masters and I hated it and it frightens me and when I see email comes in ... I just get so afraid and I don't even want to look at it because it always has negative connotation, someone has, something to say negative about me.

Yaseen: Until now it frightens me, and that's one thing I'm not really happy because it will happen a lot, like getting feedback...I just came here (UK) and I don't know how to you know, overcome this like negative feelings towards feedback.

Her past difficult relationship with her previous supervisor was a contributing factor in how Yaseen perceive feedback givers. Yaseen spoke furiously of her previous supervisor's attitude and irresponsibility in giving her feedback:

Yaseen: Actually, I don't know but I think I've been through a lot times for example my supervisor, he was supposed to supervise me, I gave him an alternative outline and I told him it's tentative, due to

time constraints, I will change it . When I went to him, I told him that I wanted to do something that I like and that would benefit my students when I go back home. He was very rude to me and he told me, you don't have to like it, it doesn't have to benefit you and I am the one who has to like it.

Yaseen was hopeful of getting a better feedback experience in her MSc course. However, judging from Yaseen's blog entries and interviews, her past feedback experience left her feeling "*frightened*" of receiving feedback.

Yaseen: I already know that I have a very negative attitude towards feedback. I would like to change my view about feedback but I don't know how. I hope it changes with time.

As expected, throughout the study, Yaseen's interpretation of feedback for formative and summative assignments were more negative than positive. From the beginning of the MSc course, for DCR formative assignment feedback, Yaseen already interpreted her feedback as overall "*unhelpful*" reasoning that "it was "*not because of the teacher, but because of me*". Apparently, Yaseen sent her reflection without the introduction task required for the reflection model she was using and this meant her DCR tutor was unable to give her more comprehensive feedback. Yaseen rationalized that the formative task conflicted with her learning beliefs and the nature of the assignment itself. Yaseen realized the DCR assignment was using the reflective model as the criteria to mark against and Yaseen disagreed with this notion. Acknowledging her own "*critical*" attitude towards learning, Yaseen did not understand why a model needed to be followed:

Yaseen: I don't like people to tell me think this way or think that way or you have to start with this, no. You don't tell me how my mind how it works, no. It's been working like this for 30 years and if I follow what you're saying, I might, I may not reach the depth I want I'm trying to do something that is new...The instruction of the assignment was not really nice. We should follow the model, what if I don't want to follow the model? Why? I have my own way of reflecting and the evaluation is assessed on whether you followed the model or not. No, the evaluation in my point of view should be whether I learn from my experience or not, this is the point of reflection.

Yaseen put such emphasis on her learning beliefs that it seemed to control her actions and interpretation. Yaseen argued that she felt that she was not learning but rather writing assignments. Yaseen believed that learning meant obtaining knowledge about topics that matter and interest her. Instead, working on assignments for Yaseen meant doing what the tutor wants to see and not what Yaseen wanted to learn about. Yaseen disputed its worth especially if it would not be of any use for Yaseen in the future and regarded it as "*a waste of time*".

I tried to dig deeper into Yaseen's thoughts because it was obvious that she had a unique view on learning. Yaseen believed in deep extensive learning about a certain subject rather than getting to know many subjects on a superficial level:

Interviewer: When you say that you're just doing the assignments, you're not learning for example, I'm just...the design in DCR for example, as you said, you supposed to do something that you do not want, isn't that form of learning? I mean, to remove you from your comfort zone, what you think?

Yaseen: I think you're right, but I think for me, I like to learn things very deep, and it's not like my other colleagues. They'd like to know about other things, no I do not want to know about this. I want to know about them in details, so instead of taking the time, to learn about something superficially just for the assignment I like to know more details the design that I love, like what is so specific about them that would differentiate, you know. Details, I like details.. it's not that I like them, it's [inaudible], the view that I am not confident until I know every little thing. It's not really helping here (MSc), you know?

The SM assignment feedback struck another blow at Yaseen's self-confidence. Yaseen did not comment on the learning part but spent the interview criticizing one of her tutors, describing an incident that made Yaseen refuse to seek further help from her the tutor. Perhaps, one could assume her tumultuous relationship with her tutor could cause her to view her feedback negatively, but I do not believe this was the whole story. This is because Yaseen had viewed her SM formative feedback negatively even before the incident took place and upon receiving her summative feedback, Yaseen regarded the feedback positively and believe it "*reflects what I did*".

Evidence of Yaseen's ability to separate between her relationship with her tutors and their feedback was also apparent in her IM and NEE interviews. For her IM feedback, Yaseen perceived her formative feedback positively. Yaseen appraised her tutor's feedback as "*very clear*" and "*very good*". She said that it was the first time that "*there were no negative comments*". During her one-on-one meeting for IM module, Yaseen even prepared questions to ask one of her tutors and spent the whole meeting discussing it, making it a productive session, boosting Yaseen's mood and reinstating Yaseen's academic confidence:

"I remember that I left her office very happy for all her feedback was positive I did have some things that I needed to work on, but she also emphasized that I was good and did well. Unlike most tutors, I left her office feeling good about myself, that I am developing and capable of doing these tasks. I really think that I do well when my tutors tell me that I am good but here are some suggestions that you can work on to improve. Even if I do well, I have horrible doubts about myself. I notice that I become really empowered when I am given positive feedback. This way I feel that my effort has been acknowledged

and appreciated.”

(IM Blog Entry)

Despite Yaseen’s positive interpretation of her IM formative feedback, she perceived her IM summative feedback to be negative. According to Yaseen, she had read the assignment marking criteria and knew “*exactly what they want to see*”. Yaseen further added that the feedback “*did not reflect in any way or sense*” and she could not understand why that is when she followed her IM tutor’s suggestion during the one-on-one tutorial:

The first part of the assignment where I followed his/her suggestion was the part s/he did not like and everything else was excellent. I am very disappointed. This is just unfair I was very happy with everything I did and the feedback I received on those parts was excellent I expected to get the distinction this time. The assignment was excellent even she said that. How unfair. I am more than disappointed.

(IM Blog Entry)

In NEE, Yaseen regarded the written formative feedback as “*not positive*”. However, she had a good relationship with her one of her NEE tutors and praised him/her for being “*really helpful*” during the formative feedback tutorial but Yaseen said it would have been better if she could direct her attention towards the session fully:

“S/he willingly answered all my questions and help me better understand the assignment requirement. S/he also explained to me the things I did not do well in the formative. The tutorial could have been really helpful if I could focus my attention more. I find my mind sometimes busy in thinking of my next question rather than focusing on what the tutor is saying.”

(NEE Blog Entry)

Despite the positive experience with her NEE tutor, Yaseen seemed confused with her tutor’s stance as a researcher. Yaseen found her NEE tutor’s opinion was different from what she understood in class. This added strain to Yaseen, where she needed not only to meet the assignment’s requirement, but also specifically meet her tutor’s requirements as well:

Yaseen: ...I felt when I met him/her that s/he has certain things in his/her mind and only if you got these things that you can... that s/he will feel good...s/he has certain ideas in his/her mind and if it not what the things s/he want to see or hear s/he will.. you’re not going to hear good things from him/her.

The confusion caused Yaseen to be “*negatively influenced*” and made Yaseen feel it was difficult for her to approach the assignment and she felt “*bitter*” when she received her NEE marks. Nevertheless, Yaseen still perceived the NEE summative feedback positively and

regardless of her disagreements with her one of her NEE tutors, Yaseen still regarded it as a positive learning experience.

After conducting a number of interviews with Yaseen, it was apparent that Yaseen's interpretation may not only be dictated by her relationship with her tutor but what was most important to her –the marks. For Yaseen, *“I want (the) marks and that marks either leaves a good impact on me or a bad impact on me”*. Yaseen acknowledged that she felt *“hurt”* by the marks that she had received. She explained that she cared about the marks because she felt strongly that *“marks define me”*.

Yaseen also argued that her feedback always said that her work was excellent, but she felt that her excellence was not mirrored in her marks. In her SM summative feedback interview, Yaseen said that her tutor remarked her work as *“excellent, well done, very well done, clear understanding”*, so Yaseen questioned if that was the case, why was she not given a distinction:

Yaseen: ...s/he said well done, excellent, that was sophisticated and then the end the summary s/he said excellent, standard, excellent everything at the end point mark well done, 68, what is this? Are you kidding me? Who are you keeping 70 for then? If everything is excellent, why are you keeping, why don't you give me my mark? This is unfair.

Failing to receive the marks that Yaseen felt she deserved made Yaseen feel that there was *“no appreciation”* from the tutors. Yaseen felt that feeling appreciated, although not receiving the desired marks, could help motivate her further in the upcoming assignments. Feeling that her effort was in vain made Yaseen *“regret working hard”*:

Yaseen: ... I do not like this I don't like to work on assignment and I don't get appreciated and then in the end I didn't even learn and I didn't get the mark I desire, so you see.

Yaseen's tunnel vision on marks clearly implies that Yaseen had trouble separating the marks she received from the feedback or the person giving the feedback. Yaseen has been a stellar student all her life who scores 'A's and to be brought down to marks below seventy was perhaps a blow to her self-esteem. Although Yaseen at one point in SM, seemed to be able to separate the feedback and feedback-giver she could not see beyond the marks. Throughout her four assignments Yaseen saw the marks to matter more than the feedback. I say this because Yaseen seemed to enter a defensive mode whenever she received, what she regarded

as, a negative comment. At this point, it was clear that feedback was quite an emotive issue for Yaseen. Yaseen's interpretation of feedback seemed to have an emphasis on how she felt about the marks and/or feedback rather than what she can learn from it.

Perhaps, Yaseen's pessimistic nature and past negative experience with feedback contributed to how she interpreted her feedback. As a self-proclaimed pessimist, Yaseen "*chose to see negative*" and she was always feeling "*insecure*". Despite her pessimism and negative interpretation, Yaseen's response to the feedback received was often initially met with distress and disappointment but it also sparked a sense of resilience and determination in her. Possibly, this is best illustrated in the SM summative interview, when Yaseen narrated a story about how her friend saw a mark of seventy as something positive and yet she saw it as something negative. Yaseen believe she needed to be more optimistic so she can keep motivating herself:

Yaseen: she chose to see the good things of the feedback and selective attention, I chose to see negative. It's not that I chose, I was I'm harsh on myself...I tell myself I think you need to pay attention to positive comments...as you can see in SM...I was thinking I should print it and keep looking at it, so whenever I have this doubts I tell myself I'm capable, I can do this, so I was just kind of confirming myself I'm working on this right now on how to build my confidence and myself. This sense of resilience.

From the data, it can be deduced that Yaseen's interpretation of feedback was characterized by her evolving view about learning and association with the marks she received. Her pessimistic personality, past experience with feedback and the impact of her relationship with her tutors also helped shape how she emotionally perceived and responded to feedback. Perhaps, due to Yaseen's negativity with feedback, she failed to progress in terms of marks as she failed to respond by improving her academic writing.

It can also be assumed, with Yaseen, that feedback will be interpreted positively when expectation in marks was met, such as in the case of SM where Yaseen obtained a better mark than what she obtained in DCR (although it was not an expected mark) and where the relationship with tutor seemed satisfactory, such as in the case of NEE.

Given Yaseen's marks however it is clear that much of what she is doing is demonstrating criticality, what she has not been able to achieve is the move to distinction, this requires a shift to independence and so bringing something new to the material she is working with.

Perhaps the focus on 'I did what they asked' and feeling she needs to comply with her tutors' perspective, is what could be holding her back.

Lulu

Lulu told a contrasting story to Yaseen's. Like Yaseen, Lulu was a stellar student all her life, scoring a 4.0 GPA in her past master's degree in the United States. However, unlike Yaseen, Lulu significantly progressed not only in terms of marks but also in terms of academic writing development.

In Lulu's initial interview, she did not seem to have much experience of receiving feedback. Nevertheless, Lulu benefitted from receiving feedback from her father who is an Engineering professor in Saudi Arabia. Lulu added that because her father is an engineer, he might not understand the content the way Lulu wished he would, so he would give her "*personal feedback*" instead, and not related to content.

Like Yaseen, Lulu had quite an emotional reaction when it comes to interpreting her feedback, tying it to marks. However, the major difference between them was evident in Term two when Lulu turned things around in order to achieve her desired academic goals. When Lulu encountered her first formative feedback in DCR, she took it negatively as she did not see how the formative feedback could help build up to her summative assignment. When Lulu received her DCR summative feedback, she changed her tone and acknowledged the feedback positively. However, Lulu reacted defensively when it came to talking about the marks she had received for DCR. Lulu described that one of her DCR tutors commented about her use of American slang and Lulu understood her weaknesses and mistakes cost her the desired marks. However, she believed that her mistakes were not enough to warrant a mark below merit:

Lulu: But I mean like, these are her feedback, I can..I can benefit from it but I don't think that these are enough reasons to forget the whole five thousand words and cut grade based on these comments. And I don't see these comments as really big issues or I'm not able to write or I'm not able to produce a paper.

Lulu's feedback interpretation was also linked to her feedback-giver. Lulu argued that her one of her tutors was overly critical and did not include encouraging comments. Lulu tried to rationalize the reason for her 'unsuccessful' outcome and criticized the tutor's insufficient

input as the cause for “*the confusion and stress all students felt*” while repeating how useless DCR formative feedback had been.

This was in contrast to Lulu’s description for her SM tutor of whom Lulu spoke fondly, praising the tutor’s professional demeanour and considered the tutor’s feedback as “*seemed very positive*”. Perhaps, the most motivating words that gave Lulu hope was when Lulu said she could not forget her tutor’s last words to her before she left the feedback tutorial meeting:

Lulu: S/he told me that don’t worry and think about the distinction, only think about the distinction and that’s it. Don’t think about anything else. So s/he really knows that we’re struggling...

However, the way Lulu responded to the marks once again showed her emotional dependence on the numbers that she perceived as an indication of her academic competency. In her SM blog Lulu said, although she was not “*pleased*” with the mark, she was “*okay*” with it:

I now have an inner peace with whatever I get because I decided to take these feedbacks to challenge myself and the tutors as well to boost these grades one way or another. I changed many things I do... and I am hoping for better grades.

(SM Blog Entry)

Lulu argued that the marks she received for SM did not reflect the feedback comments. In the written summative feedback, Lulu said that she was once again let down by her use of American slang and she reasoned this happened because she had submitted SM a day before she was due to receive her DCR feedback, otherwise, she could have revised her work again before submitting. However, Lulu queried why this issue was not raised during her one-on-one tutorial or other meeting with one of her DCR tutors, especially when Lulu recorded each session so she can go through the points made again:

Lulu: ...The tutor read the paper, if she have any issue with the language, s/he can tell me anything about the language to be honest and what I did I heard is ..Whenever I had the tutorial I record everything so I don’t forget, I heard it again. Nothing about the language, and s/he read the whole paper and whenever I asked, when I asked him/her about something I send him/her an email, so if there was like some kind of [inaudible] expression in my language.. s/he should’ve (told me). I don’t know.

At this point in term one, it was clear that Lulu had the tendency of externalizing the problems that she encountered with learning and her understanding of academic writing. Lulu failed to see the problem within herself and found other avenues to blame. Lulu also questioned the university’s marking integrity and its feedback-mark mismatch, such as what happened in her SM. In her SM interview, Lulu asked a rhetorical question that if everything

is good and correct, with little criticism concerning only the language, then why did it not reflect the grade?:

Lulu: It's still at the end, two lines she only discuss the language nothing on the statistical test work, everything is correct ..only why this grade why, so that shocked me.

In DCR and SM interviews, Lulu also conveyed her inclination of interpreting feedback as a form of emotional support instead of academic support. Lulu compared her UK study experience to one that she had in the USA. Lulu said regardless of the stress she felt, in the USA, they did it with “*care and love*” that emit “*positive energy*”. She believes that in the USA, her tutors really appreciated her hard work, knowing that English is not her first language. Lulu said in the USA, importance was placed on a student’s ability to think critically and she was given the opportunity to re-work her assignment until she gets the ‘OK’ to submit them.

Lulu added that tutors should empathize with international students’ writing problems. As it was their first two assignments, she expected a sense of appreciation and more positive feedback for their attempt:

Lulu: ...we have to discover everything by our own and for that I thought that at least there will be some kind of appreciation for the hard work we have been doing by ourselves.

Lulu: So I think that's why, that was the hardest part like do not see any appreciation, I mean even her positive comment was about one line and a half, I think you have some skills in writing, I think you have some skills in criticality, I think! There is no appreciation at all. I mean she talked about three paragraphs about the negative comments and then only one line and a half about positive comment. So that...I think, I think if the way of commenting or giving the feedback showed some sort of appreciation, I would have been able to accept.

In Lulu’s SM interview, she continued to express her desire for emotional support from her tutors, at the same time continuing to externalize the blame. Lulu highlighted that the issue of appreciation made her feel disheartened and tutors’ support would be much appreciated in helping her with her learning journey:

Lulu: ...so again I have this issue with appreciation because and s/he (the tutor) knows that I have no knowledge on statistics, never use numbers in research, that I did everything from scratch. I taught myself by myself again and I did great. If it's the knowledge (part of the test) you don't like, I still don't think I deserve a 61 to be honest...

Lulu’s overdependence on tutor’s support and tendency on externalizing her academic dilemma seemed to demonstrate her inability of becoming an autonomous learner. Lulu’s

fixation on linking marks to her academic competency, instead of engaging qualitatively with the feedback was another indicative element that showed Lulu's tunnel-vision perception about learning. Nonetheless, term two demonstrated Lulu's moment of when the penny dropped. In this term, Lulu no longer externalized her problems but showed evidence of self-regulation although she continued to pursue support and "*appreciation*" from her tutors. Lulu said she now understood her "*mistakes*" and after much self-reflection and discussion with her term two tutors she realized her negative attachment towards her feedback clouded what the "*real lesson*" meant for her and she started concentrating on avoiding making the same mistakes and employing goal-setting strategies and self-motivation. Lulu changed the way she writes and tackle her term two assignments while consciously ensuring to meet the marker's expectations by having dialogues and recording them for her reference. For IM and NEE feedback, Lulu interpreted both formative and summative feedback positively. Lulu was delighted to receive her first distinction and "*knew she did well*" although she initially had little or no expectation and said "*all I wanted was to pass*". Perhaps, she did not want to feel 'deceived' by her own feelings after her SM experience as she explained that the tutor has "*lost her trust*".

However, Lulu's faith and confidence were restored when she received her IM feedback. Lulu had a good working relationship with her IM tutor and she only had praises for her, describing the tutor's feedback as "*very detailed*" and "*more beneficial than previous ones.*" In her IM blog entry, Lulu said the written formative feedback made her realise her "*weaknesses that previous tutors did not tell me before*". The written formative feedback gave Lulu her much needed motivation. For her one-on-one tutorial, Lulu tried to show her capability as a student and researcher. Lulu read and researched her topic well before the tutorial and it resulted in her favour. Lulu appeared flattered with the tutor's feedback in their tutorial as she wrote in her blog entry:

The reviewer actually enjoyed reading my paper, and stated that I was able to critique the paper in a good way. S/he gave me some very good comments in how I can strengthen the paper. I had my sources, and the reviewer was able to understand my thoughts, but I needed to support my paper with evidence from the articles.

(IM Blog Entry)

Lulu did not discuss much about her NEE feedback. Perhaps, this was due to her health problem at the time that prevented her to blog as much as she did with the other modules. Lulu only wrote in her NEE blog entry that she was "*worried to read the feedback from my*

reviewer especially because the DCR grade killed my confidence”, clearly indicating her haunting fears from previous feedback that she had received in term one modules.

Lulu conveyed her surprise when she received a positive and constructive feedback and was delighted that her NEE tutor also enjoyed reading her formative and summative assignment. What Lulu appreciated the most was her NEE tutor giving her certain guidelines on how she could strengthen her paper further by using evidence found in research articles.

I believe this was Lulu’s moment of academic epiphany. She said that her assignment *“becomes easier”* and she was able to develop and connect ideas well while making sure that she was also fulfilling all the requirements. Lulu felt she deserved the marks and it help *“boost”* her *“energy”*.

Lulu also seemed to have found the support and appreciation that she had been craving for since the first assignment. Her positive relationship with her IM and NEE tutors helped Lulu interpret not only the feedback but the whole learning experience positively:

Lulu: yeah everyone was telling me the tutor, s/he doesn't give high grades (but) from when I read her feedback, s/he really enjoy read it, I'm gonna send you the feedback and that was the first time that I really felt that my paper is really appreciated.

What can be deduced from Lulu’s experience was that she interpreted her feedback positively when she felt that she had received constructive feedback and obtained the marks that she desired. In short, for Lulu, constructive feedback tied with a good working relationship with her tutors resulted in a positive interpretation of feedback, hence making it capable for Lulu to make the necessary constructive changes in her academic writing. This suggests that Lulu’s ability to self-regulate was very much related to the motivation she received from her feedback and marks, where she no longer showed evidence of externalizing her problem. In Lulu’s overall interpretation of feedback there seem to be a visible pattern. Each time, Lulu would have an emotional response to her feedback and marks followed by a reflective response in speculating what the problem was and doing something to make the next assignment better.

Her experience with her summative feedback was consistent with her feelings in the formative feedback. within the modules for example in DCR, there seemed to be a change of tone as her development occurs. Even though Lulu’s perception of her DCR feedback was

negative to start with, as she developed, Lulu seemed to realize that it was negative because Lulu did not receive the marks that she wanted.

Lulu: Of course the worst is DCR, even now when I when I go back to it and read it I can really understand why I got that grade...because I did not know what should I fix but now I developed. I could understand how I should evaluate my own paper.

In the end, it seemed that Lulu was able to separate the feedback giver from the feedback content by going back to all her feedback and realizing her weaknesses. This was also evident in her perception of the SM summative feedback and the IM summative feedback where she realized that praise did not guarantee the mark she wanted. Although her SM tutor was helpful and motivating, Lulu still failed to accomplish the marks she wanted. By now, Lulu learnt her lesson to carefully interpret praise as being as much about tutor personality instead of as a scale to rate a text against and understanding that receiving compliments did not equal constructive feedback.

Her feedback encounters with her IM tutor and NEE tutor seemed to be an eye-opener to Lulu of what ‘constructive feedback’ actually means. In these feedback encounters, Lulu was able to pin point what she needed to improve and act on it accordingly, ensuring her progress in the course. Perhaps separating personal response, the mark or the relationship with the tutor from understanding about what the feedback means, is key to progress.

5.5 A story of support

The story of support is essential to demonstrate the different types of support available for the participants in this study. It not only informs about their perception of the adequacy of support available for general learning but also specifically for their academic writing.

5.5.1 Tutor Support

From the data, there is no evidence that suggested the participants expected a spoon-feeding relationship with their tutor. Rather, most of them expected their tutors to play the roles of their academic guide and motivator. Each participant had experienced and perceived both

positive and negative relationships with their tutors and it was only natural that they might assume that a positive relationship was expected to result in a good outcome and vice versa.

This is especially true in the case of Lulu, an optimistic and resilient student who was lucky to have a good relationship with most of her tutors. She was eager to follow guidance and easily motivated when she was praised or received what she perceived as supportive feedback. So it is safe to say a good relationship, visible support and constructive feedback induced Lulu's positive interpretation of feedback. Unfortunately, this was only in Lulu's case as the rest of the participants had a rather inconsistent relationship with their tutors.

An example of the impact of a negative working relationship with a tutor would be Elio. He deemed that one of his tutors failed to act as his guide and motivator. It caused Elio to view the experience and feedback negatively. In his SM blog entry, he said he was "*to some extent satisfied*" but he was a little bothered about certain remarks written by his SM tutor. In the interview, Elio elaborated his frustration with his SM tutor where the tutor remarked that Elio had not mentioned a certain criterion that was expected in the SM assignment, costing Elio certain marks. Elio reacted defensively that had the tutor read carefully, he would realize that Elio had indeed included the criteria and Elio vowed to have a sit-down with him/her to discuss this although he did not expect that the tutor would change his marks. It was clear that the mark was not the issue but 'being right' was.

Elio also recalled his SM tutor's lack of usefulness in helping him with his assignments. Elio met his SM tutor twice prior to submitting the assignment and regarded both meetings as futile. In the first meeting, the tutor told Elio that they had nothing to discuss as his SM tutor considered the formative assignment to be "*brilliant*". When Elio sought for help the second time, Elio once again felt let down by the tutor. Unlike DCR, Elio had some prior knowledge of the content of SM so Elio knew the questions that he needed to ask the tutor. However, the SM assignment required students to use SPSS and this was a new skill for most students, so Elio was a bit lost:

Elio: I've never done SPSS. I've never done statistics before so s/he should tell me like what to expect, s/he should guide me and comeback another time with more questions you see what I mean... I have prior knowledge like in qualitative research. I can interact with previous tutor because I have prior knowledge I can ask questions but this tutor expect us to ask question and to say something about something that we haven't done before ...s/he should like boost the confidence of the students. S/he

should pay attention, s/he should work closely with paper of each student why this hypothesis, why this variable what are your questions, what is your question I think we should really do this but s/he didn't, s/he didn't feel it at all.

Another contrast with Lulu's more positive relationship with her tutors would obviously be Yaseen. In the earlier sections, it has been discussed how Yaseen tied her emotions to the relationship she had with her tutors. Yaseen perceived her tutors positively initially but when she felt the trust was broken, it caused Yaseen to succumb to her natural domain of feeling insecure and perceiving things negatively. Yaseen believed that tutors needed to exude themselves as a professional trustworthy person that students can depend on and trust.

Yaseen gave an example of her experience on one of her modules where she perceived her tutor as "rude" and unprofessional. Yaseen said, not only was the tutor rude and short with her, she also thought that s/he had an unprofessional demeanour, discussing about his/her personal life with his students:

Yaseen: I don't want to talk about life or his/her family or anything [inaudible] in it, I just want content ...we were thinking why isn't s/he friendly to me? I don't want him/her to be friendly with me, I just don't want to feel uncomfortable.. like it's not I want him/her to be friendly and talk to me and discuss and everything, no. I just want him/her to not make me uncomfortable so.. I don't know this is it, I'm being very honest.

The conflict Yaseen encountered with her tutor caused Yaseen to stop seeking the tutor's help. This drove Yaseen to seek help from Youtube videos and purchased books, other than gaining information from her colleagues "who keep go back and forth about almost everything". Yaseen's difficult relationship with her tutors continued in her IM assignment. Yaseen declared that her IM tutor's summative feedback "hurts" her and she regarded this as "dishonesty". When I asked if she reached out to the tutor about this, Yaseen said she did. She said the replied to her but considered her reply as a peace-offering gesture, like "opium". The IM tutor praised Yaseen for being a good student with potential to pursue PhD:

Yaseen: I think it touched him/her because what she sent back to me was.. it really touch my heart. She tries to make things easy although I know it was kind of opium, because you know it was kind of gliding me to reality that won't change (the mark)

It made Yaseen feel good but only for a while because she then realises that the tutor would never change the marks regardless the points Yaseen had raised. Her pessimism continued to thrive with her experience when she summarized that "people don't always like to say good

things about others.”

Yaseen was not the only student who decided to go back to their tutors for some feedback illumination, Elio and Shaima did so as well. Elio and Shaima had mentioned plans to talk to their tutors regarding the dissatisfaction they felt about their assignments. However, Elio never did because he believed that the SM tutor would not care and would not change the marks. Shaima had a more positive outcome where her tutor listened to her feedback needs and explained the mark and the feedback to her regarding the IM assignment. Perhaps, one could view students' persistence about speaking to the tutor after the summative feedback has been released as a futile effort. This would be the case for those students who view the purpose of the meeting as an opportunity to alter or negotiate the mark. However, for participants it could serve as an important gesture to clarify their understanding for future references. Such a notion was voiced by Maria who regarded the formative tutorial as insufficient for a struggling learner like her. In her NEE interview, Maria believed a tutorial after the summative feedback had been released was important for learners who were still grasping university's writing conventions so she can try and improve better with the next assignments.

At this point, although the participants expected the tutors to play their roles, these roles were not necessarily fulfilled because it depended on the one perceiving it. This is because some participants shared the same tutors for the same or different modules and their perception of the feedback and/or tutors was not always consistent. In fact, it is quite a cliché to believe that tutors can become a one size fits all model, offering identical comment and style in tutorials, as obviously, people differ, and disagreement of opinions and/or expectations tend to occur.

Perhaps, the person who best developed her ideas of the possibility for understanding and misunderstanding in tutor-supported learning was Shaima. From the data Shaima's perception was that the feedback giver's character should not lead to over valuing or undervaluing the feedback given. For example, Shaima described one of her tutors as not possessing as pleasant a character as other tutors but for Shaima, what mattered was the tutor's feedback which included the details she sought after, and she was less concerned about the tutor's manners. This was a stark contrast from Yaseen who embedded her perception of the value of the feedback in her relationship with her tutors.

The cohort's general perception of tutors and their varied characteristics played quite a considerable role on how it affected a student upon receiving their feedback. For example, in Shaima's NEE interview, the findings showed Shaima having her confidence reinstated when her NEE tutor who was regarded by the MSc cohort as a 'tough' marker, gave her the same mark as her (perceived) 'generous' DCR and IM tutor. This shows that perhaps, with her experience as a teacher, it helped Shaima tell the difference between constructive feedback and a criticism. It also shows how Shaima had developed her way of perceiving feedback support from her tutors, which was from merely looking at the comments and not getting hung up on the precise words used in the feedback, but rather to understanding how the feedback content can help her develop into a better learner. Unlike Yaseen, Shaima saw her development to be more important than numbers (marks) and she revealed that both in belief and practice she appreciated that she can only know whether she had developed via the feedback given. In Shaima's words in her NEE interview: *"I do not care about marks but I need more detailed feedback to know how well or bad I did."*

5.5.2 Peer feedback and Peer support

In their initial interview, the participants did not mention much about their experience in receiving peer feedback. Although prompted, the participants seemed to prefer to discuss about tutor feedback in general than about peer feedback. Therefore, I believe it is safe to assume that the participants did not experience much peer feedback in prior learning contexts or that they do not see it as formative feedback.

I revisited the topic again during each module interview, which occurred once the MSC was underway, asking the participants if they had considered or used peer feedback. Elio was very eager to share his peer feedback experience with his close friend and MSc colleague, Damia. Elio swapped papers with Damia, proof reading each other's work. For DCR, Elio said Damia would help him revise his writing by warning him it was *"too academic"* for the lay audience task and this initiated Elio to amend his writing so it would suit the target audience. Elio indicated that peer feedback needed to come from someone we trust and has our best interest at heart. In DCR, had he not used peer feedback, he *"would have never changed it (his writing)"*:

Elio: I believe in peer feedback especially if you trust someone and you know their mind set, the way they work .You know they're like not gonna steal your idea or stuff like that because it might happen, so if you trust someone and you have a good academic chemistry you can swap and share feedback.

Even though Elio was very passionate about Damia's feedback, it only happened once for the DCR assignment and never again for other assignments. For SM, Elio only asked for "*pieces of advice*" from Damia. Elio reasoned that everyone in the programme was "*under pressure*" and did not have the time to look at each other's work.

In the final interview Elio maintained his view about peer feedback. Elio added that having peer feedback is "*valuable*" and he benefited from both giving and receiving it. He regarded it as a "*skill*", helping him to communicate better and it helped him "*train*" as future preparation for when he works as an academic one day. Elio said he was slightly disappointed that peer feedback was not widely used in his MSc cohort and he did not believe that it has anything to do with their cultural background. Elio assumed that it was possible that the students felt that other students might steal their ideas.

Yaseen also expressed the same concerns as Elio. She related this to her experience when she believed her idea was 'stolen' by another student. Yaseen assumed these people did not have the mental capacity to think of their own original ideas so they copied other people's ideas and pretended it was their own.

Although Yaseen thought peer feedback has its benefit, she never made use of this throughout her MSc programme. She only had what she described as a short "*peer discussion*" which was done over the phone without actually looking at her peer's work. Yaseen further elaborated that she did not have peer feedback in MSc because she did not trust some of her peers:

Yaseen: I see so many students so full of themselves. They have answers for everything ...and I was just thinking this is not right, this is not what written in the book, this is what not the teacher says. How can you speak so confident, do you know? So you cannot really trust everyone...

Yaseen further strengthened her argument by describing an incident when her peers told her what she was doing for an assignment was "*not acceptable*" and she needed to "*change everything*". Yaseen said it was five days to the deadline and she felt she was "*dying*" that day. Yaseen went to see her tutor who reassured her that Yaseen was right and her peers were wrong. This was why Yaseen thought receiving peer feedback had no standing and depends who is giving it and "*the quality*" of feedback. This suggests that for Yaseen the benefit of

peer feedback lies in what is said rather than the learning affordances of sharing and co-constructing ideas.

However, not all peer feedback focussed on the content only. Lulu for example, had one peer feedback event during her SM assignment. She said it was the first time she discussed her topic with her colleagues and “*wished I did it earlier*”. Lulu said it only took one question from her peer that suddenly made her work appear “*suddenly vague*”, a comment related to the audience of the paper. Hence the peer feedback session benefited Lulu to see how her writing could be perceived as incomplete, causing Lulu to rephrase her sentences.

In the final interview, Lulu was adamant that peer feedback “*makes you think of your topic differently*” and helps you to be open to new discussion. She believed peer feedback was worth the time to ensure a student being on the right track and her peers, being more experienced, could have a better opinion that she might not have considered before:

Lulu: Yeah very helpful especially for me like I told you I'm that kind of person that make believe that no one is perfect so I never see myself perfect so I always see that I need to develop in that and I need to develop...so discussing it with people who are older than you more experienced so it's very helpful.

For Shaima, despite having a positive experience with peer feedback, she surprisingly did not receive a constructive peer feedback experience throughout the programme. She had one opportunity to receive and offer feedback in SM's formative online collaboration where everyone in the programme was given the chance to ask questions and their colleagues would reply to the question. Shaima participated in answering the questions online however Shaima seemed to change her tune when she commented that she was not benefitting from peer feedback. Shaima also wrote about an incident where she was given peer feedback for NEE where her colleagues questioned Shaima's clarity. Shaima however seemed to disagree with their feedback:

My colleague asked questions about some of the points that I thought I covered 'clearly' in the analysis. Anyways, I tried to revise the analysis according to the feedback I received but funnily enough, I changed nothing! I did not find any confusion or missing points that my colleague highlighted.

(NEE Blog Entry)

This seemed to indicate that Shaima perceived feedback as something that always needed to be acted upon, instead of revealing ideas that may otherwise be implicit and did not require change. In fact, it was not just Shaima but most of the participants of this study were anxious

about what their peers might say, instead of looking at the bigger picture of the benefits of the culture of discussion and sharing ideas. This means, that the participants seemed to fail to see the peer feedback activities as part of learning, an avenue for practicing criticality among colleagues who were of similar ability. Moreover, certain participants could feel overwhelmed by the burden of study and so felt physical meetings to be “*time consuming*” and preferred to answer questions online via a Whatsapp group set up for their cohort. Shaima said she was not against peer feedback but she had her reservations. So Shaima seemed to have less faith in peer review the further into the programme she went.

Of all the participants above, I found Maria’s experience to be the most compelling. Maria sought for peer feedback. Even in the final interview, she was determined that peer feedback had many benefits and it should not only be limited to academic writing. Maria said peer feedback can help students see another person’s perspective and the value of each page written, whether it was effective writing or not. Maria added that peer feedback can aid progress and she viewed constructive criticism to be important for a student’s own development.

As optimistic as Maria responded, when I asked her if she had any peer feedback in MSc, her face fell and she shook her head. According to Maria, she did not have a single friend on the MSc and when she tried to talk to her colleagues, they did not seem to understand Maria. Maria tried posting on the SM online task page but “*they do not return my message*”. When I asked Maria if she used the whatsapp group medium, once again she gave me a half-hearted smile and nodded. Maria said she texted in the group about one of the modules and asked for clarification. Maria shook her head and said “*sadly, nobody responded*”.

Maria blamed her English language ability to be the root cause of this. Maria said the majority of her colleagues were female from the Middle East and they communicated in Arabic. Maria said not only could she not speak Arabic, her ability to communicate in the English language was so poor that miscommunication had occurred, so Maria preferred to keep everything to herself.

Perhaps, another reason for why feedback can be seen as beneficial links to the relationship between the participants and the feedback giver. In the findings above, we can conclude that only Elio and Lulu gained a positive experience with peer feedback on the MSc while the other three participants encountered difficulties in establishing peer relationships. Maria, for

example, did not have a positive experience because of her inability to communicate well in English and not because she chose not to participate. Maria's inability to communicate well also resulted in her being unable to have any friends at all, causing her to feel "very lonely" throughout the MSc programme. Maria said the Arabs, Chinese and even local students only hung out with their own. Being the only Turkish student, Maria was left on her own.

Shaima who had started out optimistic in the initial interview said she did not get along well with some of her peers. She compared her peers from her previous MA programme with her current MSc colleagues and she was not pleased. Shaima said her previous colleagues were helpful and often shared collaborative discussions, often looking for solutions. However, according to Shaima, her current MSc colleagues were more interested at looking for and circling problems instead of solving them, causing Shaima to detach herself from her MSc colleagues:

Shaima: ...but this year I'm totally isolating myself, I'm trying to.. but people keeps coming up for me. I try to, I'm trying to isolate myself socially because I'm not benefiting, their mind sets are directed towards looking at problems. It really hurt, no.. not hurt me, tires me, burden me you know. I'm the type of person that I don't really get affected in a way but things starts to get gloomy and I hate it yeah.

This was why Shaima believed that how feedback was perceived would depend on who was giving the feedback. Because of the absence of tone and facial expression perhaps, according to Shaima some people might perceive peer feedback negatively. Shaima also reflected that sometimes feedback *had* to be given as part of the module's task. Shaima gave an instance in NEE online task when her feedback was not received well by another colleague:

Shaima: ...she thought I was criticising her piece other than giving feedback.. so depends really on the situation and on the person as they want (feedback) or not because they are only doing it because of requirement of NEE to do online you know.

Shaima also shared more positive thoughts about peer feedback. Shaima said, by reading her colleagues' questions and answers she was able to identify with her peers and this helped her think deeper before leaving feedback, to ensure she was leaving a meaningful one. Shaima also expressed certain feelings of animosity with certain behaviour displayed by her colleagues that Shaima deemed as 'inappropriate'. The behaviour included buttering up to tutors which Shaima described with utter disgust. Shaima said such behaviour should not be tolerated and yet the tutors were letting it happen which Shaima perceived was unfair to other students, provoking hostility among peers. Shaima also believed that her one of her tutors'

behaviour was “*pure biasness*”. Shaima found out from her colleagues, who were not the tutor’s tutees that this tutor had helped them with their assignments, showing how an informal culture of students’ background discussion can impact a students’ learning and their perception on their tutors and/or feedback:

Shaima: When I asked him/her a simple question during the meeting ... s/he said yeah I cannot answer this detailed question because it means I’m helping you rather than the others, and that’s not fair for the other students. I was like ok. I expect the tutor to deal this way with all of the students but the three of them (the non-tutees), they’re not..because the tutor likes the students. When the tutorials [sic] went to him/her with questions and she answers, but not for us, him/her tutorials [sic]

Yaseen also did not experience a pleasant encounter with her MSc colleagues. Yaseen described her tumultuous relationship with her peers as full of deceit. She also labelled them “*unethical*” and gave an example where her colleagues would sign in for their absent friends. Yaseen also experienced her colleagues giving her false information that at times Yaseen was gullible enough to believe. Yaseen was visibly upset when she talked about her colleagues, staring at me, without blinking nor pausing. In the end, Yaseen explained that she was upset because she does not live by that code, where one lies just to look superior among your colleagues. Yaseen also disagreed with the way some of her colleagues discuss certain issues with such confidence, without verifying their source. What is revealed in these examples is a culture between students that may well go unnoticed by tutors but creates a hierarchy of access to support.

In summary, it can be assumed that the participants of this study saw peer feedback as a form of product instead as a process that could develop their criticality. The participants were more concerned about whether a comment was right or wrong, or about stolen ideas instead of learning opportunities. Additionally, good relationships are needed to be established in order for the participants to develop a meaningful quality learning experience.

5.5.3 International students’ need for academic writing support

Several participants have expressed a call for more support for international students. They felt that the support that was made available did not support the academic ‘transition’ phase but was motivated towards the final production—summative assignment. Maria advocated that international students struggling with the language barrier like her should be given more than the usual half an hour for the one-on-one meetings. Maria believed that with the extra

support, international students could develop quicker in terms of their skills proficiency. Although Maria had on her own initiative attended a pronunciation course, she had to cut it short due to her frantic academic schedule. She also sought help from the university's language centre but still felt it was not enough as she was given a limited time for the consultation. Lulu also reported the reluctance of some tutors on further supporting international students beyond the class. Lulu said although they have mentioned their struggles with the MSc director, no real action was taken. It was only when one of the IM tutors heard about their distress that an extra session was arranged to help solve the problem.

Shaima revealed the same incident regarding her MSc cohort's woes with writing the dissertation as well. She felt that although they were given an hour workshop on how to tackle writing the dissertation with criticality, she felt it was not enough. She argued that an hour workshop cannot fix a problem that required development such as academic writing. She suggested that perhaps the university should consider breaking it into a few courses instead of just as a one-time workshop so international students can benefit more from it. With the 'complaints' from the participants, I asked them why would they not just go back to their individual tutor for extra help? Shaima was quick to reply that she did not want to appear dependent on the tutor. Furthermore, Shaima said she was a professional, being a teacher herself, hence, she respected whatever allocation of time was given to her. Furthermore, she did not want to appear "*annoying*" as she understood her tutors have a lot in their plates too.

Maria, on the other hand, was reluctant to do so because she felt embarrassed about her communicative competency. She revealed there were a few instances when the tutor misunderstood her questions because she had expressed them wrongly. This led Maria to feel self-conscious about her ability to communicate her concerns and so she reverted to working on her own.

5.5.4 Proof reading support

There have been a number of comments about proof readers. Throughout the findings, it is safe to say that they play quite a major role in the participants' writing experience, particularly for Maria, Shaima and Lulu. Yaseen and Elio however, did not find the need to employ proof readers.

Yaseen elaborated that in all her assignment feedback, her tutors' comments were not related to her writing skills. Instead her writing was "*the most positive*" of all her comments citing their remarks such as "*you write well*", "*well-organized*" and "*well-written*". This gave Yaseen an indication that she had no problem with her writing.

Elio did not employ the use of proof readers because "*it did not cross my mind*". Elio added this was perhaps because he was too busy thinking and editing his own assignments that he did not think about sending it to be proofread. Furthermore, with his hectic work schedule, he did not think he had enough time allowed for his work to be sent to proof readers anyway. In the end, he proof read his writing himself and was glad that he did not have to spend money paying for proof reading services.

For the rest of the participants, they did not mind having to pay for proof readers. They argued that employing them can give them certain benefits that could be lacking from their tutor or peers. One of the obvious benefits according to Shaima, was that she need not worry about her grammar and sentence structure because the proof reader "*had taken care of that*". This allowed Shaima to give her full attention to the content. Maria was also an avid proof reader user in all her assignments. However, Maria changed her proof reader three times in order to suit her needs. She said she liked using proof readers because, like Shaima, it eased her burden by giving more focus on the content and criticality of the assignment instead.

Lulu also saw proof readers as someone who can assess her clarity in writing. The proof reader would tell her if her expression was clear enough or if a change of sentence structure was needed in order to achieve her message's objectives. Lulu's only regret was that she did not send her work to be proof read soon enough as she only sent it for her IM and NEE assignment.

Lulu also added that having a proof reader was like having an extra pair of eyes. Lulu gave an example on how she struggled with connecting ideas which was pointed out even though she has done her best in demonstrating so. The proof reader was able to pin point to Lulu where it was exactly that Lulu lacked connectivity. This helped Lulu realize that she was not expressing herself as clearly as a native speaker would and noticing that she had the tendency to reveal her message quite late in the paragraph. Lulu concluded that having a proof reader

while studying in the UK “*is a must*” for international students to avoid problems with writing expressions.

Having used proof reading services for all her assignments, Shaima also mentioned that it helped her keep track of her writing development. Shaima shared that initially for the DCR and SM assignments, she would receive many comments about grammatical mistakes and her paragraphs being shifted around. However, for her IM and NEE assignments, Shaima noticed that there was less comment on these aspects, only minor mistakes such as use of vocabulary. This, for Shaima, was an indication that she can finally write coherently and that her writing skills were indeed improving.

The three participants did not select their proof reader casually. Instead they had certain criteria that needed to be met which is understandable given the amount they needed to pay for their services. Lulu appeared to prefer British proof readers. She specifically chose British proof readers because she wanted to adhere to British academic writing conventions. However, Lulu was cautious that although her proof reader praised Lulu that her paper was a strong, excellent piece, she still would not trust the proof reader because they were paid for their services so they would say anything in order to keep the job coming.

Shaima on the other hand, specified that her proof reader needed to possess a PhD as this was the writing standard that she wanted to match. Maria had a more troublesome experience with her proof readers in that she ended up with three different proof readers throughout her assignments. Her first proof reader was British but seemed to not understand Maria’s writing well. Her second proof reader was Turkish who she still had problem with for not being able to deliver specifically what Maria wanted and the last one was a British-French lady who she seemed to finally get along well with.

Although using proof readers seemed common on the MSc, there was uncomfortable chatter on how ethical certain proof readers can be. Although the participants’ proof readers were ethical and only edited the participants’ writing and not the content, there were whispers of other students using proof readers that were providing them with more than writing advice. Even though there is no hard evidence, there were rumours that certain students had their proof reader not only check their grammar and sentence structure but also help them with their content. I was not sure which proof-reading services would do so but then there is an

abundance of such services on the internet, coaxing desperate students to have their essay written by so-called professionals with full confidentiality. This caused uneasiness and a feeling of unfairness with certain students and this made certain participants wonder if the university was even aware about this issue or that they were aware but turned a blind eye as the university's income to some extent depended on international students coming to the university to study.

5.5.5 Sample essays as a writing reference

The wish to have sample essays has also been voiced by the participants at several points during the study. This is not a practice currently offered on the MSC. Shaima was consistent about her opinion about sample essays from the beginning of the study to the end. She believed that sample essays are essential for students attempting certain tasks for the first time. She also strengthened her argument that although the tutors talked them through some of the assignments, she is a firm believer in telling versus showing:

Shaima: Yeah because it help you know when you tell me a triangle has three sides blablabla and looks like that and so on.. I wouldn't get it the same way when I see it, when I see a triangle drawn in front of me. I think that's the reason when you see example of helps, helps to know what they (students) need.

Shaima also mentioned that perhaps tutors might worry that if samples were given, students could copy them. Shaima did not believe it was the case with adult postgraduate students such as herself as they were mature enough to understand the need to be original and to avoid the danger of plagiarism. Shaima said sample essays were simply guidelines to show possible writing sequence of topics and learn what sort of terms were often mentioned.

Elio also saw the importance of sample essays to “*model*” on and he has spoken about this in a few interviews. He said sample essays provide students with “*concrete*” rather than “*abstract*” ideas on what sort of standard of writing they needed to display. Elio recalled reading one of his IM tutors' articles and he took notes on how writers write and show their arguments critically. Elio believed he wrote more effectively after that:

Elio: I just saw the way s/he, you know, the way s/he approaches his/her writing basically so I just I was like ahh ok so this is how you critic, this is how you analyse, you contrast argument and stuff like that so I learn from the book, tutor's articles and of course from tutor's feedback it was really good.

Elio also commented that his struggle with APA referencing in DCR was because he had never encountered internal citations before and was only familiar with external

bibliographies. This was why, according to Elio, essay samples and models were important for international students who were new to the UK education system, so they can use them as a writing guide.

Lulu also highlighted the importance of having sample essays as it helped students understand what is meant by writing critically. She said the whole MSc cohort were baffled with the notion of criticality, however, Lulu felt if only students read sample essays, they will realize that everyone writes critically. The only problem for students was how to “*express and organize ideas correctly*” in order to demonstrate such criticality.

However, according to Lulu not all sample essays were useful. She gave an example of an SM essay sample which Lulu said was very poorly written. Lulu claimed that the sample paper contained mistakes and gave incorrect tests and even sub-headings and this made students “*lose trust with the university*”. Yaseen also shared a similar opinion about a SM sample assignment being erroneous. She labelled them as “*really bad*” and thought her SM assignment was much better written. Perhaps, this was why Yaseen was confused as to why her marks did not reach a distinction when the supposedly ‘merit standard’ essay sample was written badly.

Maria also shared her confusion about the SM essay sample as being “*incomplete*”, with no mention about piloting which was essential in the SM assignment. She said because the essay sample served as a guideline for students, they would assume that it was a good sample essay. However, to be given such a bad sample was misleading to international students like her. Furthermore, Maria said it would also be beneficial if the tutors could provide them with both good and bad essay samples so students can use them as their writing yardstick.

Tutors’ inability to confirm the standard of the essay model was also a concern mentioned by Lulu. She claimed that tutors should tell the students what kind of sample essay they had to work with. Instead, she said the tutors were vague and said the samples “*need not be a pass*” essay material. Lulu argued that she was lucky that she could spot a bad sample from the good ones but there are students who had the tendency to plainly see model essays as good essays.

Lulu said that perhaps, if the tutors were not obliged to notify the students with the standard of the sample essay, the least they could do was go through the sample with them as one of their IM tutors did with them. Lulu said their IM tutor took an hour discussing the sample:

Lulu: ...the tutor shows you how to pan out that section and some ideas but the way the tutor handled the module, the sample sorry, s/he discussed it with us and give us different opinion on how we can do it differently and some of the thing we didn't have, to put in our writing ..so discussion comes first for me.

Shaima also mentioned about the benefits of discussing sample essays. Shaima recalled a one hour session given to their cohort on writing the dissertation. She said that it was advantageous to see different types of writing as well as how to demonstrate criticality. However, Shaima claimed that the session should not be limited to only an hour session, especially when it was the first time for many international students to include criticality in their writing.

Maria towards the end of the study expressed her dissatisfaction about the inconsistency of the provision of essay samples. She said, only SM provided an essay sample though unfortunately, it was not a good one. Maria kept repeating how important essay samples were to aid her thinking and writing. She said having essay samples gave her examples of certain writing expectations.

In spite of all the positive reviews about having sample essays, Yaseen did not seem to share the same point of view as her colleagues. Yaseen professed her dislike for sample essays. She said sample essays “*terrified*” her as it could “*restrict*” her scope of thinking. Furthermore, Yaseen did not see the point of looking at the sample essays as she felt she could write better. She also said it did not matter to her whether she looked at the sample essays or not because what was actually important was what the tutor wanted to see. She revisited her NEE assignment as an example where she believed her NEE tutor had a specific idea in mind on how her writing should be written regardless of the sample essay the class was given.

According to Yaseen, a former MSc student from an earlier cohort had also shared their previous essays with her. However, Yaseen opted to only have a peek without fully reading them. When I asked whether she regarded the essay samples as good samples, she said that it was a subjective question. For Yaseen, the writers were Non-native English speakers (NNES) and for them to write such an essay was what Yaseen considered to be very good, given their

writing status. However, Yaseen believed Native English Speakers (NES) might not think so as they have their own writing convention and standard. Comparing Yaseen's answers to the other participants, Yaseen's critical evaluation about essay samples seem to show her critical thinking ability and she possess these critical skills without herself noticing. Perhaps, had Yaseen applied the same cognitive exercise in her assignments and writing, it would help Yaseen portray her critical ability better.

5.6 A story of Cultural Difference

A theme that emerged from the analysis was that some participants would relate certain experience in comparison with their own culture. This relation to culture is an important factor in how international students try to find common ground between their new experiences and their own culture before adapting to the newer academic culture in the UK and many described the cultural difference in a positive light. Elio, for example had described in detail about the learning culture in Algeria and compared it to the UK. Not only did he describe the difference of physical infrastructures to accommodate learning here in the UK, but he also described the positive energy that he could capture from his new learning environment.

He said back in Algeria, being studious was considered to be a “*feminine*” trait. Elio considered his university colleagues in Algeria as “*lazy*” and “*taking education for granted*” because of the free education they were given. Therefore, Elio was pleasantly surprised when he got to mingle with like-minded people who strived for academic satisfaction.

Elio: I don't know maybe the university culture here, culture of the university is different I don't know it just it has good vibes you just feel like each person has a goal so they join university for a reason and they are not here you know to waste their time ...they're here to study and then you're here to study and to create this chemistry, you meet people and they become your friend and they become your family literally.

There were also comments on culture pertaining to criticality in academic writing. Shaima had disclosed that people from her culture found it difficult to be critical. She elaborated that she was raised in a culture and academic climate that did not promote criticality, although she believed that she was much better now than before she came into the UK:

Shaima: ...because we don't have that concept of criticality. We students usually only receive the information without arguing with it, so criticality would be considered as criticism and for me to come

here and learn all over about how to be critical though I speak my mind, I thought that I speak my mind, I thought that I was a bit better than my peers back home in Kuwait.

Shaima said much of the problem with the absence of critical attention in her home country was tied to power relations. She emphasized that only someone that is a figure of authority was able to demonstrate criticality in any given situation and Shaima's stance would not be heard because she was "just a teacher" and "criticality is considered to be criticism (sic)". This was why perhaps, Shaima strictly "respected" the designated tutorial time she was given and did not seek further help from her tutors.

Shaima also revealed that PhD certificates were easily available for purchase in Kuwait. Shaima commented that she could have chosen the easy way of procuring a certificate instead of spending her own money studying in the UK, "but I wanted to learn properly..to be a proper academic". Perhaps this was why Shaima voiced her disgust about some of her colleagues who are sycophants in their engagements with the tutors which she interpreted as having the intention of attaining better or extra marks. Shaima elaborated that they would ask tutors to join them at the university café to an "innocent chat" or bring coffee for the tutors during break time. When asked if these students acquire better marks, Shaima nodded, clearly displaying her irritation of the "culture" that her colleagues were bringing into the UK. Shaima protested that these colleagues were given extra time for counsel about the assignments, disrespecting not only the tutors but other people in the MSc programme who did not agree with such gestures:

Shaima: It's not fair. Even if not you are not being biased when marking someone's paper, but you are being biased when they asked you question and you explain formally something related to dissertation or the assignment. That's not fair to the other students. We respect the lecturers' time and we're respecting the professional culture here... Do I have to start buying the tutors coffee? Or should meet them in their offices and play dumb)? Should I cry in front of them (like other students did)?

Another point Shaima brought up was how in spite of being in the UK for almost two years, she still had trouble adjusting to her new learning environment. Shaima still felt the resistance to question her tutors face to face as she was culturally raised to "obey". This, according to Shaima was often somewhat of a contradiction in herself as she was quite vocal in giving her opinions:

Shaima: Both (at home) and then in school you have to obey you teachers and mostly you silent until the teacher asked you comment or answer about something.

The importance of culture obviously helps shape how the participants perceive and adapt to the UK learning culture. For some students the learning culture that they grew up in can make criticality or questioning a tutor a difficult task, thus tutors need to understand the international students' academic struggles.

5.7 A story of an NNEST writer

The data showed some participants relating their identity as an NNEST to their 'limited' English language competency. This was especially brought up repeatedly by Maria as she believed her limited language skills stopped her from writing well and contributed to her academic performance. This section will explore Maria's concern as well as how participants related their strength with English language to not only writing skills but other skills necessary to become an academic.

5.7.1 Importance of Mastery of English

Throughout the findings chapter, Maria is less visible than the other participants nor have I used many of her direct quotes. This was because Maria had a hard time expressing herself, trying to combine the right word with the right intention of speech. I did not use many of her direct quotes because when written, it was not exactly grammatical and it might not make sense to readers who were not present during the interviews where Maria used gestures and pointed at certain words on her mobile phone in the attempt to make her speech clear. Hence, I was selective with choosing Maria's direct quotes.

Unlike other participants, Maria might seem to hold back when talking about certain issues. However, Maria was very passionate when speaking about the importance of the English language. According to Maria, mastering the English language and being competent at it is "*really important*" more so than demonstrating criticality. Maria said she experienced this first hand throughout the MSc where she believed that the language barrier in reading, writing and speaking contributed to her being unable to follow certain topics or write as effectively as she would have wanted. Maria was nevertheless able to use the analogy of her father who had hearing problems to represent the problem. According to Maria, hearing and thinking are closely connected just like the English language and criticality. If you cannot hear properly, it could impair your understanding about a certain topic. She said the same goes for writing, if a student was not competent at using the language, it could impair the

student's thinking or writing skills for that matter because s/he could not fully understand not only the language, but the rhetoric of writing as well. In its simplest form, Maria summarized that being smart or critical would not mean a thing if a student could not express it effectively and succinctly, especially at postgraduate level.

Elio had a similar view to Maria, believing that mastery of the English language was not limited to writing only but also to reading, listening and speaking as well. *"Everything is interrelated"* said Elio. He said he witnessed certain students who passed their assignments but could barely utter a comprehensible sentence. Perhaps, according to Elio these students had outside help from proof readers. He believed that good speakers can translate their skills into writing as well:

Elio: Well you can't just be crap at speaking but you're Shakespeare when it comes to writing. Does it make sense?

Elio's unrelenting notion of speech as predicting writing ability was supported by his idea about research. He stated that even if you produce an exceptional research paper, you would at some point talk about it in workshops, seminars or conferences. Hence, according to Elio this was where practice played a major role. Elio, throughout the study had stressed the importance of practice over and over again and this was no different when it came to his views related to mastering the English language and skills. Still focusing on the idea of interrelatedness, Elio said practice, would not mean much if one failed to understand what was being discussed:

Elio: I mean of course yeah if you understand English there are some words, some terminology that you have to master and you have to understand before actually practice in it, you see what I mean? You have to understand what research is, you have to understand what interpretivism is for example. You have to understand when the lecturer explain something, this involve the mastery of English you see.

Elio concluded that English language mastery is crucial before coming into postgraduate programmes such as MSc or PhD. He recapitulated that these postgraduate programmes focused on research and involved reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in order for a student to be able to communicate his/her ideas efficiently and show criticality. This notion was also expressed by Lulu. Lulu also added that a student needed to be fully competent in the language at this postgraduate level to show their ability to write in a succinct and concise way, therefore using the right academic vocabulary and linguistic features was imperative.

Like all participants, Yaseen and Shaima also agreed about the importance of the English language. However, the focus of our conversation quickly shifted towards the relationship between speaking and writing. Like Elio, Yaseen and Shaima questioned certain students' ability to pass the assignments, some doing better than those who can competently communicate in English when the said students could barely speak the language.

For Yaseen, academic writing requires a student to be competent in the language which meant that they do not need only to write enough, but also be able to write something worthwhile in order to be recognised as an academic. Therefore, it is not surprising that some participants in this study reveal some kind of dependence on the proof-reading services. For someone with doubts about their own English language competence, proof readers can help remove their linguistic concerns so they can concentrate on other areas of academic writing. This dependence made Yaseen feel bewildered and uneasy. It baffled Yaseen how someone who could not speak the language wrote so well. Yaseen answered her own question when she supposed the proof reader that many students employed was the reason behind these students' success. Yaseen denied that she was jealous of their achievements, but she questioned its fairness to students who could not afford to pay a proof reader and Yaseen wondered what the university's stand was on this.

Shaima on the other hand, did not see writing and reading skills to relate to speaking skills. Shaima said she had witnessed her colleagues, who speak little English but can read and write well. She said for her, writing is all about grammatical attributes in making sound sentences and making ideas logical. In short, writing requires grammatical knowledge and speaking did not have to be as grammatical. For the latter, what was important was the message being communicated and not the syntax that expressed it and in saying so, Shaima saw speaking skill to be separate from writing skill. This distinction is interesting as it implies a belief that linguistic choices characterise writing while semantic choices characterise speech.

However, Shaima also argued that a language is not only about the "*words and letters*" but also the way you think. Shaima said she avoided even "*translating in her head*" and tried to think using the English language in her assignments. This suggests that Shaima's view of progress includes the idea that as her own competency develops there may be some forms of expression and ways of communicating that perhaps only exist in a writer's second language. That practicing academic writing in L2 means there will be skills and concepts that are less

accessible or more difficult to articulate in first language. Therefore, Shaima felt it was important for tutors to understand the struggles NNES faced having to adapt into how their tutors (who were mostly native speakers) would think about certain topics or structure of writing after many years of writing in their own native language:

Shaima: Especially when your mother language is totally different than the second language or third language, in my case, and also because we always had the idea that we have always been told to write formally and using many words, bigger word, bigger vocab you know.

Maria had a similar view as Shaima as she had experienced trouble adapting to the English language writing structure. Throughout the MSc, Maria said that she still wrote according to the Turkish language writing structure and she believe this had cost a lot of marks.

Maria also admitted that problems with English language took a toll not only in her grades but also her self-confidence. Maria said she felt inferior compared to her colleagues who were “*mostly English teachers*” and struggled to communicate with them so that in the end, she dismissed the idea of talking to her colleagues at all for fear of being misunderstood and to save herself from the embarrassment.

In this final interview, Maria said she thinks that the MSc would have been easier on her had she improved her English language competency before enrolling in the programme. Although she tried to improve, she said it cannot be done drastically as it involved a lot of practice and trial and error. She also recognised her shortcomings in her writing ability, however she did not believe these shortcomings affected her ability to think critically and this was what frustrated Maria—her inability to show her critical side because of her failure in expressing it in the English language:

Maria: I cannot use complicated tenses and I cannot understand clearly when I read it, I don't use complicated things (vocabulary) but I don't think so it affected criticality, no I don't think so...I know I'm very lack on English I know, I know I want to improve but step by step not only one time.

5.7.2 Being a Non-native speaker of English

Being a Native English speakers (NES) or a Non-native English speakers (NNES) was another important topic that participants addressed. In the final interview, we discussed how well they compare their writing to NES. Not one of their responses corresponded with one another, giving a fascinating insight about NNESs' ideas about themselves and NESs.

Lulu stated that no matter how competent an NNES was, s/he will always look up to NES as the owner of the language. As an NNES, being evaluated by NES, she could not help but feel insecure about her writing expression and clarity. Lulu believed that an NNES can never get away from being assessed on their language ability. Lulu said never mind the tutors, her NES colleagues' comments on her online activity specifically focusses on her writing and not the content. This made Lulu feel doubtful about her abilities, no matter how much she has progressed.

Maria felt as an NNES who had just started learning the language, she felt the disadvantage. She repeated that she should perhaps have prepared herself better before coming into the British academic context. Maria felt if it was reversed, where a British student who had only learnt Turkish language for a year, came and studied in Turkey, s/he would also encounter the same difficulties as Maria.

Yaseen on the other hand did not feel that NES are more superior to NNES like her. She claimed that she can write as well, if not better than NES, as long as she has enough opportunity to practice it. Therefore, she insisted that to compare an NNES' writing to an NES was not a fair question. She explained that to compare an NES who has been writing in their mother tongue from a young age and so obviously has more advantages than NNES like her who was still new to academic writing was merely to point out the benefits of practice. Yaseen added that tasks like reading critically that could take an NES thirty minutes could take four hours for Yaseen to finish as she had to understand not only the words and content, but context as well as to simultaneously think critically. In the end, Yaseen maintained, although NNESs are disadvantaged in certain areas such as reading, they can still write as well as NESs or better. The additional commitment of time required by NNES might be viewed as an advantage over the course if a year.

Shaima had a different view about this issue. For Shaima, English language and academic writing were two separate things. Shaima did not believe that just because a student was an NES, s/he would be able to write academically well or even critically, for that matter. Shaima narrated a story about her MEd NES colleague from the USA who was barely passing her assignments because her colleague was struggling with writing critically. Shaima rationalized that perhaps, like her, her colleague was transitioning from the American university writing convention to the British university writing convention and some can grasp it faster than

others. Shaima gave an amusing metaphorical view that every learner was a driver who will not know the course of the road. Shaima said everyone had the same destination but each one will have their own journey, where some will complete the journey faster than others with no hurdles and some may complete it more slowly, and some may not make it if they do not know how to remove their obstacles.

Elio had a similar view to Shaima. Although Elio never had the chance to look at his NES colleague's writing, he said he has heard them speak about their own writing difficulties pertaining to academic writing and criticality. Apart from that, Elio declined to comment as he did not want to give the wrong assumptions about the challenges his NES colleagues might face.

5.8 A story of Externalization

Throughout the MSc course, there was a tendency for participants to externalize their problems where they see the course, or the tutor or the assignment as the focus of the problem. In the previous sections, I have discussed Lulu's earlier attitude of blaming tutors' inefficiency as the cause of her lack of progress rather than her own inexperience with academic writing. I have explored Lulu's and Yaseen's perception of the 'flawed' university marking system that contributed to them failing to achieve their desired marks. Additionally for Yaseen, her relationship with her tutors played a major role on how she interpreted her marks and progress.

One explanation for this tendency might be that this is a consequence of how overwhelmed the MSc students felt. Yaseen is perhaps the most strenuous in her expressions of being overwhelmed with her new academic environment while continually questioning her learning experience. It also brings up the issue about international students' ability to be autonomous and independent when studying in the UK University, without relying too much on their tutors. The issue here is one of balance between offering necessary additional support and being so supportive that independence is compromised.

Students were quite pro-active in pushing for changes to the course and how it was delivered there was a mention of a petition for the removal of an assignment at least once during the study. I felt that this was an important event as it shows how some participants externalize their problem to the extent of demanding that assignments be removed. It is also important to

showcase when externalization of concerns grows, causing certain international students to feel overwhelmed with the amount of assignments they were required to complete and feeling that assignments that carried no marks are tedious as they had no apparent contribution in their studies. Thus making marks more important than the learning experience, or concluding that the only valuable learning is learning that supports the assignment. This however needs to be viewed in light of the importance the 60% benchmark has for these students.

Elio was the first participant to bring up the topic about assignment removal. He said that some international students in their MSc cohort had come up with the petition to remove certain assignments from the programme so they can concentrate more on their dissertation. The removal suggested assignments that carried no marks should be removed such as online tasks and presentations. Although Elio disagreed with the notion, he disclosed that the reasons for the petition were because some students felt overwhelmed and he believed that this was due to the students' own failure with time management and self-organization:

Elio: I finished my dissertation. It doesn't mean it's impossible. Everything is possible if you are clear in your head about where you want to reach and if you're organized, that's the key and of course, if you know what you're doing but if you just complain and have negative attitude you're not gonna reach further. Trust me.

Elio also believe that cultural background played an important role on how international students perceive assignments. According to Elio, Arabs such as himself were not trained to be critical and this was a novel idea in their MSc cohort hence, many were struggling to grasp its essence. Combined with the workload in the form of formative and summative assignments, online tasks and presentation as well as attending lectures, Elio believed this made his colleagues feel overwhelmed. Elio added that most of the students who proposed the petition were people who had family commitments in the UK therefore, dividing time for university work and family could be an added stress.

Shaima concurred with the idea that cultural background was a key driver in the students' petition. Shaima said people from the “*Gulf countries*” saw the British education system as rigid, critical and intensive which was new for many of the MSc students. This was why Shaima assumed many students from the Gulf countries would prefer to further their studies in the USA, because they will acquire their qualifications with less academic tension than they have received in the UK. Shaima was against the petition citing that “*it was not fair*” for

other students who wanted to learn everything, whether given marks or not, that the programme had to offer. Shaima believed that although it was an overwhelming experience, the skills and knowledge learned was what mattered the most.

Yaseen, on the other hand, was a supporter of the petition. She said the reason why the petition started was not to remove assignments but rather to have them reduced. She explained this was because many students feel that it was a waste of their time and effort to work on assignments that carried no marks. Furthermore, Yaseen thought that time ‘wasted’ on these assignments could be better used to learn about things that students actually want to learn about. Yaseen gave an example where they were given five sessions on NVivo and data analysis. She said she was “*frustrated*” because those were not topics they wanted to learn deeper about.

Another possibility for the cause of the petition was because of how the students felt about the timing of the assignments and online activities. Throughout the interviews conducted many participants expressed their concerns about their submission deadlines for online tasks, formative assignments and summative assignments being so close together in Term two. Participants like Shaima, Elio and Yaseen all confessed not to have prepared for either IM or NEE assignment properly as they coincided with their dissertation tasks submission and were overwhelmed with the online group work that they needed to do. The online activities being ungraded added further stress on some participants such as Lulu:

Lulu: To submit something for the first semester in the second semester, that's a disaster and work on your dissertation at the same time and to do online activities, something that I will not be graded on.

The assignment timings caused students like Shaima to send in their work with an “*as long as I pass*” attitude and it also took a toll on one particular participant’s purpose for learning, Yaseen. Yaseen claimed that Term two was more grade-oriented and most work was really “*reading, learning and writing*” but at a more superficial level. Yaseen compared that Term One where “*she read just to learn*” but in Term two, “*she read to write for assignments*”.

In the end, according to Elio, he tried to be neutral about the situation. He tried to resolve the issue within the MSc cohort but somehow the matter was escalated to the university. Elio said due to insufficient paperwork and procedure, the petition never passed. This suggests externalization is an inevitable aspect of student experience and is unique to each student.

5.9 A story of individual change

Throughout the study, some of the participants would communicate their awareness of the changes and development they were experiencing. Some participants would share quick comments about how they felt they had changed as an academic, as a person or as a writer. Because they had made such disclosures, I decided to discuss it further with the participants in the final interview. I will not discuss Lulu however, because I believe a lot about her change as an academic and as a person has been revealed and hope to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Shaima said the obvious change that she has perceived about herself was how she had changed as a writer. She believed that her change as an academic writer was a gradual journey, although if she was to compare it to her MEd writing experience, she would view it as a drastic change. Shaima believed that her self-confidence and knowledge of criticality had developed tremendously. She recognized that she was able to write with more clarity and more coherently.

Shaima said she understood that she had changed in her academic writing when she realized how different her academic writing approach was this time. She said she spent more time reading towards the end of MSc and trying to explicitly show her critical writing. She was also adamant that marks did not mean progress but “*receiving invitation for the PhD is a sign of your progress*”. Furthermore, she revealed that assignments that used to simply take her a week to finish now took her longer because she had more kinds of input to consider:

Shaima: ...to write assignments in one week and that was you know I consider that to be an achievement, but now I am spending a lot of time. I know the writing approach is different because here it totally about the research method ... here you see the development in yourself but there (MEd) I'm not seeing any.

Maria on the other hand, saw her change to be in the form of not only her English language ability, but her knowledge about research as well. Maria said she had thought that she was an average writer when she first started the MSc course, but now she realized that she was nowhere near average. Regardless, of the pre-session course that she took that had helped to make her feel more confident to write academically, she deemed the exposure as insufficient for international writers like her. The positive change that she could see was that she said she

can communicate better both verbally and in writing and that she “*knows more English words and academic terms*”.

Elio’s academic change was also similar to Maria’s. Elio viewed his change mainly in terms of his enriched research knowledge as well as his improved ability as an academic writer. Elio said he had changed so much from his academic experience in Algeria where he “*took things for granted*”. In the MSc, he understood the need for the presence of authority in his writing and to be critical of the minutest details in order to showcase his academic ability:

Elio: I think my writing develop because when I used to write example back home in Algeria it was really superficial ... I’ve just learnt when you critic something your voice matters so I included my voice like for example in the reflection, the point that I raised is that should researchers be reflective or reflexive and there like this difference I learn between in the research area and some researchers you know just used the terms interchangeably but actually they’re not the same even though their ultimate goal is to reflect but both you see what I mean?

Elio elaborated further that his change was not only concerned with being more academic but it affected him personally as well. Elio felt that he learned to “*appreciate life more and I just appreciate people as well*”. This was because Elio felt that previously he had not been properly supported academically nor was he motivated socially. The new learning environment gave him the academic support that he had been craving for and a group of friends who finally had the same academic purpose to strive to do well academically which would not be viewed as a feminine trait. Elio believed doing the MSc was one of the best decisions he has made both academically and that it helped him “*find himself*”.

Despite the fact that most of my participants revealed positive change throughout their MSc journey, be it academic change or personal change, it is perhaps to be expected that Yaseen will answer it within her more pessimistic outlook. Yaseen said her MSc tenure had provided her with a “*negative change*”. She said at the start of the MSc, she was very optimistic but as the MSc course was underway, she reverted to her insecure nature. Yaseen disclosed that the MSc course had made her feel insecure not only as an academic but her experiences with her peers made her insecure and more pessimistic as a person as well. Although Yaseen acknowledged that she can write academically better with the given experience, she believed that this was expected due to the knowledge input:

Yaseen: Well it definitely changed because this is how I view it. There is input and output there has to be an improvement so this is what I basically doing, reading and writing.

In summary, almost all participants, with an exception of Yaseen, could see certain positive change that occurred throughout their MSc course. These changes were mainly concerned with academic improvement which, as Yaseen had put it, is to be expected. However, what was interesting here was how this change was seen to happen and which areas the participants viewed as aspects where change had occurred and how positively (or negatively) they perceived them in the end, despite the marks or progress that they had achieved.

Chapter 6. Discussion.

The process of analysis revealed new themes I had not anticipated which meant I needed to extend my reading further in order to engage with these emerging ideas. The table below shows themes that emerged during my literature review writing stage in comparison to themes that actually emerged after data had been analysed.

Themes in Literature Review	New themes emerged in the discussion chapter
SCT	Conception of Learning including Academic Readiness
Conceptualization of Academic Writing	Proofreading
Academic Literacy	Externalization
L2 and writing challenges	Proficiency vs Competency
Writing Strategies	Intrinsic Factors including personality e.g. learning attitude and metacognition
Postgraduate as adult learners	Extrinsic factors e.g. Dependence on tutors and proofreaders
Postgraduate experiences in Anglophone countries	Importance of University support
Feedback and how it can help learning and Feedback perception in higher education	Transparency of academic marking system, tutor's incompetency, feedback clarity
Perception of feedback in Higher Education	Feedback interpretation relating to attitude, motivation and emotion
	Peer feedback
	Reflection in TLT
	Reluctance for change

Table 15 Comparison of themes before and after data analysis

The literature review process was quite an iterative cyclical process that underwent several changes as the discussion chapter took shape. In the literature review, I initially started off with three important themes and they are SCT, conceptualization of academic writing and academic literacy. However, towards the final stage of my thesis, I decided to remove academic literacy as I thought my literature review on academic literacy was too broad when compared to my discussion. My data seemed at odds with aspects of the literature. Now, I realize that it is all part of the research process that you would not necessarily be able to anticipate the kind of themes that would emerge from the data collected. There were even

times when categorizing the data into themes was tricky when clouded with feeling obligated to ‘match’ the literature review. However, I realize now that when I started my literature review, I was looking at everything in such a general and broad sense while my discussion was more of a fine tuned collection of themes that had emerged from the process of analysis, still relating to the major themes I had in my literature review, just more defined and specific to the participants.

To elaborate on the table above, I will discuss the second column with more detail. Though change and persistence are the major themes in this discussion section, smaller themes like conception of learning and proficiency versus competency were also available but not covered in the literature review. In the literature review, I was more focused on themes related to writing rather than learning. I could have added this, but I did not because it might interfere with the transparency and honesty of the study. I wanted to ensure the visibility of such ‘contrast’ of themes for literature review and discussion chapter to demonstrate the differences in research expectations and actual data.

Themes like proofreading and externalization came as a surprise. Perhaps, I was unsure myself about the university’s standpoint on proof reading services and did not think it would emerge as such an important theme to my participants. I did not expect externalization to become a theme as I have ‘normalized’ this, being a student myself, so much so that I was blinded to it until towards the end of my analysis. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors were expected and were touched on under writing strategies. However, after the analysis, I re-wrote this section adding self-regulation and metacognition, after seeing evidence of these in the data.

Although I have written about Postgraduates’ experiences as adult learners and studying in anglophone countries, my data revealed that conceptualization of academic writing encompasses more than just general university challenges. While I could touch on ‘typical’ challenges my participants encountered, I did not take into account the ‘reason’ for these challenges which, in my study, some of my participants seemed to think was due to the university’s lack of support. Again, I did not add this in the literature review as this was a new theme for me that deserved to be discussed in the discussion chapter, to indicate my ‘new’ knowledge.

For my review on feedback, the literature review was written more on why feedback was important and how students tend to perceive it. I did not take into account the complicated nature of interpreting feedback itself and its relation to aspects like motivation, attitude and emotion until I saw it impact on some of my participants. This was also when I could relate the program's design in communicating feedback and transparency and how my participants receive them. As for TLT, although I have elaborated this in the review, I missed out writing about the different ways of reflecting in TLT. This was only brought to my attention when I analysed and saw differences in ways my participants reflect about change. This also led me to notice my obsession with documenting change that I needed to realize reluctance of change as an important theme in this study as well.

The findings suggest two recurring major themes present throughout the study and they are Change and Persistence. Persistence here refers to how long students sometimes held on to existing beliefs and practices. These two themes occurred both as a sociocultural aspect and in relation to writing practice. Some participants changed more than others, while others persisted with older habits and so were more resistant to change, which in this study may account for underdeveloped academic skills.

This investigation's main aim was to follow the conceptualization of academic writing of international postgraduates how this develops and how feedback can impact or disengage students from becoming better academic writers. It also aims to track changes that occurred during their MSc sojourn, paying a particular interest to the combination of factors influencing how one can become a proficient writer. In order to achieve this aim, I set three objectives which intended to advance the understanding of:

1. To explore their conceptualization of good academic writing.
2. To establish a relationship between feedback and development as a proficient writer.
3. To explore and follow any transformational/conceptual change throughout the course.

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a discussion on the findings and relate their contribution to the body of literature concerned with academic writing development in Higher Education with an in-depth and holistic understanding of the experience of international students exploring the university's academic writing conventions and the important elements that were essential for their aspiration to become a proficient academic writer. I angled my study to look at postgraduate international students who had previous teaching experience to

explore a different angle, namely those who had experienced education as both language teachers and learners and as a response to the literature citing the scarcity of postgraduate international student research (Tobbell & O'Donnell, 2013). It also aims to provide suggestions to improve the support offered to international students' academic writing, particularly for those students who have little experience writing in English or studying in an Anglophone context.

The findings in this study found an important interplay between the participants' beliefs and their actions in becoming a proficient academic writer. This has similarities with Case, Marshall and Linder's (2010) narrative study of teachers' experience when going back into education as students. There are certain thematic similarities in the findings of the study such as the multiple lenses the teacher/participant had, which was as a student, a teacher as well as a mature student. Like this study, Case, Marshall and Linder's (2010) study also did not aim to discredit teaching approaches, there was discussion for the need of teacher's empathy towards students by pushing students outside their comfort zone while finding a balance in stimulating learning rather than demotivating them. While one would expect a postgraduate with language teaching experience to be more acquainted with what is expected in academic writing, this study suggests that no such difference exists. Rather the participants in this study who were returning to education from the workplace setting also found quite substantial academic impediments with higher education discourse and a level of "unlearning" was necessary in order to progress (Evans, 2013, p.76). Within this context unlearning refers to certain academic writing traits such as writing grammatically versus writing with criticality. Particularly in this study, the participants encountered a variety of difficulties and challenges ranging from problems adapting to the UK academic writing culture to problems with criticality which is similarly found in Kaur and Shakila's (2007) study on postgraduate learning experience. Hence, it was important for the participants in this study to change their old views on quality in writing and adopt a new one that suits the new academic context.

This chapter's organization will firstly present examples of change and persistence within the sociocultural aspect. This will include change and persistence in the participants' beliefs and values, their learning and their strategies. The second section will discuss changes realized by the participants in their writing. This will include issues of dependence and independence, the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that contribute to change and the role of feedback in helping the

participants become proficient writers. The last section will attempt to explain how change and persistence can be understood.

6.1 The changes experienced during the MSc sojourn

According to the Belief system theory (Grube, Mayton & Ball-Rokeach, 1994) beliefs and behaviours are interrelated. Beliefs can determine or alter behaviour (Rokeach, 1980). The findings showed that certain participants' beliefs and values changed or remained persistent over the course of the study. These could be explained due to the unfamiliar sociocultural impact they were experiencing during their sojourn in the MSc programme. This section will discuss what changed during the study in terms of beliefs and values and the participants' learning and strategies.

6.1.1 Beliefs and Values

One of the earliest prompted questions was for the participants' perception of what good academic writing was. The findings show their responses changing from superficial description of 'what' good academic writing is to 'how' one can become a successful academic writer. The participants' initial responses were riddled with references to grammatical attributes while their later answers were packed with references to writing styles and a focus on content. It can be speculated that the participants' responses had something to do with the sociocultural context. The participants at the earlier stage of the study were yet to be acculturated into the host's academic system. Over time, as the participants immersed themselves in the programme, they started to develop more context appropriate answers to the questions during the study. This shows that the influence of previous cultural and educational backgrounds became less influential when they had more exposure to the academic culture in the UK (Wang, 2018). According to Wang's study of Chinese international transition to higher education in the UK, he acknowledged the importance of cultural and academic background in influencing a students' academic adjustment. However, with more immersion into the UK education system, these influences become less dominant as new learning approaches and strategies began to emerge in each individual student.

The academic changes experienced by the participants were not only in terms of writing but in their overall learning experience as well. In the findings, Elio expressed his satisfaction studying in the UK and made repeated comparison to his home country. Elio did not only comment on the physical learning attributes but in terms of the university's learning belief

and values as well. Elio felt he was not supported academically nor spiritually back home where he believed that education was taken for granted as it was free. In the UK, Elio felt he was joined by like-minded academics who strived for academic success. Similarly, Shaima also experienced a sense of restoration of her beliefs and values where she felt that education and learning are pursued to their highest standards at the university. Shaima believed that her education in the UK will help her strive in becoming what might be viewed as a 'proper' academic where the emphasis is on 'being an academic' as much as it is on 'doing academic things'. Thus, their time in the UK has shaped an understanding of approved academic norms within a western context; and from this perspective previous norms are viewed as a deficit model. This is not just about new learning, or a new perspective, it is about negotiating a sense of belonging. This can be explained with the theory Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger & Lave, 1991) where learning is regarded as a 'situated activity' and the learning process occurs when one participates in sociocultural activities. The MSc cohort further resembled a CoP due to their shared aims and interests of becoming capable researchers in order to obtain a PhD in the future and the initiation of new members.

According to Wenger (1998), in order for a CoP to function there needs to be three characteristics namely, the domain, the community and the practice. This domain refers to shared interest held by the members of the CoP. Although the CoP domain for academics exists within the university, the participants in this study belong to a subset of an MSc academics' domain with more defined shared interests, that is to become a fully-fledged academic by passing their MSc and PhD. The community on the other hand refers to members' engagement in activities such as discussion or peer feedback that could benefit members in having shared information and building relationships while learning from each other (Wenger, 2006). The last characteristic, the practice, refers to members not being silent members but practitioners of their groups. This is present in the MSc cohort as they take part in activities in the form of formative and summative assignments in order to sharpen their skills in becoming a researcher when they pursue their PhD. Thus, the practice being developed is both that of an academic but also that of a second language doctoral student. Together the community develops practices for learning, writing, negotiating the marking system and becoming an early career researcher – with shared challenges, concerns and coping strategies. As such they are a community within a community – absorbing practices from the wider academic community and realising them within the confines of the narrower group.

Furthermore, this MSc cohort can be used as an example of how work within a CoP is accomplished by having three elements namely, shared repertoire, mutual engagement and joint enterprise. Shared repertoire is present in this MSc cohort as they share the same academic ideas, discourses, or concepts gained via channels such as classes, writing assignments as well as artefacts such as shared publications and references used throughout their programme. The presence of mutual engagements on the other hand can be seen in terms of the existence of both personal and academic relationships built one student with another as well as with their tutors hence contributing to CoPs demand for diversity of cognition for (Borgatti, 2004). The participants also have occasions where they execute certain tasks together or via peer feedback and support which is also essential in a functional CoP. The last characteristic which is the existence of joint enterprise refers to the group's common purpose, in this case, the common goal to pass the MSc and proceed to PhD. Within this purview, the participants in this study also shared their common interest of becoming a 'proper' researcher and academic.

This is further demonstrated within their own networks, where Shaima and Elio lent on and received emotional and academic support. Information and experiences were received from their seniors, helping them cope in the MSc. Rather than seeing learning as the individualized acquisition of knowledge, in CoP, "learning, thinking and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with and arising from the socially and culturally structured world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.51). Therefore, learning is regarded as social participation where newcomers like Shaima and Elio could benefit from engaging with others in organized activities in order to advance their skills and understanding. This resembled McDowell and Montgomery's (2009) study where international students reconstructed their "social capital" (see page X) during their transition into the UK. Another similarity to Montgomery and McDowell's study (2009, p.464) was the existence of the important fusion of "psychological encouragement as well as practical academic help" contributed by CoP which is seen as an integral part of the international students' learning experience. Elio and Shaima's frequent comparisons between their previous learning experience and social community with the learning experience and social community that they have gathered in the MSc, supports the claim that international students felt that their belief and values had changed for the better because of their experience of learning in the UK (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009) and according to Lave and Wenger (1991) would be categorised as the 'Active' stage of CoP

where members develop CoP This is reinforced by a sense of identifying strongly with the values perceived in these changes.

However, not everyone articulated a sense of being part of a CoP in their academic community. And even when they did, there were always certain personal traits or preferences that revealed a resistance to fully engaging with the new CoP. This is apparent in participants like Maria and Yaseen. Although Yaseen had support from senior members of the CoP and had certain academic discussion with her peers, it seemed that Yaseen did not completely identify with the norms and values she perceived within the community as she may have had with her previous CoP. According to Kim (2011) this could be due to a CoP's invisibility to such participants due to differences in language, sociocultural as well as historical values and belief systems. Smith (2003, p.2) remarked that in order for membership of a CoP to take place, there needs to be "shared repertoire of ideas, commitments and memories". However, at times due to limited English proficiency and a lack of mutual engagement or a shared repertoire of ideas, international student engagement with members of the CoP can be restricted (Kim, 2011). This seemed to happen to some participants in this study in particular Maria who although she was open to engaging with her peers, found difficulties in realising this intention and also due to her lack of communicative competency due to her lack of English language proficiency and Yaseen's negative view about her own learning experience and pessimistic nature prevented them from becoming more integrated into the CoP. Indeed, she often positioned the institution as represented by, the course, the tutors or the assignments, as part of the problem.

Lulu's position within the CoP theory in this study shows an apparent contrast to those of Elio's and Shaima's. Elio and Shaima consciously adopt or are in the process of adopting a set of ideas and practices that represent the culture they have joined. Lulu on the other hand, withdraws more over time and does not articulate the sense of being part of a research community. Based on the data, Lulu spoke about support and shared attributes with her CoP but was more withdrawn towards term two hence, it was hard to say that Lulu was exclusively receiving benefits for being within the CoP because she also spent a great deal of time especially in term two studying independently. However, although there was no evidence in terms of the direct impact CoP has on Lulu, Lulu still surrounded herself within the community, perhaps as a means of academic strategy where the sense of belonging could empower her learning drive. I will discuss more on Lulu in the later sections as this is

interrelated with Lulu's learning conception and other intrinsic influences. This can also be seen as the 'Dispersed' stage of CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where Lulu no longer engaged intensively with the group but still attached herself to them.

In relation to CoP, the participants therefore display shifting beliefs and practices (Elio & Shaima), A welcoming of belonging but less articulation or conscious awareness of what constitutes this CoP (Lulu), a sense of being an unwilling outsider (Maria) and Resistance to the new CoP (Yaseen).

Yaseen's reluctance and Maria's struggle to be fully part of the CoP could explain why their beliefs and values remained intact regardless of their experience in the MSc programme. Spending almost a year in the programme offered the possibility of one's belief to be swayed or influenced by what is absorbed in the classroom. Their world view seemed out of sympathy with the understanding that academic writing has a "rhetorical objective" (Anderson & Cuesta-Medina, 2019, p.38). This means Yaseen and Maria saw academic writing in terms of correct content, clashing with the rhetorical focal point in the university's academic writing criteria and they failed to understand the conception of academic writing production being a positional one and not informational (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Seow, 2002) This puts them in an awkward position and possibly at odds with their tutors' expectations whose understanding occupies a central place in determining views of quality in academic practice (Leki & Carson, 1994; Cooper & Bikowski, 2007). International students need to be better prepared to meet the expectations of their tutors so tutors can spend more time on the conceptual area rather than spending so much time giving exhaustive writing instructions (Cooper & Bikowski, 2007). Seeing tutors as a resource for writing support can cause over-dependence on tutors which is in contrast to the autonomous learning objective in tertiary education. Additionally, Leki and Carson (1994) stated that a mismatch in academic writing expectation between students and tutors tends to occur with the tutors often holding power to determine what is appropriate that could result in students developing negative feelings. This means it is essential for the participants to understand the assessment criteria, and the values they represent in terms of learning and the indicators of writing quality in the host country and recognize that their own writing challenges are not necessarily linguistic but rather cultural. A key question here is whether this is only the responsibility of the student or whether the institution should make some of these challenges explicit based on research findings that highlight their salience for learning.

6.1.2 Learning and Strategies

The previous section shows the value of the learning context as important for development and how different individuals become part of this context, or remain distant from it, for a range of different reasons. This section will focus on individual learning and individual writing behaviour. Both these aspects could contribute in the change and development of the participants in this study specifically in the area of learning and strategies.

In this research, some participants were able to adapt to academic change while others did not. In the findings, I have shown Lulu to be a good example of a learner who adapted to the new academic writing conventions and that this resulted in considerable progress throughout her sojourn in the MSc programme. Initially Lulu resisted embracing change and repeatedly made comparisons between her academic experience between the USA and the UK. However, Lulu's writing confidence remained intact and Lulu did not only adopt new strategies to ensure her success but immersed herself into the UK writing culture by consciously writing for her readers. Lulu (page 103-104) showed evidence of meta-cognition (such as her ability to self-assess), being able to self-regulate, and understanding that her failures did not define who she was but that what she was doing about them made the difference (Williams, 1991). Lulu also demonstrated a sense of critical thinking of being "productive and analytical" (Williams, 1991, p.9), by which productive means that Lulu was able to create sound justifiable arguments and analytical thinking by being able to challenge someone's argument. Through meta-cognition, Lulu became a more independent writer although she relied on proof reading services to check her language.

This is in stark contrast to Lulu's colleagues such as Shaima, Yaseen and Maria who did not demonstrate such clear meta-cognitive skills in their writing. They seemed to struggle with articulating the notion of criticality although their marks suggest their ability to write a sound academic assignment using the **university's** writing convention. This can perhaps be explained in the participants' conception of learning. According to Negovan, Sterian and Colesniuc (2015), one's conception of learning can influence motivational processes as well as strategies for learning. Motivation and well-chosen composition strategies will in turn, influence the quality of learning and academic performance (Cano, 2005). To demonstrate, Lulu had a sophisticated learning conception where she was motivated to write to suit the native audience. Lulu adopted new writing strategies by understanding her previous writing mistakes and adopting more suitable writing skills that match the expectations of the marker

(page 104-105), in order to achieve this and surrounded herself with like-minded people. The outcome showed Lulu steadily progressing from one assignment to another. On the other hand, although Shaima showed enthusiasm at the beginning of the course, she had a much simpler conception of learning, of ‘wanting to just pass’ attitude that leads to minimal motivation to do better. Shaima also failed to demonstrate evidence of adopting better strategies to aid her learning and writing and this may have resulted in her marks being more or less the same for all her assignments.

As mentioned before, marks may not be regarded as a sign of the participant’s development in knowledge, however, they can be used as a yardstick to measure the progress of the participant’s academic writing. Although Maria failed to achieve the progression mark for her last assignment, her English language competence and vocabulary improved. Improvement in knowledge will not guarantee academic writing improvement without knowing how to apply it, therefore, knowing what writing strategy to adopt is crucial. While writing strategies refer to strategies on how one writes, learning strategies is more of a holistic nature encapsulating not only writing but thinking about learning as well. Participants like Lulu (page 105) and Elio (page 165) seemed to have adopted deep-oriented learning strategies while Shaima, Yaseen and Maria did not provide such evidence of doing so. Lulu and Elio featured mostly positive emotions in their learning while Yaseen, the self-proclaimed pessimist and Maria, who associates success to marks, were mostly surrounded by negative emotions. According to a study by Trigwell, Ellis and Han (2012, p.820) students who display a deep learning approach often report the feeling of positive emotion which lead to achieving a “significant higher learning outcome” as in the case of Lulu and Elio. While the data did not provide enough evidence to suggest that Shaima, Yaseen or Maria have adopted a surface learning approach, their general emotion accumulative was less positive than that of Lulu and Elio, which is most visible in Yaseen. This negative emotion perhaps could explain why Shaima, Yaseen and Maria were less successful. Furthermore, according to Trigwell, Ellis & Han (2012), students with negative emotions were highly likely to be related to a surface approach to learning that contributes to less academic success.

Each of the participants were on a journey of discovering the UK university’s writing conventions and felt disheartened when they failed. The participants’ learning conception and motivation as well as emotion could also be a consequence of the fact that they were NNES. The findings acknowledge the participants’ persistent sense of inferiority being an NNES

with Lulu eloquently summarizing that they will never be as competent as the owner of the language (NES). This finding supports Canagarajah's (2001; 2002b) view on NNES's perception of Anglophone countries as the language "gatekeepers". The participants faced challenges in grasping discourse patterns where something regarded as appropriate in their writing culture may be regarded as 'waffling' or inept in the UK writing convention (Peters, 2005; Ryan, 2000). Even with participants such as Lulu and Shaima who have had experience studying in an English-speaking country such as the USA which is often deemed superior in the English language competency context (Canagarajah 2002a), it is still different to how academic writing is perceived in the UK; hence making it difficult for international students to achieve their desired marks, requiring practice and guidelines from tutors. From this angle it can be surmised that the participants' motivation characteristics are still influenced by the social context because of the participants' identity as an NNES.

The participants are regarded as NNES or L2 learners. This means, they need to write according to the host country's **university** writing convention in order to be regarded as an academic writer. Therefore, they needed to employ certain strategies to help them with academic writing. These strategies include using sample essays, grasping the notion of criticality and the use of proof readers, yet not many of the participants were able to engage with these strategies. As English is regarded by the participants as a second or foreign language, this means they felt the need to learn to write like a native. Writing in English means writing in another language and often the start of learning another language is in a form of imitation of other people's words (Pennycook (1996). This suggests imitation might be where learning starts for L2 learners and so an alternative would be to use extracts of whole essays, perhaps organised such as opening/closing paragraphs, developing an argument, introducing a counter argument – the point being to represent the 'voice' of these elements and so students can imitate and practice using this voice in preparation for an assignment. This means writing academically in the second or foreign language can be regarded as a process of imitation (Shi, 2006). Shi (2006) elaborated that beginner writers strategize by repeating, imitating, and manipulating others' words as a way of connecting their text with earlier texts in order to develop authorship and due to their limited vocabulary knowledge, this propelled their tendency to copy in order to write like a native. This might suggest that a successful L2 writer could be the one who can imitate most closely a native with an added extra of an individual critical voice. From this perspective the most successful participant was Lulu. Perhaps, this perceived need to '*write like a native*' is why the findings

show a tendency of the participants to depend on sample or model essays that they used as a reference for writing up their assignments that they have seem to have sought themselves. Participants like Lulu, Elio and Shaima felt strongly about the need for the university to provide sample essays however, Yaseen felt sample essay could limit her writing ability. This demonstrates that while other participants were persistent about the importance of essay samples, giving it credit in helping with their writing, Yaseen was sceptical of its usefulness. Here, in some ways Yaseen is more in line with the university position on this – the desire to produce an independent assignment rather than one based on a model seems to me to be both in line with the COP and likely to be one aspect of criticality.

Although sample essays can help kick start or help participants familiarize themselves with UK academic writing, there is also one important academic writing trait that was much discussed in the interviews -- criticality. Because the notion of criticality was new to the participants, each of them tried to strategize the best way to demonstrate criticality. Shaima had claimed in her narrative that critical thinking was not encouraged in her country's academic setting as the ideology of power would come into play. Being critical was considered to be a new-found skill with many of the participants feeling lost and frustrated for not being able to grasp the idea and demonstrate it in their writing. Although a session on critical academic writing was provided, for the participants who struggled with the idea, this was considered inadequate. The participants' cultural identity and notions of power are also likely to play a role in influencing the portrayal of the participants' academic skills that they had previously possessed and bring into the new academic environment.

Some participants' writing challenges did not change until the end of the MSc programme. The importance of competence in both speaking and writing as well as listening in the English language continued to persist as one of the challenges for some participants. Towards the end of the study, Maria realized that learning English two years prior to her sojourn and achieving 5.5 IELTS band before enrolling in the MSc programme was unrealistic to be confident in believing that she was academically prepared. Maria also resisted adapting to the academic change and continued to write her assignments using Turkish academic writing conventions and even combining them. This move of mixing discourse according to Canagarajah (2002a) could be treated as a sign of incompetence, especially in relation to assessment against certain marking criteria, where certain features and characteristics are

expected and rewarded. As Olivas & Li (2006) claimed, students with English language incompetence are often linked to poor academic performance and this was reflected in Maria who repeatedly failed to achieve the progressing mark of sixty. According to Bailey (2006) lack of oral English competency could affect a students' participation in group work or tutorials and this was the consequence that Maria endured. Due to her lack of speaking competency, Maria isolated herself which resulted in her feelings of loneliness as she refrained from talking to anyone to avoid miscommunication. Even when Maria sought for help twice on the online group page, none of her colleagues came to her aid. Peters (2005) explained that the inability for a student to express his/her ideas can be humiliating especially for older postgraduate students, reminding us of the importance of the English language not only for academic purposes (Mulligan & Kirkpatrick, 2000), but for social integration too (Copland & Garton, 2011). Without social integration the possibilities of socially constructed learning taking place are considerably less likely. The MSc makes considerable use of interactive learning, through classroom and on-line discussions and group work. Social integration encapsulates "self-esteem and the quality of relationships established with teaching staff and peers" (Nevill & Rhodes, 2004, p.181) and language is important in establishing and maintaining these relationships (Copland & Garton, 2011). Copland and Garton (2011, p.252) insisted that language competence is important particularly when a certain conversation goes "off script" which can result in miscommunication as experienced by Maria during her feedback sessions, prompting her to stop speaking or asking help from her tutors and peers.

As mentioned before, Maria's and Yaseen's perceptions of the world are similarly focused on information and marks yet their reasons for being unable to adapt to change and progress differ. Like Maria, Yaseen's perception of her writing challenges also did not change until the last of the assignments yet for Yaseen, neither language competency nor proficiency was the issue. Having an IELTS 8 band and speaking competently during interviews, Yaseen was clearly communicatively adept compared to Maria as she started in a position of some competence, achieving marks in the high 60's, but never progressed beyond this point, achieving similar marks throughout the year and never seeming to be able to build on this position of strength. This supports the view that having English proficiency alone was not enough to ensure academic success as stated in a study by Neumann, Padden and McDonough, (2019). Their study also found other factors such as synthesis of information and analytical skills were seen as crucial for academic performance by tutors. Nevertheless,

they still stress that academic performance is highly dependent on a student's language ability while academic writing proficiency is a key skill for academic success (Neumann, Padden & McDonough, 2019). So while poor language skills can limit the possibility of progress, having them is no guarantor of making progress.

The persistence of Yaseen's writing challenges can perhaps be explained in her tenacity in resisting change in learning. In the findings, Yaseen demonstrated that her idea of learning was not flexible and it has to concur with her own ideology of learning. Her view on learning however, was contradictory to how it was being taught in the MSc and the aim of tertiary education which according to Biggs "should be to change students' interpretation of their world" (1989). This resistance to change perhaps, contributed to her inability to progress despite her excellent English language proficiency and competency. More on resistance to change and an explanation of how change can be understood will follow in the following sections (Page 196).

Persistence with previously successful strategies and approaches from previous learning contexts as portrayed by the participants is not necessarily bad but can be interpreted as being 'for the wrong reasons'. This includes the participants' reluctance in seeking extra help from their assigned tutors. Although one might say it is a good kind of persistence where it nurtures autonomy, it may not be necessary for international students who have just started to learn to write academically. While Shaima, Yaseen and Maria shared their concerns and difficulties with their assignment, they refused to ask for extra time or additional meetings from their tutors. Shaima and Yaseen conveyed that the reason for doing so was out of respect. This resonates with many findings in the literature that many NNEST students especially from collectivist countries who have experienced teacher-centred classrooms put elder-respecting or respecting anyone in the position of authority as one of their utmost uncompromising norms (Saxena & Babu, 2015). Thus, shifting from a teacher-centred classroom to a learner-centred classroom in the MSc where critical knowledge is considered paramount and students were expected to be "autonomous, self-directed and self-regulated" (Obeng, 2019), could become part of the 'academic culture shock' that the participants were experiencing. The negative part of this is that regardless of their good intentions, it proves to have negative outcomes in their learning. This is not to encourage dependence on the tutors, but to put oneself in such a position out of respect while their academic writing needed support, can be considered as unwise. Paradoxically, in spite of this respect for an assumed

authority figure, in the end, they blamed the tutors or the assignment for their failure to grasp academic writing. Perhaps a culture that places so much emphasis on teacher centred approaches means that blame can be more easily apportioned to teaching strategies than to learning strategies.

Another continuing strategy used throughout the study by participants was the use of proof readers. Shaima and Maria used their services throughout the MSc sojourn while Lulu only started in Term two. By using proof readers, Shaima and Maria believed that they could help eliminate their language problems so they can concentrate on the content. Lulu's strategy for using a proof reader was rather to ensure that she was writing like a native apart from removing her "American slang" that she might not have noticed. This might have helped Lulu to write better in term two compared to term one. Elio and Yaseen did not see the need to employ proof readers as they were confident with their linguistic abilities. The participants' dependency on proof readers and the issues raised about it will be discussed more in the next section.

In relation to answering research question one, the data suggests three things. Firstly, the conceptualization of good academic writing is socially constructed as it is socio-culturally dependent. The wider point that can be drawn from the discussion, concerning the participants' conceptualization of academic writing, is that while development is unique to each participant, they were all influenced by the sociocultural aspect which brings me to the second point, that the participants' initial perception of academic writing evolved along with their tenancy in the MSc programme, as the participants were more and more immersed in the programme. Their conceptualization of academic writing changed from abstract to a more concrete understanding based on their current academic context, as they moved from a teacher-centred context to a learner-centred one and as their cognitive skills developed. In other words, one way of absorbing the new context is full participation in it though each participant engages differently with this new context. Thirdly, the data also shows academic writing in this study is generally a context-related social activity instead of an individual and formal one. Although Lulu might differ slightly as she chose to write independently towards the end of the study where she became 'successful', it should not undermine the value this study shows regarding learning 'with' others.

6.2 How change happens in the MSc sojourn

The previous section discussed the kind of changes or resistance to change that happened during the study. This section will look at how these changes happened during the study. This section however, will draw more on cognitive and individual aspects, although it will still show a presence of sociocultural influence. Firstly, this section will discuss the occurrence of dependence and independence in academic writing, then the intrinsic and extrinsic influences experienced by the participants and finally how these factors together with feedback are influential in shaping the change that can facilitate becoming a proficient academic writer.

6.2.1 Independence and dependence

The findings showed certain participants' dependence on proof readers. Shaima and Maria, in particular started employing the use of proof readers from the beginning of the programme and continued to employ them until the end. As mentioned earlier, this can be regarded as their strategy to eliminate problems relating to language as most L2 learners view the use of their own words to be less harmonious, hence may be presumed as awkward (Sherman, 1992). Lulu, who was originally independent of outside help had no intention of using proof readers, but did so in her second term, eliminating her English language slang problem completely. Elio and Yaseen declined to use this support as they believed in their own writing ability, citing that the feedback they received from tutors was never about their language anyway.

As proof reading becomes more readily available, there is no clear boundary in deciding what or when proof reading becomes unethical (Kim & LaBianca, 2018). Perceptions on the ethical approach to using such services is split with some seeing it as cheating and not as part of the learning experience (Harris & Silva, 1993) arguing that some students accept corrections blindly without understanding or with no interest to know why. Some participants also reported knowledge of unethical proof readers who get paid extra if they re-write and re-structure certain elements of the essay or the whole paper. The other half saw it as a learning process where students can play an active role in framing their writing (Harwood, Austin & Macaulay, 2009). Perhaps the best example of how such services can be regarded as a learning process would be in the case of Lulu. By using this service, she learnt from a native reader's expectations and how phrasal verbs are used in the UK compared to when she was studying in the USA. However, such perception is more likely to be made by students like Lulu who make use of metacognitive strategies.

Nowadays, many universities provide a list of professionals accessible for students who need proof reading help. Due to the continued dependence on employing proof readers by some participants in this study, it invited speculation relating to issues regarding unfairness and a call for a more explicit university stance on writing ethics as expressed by other participants who did not or could not afford such services. Scurr (2006) understood such frustration as she believes that this helps well-off students procure higher grades and could weaken the student-teacher relationship as tutors would now have an extra role of playing detective to determine if a student had purchased inappropriate levels of help. Scurr's concern is supported by Shaw (2014) who wrote an article on how proof reading agencies claim that they can guarantee a better grade, prompting a debate on L2 students' writing competency and universities' negligence on language support (Harwood, 2018).

Furthermore, some contributors in the proof reading debate were sceptical of its effectiveness in tackling the problems encountered by non-native speakers. For example Harwood, Austin & Macaulay (2009) argue that some proof readers gave the NNES a superficial impression on their problem relating to grammar and syntax when it could be something more significant such as a lack of subject knowledge, argument and even the writing's organization. Blau, Hall and Sparks (2002, p.43) on the other hand, said proof readers need to tackle writing problems at sentence level errors that have the potential to lead to ambiguity on the coherence and meaning of an entire paper. Perhaps this is useful in explaining Maria's case where her academic writing failed to improve in spite of her use of proof reading services. Instead of focusing only on the language, Maria needed also to look at other aspects of her academic writing as "students who are struggling with English may require more flexibility and often require more direction and instruction" (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002, p.35) instead of just relying on proof readers. Maria needed more academic writing instruction to realize that academic writing was not merely about being grammatical but she needed to understand that it also involves attention to the coherence of the text as a whole and the creation of meaning. Due to such differences in the problems experienced by NNES, it is hard to point out the boundary of when proofreading ends and the creation of meaning starts thus making it difficult to decide at what level proofreading becomes inappropriate. How these services are used is key and there remains the concern that proofreading services could cause dependence and almost an addiction for the participants, especially where high stakes assessment is involved. Lulu's dependence resulted in learning about her writing, she did say that she

would continue to use such services to eliminate her ‘American slang’ problem instead of resolving it herself.

Apart from dependence on proof readers, the findings also show a clear pattern for certain participants’ of change through dependency on externalizing their problems. All of the participants started out as confident learners at the start of the programme but soon after their first assignment marks and feedback were given out, their confidence plummeted such as in the case of Lulu and Yaseen. Whenever the participants found themselves in an unsatisfactory position, they had the tendency to blame everything apart from themselves. The blame included their perceived idea of the university’s unjustified marking system and a view that there was an overwhelming amount of non-marked assignments that led to the petition. In addition there was a perceived notion of their tutor’s unprofessionalism and incompetence which in turn resulted in a less constructive relationship. According to McClure, Meyer, Garisch, Fischer, Weir and Walkey (2011, p.71) this notion of “self-serving bias” is common in many people. They often attribute success to internal causes yet attribute failure to external causes such as described above (Pronin, Lin & Ross, 2002). The participants in this study all come from a collectivist society which McClure et al (2011) suggest can result in people from such societies often attributing their outcomes to social influences compared to people from individualistic societies. For example, Asian cultures attribute outcomes to social components such as family and belief in fate (Ng, McClure, Walkey & Hunt, 1995) while Western cultures attribute their outcome to more internal factors such as ability. However, this is not to say those from individualistic cultures are superior than those from collectivist cultures. Students from individualistic cultures were found to possess less emotional competence, reluctant to seek for help, have a smaller support system while also prone to poorer mental health (Scott, Ciarrochi and Deane, 2004).

The tendency to externalize the problem can also be explained by concluding that the participants were experiencing academic culture shock. Most of the participants apart from Shaima came straight to the postgraduate programme without prior academic training and a minimal transition period, bringing with them their previous learning beliefs, attitudes and behaviour, hence struggling to adapt to the new environment (Bailey, 2006; Sherry, Thomas & Chui, 2010; Wang, 2018). As in many studies of international student enculturation, the participants may have experienced stress and anxiety due to a lack of preparation and possessing little knowledge and understanding regarding British culture and learning

conventions (Gill, 2007). Moreover, the participants could be experiencing the pressure of needing to fit into the UK cultural and educational framework in order to reach the social and academic demands expected of the host country (Gill, 2007). This therefore may have triggered the participants to demonstrate the feelings of “powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self and social estrangement, and social isolation” (Furnham 1997, p.16). The academic dissatisfaction from the participants was not only about the assignments themselves but the university’s grading system as well. Lulu and Yaseen mentioned this over several interviews, making assumptions about why hardly anyone in their cohort could obtain marks in the eighties or nineties, although their cohort had been given a fair warning about this characteristic of the marking culture from the start of the programme. According to Ryan (2000) some countries like the UK set their grades much higher causing stellar students like Lulu and Yaseen to feel disappointed to receive marks lower than what they were used to. The frustration the participants felt over their grades especially in their first assessment could contribute to an enfeebling negative experience (Pitkethly & Prosser, 2001). Pitkethly and Prosser (2001) explained that students who failed to achieve their desired goals were not necessarily due to intellectual disadvantages but rather due to failure to adjust in their first year of study as well as contextual factors. This early disruption of their own expectations can cast a long shadow, influencing later choices and decisions. The participants’ dissatisfaction can also be perceived here as clash of cultural understanding. The participants’ dissatisfaction seemed similar to the findings in a study by Tapanes, Smith and White (2009) online classrooms where cultural differences do affect how students perceive the classroom. Their findings further suggest that collectivist students studying under an instructor from individualistic culture felt that their instructor was unaware of cultural differences and felt cultural differences were not considered when designing the course and a prior notification on relevant cultural differences would be deemed helpful in preparing collectivist students academically.

Regardless of the participants’ evident dependency as presented above, the participants also showed change from dependency to independency in other areas. This is clearly visible in Lulu who initially externalized her problems but gradually changed into becoming an independent learner in term two while Yaseen was still stuck in her own ways throughout the study and used this existing lens to critique the new norms. As described in the earlier section, Lulu started using many strategies to support her becoming a more proficient academic writer. As suggested in an L2 study by Wang (2018), like Wang’s participants,

Lulu could be experiencing academic adaptation as she was more and more exposed to the UK university's academic culture and writing conventions. Lulu also developed a more positive teacher-student relationship with her tutors that perhaps helped boost her motivation and learning drive (Wang, 2018).

Another trait that Lulu demonstrated was her ability to self-regulate with the help of feedback. To self-regulate generally refers to a student's ability to be proactive in his/her learning task, to be fully engaged and independently make decisions in order to improve academic performance (Zimmerman, 2013). In writing tasks such as the assignments in the MSc where cognitive engagement is highly demanded, knowledge is an important factor in self-regulation. Research has shown students who implement strategies towards autonomous control of their own learning are likely to succeed (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Sadly, although participants like Shaima, Maria and Yaseen (page 110-113) acknowledged their development of knowledge, it was not paired with the strategic skills that are needed to be paired with in order to unleash the sense of self-regulation (Wagener, 2018). Boud and Molloy (2013, p.705) affirm that students need to position themselves as "elicitors of knowledge for improvement and not just recipients of inputs from others". Lulu as well as Elio revealed both an increase in well-developed critical knowledge utilizing ideas from her tutor's feedback as well as her ability to gradually self-regulate which corresponded to her increased intrinsic motivation and varying writing strategies. This shows that Lulu and Elio were aware of their own cognition and this made them believe in their ability to learn academic writing (Hammann, 2005). It has to be noted that some students are better at self-regulation than others, so weaker students need to be given more opportunity to practice such traits (Nicol, 2009).

6.2.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic influences

To understand why one participant seemed to improve more than the others, we also need to look at their intrinsic and extrinsic influences. Intrinsic influences refer to internal factors such as a participants' personality, confidence and extrinsic factors here refers to external factors not directly related to the participants such as tutors and marks. It is clear, however, that there is an interaction between these influences, for example a low mark can undermine confidence.

The findings show Lulu is the participant who academically progressed the most in terms of her increasing marks and development of academic writing skills. Lulu was demotivated in term one, however, in term two, Lulu developed rapidly into becoming a better academic writer acquiring her desired marks. One of the noticeable changes in Lulu was that she attributed her success to internal factors such as her writing ability. Lulu had a different and more positive attitude in term two, no longer blaming the university or her tutors. Hence, this supports Hsieh and Schallert's (2008) assertion that when one attributes success to ability, it results in an enhanced sense of pride, persistence and self-efficacy beliefs.

In explaining the intrinsic factors that lead to higher education experience, I will refer to Biggs' (1987) three P model and Richardson's (2011) input. Biggs' three P model included Presage (Academic readiness), Process (Engagement with study material, deep versus surface learning) and Product (in this study, this will be referred to as marks) and Richardson's addition to the presage factor which is learning conception. All these factors were somewhat visible in this study within each participant with Lulu being the participant who most clearly appears to incorporate all these factors in her learning.

Firstly, in terms of academic readiness; students entering higher education brought with them different sets of abilities, knowledge and willingness to self-regulate (Evans, 2013). From the findings, it can be assumed that initially all participants were excited and ready to return to studying in higher education. However, I believe that they were only ready in spirit and in motivation but not fully ready intellectually nor in terms of academic writing and in having to deal with a change in academic context, including Shaima and they all seemed to encounter a level of academic culture shock most visible upon receiving their first set of marks. Apart from Lulu, it can be observed that some participants' spirit and motivation wilted with time, while some participants' fluctuated according to the circumstance.

Secondly, I will discuss Process, Product and Learning Conception together as they are very much interrelated. Taking Lulu as an obvious example, Lulu was consistently academically positive and confident throughout the study. In term one, Lulu had the pattern of feeling disappointed, attributing her 'failure' to external factors but there was no evidence of weakening confidence. She had a positive attitude of reaffirming herself that she was indeed a good academic writer who needed to learn and understand the university's assessment criteria. Indeed, Lulu's ability to improve is highly related to her cognitive features in her

conception of learning. Säljö (1979) listed five descriptor classifications of the learning conception which were added to be h Marton, Dall'Alba and Beaty (1993) whose sixth descriptor originated from Van Rossum, Deijkers and Hamer (1985) who showed that learning conception was changing a person, particularly in postgraduate studies. Below are the six descriptors:

From Säljö (1979):

- Learning as a quantitative increase of knowledge
- Learning as memorising
- Learning as acquisition of facts
- Learning as abstraction of meaning
- Learning as an interpretive process

From Marton, Dall'Alba and Beaty (1993):

- Changing as a person

The table (Table 16) below demonstrates my interpretation of my participants' learning conception. I believe participants like Lulu and Elio adopted the last three conceptions of learning because they seem to understand their learning conception as an interpretive reconstructive process that deals with the negotiation of meaning and particularly in the last descriptor where they describe that learning changed them as a person. Throughout my interview sessions with them, they almost never said "I want to know more" but often uttered along the lines of "I want to understand why/how" hence why I could not place them in the first description of learning as a quantitative increase of knowledge. Lulu's and Elio's learning conception can also be explained using Entwistle and Peterson's (2004, p.409) conception of learning where learning started off from "reproducing" and evolved into "seeking meaning" in learning. This is a contrast to the rest of the participants who often exhibit their desire to know 'more' about certain aspect of their studies without much consideration for understanding. For example, Maria expressed her desire to write better in English but still employed writing in her native language which she knows was a hindrance for her to be a better academic writer in English due to the difference in writing technicalities. There was a question of whether Shaima and Yaseen should be put in column (d) as they did show evidence of abstract thinking and criticality. However, these abilities were not raised to conscious attention as they did not articulate the understanding of criticality or how to

achieve it. Furthermore, it is evident from their narratives that their interest to learn was not as an interpretive process or as abstraction of meaning, but rather as a one-way street approach of superficial and generative learning (Säljö, 1979) where participants acquire facts with the end goal of completing and passing their assignments.

Saljo's (1979) five descriptor categorisation					Marton, Dall'Alba and Beaty (1993) sixth descriptor
a) Learning as a quantitative increase of knowledge	b) Learning as memorising	c) Learning as acquisition of facts	d) Learning as abstraction of meaning	e) Learning as an interpretive process	f) Changing as a person
Yaeen		Yaseen	Elio	Elio	Elio
Maria		Maria	Lulu	Lulu	Lulu
Shaima		Shaima			

Table 16 Participants' learning conception categorisation using Säljö (1979) and Marton, Dall'Alba and Beaty (1993) descriptors.

Many studies also associate a deep learning approach with obtaining good grades while a surface learning approach results in poorer academic outcome (Bonsaksen, 2018) and higher age, has also been associated with a deep and strategic learning approach (Bonsaksen, Sadeghi, & Thørrisen, 2017). Studies also assert that there is a relationship between one's learning conception and one's learning approach (Edmunds & Richardson, 2009; Richardson, 2011). However, in terms of the relationship between learning approach and a better academic outcome, older and more recent studies remained inconclusive for example Busato, Prins, Elshout and Hamaker (2000) and Asikainen et al (2014) who could not find such a clear relationship, although older studies (e.g. Biggs, 1979) have found that the adoption of a deep approach to have better quality outcomes in higher education.

Nevertheless, based on the data, Elio and Lulu seemed to have adopted the last three categories of conception which signifies a reconstructive view of learning that focuses on meaning (Säljö, 1979; Marton, Dall'Alba & Beaty 1993) and the data shows that both Lulu and Elio focused on meaning while learning new ways of relating old and new information while at the same time engaging with and discovering critical thinking which are associated with a deep learning approach. However, I do not believe that I can neatly categorize Elio or Lulu nor any of the participants as a deep or surface approach learner although studies have

shown that learning approaches relate to the quality of learning outcomes (Dart, 1998; Prosser & Miller, 1989). However, this was not always about constant progress but was interrupted by doubts and questions. Rather, what I observed was an evolving process from surface to deep learning over a course of time similar to the conception of knowledge described by Entwistle and Peterson (2004). Entwistle and Peterson (2004, p.409) proposed that the development started from the idea of “dualism” where students were inclined to think of aspects of their learning being either right and wrong. The second phase involved “multiplicity” (Entwistle & Peterson, 2004,p.409) where students look at alternative views, drawing on different possible conclusions (relativism) and eventually “commitment within relativism”, when students are ready to display a personal stand on all issues while having an open mind that all knowledge and ideas are relative. This process results in changing a person’s perspective, and giving a new sense of identity which relates back to Marton, Dall’Alba and Beaty’s (1993) sixth descriptor of the learning conception. Therefore, my stand supports Bonsaksen (2018, p.6) conclusion that a simple dichotomy between surface and deep approaches is inappropriate as the data from my own study would suggest that learning seems to be rather a “gradual development”. This also goes back to my earlier argument on why I cannot neatly place Lulu within the CoP context as she not only demonstrated both a surface approach to learning initially and a deep approach to learning towards the end but she was also comfortable having her own independent study in her successful sojourn of term two in MSc. Bonsaksen proposes that students who engage in independent studies have a “more broadly composed learning concept” (Bonsaksen, 2018 p.6) and this conclusion is illustrated by Lulu.

Another noticeable attribute that could contribute to learning conception and academic performance is the participants’ own personality and social environment (Kassarnig et al, 2018). However, it needs to be noted that neither intelligence nor any other aspect of cognitive ability is determined by personality (Noftle & Robins 2007) although as mentioned in earlier sections, one’s conception can be influenced by one’s personality and can impact one’s motivation and learning strategies which impacts academic performance. Among the dimensions of the Big-Five Inventory (Goldberg, 1993), conscientiousness (positivity) and Neuroticism (negativity) demonstrated the strongest relation to academic performance (Farsides & Woodfield, 2003; Gray & Watson, 2002; Noftle & Robins, 2007). In the findings, there is a clear indication of Lulu’s positive attitude and acknowledgement of her peers’ help with her motivation in becoming a better academic writer. Lulu strategized

accordingly and, in the end, managed to obtain her desired outcome. In contrast with Yaseen, who was pessimistic not only about herself, her achievements but also about her peers and tutors. Yaseen was persistent in not changing her learning strategies although she concurred that writing can be learned and it landed her with less satisfactory progress and this result is consistent with studies that show personality as a possible predictor of academic performance (Wagerman & Funder, 2007; Kassarnig et al, 2018).

In terms of extrinsic influences, the most notable would be the participants' lack of experience with academic writing. Many of them, despite having experiences studying for their masters in another Anglophone country, were unfamiliar with academic writing because most of the participants' learning experience of assessment included examination-based essays, sometimes in their native languages. Although I have discussed earlier the importance of English in communicative competence, it has been found that linguistic aspects are not related to academic writing challenges (Anderson & Cuesta-Medina, 2019). Such a conclusion can be demonstrated in this study, where all participants apart from Maria possess competent and proficient English language skills with impressive academic vocabulary, and yet they progressed at very different rates. The one trait they all had in common was that they were untrained for academic writing and the MSc itself was their training ground. Shaima, however did have the experience of UK academic writing when she was studying at the same university for her MA (TESOL) and so it would be logical to expect that she would be able to develop her writing faster, unfortunately this was not the case. Experience did not necessarily guarantee better academic writing and enhanced knowledge.

The findings in this study corroborate Anderson and Cuesta-Medina's (2019) study findings on Colombian university students that due to postgraduate students' prior learning at primary/secondary and undergraduate level (with some postgraduates in this study), the participants are somewhat successful in certain aspects of writing such as grammar. Because international students are often unprepared for academic writing challenges (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Baird & Dooley, 2014), this might explain why the participants in this study relate their initial writing challenges to grammatical aspects as they were trained (as ESL/EFL learners) to write grammatically. So it is almost an automatic initial expectation that good grammar means good writing. However, these concerns shifted (for some participants) once they were immersed in the university's academic writing conventions. Some participants like Lulu and Elio developed their academic writing according to their new academic environment,

understanding that arguments and meaning are placed more highly in the UK institution than just being grammatically correct, other participants on the other hand, failed to demonstrate such improvement, failing to reconstruct their expectations in line with the new demands of the UK academic context. This shows that writing is a “learnable” ability (Hammann, 2005, p.16) but some might grasp it faster than others. Hence, this study cannot conclude that the participants (with the exception of Maria) were not trained to write but rather that their training did not include the rhetorical aspects required for success at tertiary level in the UK (Anderson & Cuesta-Medina, 2019).

The belief in and valuing of marks also seemed to have an extrinsic influence on many participants. As mentioned before, some participants saw marks as the ultimate progress marker while others believe marks and progress to be separate. Marks could become the participants’ source of motivation such as with Lulu or source of demotivation as in the case of Yaseen and Maria. Yaseen and Maria were persistent in such a view and saw marks as the only way to show progress. Elio and Shaima who from early on had a mature approach towards marks and feedback, remained so until the end of the study. This is indicative of their conception of learning where they uphold marks to motivate their learning rather than understanding how crucial the content of any written feedback might be to support their learning and help with improvements (Smith & Gorard, 2005). More on feedback will be discussed in the next section.

University support was also present in the findings. All the participants at certain points in the study expressed their perception of the inadequate support for international students especially when dealing with academic writing where it is often limited (Sidman-Taveau & Karathanos-Aguilar, 2015). As not all students are equipped with autonomy (Krapp, 2005) some students might need extra guidance and support from their tutors (Alkaber & Dolan, 2014) such was the case with Maria. Maria was insistent that more language support from the university could perhaps help her write better. Although the university provide writing support through bodies such as the university’s language centre that provide guidance for international students and offers an academic writing mentor that specifically targets students with academic English deficiency, it seemed to be not enough for Maria. Perhaps the university adopts the view that if students were given too much explicit guidance, it could cause over-dependence and limited thinking (Evans, 2013). However, it has to be taken into consideration that from an international student’s point of view, most universities require

error-free texts. Due to the lack of academic writing support perceived by Maria, perhaps she had no choice but to rely on proof readers. Furthermore, with the internationalization of higher education, it is expected that the university should help support students to assimilate from one CoP to another.

Relationships between the participants and their tutors also proved to be a vital extrinsic influence in their writing changes. Having a positive relationship with one's tutor can help foster positive emotion which can be regarded as a key element in one's ability for self-regulation (Scott et al, 2011). In this study, the relationship is established in the form of face to face meetings as well as written feedback received after each summative assignment. Even though the participants are surrounded by their more immediate CoP in lending help and support, more value was put on the participants' relationship with their tutors than their peers (Efklides & Dina, 2004). A study of extrinsic feedback by Efklides and Dina (2004) showed students receive feedback on outcome (in this study referred to as marks) and performance (in this study referred to as academic writing proficiency) by external sources (in this case, it can only be given by tutors), showed that it could influence a student's performance as well as metacognition experience but did not temper with a student's self-concept. Hence, this is perhaps why all the participants seemed to be very reliant on their tutor's feedback and did not seek much support from their peers due to their belief in the limited knowledge that their peers could provide. This could also explain why regardless of the amount of feedback Yaseen had received, her negative self-concept towards feedback remained unchanged.

6.2.3 Feedback and becoming a proficient writer

The earlier sections have discussed the impact of sociocultural and cognitive factors in explaining the participants' perceptions on learning and writing. Additionally, no study of writing change or development is complete without discussing the importance and influence of feedback that is very much sought after by international students (Leki, 1995; Weaver & Jackson, 2011). Echoing a claim by Eldaba and Isbell (2018), all the participants in the study agree that feedback was essential for success and some participants such as Shaima demanded detailed constructive feedback that she can relate to. Although feedback can be regarded as an extrinsic factor for change in writing, I have to give it a different heading as I would like to elaborate on feedback here and its relationship in helping participants become a better writer. I would also like to highlight and discuss certain concerns expressed by the participants in the study.

In the earlier section I have discussed the importance of the participants' relationship with their tutors. This relationship affected how participants interpreted and reacted to feedback differently. Their interpretation and reaction contributed to how they tackled the next assignment and so had implications for their progress in becoming a proficient academic writer. In the findings (Table 14, page 134) I have presented how the participants interpreted their feedback whether positively or negatively or in neutral mode. I also included the aspect the person based their perception on. (i.e. the feedback itself, the tutor or the marks or a combination of two or all). For every participant apart from Maria, there was at least one mention of the tutor in influencing their interpretation of feedback.

Interestingly enough, every time the tutor aspect came up, it was related to either a positive relationship or negative relationship with the tutor. For example, Lulu based her interpretation of all her assignments on tutors, each time explaining what her tutors did right or wrong in helping her enhance learning and writing and her perception moved from less negative to more positive. This was similar to Elio although his overall perception alternates between positive and negative. Maria expressed a neutral perspective except for the last assignment when she displayed a sense of exasperation for her failure to utilize feedback and improve her academic writing skills. This shows that students do not necessarily hold a homogenous view regarding what entails effective feedback and how it can be utilized (Mutch, 2003; Evans 2013). What is perceived as effective feedback for improvement by one student could be viewed otherwise by another student and this is why feedback should be regarded as a "social practice" (Mutch, 2003, p.36) rather than a textual product. Feedback should be regarded as a social practice as it is highly dependent on the tutor's expertise as well as the academic context (Tuck, 2012). Furthermore, instead of regarding feedback as a one-way monologue, the feedback process in this study actually invites interaction between the participants and their tutors during the one on one tutorials. Regardless of the tutor's efforts, perception of feedback is highly unique from one participant to another as each participant experiences and interacts with feedback differently and it is important to consider how students develop and adapt the knowledge and skills acquired from feedback to new and different learning contexts (Evans, 2013).

Previous literature has cited that dissatisfaction about feedback from students has been due to content, timing, transparency of assignment requirements and assignment organization (Huxham, 2007). As far as this study is concerned, the feedback given to the participants

seemed to tick all the boxes demanded by students being both timely and personalised (Ferguson, 2011). The timing of the feedback was quick and the content was detailed. However, regardless of how well the feedback was written and how quick it was received, misinterpretations still occurred and dissatisfaction still arose. The complaints received from the participants of the study included clarity, transparency of assignment marking system and tutor's incompetence. Lulu, for example, initially expressed her dissatisfaction with her DCR feedback only to realize later it was due to a contradiction of her ideas and her tutor's. Shaima also expressed the same frustration and requested for more detailed feedback. What seemed to have happened with Shaima was that she was receiving feedback in "mitigated forms" (Coffin et al, 2002, p.118) to soften the tone of comments. The tutor's purpose in this was to be careful not to show frustration and to be supportive but Hyland and Hyland (2001, p.185) found such hedged tones "carries the very real potential for incomprehension and miscommunication."

Present in the findings as well was the impact of feedback in contributing to participants' emotion, attitude and motivation similar to the findings in Zacharias (2007). The participants' feelings towards their tutors affected how s/he perceive his/her feedback and this evaluation influenced his/her decision for the next assignment. This is apparent in Yaseen who interpreted her feedback negatively on her first assignment and ever since has distrusted the tutors and the university. Yaseen's negativity and distrust in the feedback was rooted in two main reasons. Firstly, she believed that the feedback failed to reflect the mark and the effort she had given. Secondly, she lost her trust when it was announced that to obtain marks in the eighties or nineties is an elusive idea. Yaseen's distrust went beyond feedback because even when Yaseen had a good positive relationship with one of her tutors, Yaseen still found a way to externalize the blame to the university, the programme perhaps as a consequence of her unrelenting pessimistic nature.

How the participants interpret and make use of feedback goes back to my earlier discussion on the importance of cognitive ability in learning. Vickerman (2009) also argued that how one perceives, interprets and reacts to any information given, is highly related to the cognitive and learning style interaction within the individual. Weaver (2006) claimed that student's ability to utilize feedback depends on their maturity level and their receptiveness depended on the student's past experiences with feedback. This could be true in the case of Yaseen who embodied negative emotion throughout her MSc programme sojourn paired with her previous

unpleasant experience with feedback and her self-declaration of dreading collecting her feedback. Although a face to face session was set to help resolve any distrust or ambiguity about feedback and assignments (Carless, 2006), Yaseen was still persistent in drawing negative conclusions. Therefore, it can be speculated that Yaseen was not ready to receive feedback. Burke (2009, p.49) suggests that students unprepared for feedback often show “inadequate learning strategies” and little evidence of development as well as intrinsic motivation to learn (Mutch, 2003).

Peer feedback has also been cited to be an important aspect in learning. In previous studies, it has been shown that peer support was very much sought after in academic settings (Leki 1995; Shang-Butler, 2015). However, regardless of the perceived presence of a CoP the students claimed that they did not have much chance for peer feedback due to feeling overwhelmed by the assignments. When they do engage in peer feedback, some participants appreciate it while some seemed agitated by it. There was also an assertion of power claims whereby participants such as Shaima asserted the importance of the source of any feedback. This could imply her not valuing or accepting feedback from someone that she might regard as less knowledgeable than her (Evans, 2013). This notion is also supported by Gilmore (2009) where he stated that L2 peer feedback could be perceived to be less valuable. This not only applies to peer feedback but for academic feedback as well, where students prefer native speakers (Rebuck, 2014). Another more practical reason why not much peer feedback took place in this study was due to the compact module task and assignment in the programme that validated the need for peer feedback as only relevant to certain tasks (Fallows & Chandramohan, 2001). Certain tasks that require more “detailed objective evaluation” (Fallows & Chandramohan, 2001, p.243) would need feedback from someone who is better acquainted with the topic such as tutors. In this study for example, peer feedback was not present in the SM assignment neither receiving nor giving feedback from or to their peers was reported. Perhaps, this could be due to participants all claiming to be novice SPSS learners and so were their colleagues. Additionally, SM is a factual topic that had certain statistical logic that can only have a right or wrong answer thus leaving little space for an open discussion.

The discussion of feedback in this section, leads to answering my second research question on how feedback supports writing development and what other factors help develop academic writing. I believe that feedback helps the participants tremendously. There is evidence of

detailed feedback provided although there were certain concerns about clarity from the participants which I believe is due to cultural aspects and not linguistic. Extra face to face sessions were given to help clarify any misunderstanding or concerns and most of the participants benefited from positive relationships from their tutors. I believe the problem with participants who could not improve their academic writing skills in becoming a proficient writer lies in how they interpret their feedback (both written and face to face) and how effectively they are able to utilize it to become an autonomous self-regulated writer. It is also important to consider students' utilization and perception of feedback within the sociocultural and constructivist perspective because learning in this study is viewed as a situated learning context whereby any learning is always mediated by the contextual affordances and limitations (Green, 1997).

However, extrinsic factors can only help so much. Intrinsic factors need to interact with the extrinsic factors in order to achieve academic development and success. As mentioned before, academic writing is a learnable skill. The participants' learning conceptions interacted with the participants' own personality and motivation in order ideally to produce a self-regulated autonomous writer and enable academic development. To achieve this, students need to identify themselves as "agents of their own change" (Boud & Molloy, 2013, p.705). Students need to recognise the impact of their own attitude and assume the identity of someone who can be internally driven by their own intrinsic motivation and become a productive learner (Boud & Molloy, 2013). By cultivating the identity of an effective autonomous learner, their ability to make sense or make use of useful information will be better exercised (Boud & Molloy, 2013). Extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors together with the sociocultural aspect of learning all contribute to one's writing development and proficiency according to the writing convention set by the university. Nevertheless, one could argue that with the increase in numbers of international students in the UK universities, having to adapt to the UK university's writing conventions could perhaps be regarded as having a slight bias where international students are regarded to be in academic deficient (Bista,2019). Perhaps this is best quoted by Peters (2005, p.5) who said that "there are too many foreign students in the University to study in the UK way" so unless adequate support is given, academic writing problems could remain unresolved.

6.3 How change can be understood

This section will describe the changes that occurred in the study and discuss possible reasons why certain participants resisted change. I will use Mezirow's (1978, 1991) Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) as a framework to explain how changes that had occurred can be understood. This theory is selected as it fits the epistemological notion of a constructivist study, supports a socio-cultural theory of learning and is particularly developed to explain how adults make sense of their own learning experience (Mezirow, 1991), all of which are the important aspects in this study. Lulu will be selected as an instantiation of Mezirow's TLT.

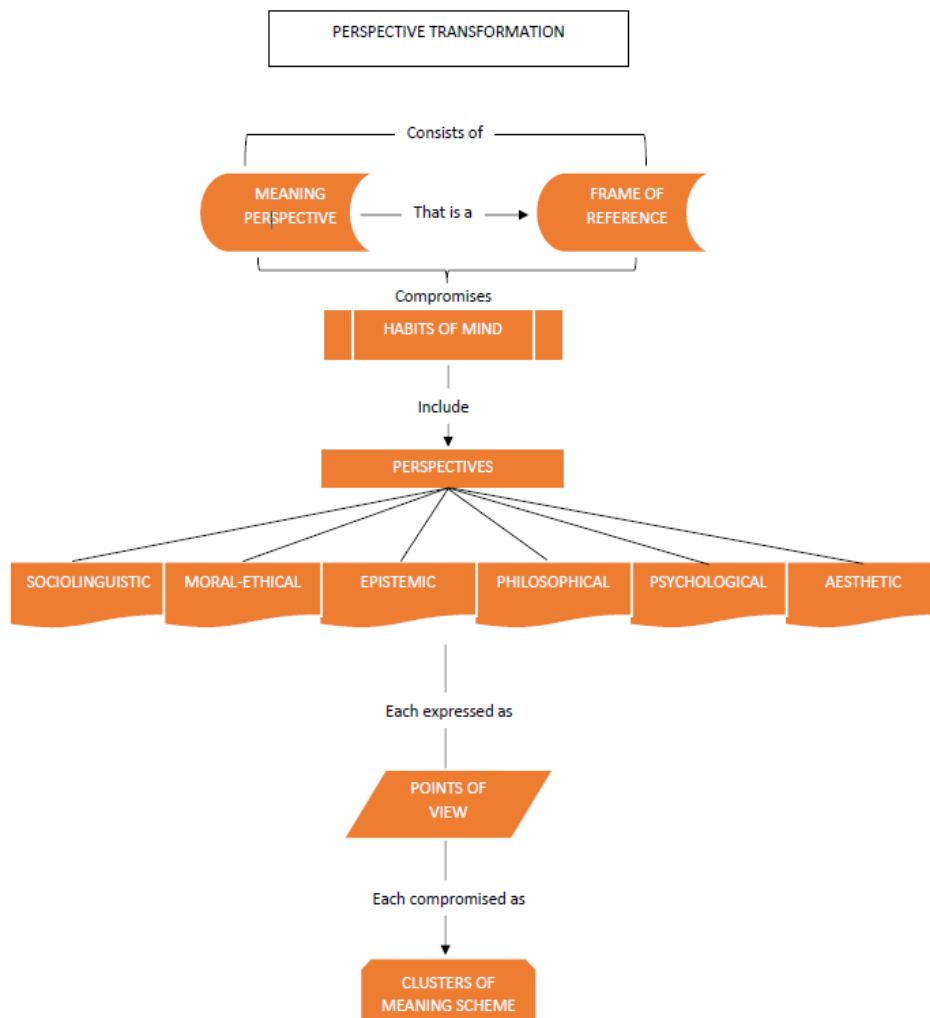


Figure 2 Mezirow's revised Transformative Learning Theory from Kitchenham (2008)

Briefly, TLT (Figure 5) attempts to explain how adults perceive their experiences and the consequences that occur when they start questioning these experiences and altering the meanings they attach to those experiences. Learning in adulthood is considered to be transformative because adults can perceive distortion in their beliefs, feelings and attitudes while learning in childhood is regarded as formative as it involves a formal source of authority and socialization. TLT involves “point of view” (Mezirow, 1991) that consist of different meaning schemes which are seen to be more changeable than habits of the mind. The habits of the mind act as a ruling system for behaviour and action, while a frame of reference aligns these habits of the mind which results in a particular point of view. The idea of transformative learning in adulthood links to Biggs’ (1989) belief that tertiary education was meant to provide a change in the students’ interpretation of the world, transformative learning theory focuses on this reconstruction and how it occurs. It happens when an individual reinterprets his/her (old or new) experience in order to adapt to a new set of expectations hence giving new meaning to the experience (Mezirow, 1991). In this study, the idealised instantiation of transformative learning theory is most visibly apparent in Lulu. Lulu stood out in terms of her transformation from a naïve writer to becoming a proficient academic writer when she transformed her perspective after incurring a writing dilemma.

Based on Habermas’ (1987) learning domain, Mezirow (1991, 2012) formulated TLT to involve three possible domains namely: the instrumental learning domain, the communicative learning domain and the transformative learning domain. The instrumental domain comprises empirical tests where problem-solving is involved to affirm our understanding or to restructure our action to solve the problem. Communicative learning involves understanding what someone means and this is shaped by involvement in cultural and linguistic codes as well as with social norms and expectations. In order for the last domain to be achieved, both instrumental and communicative learning needs to be engaged. When this engagement occurs, it will cause one to change one’s frame of reference. This can be demonstrated in Lulu where her belief that her excellent academic record and her experience of teaching academic writing was enough to equip her to excel in MSc. However, when she failed to obtain the desired high grades, Lulu then began to acknowledge the differences between the university’s writing conventions and her previous understandings and so started writing by aiming to engage the native audience (tutors). Lulu also started to discuss with her tutors, peers, and proof readers, as well as changing her writing strategies in order to fit in with the university’s academic writing conventions. Within the study, in her blog entries and

interviews, Lulu had a sort of reflective monologue with herself acknowledging her shortcomings and realizing the areas that she needed to improve. This is evidence that Lulu had conscious awareness of the need to modify her old belief and realize that academic writing was more than mere excellent academic records, thus resulting in Lulu engaging in transformative learning.

In order for transformative learning to occur, “critical reflection” or “critical self-reflection” needed to take place (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 105). Reflection often occurs within the problem-solving setting and occurs three ways that relates to different depths of change (Mezirow, 1994). One could reflect on the content, the process or the premise (Figure 6). Content reflection is when one reflects on what has been done while process reflection relates to reflection on the origin of actions and related factors and both can result in the transformation of any meaning scheme, which is considered to be a straightforward transformation (Kitchenham, 2008). Premise reflection on the other hand often results in transformation of the meaning perspectives and is regarded as a profound transformation leading to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). This occurs when one looks at the bigger picture where critical reflection occurs. Based on the findings, it can be shown that Lulu experienced all three type of reflections. Lulu initially adopted content reflection, where she looked at what she has done right in the past and how she could apply it to her current context. Lulu then moved on to process reflection by reflecting what she has done right or wrong in her academic writing in order to pass the module assignment. Lulu reflected deeper (premise reflection) in term two where she not only focussed on passing but adopted new strategies to ensure improvements and desired results for her current and future assignments. In the findings Lulu showed commitment not only to write like a UK academic but to understand fully each academic term she was using while applying criticality. The moment Lulu reflected this way, Lulu experienced perspective transformation where she saw academic writing not in stages or as a separate element from herself but rather as a holistic activity where cognitive attributes meet her social context.

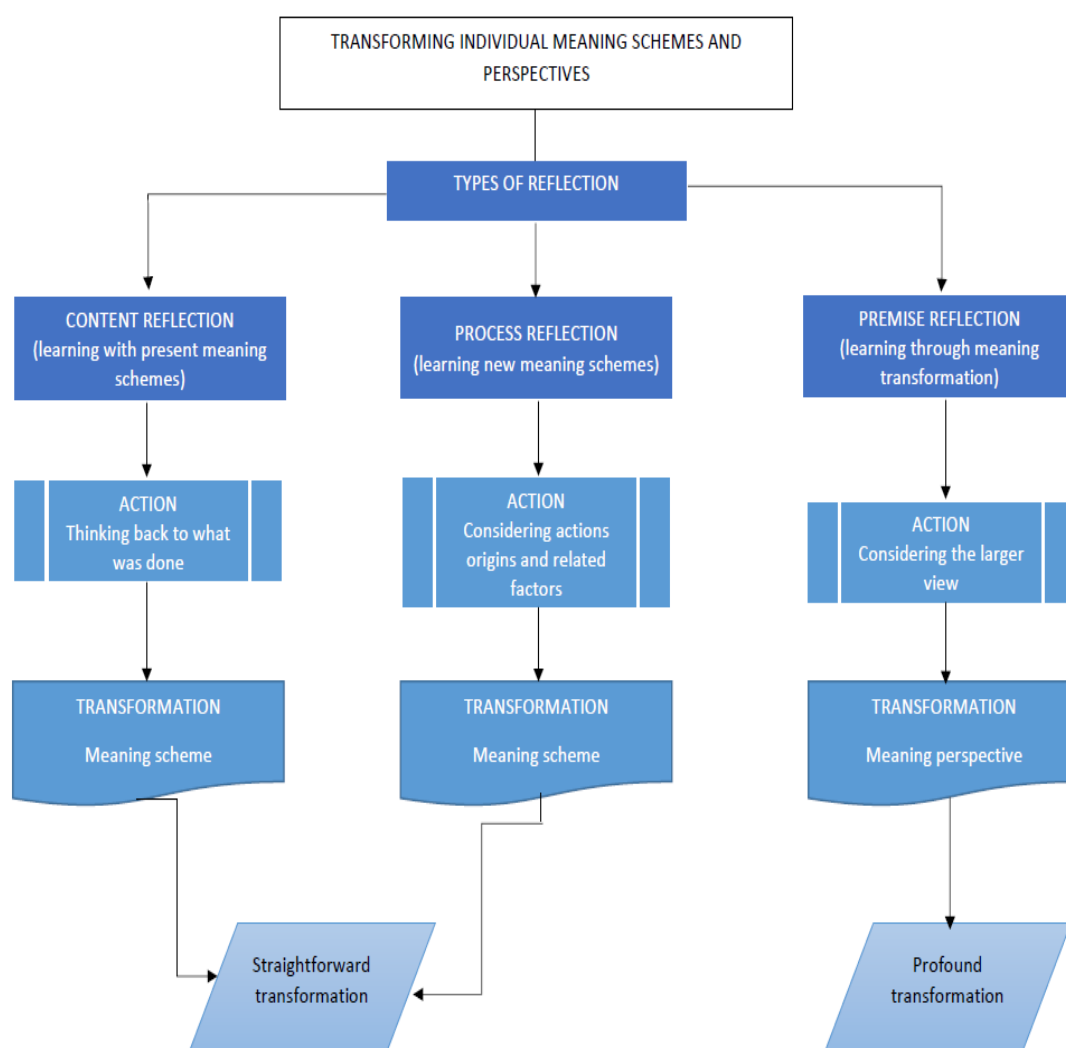


Figure 3 Types of reflection (Kitchenham, 2008)

In relation to this, Mezirow (1985) stated that perspective transformation can occur gradually and painlessly or in epochal steps and painfully (Mezirow, 1985). However I could not see such divided evidence in Lulu. From the experience of interviewing face to face, I can surmise that Lulu’s perspective transformation occurred initially gradually and painfully and epochal and painlessly in term two. Perhaps, by using Mezirow’s ten phases of transformative learning (perspective transformation) in Table 17, it can better explain the point I am trying to make. The process of perspective transformation is essential to be experienced in order to grasp and accept change in transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978). Without participants changing their meaning perspectives, their perspectives towards

academic writing and learning will remain the same hence resulting in their behaviour to remain unchanged. Once perspective transformation occurs, behavioural change will tend to ensue (Mezirow, 1991). Indeed, for this study, meaning perspectives two dimensions were apparent throughout the study. The first dimension included sociolinguistic codes (e.g. social norms), psychological codes (e.g. personality traits) and epistemic codes (e.g. learning styles) and the second dimension the meaning scheme which includes belief and anything that contributes to shaping our feelings and judgements (Mezirow, 1994). Both dimensions have been examined in the earlier sections when discussing about beliefs and values, context, cognitive traits and other intrinsic factors.

Phases	Mezirow's ten phases of transformative learning and perspective transformation (1978a, 1978b)	Lulu's experiences	Perspective transformation behaviour
Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma	Upon receiving DCR assignment marks and feedback, Lulu experienced a dilemma of 'what went wrong'	Gradual and painful
Phase 2	A self-examination of feelings of guilt or shame, sometimes turning to religion for support	Lulu shared in the interviews her anger, disbelief and shame for failing to reach bare minimum of sixty marks	
Phase 3	A critical assessment of assumption	Lulu shared her assumptions about academic writing and externalizing blame	
Phase 4	Recognition of that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change	Lulu shared that she was not the only one going through the dilemma	
Phase 5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions	Lulu trying to write like a native while consulting her peers, proof readers and tutors	
Phase 6	Planning a course of action	Lulu employed new strategies to help improve her academic writing	
Phase 7	Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans	Lulu changed her reading strategy by reading from pioneers of her research topic and developing criticality after acknowledging that her previous writing strategies were not suitable in the UK context	Epochal and Painless
Phase 8	Provisionally trying out new roles	Lulu's first attempt for IM assignment	
Phase 9	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships	Lulu received IM feedback and marks, reaffirming that she was going in the right direction	
Phase 10	A reintegration into one's life on a basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective	Lulu reaffirms her new academic writing perspectives and applied it to her future assignments	

Table 17 Explaining Lulu transformative learning/perspective transformation journey

The table above shows Lulu's experience in reaching transformative learning. The data documented Lulu's changing perspective which fits neatly into the ten phases of Mezirow's TLT model. It can be observed, Lulu's transformation started out slow and gradual with much negative emotion accompanying each phase. However, after consulting her tutors during tutorial meetings, Lulu started to transform rather quickly and almost smoothly with apparent positivity in attitude. I would also like to highlight that Lulu's experience was transformation rather than a replacement as she "*connected*" not only her academic writing to flow but she also linked her previous experience to her current context and made use of what was related to her current situation.

There have been arguments that transformative learning is a complex process and it cannot simply be described by ascertaining marks of transformations. Newman (2012) criticised transformative learning to be too loose conceptually and some could mistake transformation for mobilisation. This was supported by Cranton and Kasl (2012) who claimed that many researchers merely saw changed behaviour as a product of transformative learning. That is why I gave Lulu's narrative extra attention on analysis to explore the extent to which she indeed experienced transformative learning, with or without her realizing it.

This is not to say that other participants did not experience any kind of learning transformation. Perhaps they did but it was less visible in their writing behaviour, performance or articulation of the learning process. Elio for example, seemed to have also experienced transformative learning, however, his experiences did not quite follow the ten phases described above. However, it needs to be noted that just because it did not fit the model, it does not mean transformative learning did not take place. In the data, Elio did not seem to experience any disorienting dilemma nor feelings of guilt or shame. Rather his anger was projected towards his tutors. It seemed that Elio did not exhibit any of the characteristics of phases one to six but has behaviour typical of phase seven, similarly there is little evidence for stages 8 and 9 but evidence of behaviour similar to that described as stage 10. Perhaps, this can be explained using a similar study by Nada, Montgomery and Araujo (2018) who used a transformative learning framework to explain international student experiences in Portugal. Using Stevens-Long et al's (2012) proposed guideline, they looked at transformative learning as a product as well as a process. Hence, after deeply analysing Elio's narrative, I have come to the conclusion that the transformation he was experiencing was in terms of personal growth and development, instead of his academic writer identity and

performance. In other words, Elio perhaps did experience transformative learning however, the process was not quite as staged as Mezirow's. After all, Mezirow (1990) asserted that one of the essential conditions of transformative learning is for one to be in an unfamiliar context, where one is forced to adapt and challenge the socio-cultural context and reconstruct one's meaning perspectives.

I could not find enough evidence to say Shaima, Yaseen or Maria have experienced much transformative learning or transformation in other areas at all. They seem to lack conscious reflective ability which is a higher level of cognitive functioning (metacognition) and this resembles findings by Bee (2000) where he found only half the adults in their sample reveal any indication of possessing metacognitive thinking. My study also seems to disagree with Mezirow's (1991, p.193) claim that it is after the age of thirty that transformation was likely to produce "developmentally advanced meaning perspective". Shaima, Yaseen and Maria were all well above thirty years of age while Elio and Lulu were under the age of thirty. The lack of evidence of transformative learning could also be explained by the substantial amount of evidence of persistence with the familiarity of earlier learning and writing habits and reluctance to let go of their previous knowledge and belief about writing. To explain this, I will draw on the works of Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997) and Prochaska and Prochaska (1999).

Self-regulatory learning or self-regulation has been discussed in the earlier section. Yet it is an important aspect to be considered when talking about positive change in learning. The act of being able to manage one's learning behaviour itself is considered to be self-regulatory behaviour (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Hence, Zimmerman (1998) argued that skilled self-regulators have goals and plans to succeed, with high self-confidence and self-efficacy. Skilled self-regulators are also keen on learning in-depth, engage in self-evaluation and are highly adaptive in identifying problems and changing their academic behaviour. Although Yaseen and Shaima have uttered their passion for in-depth learning, unfortunately they do not reveal much evidence of self-regulation.

Prochaska and Prochaska (1999) have put forward four reasons why someone might be reluctant to change. Although this framework has previously been used in health-related research, it has been applied to academic-related settings as well (Dembo & Seli, 2004). The reasons for resistance to change include: a) they believe they cannot change b) they do not

want to change c) they do not know what to change and d) they do not know how to change. After analysing carefully each of Yaseen's, Maria's and Shaima's narratives in the findings, it is clear that they each belong to a category. Yaseen is in category a) because she believed that her pessimist being does not allow her to change. Yaseen also displayed a conviction regarding her own understanding of what learning is and what she wanted to learn, implying the university and the programme failed to provide what she needed academically. Maria on the other hand, can be classified under category c). Maria has provided a sense of being lost in the whole academic writing agenda repeating the same strategies from previous academic context without identifying the problem. Maria kept changing her proof reader, thinking that it would make a difference instead of working on her own understanding of how academic writing was being defined in the new cultural context. Shaima on the other hand, seemed to fit well in category d). Shaima has provided indications that she knew she had to change something in order to become a better writer and she could identify her academic writing problem. Unfortunately, even with the knowledge in hand, Shaima was not sure which strategy to apply or which problem to tackle first. In the end, she depended on her proof reader to fix her linguistic problems while being uncertain of precisely how to write according to the **university's** writing convention.

In relation to my research question three, transformative learning change did occur in two participants, although Lulu was the only participant to have gone through the complete ten phases put forward by Mezirow (1991). Although knowledge and competency improved for Shaima, Yaseen and Maria, it was not enough to say that they have experienced change that is attributed to transformative learning. This is to be expected when performing a longitudinal study on five different individuals who each portrayed a different narrative. This is why conceptualization of academic writing, changes and persistence and transformation cannot be explained with a single theory due to the differences of each participant. Each participant is unique and each displayed a different learning and academic writing experience.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

This study is a narrative study that demonstrates the interaction of past and present events in contributing to the participants' learning outcome. Using a combination of semi-structured interviews and blog entries as sources of data, this longitudinal study managed to capture a holistic picture of the dynamics in international postgraduate students' academic writing experience showing that it included many elements in shaping and influencing their writing achievement outcomes. Indeed this study is not intended to generalize to all international postgraduate experience but to demonstrate the in-depth experience of the participants and the most significant issues surrounding their experience. Perhaps it is best summarized that this narrative study paints a complex picture of issues (James, 2018). While all international students have to wrestle with these issues their individual experience of them will be different. This study offers insight into five of these stories.

This study revealed the influence of sociocultural aspects in the participants' journey to their conceptualization of academic writing. Academic writing is a learnable skill that needs time to develop hence although all the participants were provided the same amount of time and input, yet each participant had their own unique pace and outcome.

The conceptualization and journey to become a proficient academic writer in this study was of a situated nature, dependent on the UK academic context that involves many interrelated factors. Proficiency and competence in the English language, play an important role in both academic and social integration however, possessing these alone cannot guarantee the participants will become a better academic writer without understanding other aspects and demands of academic writing which includes the highly regarded yet conceptually elusive aspect of criticality.

Even understanding the essence of criticality is a process that has its own cultural attribute. International students from collectivist societies valued obedience and so were reluctant to challenge and question the person of authority (in this case, the tutors) deeming such behaviour disrespectful. Hence, for some students criticality might be counter intuitive an approach that needs to be learned but does not happen overnight.

In order to grasp criticality, the participants needed to possess positive learning strategies. The study revealed that some of the learning strategies included the use of sample essays and employing proof readers. The use of proof readers can be beneficial for understanding a native's point of view of what academic writing involves as well as learning from their linguistic mistakes. However, this can only be achieved if the participant has a deep approach to learning and can evaluate the qualities and weaknesses that are being valued and identified within the host context. For a surface learner, the proof-reading service may only be viewed as a simplistic way to escape English language errors without having to engage with how ideas are being encoded into text.

This study also discovered that in order to embody the identity of a proficient academic writer, a student needs to have a mature learning conception, learning attribution and learning approach as well as possessing metacognitive skills such as self-regulation, retain confident and optimistic outlook and an ability to process feedback and interpret how to utilise it in ways that can help improve academic writing. Maturity and criticality in the aspect of learning is important so students can look beyond feedback and marks in determining their academic progress and learning. However, these factors are not inevitable but seem to be possible to be attained with experience.

The adoption of COP also more or less helps participants achieve a sense of belonging especially with the change that adaptation into the new academic context that needed to take place. However, in this study, regardless of the sense of belonging acknowledged by certain participants, they still value feedback or advice from tutors more than they do from their peers. Some participants relate their emotions to their tutors and feedback while their peers did not receive as much attention in this study.

The final findings in this study demonstrate the importance of change and academic adaptation in order to become and assimilate oneself as part of the new academic context. A student's resistance to change or adapting to the **university's** learning and writing convention will also hinder a student from performing academically well regardless of their past success in their native countries. Viewing the challenges as simply about improving language skills and now about changing viewpoints can prevent the change needed to be successful in the new context, hence making it more than a language issue.

My academic reflection

As an ex-MSc and an academic, this study helped frame my own experience, particularly on the complicated process of immersing oneself into the UK writing convention. My original assumptions were rather simplistic. I thought every participant in this study will eventually develop their academic writing and the data will show marks with an increasing pattern. I also assumed that this study would touch mainly on cognitive or metacognitive writing strategies however, I found dependence on external factors plays quite an important role in these strategies. I had expected that the participants would talk about feedback but the study made me realize just how connected their emotions were towards their tutors. Furthermore, I also assumed that those with less language proficiency will struggle more than those who score higher. This view has been challenged by the findings showing only two of the participants developing their academic writing and the fact that Yaseen who possessed the highest IELTS score in this study overall showed less progress. Perhaps, this is the beauty of qualitative studies, where the data was full of unexpected narratives as the flow of conversation was controlled by the participants.

As a research student, completing a piece of original research myself has influenced the way I think about research. While analysing and discussing the findings, I noticed that I looked at the narrative via two perspectives. The first perspective was as a researcher lens whilst the second perspective was as an ex-MSc student lens. I found the two roles hard to separate as the first helped me to analyse my findings while the latter helped me interpret my findings given certain experiences that seem to coincide with those of the participants'. I believe this is an advantage for me as it helped me realize and understand that transformative learning was also occurring to me as I retraced my steps from being an MSc student to the PhD candidate I am now. I can now view and approach academia and research with a more refined lens than I did when I first started.

Reflecting back, I did wonder what I could have done differently. Knowing what I know now, I would perhaps continue the study up to the participants' dissertation stage which means an added three months. Regardless of the longer period, I believe I would have obtained a much fuller picture of a completed one year journey. The dissertation is also the point where students put what they have learned into practice focusing on their own research intentions and so the dissertation is the most independently driven of all the assignments

Furthermore, I would also try to somehow diversify my participants more and not concentrate on just one MSc cohort.

In spite of these limitations I would argue that a key strength of the approach I have taken is in identifying the real issues encountered by different individuals throughout the MSc course. Regardless of their innate ability, learning strategies or conception, this study shows the participants' lack of preparation as well as their perception of receiving a lack of academic and emotional support. While it is expected that they need to become independent learners, being thrust into a new academic environment needed some informed support to help kick start the learning adjustment, otherwise, it could result in early feelings of frustration or negativity as demonstrated by some participants that they could not overcome. It is hoped that this thesis will bring the insights of research to enable the support offered to L2 academic writers to be better informed

I anticipate these findings would be useful for the university, future international students as well as their sponsors. The implication that might be made in the light of these findings at university level could include amendments to academic writing support especially in matters involving criticality. Provision for L2 writers should offer more than simply language support and needs also to consider more issues such as academic culture shock, engaging with tutors and feedback, examples of learning and writing strategies, pointing out what is valued in a text and how this has been achieved, supporting students across a period of study not only at the start and opportunities to talk with peers about writing not only aimed at particular assignments.

I would also hope that the university can be more transparent about their marking guidelines. It invites frustration when high marks of 80s are made elusive and the gap between a pass, a merit and distinction (starting 70 marks) are so close together while a high distinction starts at 80 marks above. Supporting students in understanding what each grade boundary signifies in terms of learning and understanding might also help in interpreting and responding to marks. With the increase of international students studying in the UK, this means this notion could invite confusion or frustration when stellar students are told that 'no one' expects even exceptional students to achieve the elusive marks of 80 and above. An educational institution "should be about changing the ways in which learners understand or experience, or conceptualise the world around them" (Ramsden, 2003, p.6). Therefore, both students and the

academic institution must learn from each other in order to achieve better academic writing and also, an improved learning experience.

Furthermore, the university could also set up an explicit guideline about the clarity and ethics of the use of proof readers. Participants in this study have reported that proof readers often go beyond correcting error to re-write certain aspects of their essay and can be paid more for the whole paper to be written. They might not see it as plagiarism because it was guaranteed as a new piece of writing. The only writing guideline that I can find on the university's website was about plagiarism. Having a more explicit guideline administered in the classroom can perhaps help international students understand the boundaries perhaps promoting university approved proof readers only who themselves understand the boundaries. Although this thesis has revealed that this boundary is not always easy to establish.

Lastly, there are implications for future international students and their sponsors. Perhaps, certain preparatory measures should take place before sending students to English speaking countries. They have the responsibility to ensure that the students have proficient and competent English language academic ability so they would not encounter too much of a negative learning experience. There is a duty of care issue here. By preparing future international students with the academic expectations for their host university, some of the anxiety caused may be relieved. This preparation should involve an introduction to criticality as well as familiarity with the host country's academic culture as this could perhaps help lessen 'academic culture shock' from happening.

Further research that would build on these findings might include a dialogical study between international students and tutors about the perception of support and feedback. Although it is understood that laborious tailored feedback were given to participants in this study, however their perception of the feedback were different and at times seemed to be a mismatch with the tutors' intention. It could be due to the words used, the tone it seemed to evoke or merely due to the students' own cultural inability to comprehend which would then warrant the tutor's compassion. Such a study might focus on the perspectives of each group and what happens when interaction between the two groups occurs, so that students hear the tutor's intentions and tutors hear the student's interpretation.

My contribution to knowledge in this field is in the novelty of being the first in depth and holistic study to use a narrative approach and Transformative Learning Theory in investigating the academic writing conceptualization and experiences on international postgraduate student. My study demonstrates the participants' perception about academic writing development in such depth that it is possible to see how change occurs, what enables or disables this change and the complex interaction between, personal, academic and cultural influences.

My personal reflection

Every PhD candidate will acknowledge that their thesis writing journey was full of obstacles. My seniors would share that their challenges often included understanding how criticality is expressed in writing. I witnessed my colleagues' tears of frustration although some were more resilient and would prefer to express their emotions more privately. I believe I encountered and experienced the same emotional rollercoaster however; I would not categorise them as obstacles but rather as learning experiences. I admit, I was too proud to admit defeat and I was too strong to show people that I was weak. I believe, these little cognitive motivational pep talks that I had in my head helped me become a determined person, hungry to finish what I have started. In part I have now been witness to the same pep talks occurring in the lives of my participants.

What I would consider my challenges would be more personal. My challenges were concerned with the difficult contextual adjustment to being away from my children during the last six months of my PhD. While I feel that being alone and away from my children was the most difficult contextual adjustment, I felt that period was the most academically satisfying. I was able to work and think with unparalleled concentration. This new-found freedom while academically liberating, was also psychologically trying. Not only was I missing my children and their development (I am a clingy mother) but I was also constantly worrying about my father who had been recently diagnosed with cancer for the third time. These psychological trials often occurred when I come home from the office. With no one to come home to except for my Netflix on standby mode, I would rather spend my time, day and night including weekends, working on my thesis. While this was physically draining, it was also as I said, academically gratifying.

As an international student and an L2 writer myself, I empathized with my participants. I also shared similar concerns about the challenges and struggles as an L2 writer as my participants did when I was in my MSc. I felt what Maria felt, that sometimes the university did not provide enough academic writing support for international students like me. Like Yaseen, I felt I was thrown into the MSc, equipped with my past knowledge and skills, ego and confidence that failed to serve me well and this led me to regard my first three months in the UK as feeling academically lost. Nevertheless, like Lulu, these experiences taught me to become the resilient person I am when working on my thesis and it also taught me the value of those experiences which was to be more compassionate with international students when I come back to Brunei. Having gone through such experiences, I believe that I was an appropriate candidate to research and advocate for these fellow MSc (now PhD) colleagues in this study.

Although this study focused only on the academic side, there were plenty of stories they told me off the record about their personal lives that were just as compelling. This study allowed not only for me to acquire data and knowledge but acquire friends as well. Rest assured, I have tried very hard to ensure my interpretation would not be too clouded by these relationships as they began after data collection was completed. Lastly, I believe this study brought out the best of my academic strengths and together with my supervisors' support, it has been a very positive and I say it again, an academically satisfying journey.

References

- Ackerman, J. M. (1991). Reading, writing, and knowing: The role of disciplinary knowledge in comprehension and composing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 25 (2),133-178.
- Azadi, G., Afghari, A., & Hadian, B. (2020). Effect of Awareness of Teacher Education Philosophy on EFL Teachers' Professional Skill: A Post-method Perspectivization. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 8(29), 91-105.
- Ahmed, A., & Myhill, D. (2016). The impact of the socio-cultural context on L2 Englishwriting of Egyptian university students. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 100 (11), 117-129.
- Albright, J., & Luke, A. (Eds.). (2010). *Pierre Bourdieu and literacy education*. New York: Routledge.
- Ali Zeilani, R. S., Al-Nawafleh, A. H., & Evans, C. (2011). Looking back at the doctorate: A qualitative study of Jordanian graduates from PhD programs in the UK. *Nursing & health sciences*, 13(3), 360-365.
- Ali, N., Ahmed, L., & Rose, S. (2017). Identifying predictors of students' perception of and engagement with assessment feedback. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 19(3), 239-251
- Alkaher, I., & Dolan, E.L. (2014). Integrating research into undergraduate courses: current practices and future directions. In D. Sunal, C. Sunal, D. Zollman, C. Mason, and E. Wright, Charlotte (Eds.), *Research in Science Education: Research Based Undergraduate Science Teaching*, (pp. 403-434). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Alsahafi, N., & Shin, S. (2017). Factors affecting the academic and cultural adjustment of Saudi international students in Australian universities. *Journal of International Students*, 7(1), 53–72.
- Anderson, C. E., & Cuesta-Medina, L. M. C. (2019). Beliefs and Practices concerning academic Writing among Postgraduate language-teacher trainees. *Íkala*, 24(1), 29-49.

Angelova, M., & Riazantseva, A. (1999). "If You Don't Tell Me, How Can I Know?" A Case Study of Four International Students Learning to Write the US Way. *Written Communication*, 16(4), 491-525.

Arkoudis, S., & Tran, L. T. (2007). International students in Australia: Read ten thousand volumes of books and walk ten thousand miles. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 27(2), 157-169.

Arndt, V. (1987). Six writers in search of texts: A protocol-based study of L1 and L2 writing. *ELT journal*, 41(4), 257-267.

Asikainen, H., Parpala, A., Lindblom-Ylänne, S., Vanthournout, G. and Coertjens, L. (2014). The Development of Approaches to Learning and Perceptions of the Teaching-Learning Environment during Bachelor Level Studies and their Relation to Study Success. *Higher Education Studies* 4(4), 24–36.

Atkinson, D. (2003). Writing and culture in the post-process era. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12 (1), 49-63.

Badger, R., & White, G. (2000). A process genre approach to teaching writing. *ELT journal*, 54(2), 153-160.

Bailey, C. (2006). *Supporting international students in UK Higher Education: Key issues, and recommendations for further research*. University of Wolverhampton. Retrieved from: <https://wlv.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/2436/7590/Supporting%20International%20Students.pdf?sequence=1>

Bailey, K. M., Curtis, A., Nunan, D., & Fan, D. (2001). *Pursuing professional development: The self as source*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Baird, C., & Dooley, P. (2014). Ensuring effective student support in higher education alleged plagiarism cases. *Innovative Higher Education*, 39(5), 387-400.

Baker, S. 2011. "Students' Writing and the Transitions from School to University: Hybrid 'Discourse of Writing' Positions of Students and Teachers." In: The 1st International Australasian Conference on Enabling Access to Higher Education, Adelaide, Australia, December 5–7.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.

Barnacle, R. (2005). Research education ontologies: Exploring doctoral becoming. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 24(2), 179-188.

Barnard, R., & Campbell, L. (2005). *Sociocultural theory and the teaching of process writing: The scaffolding of learning in a university context*. New Zealand: University of Waikato.

Bauer, H., & Picciotto, M. (2013). Writing in America: International students and first-year composition. *Writing on the Edge*, 23(2), 75-86.

Beare, S. (2000). *Differences in content generating and planning processes of adult L1 and L2 proficient writers*. University of Ottawa: Canada.

Beaumont, C., O'Doherty, M., & Shannon, L. (2011). Reconceptualising assessment feedback: a key to improving student learning? *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(6), 671-687.

Beauvais, C., Olive, T., & Passerault, J. M. (2011). Why are some texts good and others not? Relationship between text quality and management of the writing processes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103(2), 415.

Bee, H. L. (2000). *Journey of adulthood (4th ed.)*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bell, A. R., & Brooks, C. (2017). What Makes Students Satisfied? A Discussion and Analysis of the UK's National Student Survey. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 42 (8)1118–1142

Benson, R., Heagney, M., Hewitt, L., Crosling, G., & Devos, A. (2014). Diversity and achievement: Is success in higher education a transformative experience? *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 54(2), 8-31.

Benson, R., Hewitt, L., Heagney, M., Devos, A., & Crosling, G. (2010). Diverse pathways into higher education: Using students' stories to identify transformative experiences. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 50(1), 26.

Bereiter, C. (1995). A dispositional view of transfer. In A. McKeough, J. Lupart, & A. Marini (Eds.), *Teaching for transfer: Fostering generalization in learning* (pp. 21–34). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc

Berliner, D. (2016). How our contradictions make us human and inspire creativity. Media Group. [Online] Last accessed: 10 August 2019. Available: <https://aeon.co/ideas/how-our-contradictions-make-us-human-and-inspire-creativity>

Biber, D., & Gray, B. (2010). Challenging stereotypes about academic writing: Complexity, elaboration, explicitness. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 9(1), 2-20.

Biber, D., & Gray, B. (2011). Grammatical change in the noun phrase: The influence of written language use. *English Language & Linguistics*, 15(2), 223-250.

Biber, D., & Gray, B. (2016). *Grammatical complexity in academic English: Linguistic change in writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biber, D., Gray, B., & Poonpon, K. (2011). Should we use characteristics of conversation to measure grammatical complexity in L2 writing development? *Tesol Quarterly*, 45(1), 5-35.

Biggs, J. (1979). Individual Differences in Study Processes and the Quality of Learning Outcomes. *Higher Education*, 8 (4), 381–394.

Biggs, J. (1988a). The role of metacognition in enhancing learning. *Australian Journal of Education*, 32(2), 127-138.

Biggs, J. (2003). *Aligning teaching for constructing learning*. York, UK: Higher Education Academy.

Biggs, J. B. (1987). *Student approaches to learning and studying*. Hawthorn: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Biggs, J. B. (1988b). Assessing student approaches to learning. *Australian Psychologist*, 23(2), 197-206.

Biggs, J. B. (1989). Approaches to the enhancement of tertiary teaching. *Higher education research and development*, 8(1), 7-25.

Bista, K. (2019). Exploring the field: Understanding the international student experience. In K. Bista (Ed.), *Global perspectives on international student experiences in higher* (pp. 1–16). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bista, K., Sharma, G., & Gaulee, U. (2018). International student mobility: Examining trends and tensions. In Bista, K. (ed.), *International student mobility and opportunities for growth in the global marketplace* (pp. 1-15). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Bitchener, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2012). *Written corrective feedback in second language acquisition and writing*. USA: Routledge.

Blau, S., Hall, J., & Sparks, S. (2002). Guilt-free tutoring: Rethinking how we tutor non-native-English-speaking students. *Writing Center Journal*, 23(1), 23-44.

Bochner, Arthur P. (2007). Notes toward an ethics of memory in autoethnographic inquiry. In Norman K. Denzin & Michael D. Giardina (Eds.), *Ethical futures in qualitative research* (pp.196-208). Walnut Creek, Ca.: Left Coast Press.

Bolhuis, S., & Voeten, M. J. (2004). Teachers' conceptions of student learning and own learning. *Teachers and teaching*, 10(1), 77-98.

- Bonsaksen, T. (2018). Deep, surface, or both? A study of occupational therapy students' learning concepts. *Occupational therapy international*, 1-8
- Bonsaksen, T., Sadeghi, T., & Thørrisen, M. M. (2017). Associations between self-esteem, general self-efficacy, and approaches to studying in occupational therapy students: A cross-sectional study. *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health*, 33(4), 326-341.
- Borgatti, S. P. (2004). *Communities of practice*. Available: <http://www.analytictech.com/mb814/slides/communities.pdf> Last accessed: 10 March 2020
- Boud, D., & Molloy, E. (2013). Rethinking models of feedback for learning: the challenge of design. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(6), 698-712.
- Boughey, C. (2002). 'Naming' Students' Problems: an analysis of language-related discourses at a South African university. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 7(3), 295-307.
- Boulton-Lewis, G. M., Wilss, L., & Mutch, S. (1996). Teachers as adult learners: Their knowledge of their own learning and implications for teaching. *Higher Education*, 32(1), 89-106.
- Boyd, R. D., & Myers, J. G. (1988). Transformative education. *International journal of lifelong education*, 7(4), 261-284.
- Brookfield, S. D. (1988). Understanding and facilitating adult learning. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 16(2), 99-105.
- Brookfield, S. D. (2000). Transformative learning as ideological critique. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*, (pp. 125-148). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*, (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Burke, D. (2009). Strategies for using feedback students bring to higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34(1), 41-50.
- Burns, C., & Foo, M. (2012). Evaluating a formative feedback intervention for international students. *Journal of Practitioner Research in Higher Education*, 6(1), 40-49.
- Busato, V. V., Prins, F. J., Elshout, J. J., & Hamaker, C. (2000). Intellectual ability, learning style, personality, achievement motivation and academic success of psychology students in higher education. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 29(6), 1057-1068.
- Busher, H., Lewis, G., & Comber, C. (2016). Living and learning as an international postgraduate student at a Midlands university. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 40(1), 48-64.
- Cai, L., Dangeni, D., Elliot, D. L., He, R., Liu, J., Makara, K. A., Pacheco, E.M., Shih H.Y., Wang, W., & Zhang, J. (2019). A conceptual enquiry into communities of practice as praxis in international doctoral education. *Journal of Praxis in Higher Education*. 1(1), 11-36.
- Camilli & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education*. Routledge.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2001). Addressing issues of power and difference in ESL academic writing. In J. Flowerdew & J. Peacock (Eds.), *Research perspectives on English for academic purposes* (pp. 117–131). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2002a). *A geopolitics of academic writing*. USA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2002b). *Critical academic writing and multilingual writers*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press

Cano, F. (2005). Epistemological beliefs and approaches to learning: Their change through secondary school and their influence on academic performance. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75 (2), 203–221.

Carless, D. (2006). Differing perceptions in the feedback process. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 219-233.

Carr, D. (1986). Narrative and the real world: An argument for continuity. *History and theory*, 25(2), 117-131.

Carson, J. G., & Longhini, A. (2002). Focusing on learning styles and strategies: A diary study in an immersion setting. *Language learning*, 52(2), 401-438.

Carter, R. 1987. *Vocabulary: Applied Linguistic Perspectives*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Casanave, C.P. (1995). Local interactions: Constructing contexts for composing in a graduate sociology program. In D. Belcher & G. Braine (Eds.), *Academic writing in a second language: Essays on research and pedagogy* (pp.83-110). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Case, J. M., Marshall, D., & Linder, C. J. (2010). Being a student again: a narrative study of a teacher's experience. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(4), 423-433.

Caudery, T. (1998). Increasing students' awareness of genre through text transformation exercises: An old classroom activity revisited. *TESL-EJ*, 3(3), 1-14.

Chaiklin, S. (2003). The zone of proximal development in Vygotsky's analysis of learning and instruction. *Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context*, 1, 39-64.

Chou, G. (2012). *Confucianism, colonialism, and the cold war: Chinese cultural education at Hong Kong's New Asia College, 1949–63*. Leiden: Brill.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Clandinin, D. J., & Huber, J. (2010). Narrative inquiry. In B. McGaw, E. Baker & P. P. Peterson (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education (3rd ed.)*. New York: Elsevier

Clark, M. C., & Wilson, A. L. (1991). Context and rationality in Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. *Adult education quarterly*, 41(2), 75-91.

Cleary, M. N. (2012). Anxiety and the newly returned adult student. *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, 39(4), 364-376.

Cluett, L., & Skene, J. (2006). Improving the postgraduate coursework student experience: Barriers and the role of the institution. Proceedings of the Australian Universities Quality Forum 2006: Quality outcomes and diversity 62-67. [Online] Last accessed 15 March 2019 at:
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.145.5455&rep=rep1&type=pdf#page=76>

Coffin, C, Curry, M.J., Goodman, S., Hewings, A., Lillis, T.M. & Swann, J. (2002). *Teaching Academic Writing: A Toolkit for Higher Education*. London: Routledge.

Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London: Routledge.

Collard, S., and Law, M. (1989). *The limits of perspective transformation: A critique of Mezirow's theory*. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 39, 99-107.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Cooper, A., & Bikowski, D. (2007). Writing at the graduate level: what tasks do professors actually require? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 6(3), 206-221.

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (1993). *The powers of literacy: A genre approach to teaching writing*. London: The Falmer Press

Copland, F., & Garton, S. (2011). 'I felt that I do live in the UK now': international students' self-reports of their English language speaking experiences on a pre-sessional programme. *Language and Education*, 25(3), 241-255.

Corbett, A. T., & Anderson, J. R. (1989). Feedback timing and student control in the LISP Intelligent Tutoring System. In *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on AI and Education*, 64-72

Corno, L. (1989). Self-regulated learning: A volitional analysis. In B. Zimmerman & D.H. Schunk, *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement* (pp. 111-141). New York, new York: Springer.

Cranton, P. (2006). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults (2nd ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cranton, P., & Kasl, E. (2012). A response to Michael Newman's "Calling transformative learning into question: Some mutinous thoughts". *Adult Education Quarterly*, 62(4), 393-398.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (pp. 181-223) California: Thousand Oaks.

Crisp, B. R. (2007). Is it worth the effort? How feedback influences students' subsequent submission of assessable work. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32(5), 571-581.

Crook, C. (1998). Children as computer users: The case of collaborative learning. *Computers & Education*, 30(3-4), 237-247.

Crotty, M. (2003). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Currivan, D. (2008). Conversational interviewing. In P. J. Lavrakas (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of survey research methods* (pp. 152-153). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Daller, M. H., & Phelan, D. (2013). Predicting international student study success. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 4(1), 173-193.

Dart, B. (1998). Teaching for improved learning in small classes. In B. Dart & G. Boulton-Lewis (Eds.), *Teaching and learning in higher education* (pp. 222-249). Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

de Kleijn, R. A., Mainhard, M. T., Meijer, P. C., Brekelmans, M., & Pilot, A. (2013). Master's thesis projects: student perceptions of supervisor feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(8), 1012-1026.

Dembo, M. H., & Seli, H. P. (2004). Students' Resistance to Change in Learning Strategies Courses. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 27(3), 2.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive biography*. California, USA: Sage.

Dixon-Krauss, L. (Ed.). (1996). *Vygotsky in the classroom, mediated literacy instruction and assessment*. New York: Longman.

Dunworth, K., & Sanchez, H. S. (2016). Perceptions of quality in staff-student written feedback in higher education: a case study. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21(5), 576-589

Edmunds, R., & Richardson, J. T. (2009). Conceptions of learning, approaches to studying and personal development in UK higher education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 79(2), 295-309.

Efklides, A., & Dina, F. (2004). Feedback from One's Self and the Others: Their Effect on Affect. *Hellenic Journal of Psychology*, 1 (2), 179–202.

Eldaba, A. A., & Isbell, J. K. (2018). Writing Gravity: International Female Graduate Students' Academic Writing Experiences. *Journal of International Students*, 8(4), 1879-1890.

Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Institute of English.

Elias, J. L., & Merriam, S. (1980). *Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education*, Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company.

Engber, C. A. (1995). The relationship of lexical proficiency to the quality of ESL compositions. *Journal of second language writing*, 4(2), 139-155.

Entwistle, N.J. and Peterson, E.R., (2004). Conceptions of learning and knowledge in higher education: relationships with study behaviour and influences of learning environments, *International Journal of Educational Research*, 41 (6), 407–428.

Ernest, P. (1997) *Social Constructivism as a Philosophy of Mathematics*, Albany, New York: SUNY Press.

Evans, C. (2013). Making Sense of Assessment Feedback in Higher Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(1), 70-120.

Fallows, S., & Chandramohan, B. (2001). Multiple approaches to assessment: Reflections on use of tutor, peer and self-assessment. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 6(2), 229-246.

Farsides, T., & Woodfield, R. (2003). Individual differences and undergraduate academic success: The roles of personality, intelligence, and application. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 34(7), 1225-1243.

Fenton-Smith, B., & Humphreys, P. (2017). Language specialists' views on the academic language and learning abilities of English as an additional language postgraduate coursework students: towards an adjunct tutorial model. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(2), 280-296.

Ferguson, P. (2011). Student perceptions of quality feedback in teacher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36(1), 51-62.

Ferris, D., & Roberts, B. (2001). Error feedback in L2 writing classes: How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of second language writing*, 10(3), 161-184.

Flavell, J. H. (1985). *Cognitive Development*, Englewood Cliffs. New York: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Flower, L. (1994). *The construction of negotiated meaning: A social cognitive theory of writing*. USA: Southern Illinois University Press.

Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1980). The cognition of discovery: Defining a rhetorical problem. *College composition and communication*, 31(1), 21-32.

Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College composition and communication*, 32(4), 365-387.

Folman, S., & Connor, U. (2005). Writing from sources in two cultural contexts. In T. Kostouli (Ed.), *Writing in context(s): Textual practices and learning processes in sociocultural settings* (pp. 165-184). New York, NY: Springer.

French, A. (2019). Academic writing as identity-work in higher education: forming a 'professional writing in higher education habitus'. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-13.

French, A. (2014). Unpublished Thesis Through a glass darkly: A post-qualitative case study into lecturers' perceptions of academic writing practices in higher education.

Fumham, A. (1997). Culture shock, homesickness, and adaptation to a foreign culture. In M. A. L. van Tilburg & A. J. J. M Vingerhoets (Eds.), *Psychological aspects of geographical moves: Homesickness and acculturation stress* (pp. 17-38). Tilburg, The Netherlands: Tilburg University Press.

Gajjar, D. (2013). Ethical consideration in research. *Education*, 2 (7),8-15.

- Gee, J. P. (1996). *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. 2nd edn. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Gee, J. (2015). *Social linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in discourses*. New York: Routledge.
- Gill, S. (2007). Overseas students' intercultural adaptation as intercultural learning: A transformative framework. *Compare*, 37(2), 167-183.
- Gilmore, A. (2009). Using Online Corpora to Develop Students' Writing Skills. *ELT Journal*. 63(4), 363-372.
- Goldberg, L. R. (1993). The structure of phenotypic personality traits. *American psychologist*, 48(1), 26-34.
- Goody, J.(1986). *The logic of writing and the organization of society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gourlay, L. (2011). New lecturers and the myth of 'communities of practice'. *Studies in continuing education*, 33(1), 67-77.
- Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Troia, G. A. (1998). Writing and self-regulation: Cases from the self-regulated strategy development model. In D. H. Schunk & B. J. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Self-regulated learning: From teaching to self-reflective practice* (pp. 20–41). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Gray, E. K., & Watson, D. (2002). General and specific traits of personality and their relation to sleep and academic performance. *Journal of personality*, 70(2), 177-206.
- Green, Andy. (1997). *Education, globalization and the nation state*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan
- Green, W. (2007). Write on or write off? An exploration of Asian international students' approaches to essay writing at an Australian university. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 26(3), 329-344.

Grube, J.W., Mayton, D.M. & Ball-Rokeach, S.J. (1994) Inducing Change in Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors: Belief System Theory and the Method of Value Self-Confrontation. *Journal of Social Issues*, 50 (4), 153-173

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1989). Ethics: The failure of positivist science. *The Review of Higher Education*, 12(3), 221-240.

Guba, E. G. (Ed.). (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Habermas, J. (1987). *The Theory of Communicative Action – Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Boston, MA: Beacon.

Habte-Gabr, E. (2006). The importance of socio-affective strategies in using EFL for teaching mainstream subjects. *The journal of humanizing language teaching*, 8(5), 1-5.

Haggis, T. (2002). Exploring the 'black box' of process: a comparison of theoretical notions of the 'adult learner' with accounts of postgraduate learning experience. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27(2), 207-220.

Haggis, T. (2003). Constructing images of ourselves? A critical investigation into 'approaches to learning' research in higher education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(1), 89-104.

Haggis, T., and Pouget, M. (2002). Trying to be motivated: Perspectives on Learning from Younger Students Accessing Higher Education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 7(3), 323–336.

Hairston, M. (1982). The winds of change: Thomas Kuhn and the revolution in the teaching of writing. *College composition and communication*, 33(1), 76-88.

- Halliday, M. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hammann, L. (2005). Self-regulation in academic writing tasks. *International journal of teaching and learning in higher education*, 17(1), 15-26.
- Hammersley, M. (2013). *What's wrong with ethnography?* London: Routledge.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice (3rd Edition)*. USA: Routledge.
- Harris, M., and Silva, T. (1993). Tutoring ESL students: Issues and options. *College Composition and Communication* 44(4), 525–37.
- Harris, T. L. & Hodges, R. E. (Eds.). (1995). *The literacy dictionary: The vocabulary of reading and writing*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Harwood, N. (2018). What do proofreaders of student writing do to a master's essay? Differing interventions, worrying findings. *Written Communication*, 35(4), 474-530.
- Harwood, N., Austin, L., & Macaulay, R. (2009). Proofreading in a UK university: Proofreaders' beliefs, practices, and experiences. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 18(3), 166-190.
- Hattie, J. (2009). The Black Box of Tertiary Assessment: An Impending Revolution. In L. H. Meyer, S. Davidson, H. Anderson, R. Fletcher, P.M. Johnston, & M. Rees (Eds.), *Tertiary Assessment & Higher Education Student Outcomes: Policy, Practice & Research* (pp.259-275). Wellington, New Zealand: Ako Aotearoa
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of educational research*, 77(1), 81-112.
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hendrickson, J.M. (1984). The treatment of error in written work. In S. McKay (Ed.), *Composing in a second language* (pp. 146-159). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Heng, T. T. (2018). Different is not deficient: Contradicting stereotypes of Chinese international students in US higher education. *Studies in higher education, 43*(1), 22-36.
- Hofstede Insight (2019). Country Comparison Tool. Retrieved from: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/>
- Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. H. (1988). The Confucius connection: From cultural roots to economic growth. *Organizational Dynamics, 16* (4), 5-21.
- Holloway, I., & Biley, F. C. (2011). Being a qualitative researcher. *Qualitative health research, 21*(7), 968-975.
- Howie, P., & Bagnall, R. (2013). A beautiful metaphor: Transformative learning theory. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 32*(6), 816-836.
- Hsieh, P. H. P., & Schallert, D. L. (2008). Implications from self-efficacy and attribution theories for an understanding of undergraduates' motivation in a foreign language course. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 33*(4), 513-532.
- Huxham, M. (2007). Fast and effective feedback: are model answers the answer? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 32*(6), 601-611.
- Hyland, F., & Hyland, K. (2001). Sugaring the pill: Praise and criticism in written feedback. *Journal of second language writing, 10*(3), 185-212.
- Hyland, K. (1990). Providing productive feedback. *ELT Journal, 44*(4), 279-285.
- Hyland, K. (2002). Authority and invisibility: Authorial identity in academic writing. *Journal of pragmatics, 34*(8), 1091-1112.
- Hyland, K. (2003). Genre-based pedagogies: A social response to process. *Journal of second language writing, 12*(1), 17-29.

Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and second language writing*. USA: University of Michigan Press.

Hyland, K. (2007). Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction. *Journal of second language writing*, 16(3), 148-164.

Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2006). *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ilgel, D. R., Fisher, C. D., & Taylor, M. S. (1979). Consequences of individual feedback on behavior in organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 64(4), 349-371.

Inglis, T. (1997). Empowerment and emancipation. *Adult education quarterly*, 48(1), 3-17.

Inglis, T. (1998). A critical realist approach to emancipation: A response to Mezirow. *Adult education quarterly*, 49(1), 72-76.

Irvin, L. Lennie (2010). What is “Academic” Writing? In C. Lowe & P. Zemliansky (Eds.) *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Vol. 1 (pp.3-17). Indiana, USA: Parlor Press

Ivanič, R, and Lea, M. (2006). New contexts, new challenges: the teaching of writing in UK higher education. In: L. Ganobscik-Williams (ed.), *Teaching academic writing in UK*

Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The qualitative report*, 17(42), 1-10.

Janks, H. (2010). Language, power and pedagogies. In N. Hornberger & S. McKay (Eds.) *Sociolinguistics and language education*, (pp.40-61) Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

James, G. (2018). A narrative inquiry perspective into coping mechanisms of international postgraduate students’ transition experiences. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 41-56.

Joaquin, A. D. L., Kim, S. H., & Shin, S-Y.(2016). Examining prewriting strategies in L2 writing: Do they really work? *Asian EFL Journal*, 18(2), 156-181.

Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2011). The transformative power of narrative in second language teacher education. *Tesol Quarterly*, 45(3), 486-509.

Jones, E. (2017). Problematising and reimagining the notion of ‘international student experience’. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(5), 933-943.

Josselson, R. (2006). Narrative research and the challenge of accumulating knowledge. *Narrative inquiry*, 16(1), 3-10.

Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education. *Language learning*, 16(1-2), 1-20.

Kassarnig, V., Mones, E., Bjerre-Nielsen, A., Sapiezynski, P., Dreyer Lassen, D., & Lehmann, S. (2018). Academic performance and behavioral patterns. *Epj Data Science*, 7(1), 1-16.

Kaur, S., & Shakila, A. M. (2007). The learning experience of postgraduate students: Emergent themes. *Bulletin of National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN)*, 9, 26-28.

Kelley, M. J. (2008). *The impact of weblogs on the affective states and academic writing of L2 undergraduates*. PhD thesis. University of Virginia

Kellogg, R. T. (2008). Training writing skills: A cognitive developmental perspective. *Journal of writing research*, 1(1), 1-26.

Kember, D. (2009). International students from Asia. In: M.Tight M, K.H Mok, J. Huisman & C.C. Morphew (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Higher Education*. (pp. 47–60). New York/ UK: Routledge.

Kennedy, M.M. (1998). *The relevance of content in inservice teacher education*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. April, 1998. San Diego, CA.

Kennedy, P. (2002). Learning cultures and learning styles: Myth-understandings about adult (Hong Kong) Chinese learners. *International journal of lifelong education*, 21(5), 430-445.

Khozaei Ravari, Z., & Tan, K. E. (2019). A qualitative investigation of strategies and experiences of non-native students writing master's theses. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*. 11(2), 310-324.

Kibler, A. K., & Hardigree, C. (2017). Using evidence in L2 argumentative writing: A longitudinal case study across high school and university. *Language Learning*, 67(1), 75-109.

Kim, E. Y. J., & LaBianca, A. S. (2018). Ethics in academic writing help for international students in higher education: Perceptions of faculty and students. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 16(1), 39-59.

Kim, H. Y. (2011). International graduate students' difficulties: Graduate classes as a community of practices. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 16(3), 281-292.

Kingston, E., & Forland, H. (2008). Bridging the gap in expectations between international students and academic staff. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(2), 204-221.

Kitchenham, A. (2008). The evolution of John Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Journal of transformative education*, 6(2), 104-123.

Klemke E.D., Hollinger R. & Kline A.D. (Eds.) (1986) *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science*. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books.

Knowles, M. S. (1970). *The modern practice of adult education* (Vol. 41). New York: New York Association Press.

Knowles, M. S. (1984). *Andragogy in action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The Adult Learner*. Burlington, MA: Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Krapp, A. (2005). Basic needs and the development of interest and intrinsic motivational orientations. *Learning and instruction*, 15(5), 381-395.

Kroll, B. (Ed.). (1990). *Second language writing: research insights for the classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kulhavy, R. W. (1977). Feedback in written instruction. *Review of Educational Research*, 47(2), 211-232.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kvale, S. (2008). *Doing interviews*. London: Sage.

Lantolf, J. P. (2006). Sociocultural theory and L2: State of the art. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 28(01), 67-109.

Lantolf, J. P., & Poehner, M. E. (Eds.). (2008). *Sociocultural theory and the teaching of second languages*. London: Equinox.

Lantolf, J. P., Thorne, S. L., & Poehner, M. E. (2015). Sociocultural theory and second language development. In B. VanPatten and J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction*, (pp. 207-226). New York: Routledge.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Lave, J. (1988). *Cognition in practice: Mind, mathematics and culture in everyday life*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Le Ha, P. (2009). Strategic, passionate, but academic: Am I allowed in my writing?..*Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 8(2), 134-146.

Lea, M.R. & Street, B.V. (1998) Student writing in higher education: an academic literacies approach, *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(2), 157-172.

Lea, M. R., & Street, B. V. (2006). The" academic literacies" model: Theory and applications. *Theory into practice*, 45(4), 368-377.

Lee, J. J., & Deakin, L. (2016). Interactions in L1 and L2 undergraduate student writing: Interactional metadiscourse in successful and less-successful argumentative essays. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 33, 21-34.

Lee, J. J., & Rice, C. (2007). Welcome to America? International student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher Education*, 53(3), 381-409.

Lei, X. (2016). Understanding writing strategy use from a sociocultural perspective: The case of skilled and less skilled writers. *System*, 60, 105-116.

Leki, I. (1991). The preferences of ESL students for error correction in college-level writing classes. *Foreign language annals*, 24(3), 203-218.

Leki, I. (1995). Coping strategies of ESL students in writing tasks across the curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(2), 235-260.

Leki, I., & Carson, J. G. (1994). Students' perceptions of EAP writing instruction and writing needs across the disciplines. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1), 81-101.

Lemke, J. L. (1990). *Talking science: Language, learning, and values*. Ablex Publishing Corporation, 355 Chestnut Street, Norwood, NJ 07648

Li, G., Chen, W., & Duanmu, J. L. (2010). Determinants of international students' academic performance: A comparison between Chinese and other international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14(4), 389-405.

- Li, L. Y. (2007). Exploring the use of focused freewriting in developing academic writing. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 4(1), 5.
- Li, X. M. (1996). *Good writing in cross-cultural context*. SUNY Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 97–128). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Liu, C. H., & Matthews, R. (2005). Vygotsky's Philosophy: Constructivism and Its Criticisms Examined. *International education journal*, 6(3), 386-399.
- Liu, L., & Li, L. (2016). Noun phrase complexity in EFL academic writing: a corpus-based study of postgraduate academic writing. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 3(1),1-71
- Liu, L. (2011). An international graduate student's ESL learning experience beyond the classroom. *TESL Canada Journal*, 77-92.
- Lizzio, A., Wilson, K., & Simons, R. (2002). University students' perceptions of the learning environment and academic outcomes: implications for theory and practice. *Studies in Higher education*, 27(1), 27-52.
- Malik, S. (2000). Students, tutors and relationships: the ingredients of a successful student support scheme. *Medical Education*, 34(8), 635-641.
- Mantero, M. (2002). Scaffolding revisited: Sociocultural pedagogy within the foreign language classroom. Retrieved from *Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database*. (ERIC Document No ED459623).
- Marshall, S. (2007). Engagement Theory, WebCT, and academic writing in Australia. *International Journal of Education and Development using ICT*, 3(2), 109-115

- Martirosyan, N. M., Hwang, E., & Wanjohi, R. (2015). Impact of English proficiency on academic performance of international students. *Journal of International Students*, 5(1), 60-71.
- Marton and Säljö (1976).On qualitative differences in learning. Outcome as a function of learners' conception of task. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46(2), 115-127.
- Marton, F., G. Dall'Alba, and E. Beaty. (1993). Conceptions of Learning. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 19 (3), p.277–300.
- Mason, L. (2007). Introduction: Bridging the cognitive and sociocultural approaches in research on conceptual change: Is it feasible? *Educational Psychologist*, 42(1), p.1-7.
- Matsuda, P. (1999). Situating ESL writing in a cross-disciplinary context. *Written Communication*, 15(1): 19-121.
- Matsuda, P. K. (2003). Process and post-process: A discursive history. *Journal of second language writing*, 12(1), 65-83.
- Matters, H., Winter, J., & Nowson, C. (2004). Enhancing learning for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students. *Focus on Health Professional Education: A Multi-disciplinary Journal*, 6(1), 26.
- McClure, J., Meyer, L. H., Garisch, J., Fischer, R., Weir, K. F., & Walkey, F. H. (2011). Students' Attributions for Their Best and Worst Marks: Do They Relate to Achievement?. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 36(2), 71-81.
- McKay, J., O'Neill, D., & Petrakieva, L. (2018). CAKES (Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Exchange Scheme): a holistic and inclusive approach to supporting international students. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 42(2), 276-288.
- McKenzie, J. (1999). Scaffolding for success. *The Educational Technology Journal*, 9(4), 12.

McMahon, M. (1997). Social constructivism and the World Wide Web-A paradigm for learning. In *ASCILITE conference. Perth, Australia, Proceedings Vol. 327, 411-417*

McNamara, D. S., Crossley, S. A., & McCarthy, P. M. (2010). Linguistic features of writing quality. *Written communication, 27*(1), 57-86.

Merriam, S. B. (2001). Andragogy and self-directed learning: Pillars of adult learning theory. *New directions for adult and continuing education, 89*, 3-14.

Merriam, S. B. (2004). The role of cognitive development in Mezirow's transformational learning theory. *Adult education quarterly, 55*(1), 60-68.

Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching*. Oxon: Routledge.

Mezirow J (2000) *Learning as Transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education, 28*(2), 100-110.

Mezirow, J. (1981). A critical theory of adult learning and education. *Adult education, 32*(1), 3-24.

Mezirow, J. (1985). Concept and action in adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 35*(3), 142-151.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood* (p. 1- 18). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult education quarterly*, 44(4), 222-232.

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New directions for adult and continuing education*, 1997(74), 5-12.

Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1), 58-63.

Mezirow, J. (2012). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformative learning theory. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *Handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 73-96). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, C. R. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly journal of speech*, 70(2), 151-167.

Miller, T., & Boulton, M. (2007). Changing constructions of informed consent: Qualitative research and complex social worlds. *Social science & medicine*, 65(11), 2199-2211.

Montgomery, C., & McDowell, L. (2009). Social networks and the international student experience: An international community of practice? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(4), 455-466.

Moreno, R. (2004). Decreasing cognitive load for novice students: Effects of explanatory versus corrective feedback in discovery-based multimedia. *Instructional science*, 32(1), 99-113.

Mu, C. (2005). A taxonomy of ESL writing strategies. In *Proceedings Redesigning Pedagogy: Research, Policy, Practice*, (pp. 1-10). Singapore.

Mulligan, D., & Kirkpatrick, A. (2000). How much do they understand? Lectures, students and comprehension. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 19(3), 311-335.

Mulliner, E., & Tucker, M. (2017). Feedback on feedback practice: perceptions of students and academics. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(2), 266-288.

- Munhall, P. L. (1988). Ethical considerations in qualitative research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 10(2), 150-162.
- Mutch, A. (2003). Exploring the practice of feedback to students. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 4(1), 24–38
- Mwale, S. (2014). Secrecy and Knowledge Production: Doing Research in Corporate Organisational Settings. *Review of Social Studies* 1 (1): 133–15
- Mwale, S., Alhawsawi, S., Sayed, Y., & Rind, I. A. (2018). Being a mobile international postgraduate research student with family in the United Kingdom: Conflict, contestation and contradictions. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 42(3), 301-312.
- Myles, J. (2002). Second language writing and research: The writing process and error analysis in student texts. *Tesl-Ej*, 6(2), 1-20.
- Na, S., & Yoon, H. (2016). Effects of In-class and Out-of-class Writing Assignments on L2 Writing Strategy Use and Writing Quality. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 25(2), 195-205.
- Nada, C. I., Montgomery, C., & Araújo, H. C. (2018). ‘You went to Europe and returned different’: Transformative learning experiences of international students in Portugal. *European Educational Research Journal*, 17(5), 696-713.
- Nardi, B. A., Schiano, D. J., Gumbrecht, M., & Swartz, L. (2004). Why we blog. *Communications of the ACM*, 47(12), 41-46.
- Negovan, V., Sterian, M., & Colesniuc, G. M. (2015). Conceptions of learning and intrinsic motivation in different learning environments. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 187, 642-646.
- Neumann, H., Padden, N., & McDonough, K. (2019). Beyond English language proficiency scores: understanding the academic performance of international undergraduate students during the first year of study. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38(2), 324-338.

Nevill, A., & Rhodes, C. (2004). Academic and social integration in higher education: a survey of satisfaction and dissatisfaction within a first-year education studies cohort at a new university. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 28(2), 179-193.

Newman, M. (2012). Calling transformative learning into question: Some mutinous thoughts. *Adult education quarterly*, 62(1), 36-55.

Ng, D., McClure, J., Walkey, F., & Hunt, M. (1995). New Zealand and Singaporean attributions and achievement perceptions. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 26 (3), 276–297.

Nicol, D. (2009). Assessment for learner self-regulation: enhancing achievement in the first year using learning technologies. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34(3), 335-352.

Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in higher education*, 31(2), 199-218.

Noftle, E. E., & Robins, R. W. (2007). Personality predictors of academic outcomes: big five correlates of GPA and SAT scores. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 93(1), 116-130.

Nolan, S., Hendricks, J., Williamson, M., & Ferguson, S. (2018). Using narrative inquiry to listen to the voices of adolescent mothers in relation to their use of social networking sites (SNS). *Journal of advanced nursing*, 74(3), 743-751.

Nordin, S. & Mohammad, N. (2017). The best of two approaches: Process/genre-based approach to teaching writing. *The English Teacher*, 35, 75-85

Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching & language learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle

Obeng, G. A. (2019). Student-centred learning: perceptions and experiences of international students studying social services in Finland. In E.Ryymin (Ed.) *Global Teachers Change*

Paradigms—Practical Paths to New Learning (pp.64-76). Finland: HAME University of Applied Sciences.

O'Donnell, V. L., & Tobbell, J. (2007). The transition of adult students to higher education: Legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice? *Adult Education Quarterly*, 57(4), 312-328.

O'Donnell, V. L., Tobbell, J., Lawthom, R., & Zammit, M. (2009). Transition to postgraduate study Practice, participation and the widening participation agenda. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 10(1), 26-40.

Olivas, M., & Li, C. (2006). Understanding stressors of international students in higher education: What college counselors and personnel need to know. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 33(3), 217-222

Olson D. R. (1988). Mind and media: The epistemic functions of literacy. *Journal of Communication*. 38, 27-36

O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Orsmond, P., & Merry, S. (2011). Feedback alignment: effective and ineffective links between tutors' and students' understanding of coursework feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36(2), 125-136.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies*. New York: Newbury House.

Paltridge, B. (2004). Academic writing. *Language teaching*, 37(02), 87-105.

Park, G. (2012). "I Am Never Afraid of Being Recognized as an NNES": One Teacher's Journey in Claiming and Embracing Her Nonnative-Speaker Identity. *TESOL quarterly*, 46(1), 127-151.

Pennycook, A. (1996). Borrowing others' words: Text, ownership, memory, and plagiarism. *TESOL quarterly*, 30(2), 201-230.

Peters, H. (2005). Higher education as a global project: how international students and the lecturers who teach them perceive themselves in one UK University. In *35th Annual SCRUTEA Conference. University of Sussex, England.*

Petraglia, J. (1991). Interrupting the Conversation: The Constructionist Dialogue in Composition. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 11(1), 37-55.

Petrić, B., & Czár, B. (2003). Validating a writing strategy questionnaire. *System*, 31(2), 187-215.

Petty, N. J., Thomson, O. P., & Stew, G. (2012). Ready for a paradigm shift? Part 2: Introducing qualitative research methodologies and methods. *Manual therapy*, 17(5), 378-384.

Phakiti, A., & Li, L. (2011). General academic difficulties and reading and writing difficulties among Asian ESL postgraduate students in TESOL at an Australian university. *RELC Journal*, 42(3), 227-264.

Pintrich, P. R., Smith, D. A. F., Garcia, T., & McKeachie, W. J. (1991). *A manual for the use of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning.

Pitkethly, A., & Prosser, M. (2001). The first year experience project: A model for university-wide change. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 20(2), 185-198.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 13(4), 471-486.

Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 52(2), 126.

Porter, H. D. (2018). Constructing an understanding of undergraduate disciplinary reading: An analysis of contemporary scholarship. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 48(1), 25-46.

Price, M., Handley, K., Millar, J., & O'Donovan, B. (2010). Feedback: all that effort, but what is the effect? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(3), 277-289.

Prior, P. (2006). A sociocultural theory of writing. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, and J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 54-66). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Prochaska, J. O., & Prochaska, J. M. (1999). Why don't continents move? Why don't people change? *Journal of psychotherapy integration*, 9(1), 83-102.

Pronin, E., Lin, D. Y., & Ross, L. (2002). The bias blind spot: Perception of bias in self versus others. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28 (3), 369–381

Prosser, M., & Millar, R. (1989). The “how” and “what” of learning physics. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 4(4), 513-528.

Raimes, A. (1985). What unskilled ESL students do as they write: A classroom study of composing. *TESOL quarterly*, 19(2), 229-258.

Ramaprasad, A. (1983). On the definition of feedback. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 28(1), 4-13.

Ramsden, P. (2003). *Learning to teach in higher education*. London: Routledge.

Ramsden, P., & Entwistle, N. J. (1981). Effects of Academic Departments on Student's Approaches to studying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 51(3), 368-383.

Raofi, S., Binandeh, M., & Rahmani, S. (2017). An Investigation into Writing Strategies and Writing Proficiency of University Students. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8(1), 191-198.

Rebuck, M. (2014). Feedback on feedback: An analysis of L2 writers' evaluations of proofreaders. *NU Ideas Journal*, 3, 1-22.

Reichelt, M. (2009). A critical evaluation of writing teaching programmes in different foreign language settings. In R.M. Manchon (Ed.), *Writing in foreign language contexts: Learning, teaching, and research* (pp. 183-206). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

research (pp. 477-487). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Riessman, C. K. (2003). Performing Identities in Illness Narrative, *Qualitative Research* 3(1), 5-34

Riazi, A. (1997). Acquiring disciplinary literacy: A social-cognitive analysis of text production and learning among Iranian graduate students of education. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 6(2), 105-137.

Richardson, J. T. (2011). Approaches to studying, conceptions of learning and learning styles in higher education. *Learning and Individual differences*, 21(3), 288-293.

Rinne, T., Steel, G. D., & Fairweather, J. (2012). Hofstede and Shane revisited: The role of power distance and individualism in national-level innovation success. *Cross-cultural research*, 46(2), 91-108.

Rokeach, M. (1980). Some unresolved issues in theories of beliefs, attitudes, and values. In H. E. Howe & M. M. Page (Eds.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* (pp. 261-304). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Roulston, K. (2012). The pedagogy of interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium, J. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (2nd ed., pp. 61-74). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ryan, J. (2000). *A guide to teaching international students*. Oxford, England: Oxford Brookes University, Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

Ryshina-Pankova, M., & Byrnes, H. (2013). Writing as learning to know: Tracing knowledge construction in L2 German compositions. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 22(2), 179-197.

- Sadler, D. R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional science*, 18(2), 119-144.
- Sadler, D. R. (2010). Beyond feedback: Developing student capability in complex appraisal. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), 535-550.
- Sakurai, Y., Parpala, A., Pyhältö, K., & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (2016). Engagement in learning: A comparison between Asian and European international university students. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 46(1), 24-47.
- Säljö, R. (1979). Learning about learning. *Higher education*, 8(4), 443-451.
- Sampson, H. (2004). Navigating the Waves: The Usefulness of a Pilot in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Research*, 4(3): 383–402.
- Saxena, V., & Babu, N. (2015). Respecting Elders as A Moral Virtue: Terminal or Instrumental?. *Psychological Studies*, 60(2), 146-153.
- Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (1987). Knowledge telling and knowledge transforming in written composition. *Advances in applied psycholinguistics*, 2, 142-175.
- Schoonen, R., & de Glopper, K. (1996). Writing performance and knowledge about writing. In G. Rijlaarsdam, H. van den Bergh & M. Couzijn (Eds.), *Theories, models, and methodology in writing research* (pp. 87-107). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press
- Schoonen, R., Gelderen, A. V., Glopper, K. D., Hulstijn, J., Simis, A., Snellings, P., & Stevenson, M. (2003). First language and second language writing: The role of linguistic knowledge, speed of processing, and metacognitive knowledge. *Language learning*, 53(1), 165-202.
- Scott, D., Evans, C., Hughes, G., Burke, P. J., Watson, D., Walter, C., & Huttly, S. (2011). Facilitating transitions to masters-level learning: Improving formative assessment and feedback processes. *Executive summary. Final extended report*. London, UK: Institute of Education.

- Scott, G., Ciarrochi, J., & Deane, F. P. (2004). Disadvantages of being an individualist in an individualistic culture: Idiocentrism, emotional competence, stress, and mental health. *Australian Psychologist*, 39(2), 143-154.
- Scurr, R. (2006). It is not enough to read an essay and mark it; one must also guess if a student has purchased professional help. *Times Higher Education Supplement* (15 December), 13.
- Seow, A. (2002). The writing process and process writing. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 315-320). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Shang-Butler, H. (2015). *Great expectations: A qualitative study of how Chinese graduate students navigate academic writing expectations in US higher education*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Rochester.
- Shaw, C. (2014). *International students are turning to proofreading agencies to get support*. The Guardian. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/apr/09/international-students-proofreading-academic-writing-support
- Sheen, Y., & Ellis, R. (2011). Corrective feedback in language teaching. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (Vol. 2, pp. 593–610). New York: Routledge.
- Sherman, J. (1992). Your own thoughts in your own words. *ELT Journal*, 46(2), 190-98.
- Sherry, M., Thomas, P., & Chui, W. H. (2010). International students: A vulnerable student population. *Higher education*, 60(1), 33-46.
- Shi, L. (2006). Cultural backgrounds and textual appropriation. *Language Awareness*, 15(4), 264-282.
- Shooshtari, Z. G., & Mir, F. (2014). ZPD, tutor; peer scaffolding: Sociocultural theory in writing strategies application. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 1771-1776.

Sidman-Taveau, R., & Karathanos-Aguilar, K. (2015). Academic Writing for Graduate-Level English as a Second Language Students: Experiences in Education. *CATESOL Journal*, 27(1), 27-52.

Silva, T. (1990). Second language composition instruction: Developments, issues, and directions in ESL. In B. Kroll (Ed.), *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom*. (pp. 11-23) Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Silva, T. (1997). Differences in ESL and native-Englishspeaker writing: the research and its implications. In C. Severino, J. C., Guerra & S. E. Butler (Eds.), *Writing in multicultural settings* (pp.209-219). New York: Modern Language Association of America.

Singh, M. K. M. (2015). International Graduate Students' Academic Writing Practices in Malaysia: Challenges and Solutions. *Journal of International Students*, 5(1), 12-22.

Slater, T. (2016). Syntactic complexity of EFL Chinese students' writing. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 6(1), 81.

Smith, E. (2003). Ethos, habitus and situation for learning: An ecology. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(4), 463–470.

Smith, E., & Gorard, S. (2005). 'They don't give us our marks': the role of formative feedback in student progress. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 12(1), 21-38.

Smith, J. K. (1983). Quantitative versus qualitative research: An attempt to clarify the issue. *Educational researcher*, 12(3), 6-13.

Smith, R. A., & Khawaja, N. G. (2011). A review of the acculturation experiences of international students. *International Journal of intercultural relations*, 35(6), 699-713.

Staples, S., Egbert, J., Biber, D., & Gray, B. (2016). Academic writing development at the university level: Phrasal and clausal complexity across level of study, discipline, and genre. *Written Communication*, 33(2), 149-183.

Stephens, D. & Trahar, S. 2012. 'Just because I'm from Africa, they think I'll want to do narrative'. *Explorations in narrative research*. Rotterdam: Sense.

Stevens-Long, J., Schapiro, S. A., & McClintock, C. (2012). Passionate scholars: Transformative learning in doctoral education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 62(2), 180-198.

Street, B. (1984). *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Street, B. (1995). Foreward. In G. Weinstein-Shr & E. Quintero (Eds.), *Immigrant learners and their families: Literacy to connect generations* (pp. i-vi). McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics & Delta Systems.

Street, B. V. (2001). Literacy Empowerment in Developing Societies. In Verhoeven, L., & Snow, C. (Eds.), (2001). *Literacy and Motivation* (pp. 291-300). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Street, C. (2005). Funds of knowledge at work in the writing classroom. *Multicultural Education*, 13(2), 22-25.

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2004). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Taguchi, N., Crawford, W., & Wetzel, D. Z. (2013). What linguistic features are indicative of writing quality? A case of argumentative essays in a college composition program. *Tesol Quarterly*, 47(2), 420-430.

Tang, R. (Ed.). (2012). *Academic writing in a second or foreign language: Issues and challenges facing ESL/EFL academic writers in higher education contexts*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Tapanes, M. A., Smith, G. G., & White, J. A. (2009). Cultural diversity in online learning: A study of the perceived effects of dissonance in levels of individualism/collectivism and tolerance of ambiguity. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 12(1), 26-34.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Taylor, E. W. (2007). An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research (1999–2005). *International journal of lifelong education*, 26(2), 173-191.

Taylor, E. W., & Cranton, P. (2013). A theory in progress?: Issues in transformative learning theory. *European journal for research on the education and learning of adults*, 4(1), 35-47.

Thulasi, S., Ismail, F. B., & Salam, A. R. B. (2015). Role of Model Essays in Developing Students Writing Skills in Malaysian Schools: A Review of Literature. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(2 S1), 56.

Tobbell, J., & O'Donnell, V. L. (2013). Transition to postgraduate study: Postgraduate ecological systems and identity. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 43(1), 123-138.

Tobbell, J., O'Donnell, V., & Zammit, M. (2010). Exploring Transition to Postgraduate study: Shifting Identities. *Interaction with Communities, Practice and Participation. Educational Research Journal*, 36 (2), 261-278.

Tran, L. T. (2008). Unpacking academic requirements: international students in Management and Education disciplines. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 27(3), 245-256.

Tribble, C. 1996. *Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Trahar, S. (2009). Beyond the story itself: Narrative inquiry and autoethnography in intercultural research in higher education. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10 (1).

Trahar, S. (2011a). *Developing Cultural Capability in International Higher Education: A Narrative Inquiry*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Trahar, S. (2014). 'This is Malaysia. You have to follow the custom here': narratives of the student and academic experience in international higher education in Malaysia. *Journal of education for teaching*, 40(3), 217-231.

Trahar, S. (2013b). Autoethnographic Journeys in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. *European Educational Research Journal* 12 (3): 367–375

Trigwell, K., Ellis, R. A., & Han, F. (2012). Relations between students' approaches to learning, experienced emotions and outcomes of learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(7), 811-824.

Tuck, J. (2012). Feedback-giving as social practice: Teachers' perspectives on feedback as institutional requirement, work and dialogue. *Teaching in higher education*, 17(2), 209-221.

Turner, J. (2018). *On writtleness: The cultural politics of academic writing*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

UK Council for International Students Affairs (UKCISA), (2019). Accessed on 2 May 2019 <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Research--Policy/Statistics/International-student-statistics-UK-higher-education>

Van Rossum, E., Deijkers, R., & Hamers, R. (1985). Students' learning conceptions and their interpretation of significant educational concepts. *Higher Education*, 14 (6), 617–641.

Vickerman, P. (2009). Student perspectives on formative peer assessment: an attempt to deepen learning? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34(2), 221-230.

Victori, M. (1995). EFL writing knowledge and strategies: An interactive study. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain), Barcelona.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. *Readings on the development of children*, 23(3), 34-41.

Wagener, B. (2018). The importance of affects, self-regulation and relationships in the writing of a master's thesis. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 23(2), 227-242.

Wagerman, S. A., & Funder, D. C. (2007). Acquaintance reports of personality and academic achievement: A case for conscientiousness. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41(1), 221-229.

Wang, I. K. H. (2018). Long-Term Chinese Students' Transitional Experiences in UK Higher Education: A Particular Focus on Their Academic Adjustment. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 30(1), 12-25.

Wang, L., Bruce, C., & Hughes, H. (2011). Sociocultural theories and their application in information literacy research and education. *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 42(4), 296-308.

Wang, T., & Li, L. Y. (2008). Understanding international postgraduate research students' challenges and pedagogical needs in thesis writing. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 4(3), 88-96.

Waring, R. (1995), *Second language vocabulary acquisition, linguistic context and vocabulary task design*. Summary of a paper presented at The British Council Conference in St Andrews Scotland, September 1995.

Warner, R., & Miller, J. (2015). Cultural dimensions of feedback at an Australian university: a study of international students with English as an additional language. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34(2), 420-435.

Weaver, M. R. (2006). Do students value feedback? Student perceptions of tutors' written responses. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(3), 379-394.

Weaver, R., & Jackson, D. (2011). Evaluating an academic writing program for nursing students who have English as a second language. *Contemporary Nurse*, 38(1-2), 130-138.

Webb, G. 1997. Deconstructing Deep and Surface: Towards a Critique of Phenomenography. *Higher Education*, 33(2): 195–212.

Weigle, S. C. (2002). *Assessing Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Weigle, S. C. (2005). Second language writing expertise. In K. Johnson (Ed.) *Expertise in second language learning and teaching* (pp. 128-149). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Wenden, A. (1991). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of practice and social learning systems. *Organization*, 7(2), 225-246.

Wenger, E. (2006) Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction. Available at: <http://wengertraynor.com> Last accessed: 25 February 2020.

Wenger E. (2010) Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems: the Career of a Concept. In: Blackmore C. (eds) Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice. Springer, London

Wenger, E. (2011). *Communities of practice: A brief introduction*. Retrieved from <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/11736/A%20brief%20introduction%20to%20CoP.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

West, A. (2012). Formative evaluation of the transition to postgraduate study for counselling and psychotherapy training: Students' perceptions of assignments and academic writing. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 12(2), 128-135.

William, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers* (Vol. 67). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, J. M. (1991). On the maturing of legal writers: Two models of growth and development. *Legal Writing: J. Legal Writing Instruction*, 1, 1-33.

Williams, J.B. and Jacobs, J. (2004). Exploring the use of blogs as learning spaces in the higher education sector. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 20(2), 232-247.

Wilson, E., Kenny, A. and Dickson-Swift, V. (2015). Using Blogs as a Qualitative Health Research Tool: A Scoping Review. *International Journal of Qualitative Research*. 14 (5), 1-12.

Wingate, U., & Tribble, C. (2012). The best of both worlds? Towards an English for Academic Purposes/Academic Literacies writing pedagogy. *Studies in higher education*, 37(4), 481-495.

Wingate, U. (2015). *Academic literacy and student diversity: The case for inclusive practice*. Bristol: Multilingual matters.

Wragg, T. (2002) Interviewing, In M. Coleman & A. Briggs (Eds.) *Research methods in educational leadership and management* (pp.143-158). London: Paul Chapman.

Wyatt-Smith, C. and Castleton, G. (2005). Examining how teachers judge student writing: An Australian case study. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37(2), 131-154.

Yale, A. T. (2019). The personal tutor–student relationship: student expectations and experiences of personal tutoring in higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(4), 533-544.

Yang, S. H. (2009). Using blogs to enhance critical reflection and community of practice. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12(2), 11-21.

Yu, Y., & Moskal, M. (2018). Missing intercultural engagements in the university experiences of Chinese international students in the UK. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 49(4), 1-18.

Zacharias, N. T. (2007). Teacher and student attitudes toward teacher feedback. *RELJ Journal*, 38(1), 38-52.

Zamel, V. (1982). Writing: The process of discovering meaning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16(2), 195-209.

Zamel, V. (1984). In search of the key: research and practice in composition. In J. Handscombe, R. Orem, and B.P. Taylor (Eds.) *On TESOL '83: the question of control*, (pp.195-207). Washington, D. C.: TESOL.

Zellermayer, M. (1989). The study of teachers' written feedback to students' writing: Changes in theoretical considerations and the expansion of research contexts. *Instructional Science*, 18(2), 145-165.

Zhang, Y., & Mi, Y. (2010). Another look at the language difficulties of international students. *Journal of Studies in international Education*, 14(4), 371-388.

Zimmerman, B. J and Risemberg R. (1997).Self-regulatory dimensions of academic learning and motivation. In G. D. Phye (Ed.), *Handbook of academic learning: Construction of knowledge*, (pp.105-125) San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Zimmerman, B. J. (1998). Academic studing and the development of personal skill: A self-regulatory perspective. *Educational psychologist*, 33(2-3), 73-86.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2013). Theories of self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview and analysis. In B. J. Zimmerman & D. H. Schunk (Eds.), *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement* (pp. 10–45). London: Routledge.

Zimmerman, B. J., & Risemberg, R. (1997). Becoming a self-regulated writer: A social cognitive perspective. *Contemporary educational psychology*, 22(1), 73-101.

Zimmerman, B. (1993) Collaboration, Conversation, and Community: A Qualitative Study of Social Constructionism in a College Technical Writing Class. PhD Thesis. Brigham Young University.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining self-regulation: A social cognitive perspective. In *Handbook of self-regulation* (pp. 13-39). Academic Press.

Appendix 1. Informed Consent Form

Dear _____,

I am writing to you to invite you to participate in a research project as part of my doctoral programme. The purpose of this study is to explore International Postgraduate's journey in conceptualizing good academic writing. This study could offer you the chance of discussing your academic writing stance and a source of reflection throughout your course. Your participation will involve an interview and three blog entries per module assignment (there are four modules taught in MSc Educational Research altogether). There will also be a preliminary interview for me to get to know you better and a final interview to discuss academic writing change(s) and development that could have occurred throughout the programme.

Please be aware that your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw anytime you wish without penalty. I would also like to assure you that all information gathered will be treated with the strictest confidence and no identifying information will be passed to third parties. May I also remind you that your decision to or not to participate will not have any influence on your academic standing in the programme.

Thank you in advance for your support,

(MAS AYU KARTIKA DEWI MUMIN)

I _____ agree to participate in the study undertaken by Mrs. Mas Ayu Mumin and I understand the purpose of the research is to explore International Postgraduate's writing journey in conceptualizing good academic writing. I acknowledge that (tick where appropriate):

1. the aims and methods of the study have been explained to me
2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent to participation in such study.
3. I understand that the results will be used for research purposes and maybe reported in academic journals.
4. Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorization.
5. I am free to withdraw from the study at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

Signature:

Date:

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher.

Your contact details are kept separately from your research data.

Appendix 2. Interview Schedule for Initial Interview (Phase 1)

After introducing myself, explaining the study and making the participants feel comfortable, I will use these questions as guidelines.

1. Why did you choose to study in the UK?
2. Are you a self-sponsored student here?
3. Tell me about the transition you had to make when you first moved here.
4. What is your academic history?
5. How long have you been teaching?
6. What do you teach? Can you explain more?
7. What is your experience with Academic writing?
8. Do you mark a lot of students' writing?
9. How do you differentiate good academic writing and poor academic writing?
10. How do you normally evaluate academic writing? (Marking criteria? Holistic?)
11. Do you consider yourself a good writer?
12. What sort of challenges do you face as an L2 writer? (helpful /not helpful)
13. Are there any particular writing strategies that you use? (Plan /Revise/ Edit) Cognitive strategies/Metacognitive strategies/socio-affective (mentor-mentee)/self-regulation
14. What is your expectation in terms of academic writing in this course?
15. Do you think you can apply your writing experience to the course assignments?

Appendix 3. Matters Discussed for DCR (Phase 2)

MATTERS DISCUSSED IN DCR	Elio	Lulu	Yaseen	Shaima	Maria
Teacher and assignment subjectivity		X	X	X	
Unhappy feelings about grade received		X	X	X	X
Usefulness of assignment	X	X	X	X	X
Usefulness of module	X	X		X	X
Ideas about learning		X	X	X	
Regards feedback as unhelpful		X	X		
Regards feedback as helpful	X	X		X	X
Problem with learning		X	X		X
Personality clash with learning			X	X	
Previous feedback experience contribution			X		
Problem with people's perception			X		X
Reason for lack of peer support			X	X	X
Usefulness of peer feedback	X				
Challenges doing DCR	X	X	X	X	X
Self-motivation/ Self-help			X	X	
Lesson that can be learnt from DCR	X	X	X	X	X
Writing process	X		X	X	
Insecurity		X	X	X	X
Inferiority		X			X
Future aspiration after PhD	X	X	X	X	
View on self after previous interview session		X	X	X	
Problem with grading system		X		X	
Satisfaction with grading system	X				
Understanding what needed to be improved	X	X		X	
Difficulty with references	X	X			
Understanding/demonstration for criticality	X	X		X	X
Seeing growth and development	X	X		X	
Disconnect between students and tutor		X	X	X	
Problem with tutor		X	X		
Confusion with passing mark		X	X		
Not seeing the point to seek for help: subjectivity		X			
Not seeing the point to seek for help: inferiority			X	X	
Doesn't want to dispute mark		X			
Proofreading issues		X			X
Lack of appreciation (feelings)		X			

Appendix 4. Matters Discussed for SM (Phase 2)

MATTERS DICUSSED IN SM	Elio	Lulu	Yaseen	Shaima	Maria
Peer feedback	X	X		X	
Peer support	X				
Absence of peer support					X
Tutor support		X			X
Problem with assignment	X				X
SM comparison with DCR	X	X		X	X
Unexpected grade	X	X	X	X	X
Possible reason for getting the grade	X	X	X		X
The need for one universal definition for criticality			X		
Understanding criticality	X	X	X	X	X
Importance of score than feedback					X
Issue about proofreader		X		X	X
Awareness of university support				X	
Not knowing about university's academic support					X
Mention of God (Spirituality)		X	X		
SM as a technical subject	X			X	
SM as a module failing to 'teach', no learning just instructions			X		
Dispute over uni grading system		X	X		
Tutor unprofessional attitude	X		X	X	
Tutor inconsistencies	X	X	X	X	
Possible reason for tutor inconsistencies: student's superiority			X		
USA vs UK system			X		
Insecurity			X	X	
Self assurance		X	X		
Change and development		X	X	X	
Need for confirmation/approval		X	X		
Need for model answers				X	
Reluctance to seek help	X		X	X	
Effect caused by previous feedback		X			
Effect caused by grade dissatisfaction	X	X			
Academic writing style reborn	X				
Feedback mismatch with grade		X	X		
Despite tutor's helpfulness grade was still unexpected		X			
Grade is not equivalent to language ability		X		X	
Challenge: Coming up with the right questions		X		X	
Need of appreciation		X	X		

Appendix 5. Matters Discussed for IM (Phase 3)

MATTERS DISCUSSED IN IM	Elio	Lulu	Yaseen	Shaima	Maria
Discussion of positive feedback	x	x			
Negative feeling about grade			x		
Trust issues with tutors/university		x	x	x	
Appreciation for tutor's feedback	x	x		x	
Appreciation =motivation		x	x		
Comparison to previous assignment(s)	x	x		x	
Importance of writing models	x	x		x	x
Use tutor as writing model	x				
Challenges of writing IM assignment	x	x	x	x	x
Development of Criticality	x	x	x	x	x
Understanding of Criticality	x	x	x	x	x
Conceptualization of AW	x	x	x	x	
Change and development of AW	x	x	x	x	x
Peer feedback absence	x	x	x	x	x
Importance of peer feedback	x	x			
Peer discussion instead of feedback		x	x		
Personality change due to university culture	x		x		
Differences of university culture/facilities	x				
Studying being a feminine character	x				
Pressure of studying in the UK	x			x	x
Use of proofreader		x	x		x
Switching proofreader					x
Realizing what she did differently this time		x	x		
Discussion about changing passing grade		x			x
Tutor's professionalism		x		x	
University marking scheme		x	x		
Importance of clarity of expression		x			x
Clarity of language is important in order to be accepted		x			x
Self-improvement using feedback		x			
Dynamics with tutor		x		x	
Acknowledging UK's different writing conventions		x			x
Vocabulary as a writing challenge		x			
About importance of vocabulary		x			
Citation confusion		x			
Change as a student		x	x	x	
To be safe: follow orders		x			
Issue about assignment removal/reduction petition affecting learning			x	x	
Critique about programme			x	x	
Peer rivalry and trust			x		x
AW and English language			x	x	x
Term 2 being grade oriented			x		
importance of sentence structure					x
improvement not being enough				x	x
absence for support for international students				x	x
Reason for not asking for extra help					x
Lack of language ability=misunderstood					x
Negative feeling due to previous feedback by same marker				x	
tutor asking about international student challenges				x	
international students lack certain skills					
telling vs showing				x	
what is needed by international student				x	

Appendix 6. Matters Discussed for NEE (Phase 3)

MATTERS DISCUSSED IN NEE	Elio	Lulu	Yaseen	Shaima	Maria
Less Effort in NEE because of Dissertation/sickness	x	x		x	
What was done differently for NEE	x	x		x	
Change and development in writing:more critically and confidence	x	x	x		
Change as an individual	x		x		
Change in perspective	x		x		
No academic support back home	x				
Past belief about education	x				
Idea about grades	x		x	x	x
Grade and progress relationship	x	x	x		x
Writng Challenge	x		x	x	x
Comparison with education back home: passivity, no academic support, cultural influence	x				
Removal of assignments	x				
NEE tutorial as pointless	x				
Important role of tutors	x		x		
Groupwork being pointless	x				
Scholarship vs non scholarship local students	x				
Age gap issue	x				
Proofreader issue	x	x	x	x	x
Realization and rectifying mistakes		x			
Sense of development without actually realizing		x			
Went back to old papers to fix future ones 'filling in the blanks'		x			
self doubt throughout MSc		x	x	x	x
Grades relationship with feedback		x	x	x	
Uni marking scheme issues		x	x	x	
Disconnect with tutors			x	x	
Assignment guidelines vs actual tutors want			x		
Samples/model issues			x		
Language ability and performance			x		
Tutor inconsistency in marking			x	x	
Univeristy marks influenced by uni quota			x		
Resentment with tutors			x	x	
Different students should not be given same marking guidelines			x		
Feedback and negative impact			x		
Wriitng critically vs being a critical person			x		
English language development			x		
Students bribery				x	
No writing improvement					x
No peer engagement due to english language inproficiency					x
Preference for black and white answers instead of interpretation					x

Appendix 7. Interview schedule for Final Interview (Phase 4)

Academic Writing

- What does it take to become a successful academic writer?
- Has your writing changed or stayed the same?
- Do you feel that context plays a role in your academic writing?
- Is getting marks over the year the only indication of progress?
- Is academic writing best judged by meeting the marking criteria set by the program or tutor interpretation of the text as a reader?
- After the four module assignments, how do the tasks differ?
 - What skills were they assessing?
 - How do you value these skills?
 - Is there a common writing convention in the four modules?
 - Are sample answers / essays necessary? How can they be used?
- Being a teacher, how do you feel about academic writing now?
 - Would you stay with the UK writing conventions?
 - Would you apply it back home?
 - Will there be any implications?

Feedback

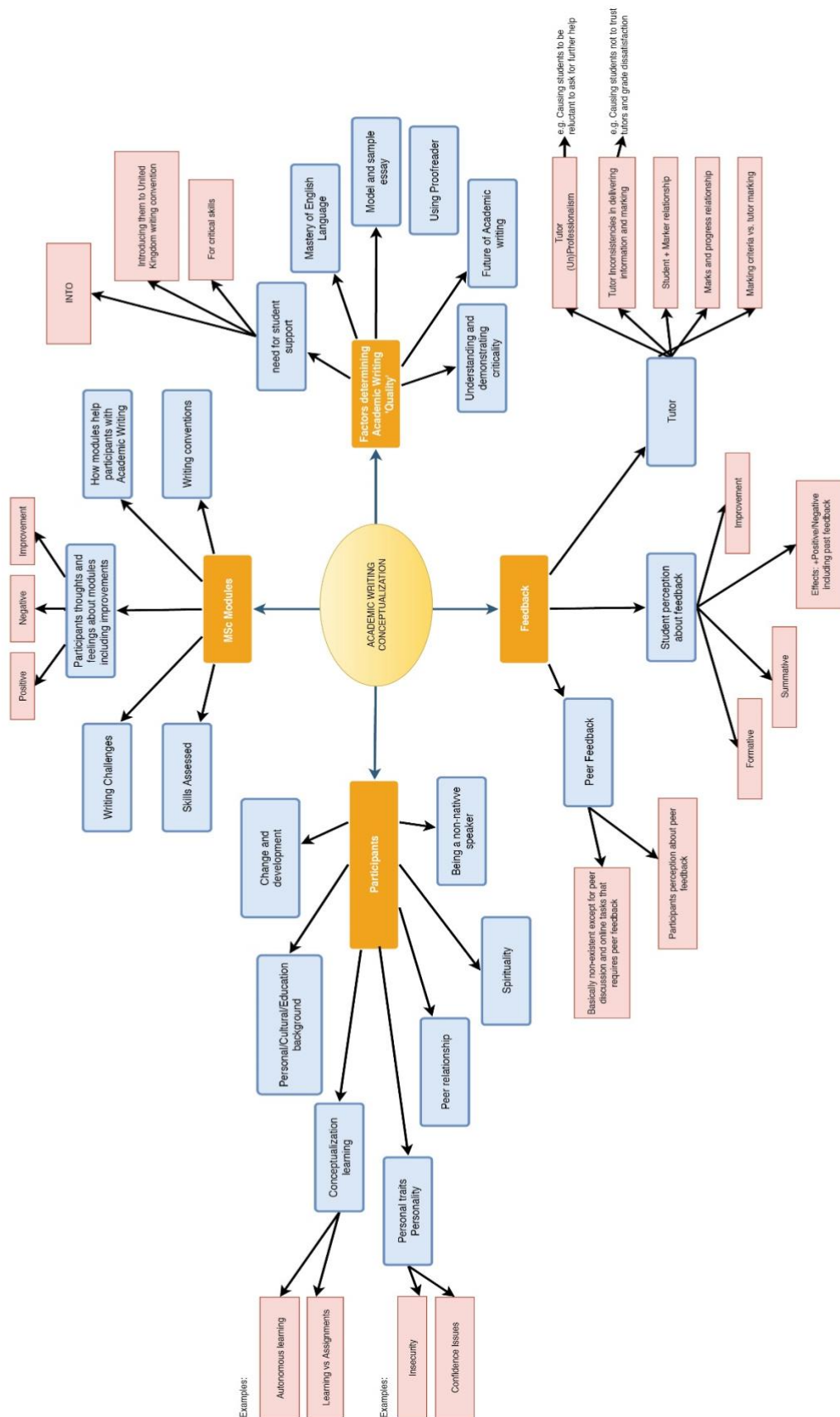
- What do you think about the feedbacks you have received so far? Any particular style that you prefer?
- Did the feedback provide useable information for you?
- Is there any particular feedback feature that you find helpful?
- How do you use peer feedback and tutor feedback?
- From your own perspective, how do they compare?
- What is the value of offering peer feedback?
- What is the value of receiving peer feedback?
- Did you learn more from offering or receiving peer feedback?
- When you were acting as the one giving feedback, how did you know you were reading 'quality' academic writing?

Being a non-native speaker

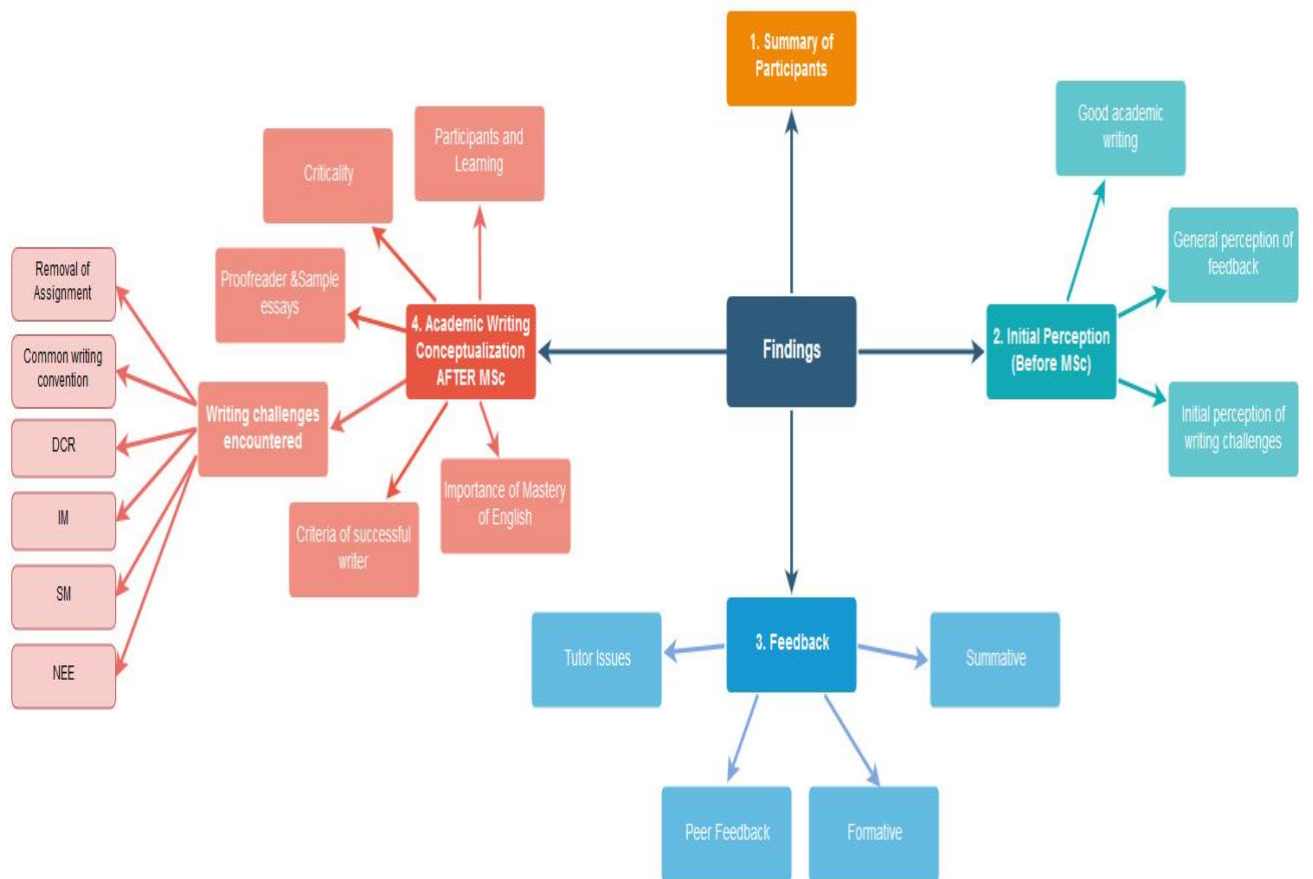
- How do you think your writing compares to students whose native language is English?
- How important is the mastery of the English language in producing a piece of academic writing?

- Does having a good command of English influence the ability to understand and demonstrate criticality?

Appendix 8. Initial Organization of Findings Stage 1



Appendix 9. Organization of Findings Stage 2



Appendix 10. Final Organization of Findings Stage 3.

